

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

#

L'ESPRIT ROMANESQUE:
FICTION, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND GENDER
IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND, 1641-1688

By

CHARLOTTE JONES

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2003

UMI Number: 3083677

Copyright 2003 by
Jones, Charlotte Rebecca

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3083677

Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

©2003

CHARLOTTE JONES

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 17, 2003
Date

Clare Carroll
Clare Carroll
Chair of Examining Committee

April 29, 2003
Date

William Coleman
William Coleman
Executive Officer

Rachel Brownstein

William Coleman
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract***L'ESPRIT ROMANESQUE:*
FICTION, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND GENDER
IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND, 1641-1688****By****Charlotte Jones****Adviser: Professor Clare Carroll**

This dissertation examines both fictional and theoretical texts in France and England between 1641 and 1688 that express ideas about the function and value of prose fiction. I argue that the epistemological value of fiction was under revision during the period, and that this becomes clear when fiction and its theoretical elaborations are read for their engagement with both historical and natural philosophical discourse. Instead of being consistently opposed to “history” and “natural philosophy,” fiction was seen to be a useful and relevant mode for examining the epistemological concerns of the period. The texts under review reflect an engagement with questions of epistemology, and this engagement is expressed by and within constructions of gender. This trio of concerns -- fiction, epistemology, and gender -- intersect and are shown to be mutually constitutive in these texts that cross national, disciplinary, and discursive boundaries.

The Introduction discusses approaches that construe the seventeenth century as a time of crisis or change -- semiotic, scientific, or historiographical -- in order to demonstrate how and where my own approach intervenes. It also introduces the structuring concepts of the dissertation and how they will be used: fiction, gender, and epistemology. Chapter One examines the preface to Madeleine de Scudéry's *Ibrahim*

(1641) and Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, comtesse de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) in France and various English translations of French heroic romance (1653-1660) and Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) in England; Chapter Two examines two English fictional narratives, Walter Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron* (1659?) and Margaret Cavendish's *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* (1656); Chapter Three is a close reading of Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Lettre sur l'origine des romans* (1670). The Conclusion offers a reading of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) and Behn's translation (1688) of it. All the chapters illustrate my argument that fictional discourse exploits and articulates the changing ideas about epistemology, and that it does so by also exploiting and articulating ideas about gender.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this project is due to the support of many people. I want to thank my adviser, Professor Clare Carroll, for the example of her teaching and scholarship; her consistent encouragement of my work and her patience with me as I revised and refined the project; and her generosity of spirit. I thank Professor Rachel Brownstein who was willing to continue to be involved even after it became clear that the dissertation was not going to resemble the prospectus she had signed off on, and whose loyal opposition was an example of collegial academic discourse. I thank Professor William Coleman who encouraged me to write the dissertation that I wanted to, and who was a good sport about playing both parole officer and twelve-step sponsor, depending on my need.

Professor Domna Stanton read some early drafts with great attention. I thank her for her help with some of the translations, as well as for her tough questions that helped me to be more precise in my argument.

My family has been very understanding during the process and has supported this work that has been a labor of personal rather than professional meaning. Thanks and love to my husband John and our children Kosta and Magda. Our growing family life helped me to set my priorities. My grandmother's influence was strongly felt during the writing of this, both in her example of disciplined writing, and in the larger question of how to tell the truth in fiction.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One Fiction and History as Competing and Complementary Discourses	32
Chapter Two Human Nature and Natural Philosophy in the Fiction of Walter Charleton and Margaret Cavendish	84
Chapter Three Pierre-Daniel Huet's Plausible Historiography of the Novel	131
Conclusion Fontenelle's Fictional Marquise	177
Works Cited	205

Introduction

This dissertation examines both fictional and theoretical texts in France and England between 1641 and 1688 that express ideas about the function and value of narrative prose fiction. I argue that the epistemological value of fiction was under revision during the period, and that this becomes clear when fiction and its theoretical elaborations are read for their engagement with both historical and natural philosophical discourse. Instead of being consistently opposed to “history” and “natural philosophy,” fiction was seen to be a useful and relevant mode for examining the epistemological concerns of the period. The texts under review reflect an engagement with questions of epistemology, and this engagement is expressed by and within constructions of gender. This trio of concerns -- fiction, epistemology, and gender -- intersect and are shown to be mutually constitutive in these texts that cross national, disciplinary, and discursive boundaries.

In this discussion, “fiction,” “epistemology,” and “gender” are key terms, and it is important to define them as they will be used in the context of this dissertation. While many of the texts under discussion have been inducted into the narrative of “the rise of the novel,” this dissertation does not seek to define or delineate genres. “Fiction” is a meta-category that embraces poetry and prose, “roman” and “nouvelle,” “romance” and “true history,” satire and love plot. “Gender” is understood and used to mean the social construction of the difference (and the significance ascribed to that difference) between men and women. This dissertation looks at constructions of gender, and the tropes of femininity used in the construction. “Epistemology” is understood and used not in a Foucauldian sense of “epistemes,” nor in a way that privileges a semiotic analysis but in a broader sense. I recuperate a non-specialist meaning of “epistemology” and use it to mean a theory (overtly stated or implied) of the grounds, limits, and criteria of knowledge

and truth. I prefer the term “epistemology” to “knowledge” or “truth” because it signals a theoretical complexity between knowledge and truth; they are not identical. I speak of the epistemological value of fiction to indicate the function that fiction was asserted to have, and I will assert that fiction participated in the epistemological concerns of the period, meaning that the changing nature of scientific and historical “evidence” was commented on in fiction.

The relationship between and among these three terms -- fiction, epistemology, and gender -- have been looked at in sets of two: fiction and epistemology, gender and fiction, epistemology and gender; but the dynamic of the three together, even when it has been acknowledged, has not been fully explored. For example, Ian Watt characterizes the triumph of “realism” as the defining feature of the rise of the English novel, and he argues that realism “does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it” (Watt 11). He asserts that the issue of representation that makes the rise of the novel difficult to explain is “essentially an epistemological problem” (11), and he appeals to “the help of those professionally concerned with the analysis of concepts, the philosophers” (11). Watt posits a relationship between epistemology and fiction, and he even links the rise of the novel with a “new sexual ideology” (161), but he does not link the epistemological problem (which for him is one of representation) to the questions of gender, asserting that representation is “ethically neutral” (117).

Watt’s thesis has led many critics to examine the relation between gender and fiction and the ways in which women -- real and figurative -- feature in specific genres, particularly the novel and its origins. The association of “women” with “fiction” has been looked at in terms of tropes: Michael Danahy, for instance, looking at France argues that there is an equivalence between concepts of femininity and concepts of fictionality; and Rosalind Ballaster does something similar with English materials. The association of “women” with “fiction” has also been looked at in terms of women writers and their

contributions to the rise of the novel by critics such as Joan DeJean, Dale Spender, and Jane Spencer.

There has been considerable work in the area of epistemology and gender as well. Judith Butler¹ argues that gender is performative and not an ontological fact. She asserts that the basic concepts in gender theory are products of power relations and that the epistemology of gender is in need of revision. Donna Haraway² also looks at the construction of gender in terms of scientific knowledge, and analyzes the terms “nature” and “experience” to show that cultural assumptions shape allegedly value-neutral science and research. Thomas Laqueur, too, interrogates the construction not just of gender, but of sex as well, arguing the “[s]cience does not simply investigate, but itself constitutes [...] the difference of woman from man” (Laqueur 17). He provides a useful model for the work of this dissertation that seeks to explore and uncover the ways in which epistemology, gender, and fiction interact when he likens the embeddedness of questions of gender in the epistemology of science to the work literature does. He quotes the literary critic Barbara Johnson to help him make his point:

Literature, in a similar way, constitutes the problem of sexuality and is not just its imperfect mirror. As Barbara Johnson argues, “it is literature that inhabits the very heart of what makes sexuality problematic for us as speaking animals. Literature is not only a thwarted investigator but also an incorrigible perpetrator of the problem of sexuality.” Sexual difference thus seems to be already present in how we constitute meaning; it is already part of the logic that drives writing. Through “literature,” representation generally, it is given content. Not only do attitudes toward sexual difference “generate and structure literary texts”; texts generate sexual difference. (Laqueur 17)

What I find most interesting in this is more than a pretty paradox about cause and effect; three different constructs are operative here, and none insist upon the priority of one term or another: sexual difference, literature, and meaning. To translate this to my own thesis, I

¹ See her *Gender Trouble and Bodies that Matter*.

² See her *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

also attempt to show that articulations of gender are embedded within articulations of theories of fiction, and that these articulations are informed by and construct questions of epistemology. The three terms do not stand in a consistent or stable relation to each other, and it is by looking closely at specific texts that this relationship becomes recognizable. The thesis is more a series of interventions onto the fiction of the period than a grand narrative about it, and the texts I am working with are only a very small sample; but these texts are not random. The texts have been chosen because they are exemplary of fiction in this period. They illustrate a tendency in some mid-seventeenth-century French and English texts for fictional discourse to exploit and articulate the changing ideas about methodology and epistemology in historiographical and scientific thought by also exploiting and articulating ideas about gender.

The chronology and geography that serve as the boundary for this exploration are also not random. The dates mark a half-century in which a defense of fiction on the basis of its incommensurability with historical discourse was transformed into a defense of fiction on the basis of its identity with it. Scudéry's preface to *Ibrahim* (1641) is a good place to begin because it applies ideas prevalent in dramatic theory to narrative prose fiction, and because Scudéry is often cited as being the last practitioner of *roman héroïque* (a fictional genre marked by its extreme length, multiple plot lines, and noble and chaste heroes and heroines) before a new genre of *nouvelle* (a genre marked by its relative brevity, and psychological realism as opposed to ideal moral behavior) is inaugurated. The preface repeats and transplants arguments about dramatic discourse into the realm of the *roman* and raises the issues that are modified and eventually transformed over the fifty years -- the difference between fiction and history and the role of *vraisemblance*. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) is a good place to end because it represents a reevaluation of Scudéry's terms, and because it is often cited as representing the first manifestation of and impulse to the novel. Therefore the chronological boundaries delimit a period in which

techniques and theories of prose narrative fiction were changing, before “the rise of the novel.”

The geographical limits also make sense. France and England had close and complicated political and religious, as well as literary, ties. In 1641 the English queen was Henrietta Maria (French and Roman Catholic by birth), whose national origin and religious faith caused a great deal of controversy and who was an effective synecdoche for illegitimate authority of which parliamentarians made use.³ English royalists followed the exiled English court to France during the interregnum, and French fiction was rapidly translated in England. The conceptual field of France and England offers many opportunities for exploring the similarities and differences between and among theories of fiction because of the rapid and numerous translations of French materials that were appearing in England.

The political systems of England and France between 1641 and 1688 see some similar challenges. In England, Charles I and his parliament come into conflict over religious and taxation issues. The Civil War begins in 1642 ends with regicide in 1649, and the decade of the 1650s sees Cromwell’s Commonwealth. The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 gives way to the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and the coronation of William of Orange. France also sees challenges to the monarchy during the period, most dramatically the series of uprisings in what is known as the Fronde (1648-1653). The reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) coincides with the period under review, and while commonly taken as the quintessence of absolute monarchy, there are challenges to his kingship model and, as in England, the literature of the period reflects concerns over power and authority.

The seventeenth century is called “early modern” because it is a period in which critics identify ideas and cultural artifacts that are recognizably similar to contemporary

³ See Patterson. I am grateful to Megan Moore for letting me see her unpublished paper on Henrietta Maria’s own political manoeuvring.

culture (modern), and yet forms remain that are less continuous with our own. In her study of ideology and culture in seventeenth-century France, Erica Harth articulates well the consensus view about the political and cultural changes taking place in Europe:

We perceive in the seventeenth century the first signposts of modern Western society: the nation-state, science, and a desacralized culture [...] In the decisive shift from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production, the bourgeoisie entered its formative stage. "Early modern" is emergent modern. With the emergence of a new mode of production and a new class, a culture that we tentatively qualify as modern began to take shape. (Harth, Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France 17)

The terms and the mechanisms of this "emergence of modernity" are highly contested and controversial, but there is agreement that the seventeenth century saw important changes in political and cultural practice. The changes taking place in the middle years of the seventeenth century have been conceptualized in a variety of ways, but each conceptualization falls under one of three broad categories that identify these changes as a "crisis" in epistemology, history, or science. These three categories overlap, and this dissertation intervenes in the conversation by looking at theories of fiction that engage with these three categories to show how during this period fiction was seen to be a useful and legitimate means of addressing them.

The three chapters of this dissertation mirror aspects of the broad overview of critical thinking about the period and look at theories of fiction to complicate the paradigms. Chapter One looks at the way definitions and defenses of fiction changed vis-à-vis history in order to illustrate a change in the epistemological value of fiction in that dissemination. Chapter Two looks at two voices engaged in the discourse of natural philosophy and science, and which were instrumental in disseminating new paradigms and ideas, as well as their use of fiction. Chapter Three looks at Huet's use of historiography and his engagement with natural philosophy in order to articulate his theory of fiction. The three chapters engage with approaches that construe the seventeenth century are a time of crisis or change -- semiotic, historiographical, and scientific.

The first paradigm describes the seventeenth century as a period of epistemological change. Michel Foucault influentially argued that an epistemic “rupture” occurred in the middle of the seventeenth century, contending that his attempt to “bring to light [...] the epistemological field” constitutes “not so much a history [...] as an ‘archeology’” (Foucault xxii). He continues that “this archaeological inquiry has revealed two great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture: the first inaugurates the Classical age (roughly half-way through the seventeenth century) and the second, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, marks the beginning of the modern age” (xxii). The mechanisms of this “epistemic rupture” have been debated, and Foucault has been faulted for his description of the nature of change as well as by feminist critics for his lack of attention to issues of gender and female experience.⁴ Timothy J. Reiss modifies Foucault’s vocabulary to make his argument that the seventeenth century saw the rise of the “analytico-referential system,” and he acknowledges his debt:

the critical method and many of its assumptions are derived principally from the work of Michel Foucault, though not uncritically: certain aspects are further developed here, the notion of epistemic “rupture” (recently pasted over by Foucault himself) is replaced with the attempt, already explained in brief, to show how one episteme (or “discursive class,” as I call it) in fact develops out of another. (Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* 13)

Michel Beaujour, looking at texts from England, France, and Italy, speaks of “the epistemological *evolution* of Renaissance science” (Beaujour 189; my emphasis), and Michael McKeon uses a dialectical theory of genre in order to describe how and why the English novel attained its stature and coherence in the 1740s. He argues that “[t]he instability of generic categories” evident in the seventeenth century “registers an epistemological crisis, a major cultural transition in attitudes toward how to tell the truth

⁴ See especially the work of Judith Butler, already cited, and Nancy Fraser, whose essays are collected in *Unruly Practices*. The anthology *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* is also useful.

in narrative” (McKeon 20). Rupture, development, evolution, and dialectic are some of the mechanisms used to describe the changes seen in the century, and it is not the argument of this dissertation to endorse one or the other. Instead, this dissertation seeks to identify different but overlapping themes in a conversation about knowledge, and to illustrate how fiction was seen to participate.

Others approach the seventeenth century more circumspectly, looking not at epistemology broadly but at specific discourses and modes of representation. Historiography is widely seen as being under revision during the period. An influential articulation of the “crisis” in France from this perspective is Paul Hazard’s *La Crise de la conscience européenne* (1935), which is revisited by Orest Ranum in *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France* (1980). A thesis about the historiographical crisis is also developed with regard to England and the Civil War by writers such as Ferguson, Quint, and Norbrook, and in anthologies such as *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction 1500-1800*.⁵ The overarching thesis of historians from Hazard to Quint is that in the face of social and political upheaval, the status of History as an impartial record of events is undermined, and that this is reflective of a broader epistemological crisis. Chapter One looks at the change in the value of historical discourse as it is used in defense of fiction.

Other work has been done to account for women in the revision of historiographical categories, most notably by Margaret Ezell and Mary Beth Rose with English materials, and Faith Beasley with French. Ezell argues that the generation of women writers born during the interregnum urged other women to read History, recognizing its rhetorical power and narratives that “concretely challenged the stability of all absolute answers and historical precedent in questions of power relationships, whether

⁵ See Works Cited list.

political, spiritual, or literary” (Ezell, “The Politics of the Past: Restoration Women Writers on Women Reading History” 21). She also argues that female autobiography is a form of History writing, which is also the argument of Rose and Beasley. Beasley argues that women writers used the *mémoire* and *nouvelle* as a means to challenge History as written by men, and that History and fiction as genres and rhetorical strategies are in close contact and conversation.

This dissertation looks at the way historical discourse is used in theories of fiction to illustrate that there was a shift from a defense of fiction as different from, and superior to, History, to a defense of fiction that relied on asserting its equivalence to History and denying its previous epistemological status. Attention to the ways in which gender is deployed and constructed within these theories demonstrates that it is an important part of the arguments about fiction and History, and their relative and shifting epistemological status.

Another way of conceptualizing the changes in the seventeenth century is through the idea of the “Scientific Revolution.” While recent critics have been increasingly skeptical about the value, heuristic or ontological, of asserting the fact of the “Scientific Revolution,” even the most dubious allow that over the course of the seventeenth century “[t]here was [...] a diverse array of cultural practices aimed at understanding, explaining, and controlling the natural world, each with different characteristics and each experiencing different modes of change” (Shapin 3). Literary critics have increasingly looked to the scholarship in the history of science to help make sense of seventeenth-century literary practices.⁶ Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is a foundational text in this area. An idea of empire and exploration also figures in this discussion, and there have been several monographs about the simultaneous emergence of “the novel,” “New

⁶ See Kroll, Rogers, Moore, Rossi, and Dear, to mention only a few, for critics who examine the relationship between scientific discourse and the literary.

Science,” and “the New World.” Anne Bratach argues that “[t]he coincidence of the emergence of the novel and of experimental science suggests epistemological affinities between the two projects” (Bratach 214-15), and Denise Albanese attempts to “seek out the connections between the New World and the New Science as simultaneous emerging discursive patterns” (Albanese 1-2).⁷

While most recent critics see a positive relationship between new scientific paradigms and emerging literary forms like the novel, Richard Foster Jones argues that literature was singularly resistant to the reforming and revolutionary nature of the scientific movement of the middle-seventeenth century, and that “neoclassicism” represents a conservative response to the attack on authority that, as Jones has it, had proceeded since the Middle Ages with little interruption. He contends that “[a]uthority in religion had been rejected in the Reformation; authority in government had been contested in the Commonwealth; authority in learning and science had been overthrown in the Restoration, and now authority was being expelled from the last stronghold -- literature” (Jones, “Science and Criticism in the Neo-Classical Age of English Literature” 72). Richard Kroll argues that Jones and Robert K. Merton⁸ together formulated a thesis that has distorted our understanding of English literary history and, particularly, how we read texts from the second half of the seventeenth century. He looks at Restoration texts and “neoclassical discourse” and concludes that

the Restoration of King Charles II coincided with a determination to revise and police an entire panoply of cultural norms, which included the practice of experimental philosophy and new protocols for literary expression. But

⁷ Other critics who see connections between the novel as an emerging form and new scientific paradigms that also mandate colonial exploration are Nussbaum, Azim, and Douthwaite.

⁸ The texts that constitute the Jones-Merton thesis as Kroll would have it are: Jones’s *Ancients and Moderns* (1936) and *The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope* (1951) and Merton’s “Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth-Century England” (1938).

I question the Jonesian thesis that the scientific world view produced an ideology that treated language as transparent or referential -- as an instrument, that is, to an unmediated cognitive and experimental grasp of objects in the world. (Kroll 3)

I find Kroll's challenge of a paradigm about the effects of the Scientific Revolution on other kinds of discourse compelling. His challenge complements my approach, which also seeks to demonstrate the range and depth of fictional discourse in conversation with other modes.

Another model for the way in which scientific thinking is related to the literary is Barbara Shapiro's study of the emergence of the ideas of probability and certainty during the period. Shapiro argues that it was the erosion of the Ptolemaic worldview

derived from the ancient Greeks and Romans and revived by early Renaissance humanists, that subtly altered the way in which research and investigation in many fields was pursued and made possible a more intimate relationship between empirical, natural philosophy and religious, historical, legal, *and even* literary thought. (Shapiro 3; my emphasis)

She examines how the epistemological concepts of probability and certainty operate in different discourses, separating for analytical purposes what she acknowledges to be overlapping disciplines (Shapiro 227).

The category of gender is significant in the "Scientific Revolution" and natural philosophy and has been given some attention. Carolyn Merchant, Londa Sheibinger, Susan Bordo, Ruth Perry, Erica Harth, and Eileen O'Neill have documented the ways in which the New Science constituted women as objects for scientific inquiry, as well as recuperating the contributions of individual women.⁹ Thomas Laqueur has argued that the one-sex/flesh model of sexual difference current in antiquity and through the Middle Ages and Renaissance gave way to the two-sex/flesh model in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He argues that this shift depended not upon scientific inquiry or discovery (that would come later) but was "a consequence [...] of an epistemological and a social-political

⁹ See Works Cited list.

revolution” (Laqueur 20). Laqueur seeks to document “the fact that at one time the dominant discourse construed the male and female bodies as hierarchically, vertically, ordered versions of one sex and at another time as horizontally ordered opposites, as incommensurable” (10). The Scientific Revolution in Laqueur’s formulation helped to construct a biology of the sexes that is as implicated in social and political constructions and their literary articulations as is gender. This dissertation examines some of the ways in which the changes in scientific thinking were incorporated into thinking about fiction. It also looks at texts that use fiction to address the epistemological issues raised in and by, to use the vocabulary of the period, natural philosophy.

One of the main contributions of this dissertation is its comparative approach to these issues and, particularly, to fiction. The comparative studies of the fiction of the period that do exist are either more than fifty years old or are isolated articles.¹⁰ Scholarship on English materials tends to focus on the teleology of the realist novel and to repeat the story that sometime around 1740, English writers were able to release themselves from the fetters of French romance and to pioneer a new genre, the novel, which reflects England’s unique genius and consciousness.¹¹ Scholarship on French materials tends to repeat the story of the overthrow of aristocratic romance forms and the ascendance of the memoir and epistolary narrative.¹² The history of philosophy and

¹⁰ See Haviland, *The roman de longue haleine on English Soil*, 1931; F.C. Green, *Literary Ideas in 18th Century France and England*, 1966; and Ellen Brinks’s “Meeting Over the Map: Madeleine de Scudéry’s *Carte du Pays de Tendre* and Aphra Behn’s *Voyage to the Isle of Love*”; April Alliston’s “Gender and the Rhetoric of Evidence in Early-Modern Historical Narratives.”

¹¹ This is Henry Fielding’s argument in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, in which he describes his work as a “comic Epic-Poem in Prose” and a “comic Romance,” and also, in variation, the argument of Ian Watt, Michael McKeon, and Lennard Davis.

¹² This is the broad outline of the story told by such different critics as Georges May, Thomas DiPiero, Joan DeJean, Mark Bannister, and Faith Beasley.

science also favors a narrative that emphasizes national boundaries and justifies single-literature analysis: Continental Cartesian deductive reasoning is set against English Baconian inductive experimentation.¹³ Comparative historical studies are also rare, and yet there is ample evidence and acknowledgment of the boundary crossings and mutual influence between France and England during the second half of the seventeenth century. French fiction was rapidly translated into English, and English royalists -- like the Cavendishes, Hobbes, and Davenant -- spent more than a decade in exile in France. The crisis in historiography brought on by Civil War, and the Epicurean revival as it relates to scientific practice and theory are two cultural currents experienced in both countries, languages, and literatures that find expression in fictional narrative. This dissertation seeks to approach the situation comparatively, both in terms of the national literatures it examines, and in terms of the discourses it brings into the conversation, in order to show how fiction is part of a larger cultural conversation and that this conversation takes place in more than just one national literature.

There are some comparative approaches and insights that have already been articulated. For instance, Timothy J. Reiss has argued over the course of several books that the seventeenth century saw the ascendance of what he calls the “analytico-referential discourse,” a discourse evident in different countries that organizes representation into a single network and that has persisted through today.¹⁴ He sees this as a pan-Western

¹³ This is most evident in studies of the English Royal Society. See Jones, Malcolm, and Hutton who reinforce this tendency, and Hunter who acknowledges it.

¹⁴ See his *The Discourse of Modernism, The Meaning of Literature, and Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism*. He defines the analytico-referential discourse as

a discursive class which asserts the capacity of language and mind both to analyze the order of the world and to understand (referentially) its reality, one which emphasizes the purity and clarity of a transparent mediating

European phenomenon, and uses a great number of authors and texts in several languages to make his point. His comparative approach is in the service of confirming his thesis about the invention of “literature,” and the ascendance of a linguistic epistemology that privileges analysis and reference. He asserts that

[t]he political writers of the sixteenth century had viewed the improvement of language and the stabilizing of civil society as a single problem. The tetrad of Bacon, Galileo, Hobbes, and Descartes likewise saw method, language, natural philosophy, and political order as forming a single network. The new concept of poetical representation becomes the focal point organizing this network of relations. (Reiss, “Power, Poetry, and the Resemblance of Nature” 224)

Reiss’s narrative about the invention of “literature” requires him to see the same story in different cultural and political contexts, and to argue that the differences that do exist between and among discourses are insignificant: “the differences fade before the fact that history has shown them to be already within a single paradigm of discourse” (Reiss, “Classical Criticism and Ideology” 151). For Reiss, this single paradigm holds for France as well as for England:

I have elsewhere suggested that the situation in England is identical. Literature is indeed, by then, part of a political and economic conflict just as other human practices may be. The chief reason for its existence was seen to be its role as a servant of political order and might, as an instrument for the maintenance, after the creation, of a particular society and ideology. (Reiss, “Classical Criticism and Ideology” 156)

His totalizing picture of the period is itself a good example of the discourse he is describing, but his comparative approach and liberal embrace of different kinds of narrative are useful models. His comparative perspective is also useful for identifying

language and the collective and distinct comprehensibility of concepts, one which asserts the permanent unchanging nature of humanity, wherever and whenever it is found, one which declares the unique value of the individual as it also affirms his rights, his capacity for knowledge, and the fact that since all such individuals are alike in their rights and obligations all are equal -- so that the individuality in question is in fact a common collective nature”. (Reiss, “Classical Criticism and Ideology” 149-50)

patterns and texts that illustrate both the commonality between cultural practices in France and England and their specificity. This dissertation, however, does not support his thesis about the ascendance of a single discourse.

Other comparative approaches are scarce, although some point out that England and France were experiencing similar political and cultural convulsions.¹⁵ Lennard Davis, whose study of the origins of the novel in England has been important for an approach to the novel that increasingly emphasizes cultural and historical context, limits his comparative comments to an asterisked footnote that remarks:

It is also important to point out here that the French word *roman* can be translated as either “romance” or “novel” -- a confusing inconvenience given our interest in distinguishing the two. The word *nouvelle* or *histoire* tends to be used in the latter half of the seventeenth century to distinguish a shorter, simpler style of narrative. *Histoire*, of course, can mean either story or history -- another linguistic inconvenience that leads us to wonder if these crossovers might reflect some kind of uncertainty in the grand categories of fiction, history, and journalism in France as well as in England. (Davis, L. J., Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel 27)

The answer to his query about the “linguistic inconvenience” is, of course, affirmative, and suggests why a comparative approach is called for and how one might go about it.

In terms of extant approaches that model a comparative interrogation of different kinds of discourse, Richard Kroll favors looking at various modes of discourse in order to show how questions of knowledge were engaged across disciplines. Kroll speaks

of “multiple” discourses in order to suggest that we can, from an analytical standpoint, legitimately and fruitfully treat discourse from many points of view -- institutional, generational, technological, linguistic, and so forth. But because discourse at the Restoration resists precisely those specialized modern terms of analysis we bring to it, the vocabulary of Restoration texts perplexes the very attempts to legislate differences among discourses. This is one reason why -- contrary to received wisdom -- the Restoration habitually treats literary genre less as a question of some ontological or epistemological hierarchy than as a heuristic device, and experimental space within to test wider discursive issues, a habit that explains the neoclassical

¹⁵ See, for instance, Patterson who begins her study of “functional ambiguity” as a technique to avoid censorship in England at this time, with French examples.

tendency to treat linguistic forms not as fixed but as plastic and contingent.
(Kroll 39-40)

Kroll looks at English Restoration texts to make his argument that the neo-Epicurean revival is a lens through which to look at wider cultural issues. This dissertation expands on one of Kroll's basic insights -- that in the period, genre is more a heuristic device than a question of epistemological or ontological hierarchy. I look at specific texts that illustrate fiction's interpretive range.

It is the intersection of the debates around the nature of fiction and History and natural philosophy, and their limitations, legible in both France and England, that interests me here. One of the things that makes the intersection easy to locate is that the disciplinary boundaries to which we are accustomed do not apply. Both Shapiro and Kroll acknowledge that our own compartmentalizations of knowledge are not relevant for the seventeenth century. This is what makes the analysis of the intersection difficult as well. Some read the disciplinary fluidity as the sign of a broad epistemological crisis. Shapiro argues that

[t]he wall that for centuries had separated philosophy from rhetoric, reason from experience, and certainty from probability crumbled still further as a number of humanists attempted to develop unified arts of discourse that rearranged and combined elements of logic, dialectic, and rhetoric. These efforts, the best known being that of Ramus, blurred once separate and distinct intellectual modes at the very time that Aristotelian philosophy and scholastic logic were losing prestige. In the process, particular subject matters and disciplines lost their definitive moorings in rhetoric or philosophy. It became increasingly unclear which kinds of proofs, evidence, language or appeals were appropriate to which subject matter.
(Shapiro 8)

Others read the generic and disciplinary fluidity and instability not as evidence of a crisis, but as evidence of the pre-modern, or pre-analytico-mimetic discourse. Instability and fluidity, instead of signifying liminality, signify a coherent epistemology that is contrasted to, say, Cartesian rationalism or Jonesian neoclassicism. April Alliston, looking at eighteenth-century fiction, reads the fiction of "women's correspondence" in this way,

arguing that the fluidity of boundaries -- generic and national -- constitutes its own formal features:

I propose that these fictions be read, not as establishing a European “female literary tradition,” but as constituting an illegitimate narrative genre recognizable through its consistent crossing of the generic boundary lines of novel and romance, of epistolary and memoir forms, of fiction and history, of private and public history, in ways that reflect a feminine gendered position in relation to those boundaries. (Alliston, *Virtue’s Faults: Correspondences in Eighteenth-Century British and French Women’s Fiction* 15)

Alliston links generic instability to the participation of women writers, contributing to the thesis that women and fiction are inextricably connected.

Richard Popkin’s scholarship on the history of skepticism provides a useful framework for thinking comparatively and interdisciplinarily about the mid-seventeenth century and gives an explanation of what is meant by the term “epistemological crisis.” He makes the broad argument that in the skeptical revival of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “the epistemological arguments of ancient Greek Pyrrhonism had been revitalized as a means of attacking Renaissance Platonism, Scholasticism, Calvinism, astrology, alchemy, and a host of other views, ancient and modern” (Popkin, “The High Road to Pyrrhonism” 18). They also paved the way for both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Popkin argues that the tradition of epistemological skepticism -- which in France runs through Montaigne and Charron, and Mersenne and Gassendi -- shifted opponents in the mid-seventeenth century from the Scholastics to the Cartesians (Popkin, HS xviii). The skepticism articulated by Mersenne and Gassendi denied the possibility of certainty of knowledge about the true nature of things, but asserted the possibility of knowledge about the world of appearances. Mersenne in *La Vérité des Sciences contre les Sceptiques ou Pyrrhoniens* (1625) argued that

even if the claims of the sceptics could not be refuted, nonetheless we could have a type of knowledge which is not open to question, and which is all that is requisite for our purposes in this life. This kind of knowledge is not that which previous dogmatic philosophers had sought, knowledge about the real nature of things. Rather it consists of information about

appearances, and hypotheses and predictions about the connections of events and the future course of experience. Scientific and mathematical knowledge for Mersenne did not yield information about some transcendent reality, not was it based upon any metaphysical truths about the nature of the universe. A positivistic-pragmatic conception of knowledge was set forth, which omitted any search for rational ground for what is known and denied that such a search could be successful, yet insisted, against the destructive force of complete Pyrrhonism, that scientific and mathematical knowledge could not seriously be doubted. (Popkin, HS 131)

For opponents of Descartes, science becomes separated from metaphysics, and scientific philosophers like Gassendi argue that “we can develop sciences of appearances which have a pragmatic value, and whose laws and findings are not doubtful except in a fundamental epistemological sense” (Popkin, HS 139). The epistemological questioning that skepticism provokes is evident, as Popkin describes, in the theological debates of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation,¹⁶ and in the scientific and philosophical debates about the nature of appearance and probability versus certainty as the criterion of knowledge. For Popkin, skepticism is a meta-category for understanding the Reformation as well as natural philosophy. This framework can be extended to the realm of fiction as well, where, as in scientific discourse, skepticism was advanced and interrogated.

In the chapters that follow, I explore the category of fiction and how its demarcation and articulation staged the epistemological concerns that dominated the seventeenth century and how ideas about gender are deployed and constituted in that demarcation and articulation.

1. Chapter One: Fiction and History as Competing Discourses

This chapter investigates the grand categories of fiction and history (journalism is not included) that Davis suggests are in flux and comparable in both France and England.

¹⁶ See especially Chapter IV “The Influence of the New Pyrrhonism” in *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* for a discussion of the role epistemological skepticism played in theological debates.

It not only looks at the role that a rhetorical use of “history” plays in theories of fiction, it also draws the limits of ideas of fiction -- from a defense emphasizing its difference from History to a defense that denies its fictionality in favor of historical referentiality.

I start by examining the idea of *vraisemblance* as a required attribute of poetry and drama and how it gets applied to narrative fiction. A close reading of Scudéry’s preface to *Ibrahim* (1641) reveals one orientation to *vraisemblance* and the asserted difference between History and fiction as ways of representing truth. Although Scudéry argues for the classic distinction between History and poetry (including the *roman* as a species of the latter) as modes of discourse, the deployment of the term *vraisemblance* is multi-valent and, sometimes, contradictory. Scudéry’s preface and its constructions of the History-fiction dichotomy and *vraisemblance* is contrasted to Lafayette’s interrogation of the same concepts in *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) and the ensuing uproar over its lack of *vraisemblance*. Lafayette eschews the word *roman* to describe what the front-matter and her personal correspondence refer to as “histoire” or “mémoire.” Its truth is not a poetic one that forgives or even demands the adjustment of the historical record in favor of moral instruction, but its truth is instead its professed historical referentiality. Readers and critics objected to its lack of *vraisemblance*, and this judgment was applied not just to specific plot points (would a mother allow a young girl to shop for jewels alone or a wife confess her love for another man to her husband?) but also to the narrative style of indirect discourse. I examine both the orientation to *vraisemblance* and history and fiction revealed in the substantial literature of the debate over the story and the critique of the same concepts embedded in the narrative itself. Lafayette repeatedly draws attention to the narrative’s lack of *vraisemblance*, and posits a theory of *vraisemblance* and fiction and history that is quite different from those articulated earlier.

An examination of English materials reveals a similar movement from a concept of narrative fiction as continuous with poetry and the applicability of the classic distinction

between History and fiction to a devaluation of fiction and its previous moral high ground with the assertion of its historical referentiality as evidence of veracity. The vocabulary of *vraisemblance* is missing (the awkward and unsatisfactory English cognate “verisimilitude” is not used either), making it more difficult to trace shifts in meaning. However, it is possible to discern a comparable orientation to the relative merits of fiction and History as competing discourses. I look at several articulations of theories of fiction and Romance during the interregnum in England, when royalist supporters turned toward fiction and away from History to record heroic action. In the context of political upheaval, historical discourse is shown to be partial and motivated and fiction a place of supposed respite from faction and self-interest. This conception of the relative merits of fiction and History as modes of discourse is contrasted with the one discernible in Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688). Behn denies *Oroonoko*’s fictional status and asserts that it is “true history.” I look at Behn’s narrative techniques and trace the different models of authority and truth deployed in the narrative to argue that, as in France, there is a change in the way fiction is approached and its perceived epistemological value.

Central to these articulations of theories of fiction in both countries and on both sides of the shift are tropes of femininity and figurations of gender. There has been significant work done by others to describe the ways in which *vraisemblance* relies on constructions of gender. Gerard Genette suggests that *vraisemblance* amounts to an ideology:

En fait, *vraisemblance* et *bienséance* se rejoignent sous un même critère, à savoir, “tout ce qui est conforme à l’opinion du public”. Cette “opinion”, réelle ou supposée, c’est assez précisément ce que l’on nommerait aujourd’hui une idéologie, c’est-à-dire un corps de maximes et de préjugés qui constitue tout à la fois une vision du monde et un système de valeurs. (Genette 73)

[In fact, *vraisemblance* and *bienséance* are joined under the same criterion, that is, “all that conforms to public opinion.” This “opinion,” real or supposed, is precisely enough what one would call today an ideology, that is to say a body of maxims and prejudices that constitute simultaneously a vision of the world and a system of values.]

Nancy K. Miller expanded on Genette's formulation and reading of *La Princesse de Clèves* to argue that that novel has been misread because critics have not attended to the constructions of gender inherent in judgments about *vraisemblance* relevant to Lafayette's famous and controversial work.¹⁷ Michael Danahy restores the debate to its roots, looking at Aristotle's statement of probability, which the period took as authoritative, and shows how cultural conceptions of gender were present in Aristotelian probability and seventeenth-century *vraisemblance*. He cogently puts it:

the key statement [in *The Poetics*] is "the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities." Elsewhere, he notes that the poet should maintain propriety in his/her characters. However, one of the primary examples he lists as being inappropriate to type is "valour in a woman." The phrase may be more literally translated as "it is not appropriate for a woman to be manly or clever." [...] In other words, because Aristotle relied at the outset on gender-based examples, to define the elements of propriety and appropriateness in each genre, the doctrine of generic decorum was underwritten by esthetic stereotypes about the inferiority of women. (Danahy 49)

This dependence of *vraisemblance* on constructions of gender is revealed by the accusations of *invraisemblance* heaped upon *La Princesse de Clèves* because of the actions of the eponymous heroine. The fact that in these texts constructions of gender are foundational to theories of fiction is evident not just in the deployment of *vraisemblance*. Scudéry sexes *vraisemblance* as "la charmante trompeuse," and in England, gendered metaphors are used to advance arguments about fiction. For Aphra Behn, the negotiation between History and fiction is contingent upon the deployment of a gendered authorial persona.

The second and third chapters of this dissertation take a different approach. Instead of straddling the divide between theories of fiction that assert its superior epistemological function and theories that privilege historical referentiality, they look at

¹⁷ See her "Emphasis Added."

some of the ways in which fiction was deployed in other modes of discourse before its devaluation.

2. Chapter Two: Fiction and Natural Philosophy

Chapter Two examines two narratives that use fiction to explore controversial epistemological issues in natural and moral philosophy, and carefully examines the divergent constructions of gender they use to make their argument. Walter Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron* (1659?) and Margaret Cavendish's *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* (1656) stage the debate over the relationship between the passions and reason within the broader concern over epistemology and evidence. Charleton retells a tale from Petronius's *Satyricon* that presents women as inconstant and appetitive and maintains an ironic perspective about human nature and the possibility of true knowledge. Cavendish's tale stages a more conventional romance plot that scripts the man as appetitive and violent and the woman as chaste and virtuous. Indeed, in Cavendish's story, chastity is integral to a concept of femininity and allows for a range of behavior from the heroine -- armed self-defense, disobedience, cross-dressing -- that in other cases would be antithetical to femininity.

Charleton and Cavendish are both credited with spurring the Epicurean revival in England and translating Continental scientific ideas.¹⁸ Their participation in the emerging shifts in scientific thinking that has been called the Scientific Revolution makes their fictional narratives good examples of how fiction was deployed in conversation with other modes of discourse. Steven Shapin argues that "natural philosophers were confronted with differing repertoires of practical and conceptual skills for achieving various philosophical goals and with choices about which ends they might work to achieve"

¹⁸ See, for example, Kargon, Sharp, and Blaydes. A fuller discussion will follow in Chapter Two.

(Shapin 17). Although Shapin does not include fiction in this repertoire, I assert that it, too, was among the strategies used by natural philosophers, in this case Cavendish and Charleton, to articulate and conceive of their goals. One other critic also agrees. In the only treatment of Charleton's fiction to appear in the last twenty-five years, Helen Thompson asks: "Might it be possible to read Charleton's treatment of Epicureanism in *The Ephesian Matron* as the imagined application of materialist doctrine to romance?" (Thompson 197). Thompson's realm of inquiry is different from mine, however, because she is concerned to show how materialist doctrine gets carried through into the eighteenth century and the fiction of Eliza Haywood, while I want to emphasize the strategic advantage fiction provides to conceiving the issues in the mid-seventeenth century.

Both of these stories show how the natural philosophical concerns about appearance and probability get translated into narrative fiction. They also show the fluidity of disciplinary boundaries in this translation, and the interconnectedness of epistemology, scientific inquiry, gender ideology, and fiction. Discussions of the nature of the human soul and passions were relevant to both natural philosophy and moral philosophy, and both Cavendish and Charleton show the dependence of one on the other, and how these are also dependent upon ideas about gender.

3. Chapter Three: Huet's Plausible Historiography of the Novel

Chapter Three examines Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Lettre sur l'origine des Romans* (1670). Published as the preface to *Zayde*, Huet's *Lettre* presents a history of the novel that spans centuries and continents. It concludes with an argument about France's superior accomplishments in the genre, and why that should be so. Huet is best known for this argument, which rests on the assertion that women live in greater freedom in France than in any other nation in the world and that this is why the French excel in the art of the novel. While I attend to this as part of my thesis that ideas about gender are central to

theories of fiction, I also place Huet and the *Lettre* in a broader context of Huet's interests and intellectual engagements to argue that the theory of the *roman* he advances in the *Lettre* is informed by larger epistemological concerns. In the *Lettre*, the issues of fiction, history, and philosophy converge in ways that indicate their mutuality and strategic function, and ideas about gender inform these issues.

Huet's *Lettre* is an interesting case study because it treats fiction and history both as objects of analysis and as methods of inquiry. He gives us a history (method) of the novel (object), but he does so in a way that draws attention to the fictional aspects of his own narrative using the criterion of *vraisemblance* most forcefully not in his definition of the novel (object), but in convincing the reader of the truth of his historical narrative (method). History and *roman* emerge as opposing manifestations of "l'esprit romanesque," or an impulse to metaphor and narrative that is a universal component of human nature regardless of cultural sophistication, political temperament, or historical epoch. The *Lettre* concludes with the assertion that the glory of the nation and the King will be found not in official history but in the novel. Huet in this way has a more ambitious project with his conception of "l'esprit romanesque" than Timothy Reiss, who employs the term "fictive imagination" to "describe a capacity that is always and only visible in such practices particularized in specific cultural contexts under such names as *myth, mimesis, poetry, literature*" (Reiss, Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism xvi). Huet would include *history* in this list.

Huet's assertion that History is an expression of "l'esprit romanesque," and his argument that the *roman* provides the most effective path to both moral behavior and national glory are in conflict with another interpretation of the relative functions and roles of fiction and History. There are those who argue before Huet that the ideal and heroic models of behavior available in popular fiction do not have a morally improving effect.

Nicolas de Campion's preface to Alexandre de Campion's *Les hommes illustres* (1657), a collection of historical biographies, argues that fiction is unable to inculcate moral behavior not because fiction is lies, but because it is grounded in a misapprehension of human psychology:

En effet, on ne sçauroit nier que ce soin qu'ils ont eu de dépouiller la Fable de tout ce qu'elle avoit de lascif et deshoneste; cette Liberalité d'Honneurs et de Couronnes dont ils recompensent sans cesse la Vertu, avec d'autant plus de profusion, que leur Imagination en est une source inépuisable; cette rigoureuse Severité, qui ne laisse jamais le Vice impuny; ces honnestes et genereuses Bornes qu'ils mettent au Passions les plus violentes, ne fussent d'assez belles et utiles Leçons, à des Personnes dont les Sens, la Fortune et les Affections seroient aussi aisées à conduire, que la Plume dont ils écrivent ces belles Chimères. (quoted in Clarke, D., "Echoes of a Provincial Discussion of the Morality of the Novel: Pierre Corneille's Sonnet and Nicolas de Campion's Preface to Alexandre de Campion's *Les Hommes Illustres* (1657)" 326)

[In fact, it cannot be denied that this care they have taken to divest Fable from all that she had that was lascivious and unseemly; this liberality of honors and wreaths with which they ceaselessly reward virtue, that their imagination is an inexhaustible source of it; this rigorous severity, which never leaves vice unpunished; these respectable and generous limits that they put on the most violent passions, make beautiful and useful enough lessons only for those persons for whom sense, fortune, and affections would be as easy to guide, as the pen with which they write these lovely chimeras.]

These fables are only effective for those persons who already know the paths of virtue.

There are also those who make the argument that History is better able to provide examples worthy of emulation. Domna Stanton quotes Morvan de Bellegarde (*Lettres curieuses de littérature et de morale*, 1707) to argue that "History is upheld to the *magister vitae*, the preeminent source of moral knowledge" (Stanton, "The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*" 347):

Le but principal de l'Histoire est d'instruire, & d'inspirer aux hommes l'amour de la vertu, ou l'horreur du vice par les exemples qu'on leur propose. Ainsi la conclusion de l'Histoire doit toujours renfermer quelque trait de morale, qui affectionne à la vertu. (quoted in Stanton 358n17)

[The principle end of History is to instruct and to inspire in men the love of virtue, or the horror of vice by the examples they give. Thus the conclusion of History must always contain some moral outline that is fond of virtue.]

Huet takes an oppositional point of view to both Campion and Morvan de Bellegarde, arguing instead that fiction is the most effective source of moral instruction. He does this by minutely analyzing the way in which fiction works on the mind, and argues that fiction is a fundamental human reflex, common across geography and chronology. Huet brings moral philosophy and natural philosophy to bear on his history of the *roman*, and the *Lettre* is an example of a text that asserts the epistemological value of fiction in conversation with other modes of discourse.

4. Conclusion: Fontenelle's Fictional Marquise

The conclusion offers a reading of Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) and Aphra Behn's translation (1688), which looks specifically at those aspects Fontenelle himself identifies as fictional. Credited with popularizing Copernican cosmology and Cartesian concepts, Fontenelle's fictionalized conversations between a Marquise and a natural philosopher is another text in which fiction, epistemology, and gender intersect. Fontenelle claims that his invention of the Marquise serves a dual purpose: "J'ai crû que cette fiction me serviroit et à rendre l'Ouvrage plus susceptible d'agrément, et à encourager les Dames par l'exemple d'une Femme" (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 5). I analyze this dual nature of Fontenelle's fiction, and examine the way in which the Marquise's gender functions to endorse his projects. Operative in the *Entretiens* is a discussion of the dictum "plaire et instruire" that is illustrative of its participation in the epistemological network. Because this pedagogical project is figured by a woman, gender is implicated as well. Behn's interpretation and translation of the Marquise is instructive not just because it provides a comparative national context, but also because she specifically rejects Fontenelle's fiction of the Marquise.

This dissertation brings together a wide range of texts, fiction as well as theoretical elaborations of fiction, canonical as well as marginal writers. What ties these texts together is not only chronology and geography, but also their use of fiction as a way of exploring significant cultural issues. These texts are illustrative of a moment when fiction was seen as a useful tool in the interrogation and elaboration of epistemological concerns. Drawing on the scholarship of others whose narrative of the period posits a shift or crisis -- semiotic, historiographical, and scientific -- this dissertation looks at texts that treat fiction in relation to other concerns and problems. Thus the three chapters look at the epistemological function of fiction from different points of view, each attending to the way constructions of gender figure in the articulation.

An interesting obverse of my approach is available in George Levine's provocative essay "The Narrative of Scientific Epistemology." He focuses on the question of epistemology and argues that epistemological ideas are dependent on narrative. The dependence of epistemology on narrative for its expression "makes evident the moral urgencies underlying epistemological enterprises" (Levine 227), because narrative is always and inevitably implicated in ethical and moral choice. He looks at the narratives of method written by three significant scientific thinkers -- Bacon, Descartes, and Darwin -- and concludes that they share a model for scientific investigation which "is heroic self-humiliation: the seeker of natural knowledge submits to the blows of reality for the sake of the promised land of pure knowledge, human enrichment, and material progress" (233). This, he says, "confirm[s] the importance to Western science of narrative justification [... I]t is clear and even distinct that what might be seen as the theoretical foundations of Western science were established not through pure epistemology and method but through narrative constrained by ethical imperatives" (233-34). This argument, which denies the possibility of "pure epistemology" will be revisited in the conclusion to bring us back to the ways in which *fictional* narrative engages with epistemology, and how gender has a constitutive status in both epistemology and theories of fiction.

This dissertation begs the question of genre, or, what does this say about the rise of the novel? When I began this project, I imagined it attending to fiction through the eighteenth century. What became apparent, however, was that our understanding of literary history is dominated by the thesis that the rise of the novel is predicated on the demise of romance. This assumption limits the interpretation of mid-seventeenth-century fiction to arguments about texts as either continuous with the novel and “realism” or as radically discontinuous with the new modern genre. This dissertation attempts to read some seventeenth-century fictional texts without falling into a discussion of genre as it has been framed, or as the movement from romance to novel. I use the term “fiction” in order to avoid the teleological narrative the terms “romance” and “novel” conjure in readers, and am intentionally generically expansive in the texts I look at. This attempt is informed in part by Margaret Anne Doody’s *The True Story of the Novel*, in which she asserts that “the Novel as a form of literature in the West has a continuous history of about two thousand years” (1). She also agrees that “the concept of ‘Romance’ as distinct from ‘Novel’ has outworn its usefulness” (xvii).

Michael McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* also argues that our understanding of the rise of the novel has not adequately accounted for the persistence of romance and the preexistence of the novel (4). He acknowledges “the inadequacy of our theoretical distinction between ‘novel’ and ‘romance’” (3), and argues that a reformulation of the problem via the Marxian concepts of “simple abstraction” and dialectic will help us to understand the genre. In his view the novel was called into being by a specific set of cultural circumstances, and that the novel “attains its modern ‘institutional’ stability and coherence at this time because of its unrivaled power both to formulate, and to explain, a set of problems that are central to early modern experience” (20). My thesis complements McKeon’s in that I focus on texts that were able to formulate and explain central cultural concerns, but it diverges from his in that I am not

explaining or defining a genre. My argument about fiction and understanding of genre is more in line with Huet, who includes many different so-called genres under the rubric of *l'esprit poétique* or *romanesque*.

There is a difficulty in the use of terms to describe fiction in the period. With the English materials, the noun “novel” is not applied to fiction. If it is labeled, the preferred terms are “romance” or “history.” In France, there is much discussion about the “roman” (see Chapter One), and terms like “nouvelle” and “histoire” gain currency. The term *roman* persists, and there is no differentiation between “romance” and “novel” as there is in English. This makes translating *roman* a challenge, and for the most part I retain the French word. In Chapter Three, however, there are moments when I refer to Huet’s use of *roman* as either “fiction” or “novel,” indicating by fiction that Huet’s emphasis is on the universal human impulse, and by novel, the specific manifestation of the practice in France.

The texts explored in Chapter One are a mix of those that have received considerable critical attention -- like *La Princesse de Clèves* and *Oroonoko* -- and those that have not been significantly attended to -- like Scudéry’s preface and *Aretina*. They all, however, comment on the role of fiction (in the romance mode) in representing truth and knowledge. Looking at them together with an interest in how they present the idea of fiction using constructions of gender brings to light a different landscape that demonstrates a change in the epistemological value and function that fiction was seen to have.

Chapter Two analyzes two little-read fictional texts, one by Margaret Cavendish that uses conventional romance plotting and conventions, and another by Walter Charleton, whose literary model is satire. They are complementary texts because even though they deploy different modes of fiction, they both explore ideas current in natural philosophy in a fictional format, and their different interpretations and conclusions rest on their divergent constructions of gender. Even though these texts might be considered marginal, the themes they explore are not, and they are illustrative of the various and variable manifestations of the convergence of fiction, epistemology, and gender.

Chapter Three examines a text whose influence has long been acknowledged by literary historians, but that has received very little extended critical attention. Huet's treatise is important because not only is it an answer to the anti-*roman* and misogynist rhetoric of cultural critics like Boileau, but also because it engages with the same ideas current in natural philosophy that Charleton and Cavendish do. Huet's history of the *roman* brings together the questions of History, fiction, and natural philosophy in a narrative that depends upon a certain construction of gender.

The Conclusion analyzes a text that is important to the argument of this dissertation not only for its illustration of the convergence of fiction, epistemology, and gender, but also because it invites a comparative analysis thanks to Behn's comments on its function and translation. Each component of the dissertation illustrates how fiction staged the epistemological concerns of the period using constructions of gender.

Another way in which the three chapters and the texts involved work together is that they all engage the issue of *vraisemblance* or plausibility. Chapter One looks at the changing and variable significations of *vraisemblance* as a narrative imperative in relation to fiction's engagement with historical discourse. Chapter Two looks at standards of evidence and inductive versus deductive scientific method in two fictional narratives. Chapter Three looks at a text that brings together issues of *vraisemblance*, historical discourse, and the question of certainty. The Conclusion looks at a text that uses fictional constructs to elaborate scientific principles, drawing a parallel between fictional *vraisemblance* and scientific epistemology.

The three chapters all illustrate the thesis that in the mid-seventeenth century in France and England, theories of fiction were articulated that granted fiction a shifting epistemological status and that constructions of gender were central to these articulations. The argument is not cumulative, nor is the same heuristic employed in each. The first chapter draws the outlines of the shift in thinking about fiction as a mode of inquiry

granted significant epistemological status to a devaluation of fiction by defining it against History. The second chapter explores two English texts that allow fiction a certain authority and range to participate in and comment on the significant controversies in natural philosophy. The third chapter examines a history of the fictional form “roman” that illustrates the ambivalent function of fiction. The Conclusion discusses a text famous for its popularizing of scientific principles and theories that makes use of fiction to make its argument, and the translation of that same text into English. All show that fiction was not consistently opposed to other modes of discourse, but instead that fiction was utilized by and implicated in the deployment of other modes. The comparative nature of this dissertation does not mean that all terms line up neatly or that I argue that the story is the same on either side of the Channel. My aim is to demonstrate the unstable value of fiction by making legible its contact with other discourses.

Chapter 1

Fiction and History as Competing and Complementary Discourses

1. Introduction

[J]ay voulu que les fondemens de mon Ouvrage fussent historiques, mes principaux personnages marquez dans l'Histoire veritable, comme personnes illustres, & les guerres effectives. C'est sans doute par cette voye que l'on peut arriver à sa fin: Car lors que le mensonge & la verité sont confondus par une main adroite; l'esprit a peine à les démesler, & ne se porte pas aisément à détruire ce qui luy plaist.

-- Madeleine de Scudéry, preface to *Ibrahim, ou l'illustre Bassa* (1641)

I do not pretend, in giving you the History of this *Royal Slave*, to entertain my Reader with Adventures of a feign'd *Hero*, whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poet's pleasure; nor in relating the Truth, design to adorn it with any Accidents, but such as arrived in earnest to him: And it shall come simply into the World, recommended by its own proper Merits, and natural Intrigues; there being enough of Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the addition of Invention.

--Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave. A True History* (1688)

The quotations that are the epigraphs to this chapter are utterances separated by nearly fifty years, the English Channel, and an epistemological shift. To make the differences in chronology, geography, and epistemology more comprehensible is the aim of this chapter. The poetics outlined in Scudéry's preface to *Ibrahim* (1641) are part of a conversation about the nature and function of dramatic and poetic art, and Scudéry's preface is an attempt to include prose fiction in that conversation. The changing and contradictory meanings of the term *vraisemblance* which dominated literary debates in France from Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637) to Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) register the cultural and political struggles over what gets called truth and knowledge and what role fiction plays in their apprehension. Comparing Behn's assertion of historical accuracy and referential truth for her fiction with the poetics outlined in several works of fiction in the 1650s, culminating with George Mackenzie's *Arethina* (1660), also provides a parallel example in England of the changing epistemological status of fiction and the role of historical discourse in its construction and defense.

Both Scudéry and Behn position their narratives in relation to “true history.” Scudéry and her generation argue that *poesie* is superior to *histoire* because of the moral imperative of *vraisemblance*, which demands that the poet present things not as they are, but as they ought to be. Behn and her generation will argue that they are editors, journalists, memoir writers, and translators, and that their narratives are not “mere fiction” or “fancy,” but reliable sources for knowledge about the world because they are historically true and accurate in their referentiality. The discourses of history and fiction can be understood only in relation to each other, even as their relative authority shifts. The several meanings of *histoire* illustrate how the two modes of signification are linked: *Histoire* was understood to mean both “history” and “story,” both the objective content of episodes from the past, and the narrative form that that content takes. Writers of the later generation exploit this double meaning of *histoire* in ways that mark the epistemological ambiguity of fiction.

This epistemological ambiguity is also legible in the unstable meaning of *vraisemblance* or plausibility. April Alliston in a recent article discusses the role of *vraisemblance* in Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* and Behn’s *Oroonoko*. She argues that Lafayette’s use of *vraisemblance* in *La Princesse de Clèves* and Behn’s play with narrative authority in *Oroonoko* represent a critique of probability and evidence and that “for women authors on both sides of the Channel the notion of plausibility shared by their cultures inherently undermined the possibility of female authority in narrative” (Alliston, “Gender and the Rhetoric of Evidence in Early-Modern Historical Narratives” 237). While a critique of plausibility is also available to those who do not seek to address gender inequity, I agree that both of these authors exploit the epistemological uncertainty of fiction in order to question their societies’ ideology of gender and epistemology. Where I differ from Alliston is in my emphasis on this critique of plausibility and *vraisemblance* as dependent upon a shift from an understanding of *vraisemblance* as a representation of

things based on a cultural consensus of *devoir* to one informed by a skeptical standpoint that evaluates plausibility by standards of evidence.

The role of *vraisemblance* in this play between fiction and history over a generation is significant. As a literary ideal, *vraisemblance* comes to neoclassical theory from Horace and Aristotle, whose rediscovery in the sixteenth century¹⁹ revitalized literary theory, but, as Erica Harth notes, these concepts were

the locus of contradictions arising with modern application of ancient theory. From Aristotle's distinction between history as the description of what has happened and poetry as that of what might be, the moderns derived the moral idea of verisimilitude as the depiction of what ought to be. (Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* 27)

Harth and others²⁰ have argued that seventeenth-century critics erroneously conflate Aristotelian plausibility with the idea of *vraisemblance*, which carries with it a moral imperative and a rigidly prescriptive intention. That *le vraisemblable* was of a different order from *le vrai* or *la vérité* was recognized throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *le vraisemblable* being endowed with a greater moral purpose. Boileau emphasizes the difference between truth and the appearance of truth, privileging the latter:

Jamais au Spectateur n'offrez rien d'incroyable.
Le Vrai peut quelquefois n'estre pas vraisemblable.
(L'Art poétique, Canto III)

[Never offer the spectator anything unbelievable
The True can sometimes not be *vraisemblable*.]

Boileau's comments on the difference between *le vrai* and *le vraisemblable* are offered instead as positive advice to the poet. The poet has a different standard of truth from historicity, one that has not just an aesthetic, but a moral and political dimension.

¹⁹ Weinberg's *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* is the canonical work on the debate over Aristotle in the *cinquecento*. See also Javitch.

²⁰ See Phillips and Clarke, D. R., "Corneille's Differences with the Seventeenth-Century Doctrinaires Over the Moral Authority of the Poet".

The controversy surrounding Corneille's *Le Cid* is a good example of the relation between *vraisemblance* and the historical record, and what was thought to be the proper role of art. The tragicomedy *Le Cid*, based on historical events in Moorish Spain, generated a great deal of controversy and the commentary of such dramatic theorists as Scudéry, d'Aubignac, and Chapelain. The critics complained that the action of the play was *invraisemblable*. Scudéry puts it succinctly, linking *vraisemblance* to standards of female behavior: "Il est vrai que Chimène épousa le Cid, mais il n'est point vraisemblable qu'une fille d'honneur épouse le meurtrier de son père"²¹ [It is true that Chimène married the Cid, but it is not *vraisemblable* that an honorable maid would marry her father's murderer]. Chapelain, too, objects to such conduct, and the judgment that it is not consistent with *vraisemblance* is equivalent to the judgment that it is subversive. She does not act as a woman should, and the fact that such a woman is on display is dangerous. In the official response of the *Académie française* to *Le Cid*, published as *Les sentimens de L'Académie Française sur la tragi-comédie du Cid* (1638),²² Chapelain argues,

Les mauvais exemples sont contagieux, mesme sur les theatres; les feintes representations ne causent que trop de veritables crimes, et il y a grand peril à divertir le Peuple par des plaisirs qui peuvent produire un jour des douleurs publiques. Il nous faut bien garder d'accoustumer ny ses yeux ny ses oreilles à des actions qu'il doit ignorer, et de luy apprendre tantost la cruauté, et tantost la perfidie, si nous ne luy en apprenons en mesme temps la punition, et si au retour de ces spectacles il ne remporte du moins un peu de crainte parmy beaucoup de contentement. (quoted in Phillips 276)

[Bad examples are contagious, even in the theatre; feigned representations cause only too much real crime, and there is a great danger that to divert the people by their pleasure can one day produce public problems. We should be careful that neither our eyes nor our ears become accustomed to actions we should be ignorant of, and from which we learn the utmost cruelty and perfidy, if we don't learn from them at the same time punishment, and if on our return from the spectacle, it doesn't leave at least a little of the fear amidst the contentment.]

²¹ Quoted in Genette and Phillips.

²² The *Académie française* was founded in 1634 under Richelieu's guidance in order to establish and maintain standards for French language and literature. *Le Cid* was the first and only artistic work to receive the scrutiny of the Academy.

Because people are suggestible, it is expedient to show them things that will inculcate good behavior and proper feeling. It becomes a commonplace that art should represent things “comme elles doivent être” rather than “comme elles sont.”²³ *Vraisemblance* insists that things not just be probable, but morally correct, and this standard is determined by consensus. René Rapin in 1674 defines *le vraisemblable* as being “tout ce qui est conforme à l’opinion public” [all that conforms to public opinion] (Rapin 39).

Corneille defends his drama by appealing to the historical referentiality of the action. He concurs that drama should be probable -- the playwright needs to convince the audience in order to gain their sympathy and credulity -- but he contends that “Lorsque (les actions) sont vraies, il ne faut point se mettre en peine de la vraisemblance, elles n’ont point besoin de son secours.”²⁴ [When the actions are true [that is, are historically accurate], it is unnecessary to bother with *vraisemblance*, they don’t need its help.] Corneille is of a minority opinion. The dominant view is that art must serve the social and political aim of instructing viewers and readers in good and proper behavior. This is impossible to accomplish if the artist restricts representation to the historically true; the historical record shows that the bad are not always punished, and the good not always rewarded. As Chapelain puts it, “la vraisemblance [...] et non la vérité sert d’instrument au poète pour acheminer l’homme à la vertu” [*vraisemblance* [...] and not the truth serves as the poet’s instrument for guiding man to virtue] (quoted in Phillips 268). He also contends that “le vray [...] pourroit estre si estrange et si incroyable qu’ils refuseroient de s’en laisser persuader et de suivre leur guide sur sa seule foy” [the true [...] can be so

²³ Henry Phillips’s article, “Vraisemblance and Moral Instruction in Seventeenth-Century Dramatic Theory,” is a wealth of quotations indicating the maxim, including Chapelain, D’Aubignac, and Rapin. See also Mallinson.

²⁴ *2e Discours*. Quoted in Phillips 273.

strange and incredible that [the spectators] refuse to let themselves be persuaded and to follow their guide on his word alone] (quoted in Phillips 268).

More than one critic has remarked that the quarrel over *Le Cid* “deepens the ontological and epistemological aspects of the problem of art.”²⁵ The consequences of the debate continued to be felt throughout the century. Thomas DiPiero claims that “[a]lthough it is difficult to gauge what precise effect the Académie’s pronouncement had on fiction writers, there is a marked change in novelists’ attitude toward *vraisemblance* in their works after 1638” (DiPiero 81). Citing Desmaretz’s *Rosane* (1639) as a representative example of how fiction writers applied the lessons of the *Le Cid* debate to their own genre, DiPiero argues that “relying heavily on the verb *devoir* to establish a moral imperative for fiction, he also grants a persuasive function and endows it with a particular utility” (DiPiero 82). Scudéry in the preface to *Ibrahim* continues to be quite concerned to assert that her novel is *vraisemblant*. *Vraisemblance*, though, is deployed in multiple ways that have contradictory meanings. A close reading of the preface will show that Scudéry argues not only that the novelist, like the poet and the playwright, has a moral obligation tied to *vraisemblance* that historians do not, but also that the deployment of *vraisemblance* depends upon ideas about gender and owes its rhetorical force to constructions of femininity that are parallel to constructions of fiction.

2. Scudéry’s preface to *Ibrahim*

Madeleine de Scudéry was the most prolific and best-known writer of her time. Her salon²⁶ and her fiction were famously lampooned by Molière in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659) and repeatedly by Boileau in his *L’Art poétique* (1674), *Satire X* (1694),

²⁵ This phrase is Bergerhoff’s (7). See also Genette.

²⁶ For a discussion of salon culture and Madeleine de Scudéry, see Lougee and Goldsmith.

and *Dialogue des héros de roman* (ca 1666). While most renowned for her lengthy heroic novels *Ibrahim, ou l'Illustre Bassa* (5 vols. Antoine de Sommaville, 1641); *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* (10 vols. Augustin Corbé, 1649-1653); and *Clélie, Histoire romaine* (10 vols. Augustin Corbé, 1654-1660), Scudéry wrote in a variety of forms, including the shorter *nouvelle*, which saw a rising popularity after 1660.²⁷ Although Scudéry's multi-volume novels -- with their elaborate displays of courtship among the noble and virtuous and multiple intercalated tales and plot lines -- for the most part today remain unread, feminist scholars have demonstrated how some of her stylistic and narrative innovations were foundational for later fictional forms.²⁸ Joan DeJean argues that the novelistic conventions of dialogue and emphasis on character description and exploration of feeling and interior life are Scudéry's innovation: "The interpolation of conversations marked the first step in Scudéry's rejection of the action-oriented model for romance that she had inherited from her precursors and exploited in her first novel *Ibrahim* and earlier in *Artamène*" (DeJean 47). DeJean also credits Scudéry with the invention of a new model of fiction: "*Artamène*'s tenth volume signals the death of the *roman* (romance) and the inauguration of a new model for French prose fiction, feminocentric in content and oblique in narrative stance" (DeJean 48). Instead of being a repudiation of Scudéry, the *nouvelle* borrows and builds on her innovations. Scudéry remained popular and influential into the eighteenth century. She was popular in England, too, where her novels were quickly translated and she had the reputation of a "philosophical lady." Mary Astell cites her in her *Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), wishing "that English women would follow

²⁷ *Célimé, Nouvelle première* (1661) and *Mathilde d'Aguilar* (1667) are Scudéry's *nouvelles*. For discussions about the rise of the *nouvelle*, see Showalter, DiPiero, Bannister, and Aronson.

²⁸ See not only DeJean for a reevaluation of Scudéry's achievement and positive influence, but also Doody, Aronson, Donawerth, Jensen, and Hinds.

the lead of French ones and read Descartes [...] let therefore the famous Madame Dacier, Scudéry, etc. and our own incomparable Orinda [Katherine Philips], excite the emulation of the English Ladies” (quoted in Ezell, “The Politics of the Past: Restoration Women Writers on Women Reading History” 28). In 1671 she was the first woman to be honored by the Académie Française, and she received a royal pension in 1683.

Scudéry’s first heroic novel, *Ibrahim, ou l’illustre Bassa* (1641), is prefaced by a lengthy defense and explanation of her²⁹ method and purpose. Modeling her work on an interpretation of the rules for epic poetry, which she applies to the novel, she argues that *Ibrahim* conforms to the rules of *vraisemblance*. In the course of her preface it becomes clear, however, that there are many ways to approach and satisfy the rules, not all of them consistent with each other. In addition, the discussions and examples of *vraisemblance* are embedded in sexualized metaphors and conventional gender ideology.

She begins by appealing to the authority of the Greeks:

J’ay crû que pour dresser le plan de cet Ouvrage il falloit consulter les Grecs, qui ont esté nos premiers Maistres [...] J’ay donc vû dans ces fameux Romans de l’Antiquité, qu’à l’imitation du Poëme Epique, il y a une action principale, où toutes les autres sont attachées (Scudéry, “Ibrahim Preface” 80).

[I believed that to lay the ground work for this work, it was necessary to consult the Greeks, who were our first masters... I saw in those famous novels of Antiquity, that in the imitation of the Epic Poem, there is one principal action to which all others are fastened.]

Imitation of the Homeric epic poem is appropriate not only to narrative fiction in verse, but also in prose, or the *roman*, and she cites not only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but also Tasso and Heliodorus as examples of model fictions. Among the other literary

²⁹ While critical opinion generally attributes primary authorship of the novel to Madeleine, there is a consensus that Georges was responsible for the preface. I have found no documentary evidence for this opinion, and so am preferring to use “Scudéry” as a “corporate name.” I take the position of the author of the preface, whether it be Madeleine or Georges, to be representative of Madeleine’s own strategic position.

conventions with which she is at pains to show her conformity are beginning in medias res, and limiting the action to one year.

It is the rule of *vraisemblance*, however, that is the most important for a novelist:

Mais entre toutes les regles qu'il faut observer en la composition de ces Ouvrages, celle de la vray-semblance est sans doute la plus necessaire. Elle est comme la pierre fondamentale de ce bastiment; & ce n'est que sur elle qu'il subsiste. Sans elle rien ne peut toucher; sans elle rien ne sçauroit plaire (Scudéry, "Ibrahim Preface" 81).

[But among all the rules one must observe in the composition of these works, it is that of *vraisemblance* that is without a doubt the most necessary. It is like the foundation of the building, and it is only on this that it subsists. Without it nothing is able to touch the reader, without it nothing knows how to delight.]

Vraisemblance is necessary in order to move and compel the reader. Scudéry goes on to exploit the grammatical gender of "la vraisemblance," and shows how "cette charmante trompeuse" is responsible for the pleasure found in novels for "si cette charmante trompeuse ne deçoit l'esprit dans les Romans, cette espece de lecture le dégouste, au lieu de le divertir" [if this charming deceiver does not deceive the mind in novels, this kind of reading would disgust instead of divert] (Scudéry, "Ibrahim Preface" 81). It is from the seductive and deceptive nature of fiction that readers derive their diversion and pleasure. That *vraisemblance*, the necessary and foundational guide of fiction, is sexed as a seductive and deceptive woman shows how a concept of fiction is informed by parallel concepts of femininity. Anxiety about truth and deception, pleasure and disgust, and seduction and self-possession is staged in this quotation, structured by congruent anxieties about femininity.

The argument continues and elaborates one aspect of Scudéry's understanding and use of *vraisemblance*: in order to "donner plus de vray-semblance aux choses" [give more *vraisemblance* to things], Scudéry takes pains to make sure the fiction is grounded in "l'Histoire veritable" for "lors que le mensonge & la verité sont confondus par une main adroite; l'esprit a peine à les démesler, & ne se porte pas aisément à détruire ce qui lui

plaisir” [when lies and truth are combined by an adept hand, the mind has a hard time separating them and does not tend to destroy that which captivates it] (Scudéry, “Ibrahim Preface” 81). Because the reader’s pleasure depends on the *confusion* between truth and lies, it is necessary to ground the fiction in truth. Ambiguity is necessary. That is why Scudéry shuns the example of writers like Ariosto and avoids monsters and miracles and other “visions de la fièvre chaude” (81). “Pour moy,” she says, “je tiens que plus les aventures sont naturelles, plus elles donnent de satisfaction: & le cours ordinaire du soleil me semble plus merveilleux, que les étranges & funestes rayons des Cometes” [For me, I hold that the more natural the adventures are, the more they will give satisfaction: and the ordinary course of the sun seems more marvelous to me than the strange and deadly rays of comets] (82). While Scudéry renounces the example of Ariosto, she not surprisingly cites Tasso as a positive example.³⁰ Tasso, author of the Christian epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, outlines a poetics of narrative theory in his *Discorsi* that argues for the superiority of unity and decorum over romance *à la* Ariosto and rehabilitates narrative poetry to the epic and Horatian and Aristotelian rules. In his study of the French heroic romance between 1630 and 1650, Bannister argues that novelists like Scudéry were in fact attempting a similar rehabilitation of prose narrative. Writers of that generation, he avers, were forming a new genre, the prose epic:

For 10 or 15 years after *L’Astrée*, the novel had largely given itself over to tales of adventure, made up of fantastic and generally unconvincing intrigues with undistinguished characters. As a result, the status of the novel as literature had sunk low. However, the authors of the new heroic novels that came into vogue in the 1630s saw themselves as the creators of a new genre, the prose epic. They took a noted figure in history and constructed a main plot in which the hero faced a variety of challenges and threats while a series of *tiroirs* recounted the adventures of secondary characters. (Bannister, “Imagination et Jugement”: History and the Novel in Mid-Seventeenth-Century France” 23)

Bannister identifies historical referentiality as important to this new genre (as it was for

³⁰ For a discussion of Tasso’s literary theory and influence, see Rhu.

Tasso), and Scudéry also maintains that she wanted “les fondemens de mon Ouvrage [d’être] historiques, [les] principaux personnages marquez dans l’Histoire véritable” [the foundations of my work to be historical, the principle characters noted in true History] (Scudéry, “Ibrahim Preface” 81). The ability to convince is again in the ambiguity between fiction and the facts of history, not in their opposition.

For Scudéry, the soul of fiction is this ability, enabled by the artful mixing of truth and lie in order to captivate through pleasurable deception which can only be maintained if the reader’s credulity is not abused. Scudéry argues that she judiciously limits the use of accidents and excess “pour conserver le vray-semblable” (82). Although Scudéry, following Corneille’s defense of *Le Cid*, maintains that the historical foundation of the novel’s action guarantees its *vraisemblance*, she also acknowledges that a foundation in history and internal consistency of manners and norms are not sufficient to conform to *vraisemblance*: the writer must keep the audience in mind:

Il est hors de doute, que pour représenter la véritable ardeur héroïque, il faut luy faire exécuter quelque chose d’extraordinaire, comme par un transport de Héros, mais il ne faut pas continuer de cette sorte, parce qu’autrement ces actions incroyables dégènerent en contes ridicules, & ne touchent point l’esprit. (83)

[It is without a doubt, that in order to represent true heroic ardor, you must make him accomplish something extraordinary, such as the emotional transport of the hero, but one mustn’t continue in this vein, for otherwise the unbelievable actions degenerate into ridiculous stories, and fail to touch the mind.]

It is this “touching of the mind” that for Scudéry is most important, and where, in her technique for doing so, her novelistic style was most inventive and, ironically, susceptible to accusations of *invraisemblance*. For in order to move the reader, she argues that the novel and the effective representation of the hero must be judged “par les mouvements de son ame, et par les choses qu’il dit” [by the movements of his soul and by the things he says] (83). Her model in this regard is d’Urfé, and she pays homage to him, saying:

il est admirable par tout: il est fecond en inventions, & en inventions raisonnables: tout y est merveilleux, tout y est beau: & ce qui est le plus

important, tout y est naturel & vray-semblable. Mais entre tant de rares choses, celle que j'estime le plus, est qu'il sait toucher si delicatement les passions, qu'on peut appeller le Peintre de l'ame. Il va chercher dans le fond des coeurs les plus secrets sentimens; & dans la diversité des naturels qu'il represente, chacun trouve son portrait (83-84).

[he is admirable in every way: he is fertile in invention, and in reasonable invention; all is marvelous, all is beautiful: and most importantly, all is natural and *vraisemblable*. But among such rarities, that which I most esteem is that he knows how to so delicately stimulate the passions, so that one could call it the painting of the soul. He searches the depths of hearts for the most secret feelings, and in the diversity of characters that he represents, each finds his portrait.]

While *vraisemblance* is “sans doute” the necessary foundation of the novel, she also claims that

certainement il n'est rien de plus important, dans cette espece de composition, que d'imprimer fortement l'Idée, ou pour mieux dire, l'image des Heros en l'esprit de Lecteur; mais en façon qu'ils soient comme de sa connoissance: car c'est ce qui l'interesse en leur aventures, & de là que vient son plaisir. Or pour les faire connoistre parfaitement, il ne suffit pas de dire combien de fois ils ont fait naufrage, & combien de fois ils ont rencontré des voleurs: mais il faut faire juger par leur discours, quelles sont leurs inclinations. (84)

[certainly there is nothing more important, in this kind of composition, than to make a strong impression of the Idea, or to say it better, the image of the Heroes in the mind of the reader; but in such a way that they be known to him: for that is what interests him in their adventures, and from whence his pleasure comes. In order to know them perfectly, it is not enough to say how many times he was shipwrecked, and how many times he met robbers: but their inclinations must be made to be judged by their discourse.]

Scudéry claims that *vraisemblance* works on an entirely different level from “l'histoire véritable”: the representation of human emotions is necessary for *vraisemblance*, for it is through this that readers are moved and delighted.

Vraisemblance is operating on multiple levels: on the level of historical material, the “pierre fondamentale”; on the level of human emotion, whose delineation will move the reader; and on the level of conventional social mores, or system of expectations about how men and women should behave. She claims, addressing a male reader (lecteur) that:

je n'ai rien mis en mon Livre, que les Dames ne puissent lire sans baisser les yeux & sans rougir. Que si vous ne voyez pas mon Heros persecuté d'amour par des femmes, ce n'est pas qu'il ne fust aimable, & qu'il ne pust

estre aimé: mais c'est pour ne choquer point la bien-seance en la personne des Dames, & la vraisemblance en celle des hommes, qui rarement font les cruels, & qui n'y ont pas bonne grace. (84-85)

[I have put nothing in my book that Ladies cannot read without lowering their eyes or blushing. If you don't see my hero persecuted with love by women [for love of women?], it is not that he was not lovable or that he could not be loved: but it is in order not to contradict notions of *bienséance* in Ladies and *vraisemblance* in Gentlemen, who are rarely cruel to them, and who don't do it gracefully.]

The terms *bienséance* and *vraisemblance* were often used in tandem in literary criticism of the period. Rapin glosses the terms thus:

Outre toutes ces règles prises de la *Poétique* d'Aristote il y en a encore une dont Horace fait mention, à laquelle toutes les autres règles doivent s'assujettir, comme à la plus essentielle, qui est la bienséance. Sans elle les autres règles de la poésie sont fausses: parce qu'elle est le fondement le plus solide de cette vray-semblance qui est si essentielle à cet art. Car ce n'est que par la bienséance que la vray-semblance a son effet: tout devient vray-semblable, dès que la bienséance garde son caractère dans toutes ses circonstances. (Rapin 66)

[Moreover of all the rules taken from Aristotle's *Poetics*, there is another one which Horace mentions to which all the other rules must submit as the most essential, it is *bienséance*. Without it all the other rules of poetry are false: because it is the most solid foundation of this *vraisemblance* which is essential to this art. For it is only by *bienséance* that *vraisemblance* has its effect: all becomes *vraisemblable* when *bienséance* keeps its character in all circumstances.]

Bienséance and *vraisemblance* are understood in relation to each other and if *bienséance* is "la plus essentielle," *vraisemblance* is also "si essentielle."

For Scudéry, the blush appears as an index of female modesty, and the novelist is constrained to show what is probable and morally acceptable. The phrase "Heros persecuté d'amour par des femmes" leaves the question of agency open: is the hero's persecution self-inflicted or affected by women? The contrast between female "bienséance" and male "vraisemblance" is a division of labor based on gender that is intriguing but inscrutable given the interconnectedness of terms that Rapin is still struggling with thirty years later. What does seem clear is that Scudéry understands that "probable" and "morally acceptable" are relative, and that historically accurate

vraisemblance can come into conflict with the *vraisemblance* that demands conformity with contemporary tastes and mores. For example, she explains that when her characters address King Solomon in the familiar “tu,” it is not from a lack of respect, but rather “la coutume de ces peuples, qui parlent ainsi à leur Souverains” [the custom of these people, who speak thus to their sovereigns] (Scudéry, “Ibrahim Preface” 85).³¹

For Scudéry, as outlined in the *Ibrahim* preface, narrative fiction (beholden to *vraisemblance*) and *histoire* (the objective content of the past) are sometimes in opposition. *Histoire* (the narrative form that the content takes), however, also avails itself of the rhetorical and narrative techniques of fiction, to its credit. She censures those who

ne font qu'entasser aventures sur aventures, sans ornemens, & sans exciter les passions par les artifices de la Rhethorique [; ils] sont ennuyeux, en pensant estre plus divertissans. Cette narration seche & sans art est plus d'une vieille Chronique que d'un Roman: qui peut bien s'embellir de ces ornemens, puisque l'Histoire, toute severe & toute scrupuleuse qu'elle est, ne laisse pas de les employer. (83)

[only pile adventure on top of adventure, without ornament, and without stirring the passions by the artifices of rhetoric; they are boring, thinking that they are more entertaining. This dry narration, without art, is more like an old chronicle than a novel: which can well be embellished by those ornaments, seeing that History, as severe and as scrupulous as she is, doesn't forebear to employ them.]

If severe and scrupulous History can make use of narrative art and rhetoric, that surely authorizes fiction to do the same. In this light, History and fiction have a greater affinity than do History and the chronicle.

Scudéry here foreshadows the novelization of History that in the second half of the century becomes what Paul Hazard has termed the “crise de l'histoire” (Hazard 50) and that indicates the contemporaneous shift in the epistemological function of fiction.

Thomas DiPiero has pointed out that

³¹ This contradiction also illustrates to what extent language and narrative are politically charged: what does it mean to construct a world in the narrative fiction of a novel where sovereigns are addressed familiarly?

[t]his apposition of history and fiction had two significant results: first, it led to a critical examination of both genres and an interrogation of their differing political uses of similar narrative techniques. Second, it caused each to appropriate narrative techniques heretofore peculiar to the other, leading to curious new forms of fiction, in particular the *nouvelle* and the *mémoire*, both of which gained in popularity in the later years of the century. (DiPiero 63)

The cross-fertilization of fiction and History meant that the novelist could borrow from History, both in terms of subject matter and in terms of access to “the truth” that History was seen to convey as opposed to the lies of fiction. And the historian could borrow from the novel, in terms of certain formal narrative features like plot, portraits, speeches, and moral reflections. Historical and novelistic discourse both investigate the range of truth available to the other.³² Bannister argues that the period

contains a debate in literature about the function of the novel with novelists claiming to use history to present a moral view of life in a form accessible to a wide public and historians endeavoring to maintain the popularity of their art by borrowing techniques from other forms of literature. (Bannister, “‘Imagination et Jugement’: History and the Novel in Mid-Seventeenth-Century France” 20)

Many critics have addressed the shift from multi-volume heroic novels to shorter prose forms after 1660 in relation to the crisis in historical discourse during the same period.³³ Faith Beasley in her book-length study has argued that in order to account for “the complex relationship between history and fiction in seventeenth-century France and for the development of memoirs and novels, the relationship between women writers and these works at the intersection of history and fiction” (Beasley 4) must be examined. Women writers, she argues, consciously used fictional genres in order to construct alternative history. Erica Harth remarks that the writers of the *nouvelle* “interwove fiction and

³² Hayden White’s work on the narrativity of historical discourse is pertinent here, as is the work of Leo Braudy. See Works Cited list.

³³ Stanton, Hogg, and, Bannister, as well as Beasley and Harth, Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France discuss fiction as competing with historical discourse.

history in basic patterns that functioned to demystify history” (Harth, Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France 195). Critics have argued that the appointment of a tragic playwright and a satirist to the role of court historiographer (Racine and Boileau were appointed in 1677) signaled the devaluation of History,³⁴ not just in terms of a lack of confidence in the status of History as an archive of facts, but also on the level of narrative. I would put a slightly different point on it and argue that the appointment of Racine and Boileau as royal historiographers is entirely consistent with the desire of the state to produce official History that is flattering and persuasive. Who better than they? Instead of signaling the devaluation of History, it rather signals the acknowledgment that History is constructed and not given, and entirely crucial to state-building and policy. As the relationship between the discourses of fiction and History change, what becomes devalued is not historical discourse, but fictional discourse, which comes to insist on its lack of resemblance with the *roman*, and its continuity with historical truth and *Histoire*.

There is a confusion between “*histoire* as story and *Histoire* as history” (Stanton, “The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*” 339), or, in Beasley’s shorthand, *H’histoire*, that goes beyond the linguistic ambiguity. Additional confusion stems from the deliberate attempt by the novelists to blur the boundaries between fiction and history, public and private (already present in Scudéry’s assertion that “Car lors que le mensonge & la verité sont confondus par une main adroite; l’esprit a peine à les démesler, & ne se porte pas aisément à détruire ce qui luy plaist”). Fiction presented as documentary evidence calls into question official history and publicly

³⁴ See Harth, Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France: “Louis’s appointment in 1677 of Racine and Boileau as court historiographers was consistent with the devaluation of history” (153). Stanton, “The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*” argues that official history was discredited in the wake of the Fronde.

found documents, primary historical sources, instead of invented histories,³⁵ and the terms used to designate fiction become fluid³⁶ and multiple: *roman* is used to identify fiction primarily in satirical instances,³⁷ and designations such as *histoire*, *nouvelle*, and *mémoire*, with various and abundant qualifying adjectives like *galante* and *secrète* abound.³⁸

In *Les Nouvelles françaises* (1657), which ante-dates this trend of the repudiation of the term *roman* by about ten years, Segrais attempts to draw a critical generic distinction between *roman* and *nouvelle* by appealing to the difference between the obligations of a poet and a historian:

nous avons entrepris de raconter les choses comme elles sont, et non pas comme elles doivent être: Qu'au reste il me semble que c'est la différence qu'il y a entre le Roman et la Nouvelle; que le Roman écrit ces choses comme la bienséance le veut, et à la manière de Poète; mais que la Nouvelle doit un peu davantage tenir d'Histoire, et s'attacher plutôt à donner les images des choses comme d'ordinaire nous les voyons arriver, que comme notre imagination se les figure. (quoted in Showalter 23)

[we have tried to tell things as they are, and not as they ought to be: it seems to me that this is the difference between *le roman* and *la nouvelle*: that *le Roman* describes these things as the rules of propriety would have it and in the manner of a poet, but that *la Nouvelle* must remain a little closer to history and strive more to give images of things as we ordinarily see them happen than as our imagination conceives them.]

The novelist now has History rather than poetry as a model, and this is different from both Scudéry's insistence on *vraisemblance* and the dramatic theorists who, in censuring

³⁵ Showalter, too, makes this point. See p. 58.

³⁶ See Aronson, Chapco, Showalter, and Schulz (for an English perspective), for specific statements on the interchangeability of terms and lack of coherent rules and features that would serve to make a generic distinction.

³⁷ For example: Sorel's *Le berger extravagant, ou roman comique* (1627) and Furetière's *Roman bourgeois* (1666).

³⁸ The development of the secret history genre has been discussed by Stanton in reference to Villedieu's *Les Annales Galantes*, and by Hipp.

Corneille, affirmed that poetry had a moral obligation that superceded the merely historical.

La Calprenède offers another example of an author who is concerned to develop a theory of fiction that inscribes an idea of History and undermines the opposition between *roman* and *Histoire*. Along with d'Urfé and Scudéry, he was a major contributor to the multi-volume heroic novel. After a career as a playwright, he wrote *Cassandre* (10 vols, Paris, 1642-5), *Cléopâtre* (12 vols, Paris, 1646-57) and the unfinished *Faramond, ou l'Histoire de France* (4 vols, Paris, 1661-63). The preface "to the reader" in *Faramond's* first volume is another moment when fiction and History intermingle. La Calprenède contrasts his earlier *Cassandre* and *Cléopâtre* ("moins solides que divertissantes" (La Calprenède unpaginated) [less solid than diverting]) with his current project that is in "un genre d'écrire plus sérieux" [a more serious genre of writing]. But even his earlier works, he says, should not be called *romans*, but *histoires*. Boldly disparaging *Amadis* and "autres semblables," he remarks on his own work:

on ne leur a pas rendu justice dans le nom qu'on leur a donné, quoi que peut-estre ils ayent esté assez agreablement receus dans le monde, & qu'en lieu de les appeller des Romans, comme les Amadis, & autres semblables, dans lesquels il n'y a ny verité, ny vray-semblance, ny charte, ny chronologie, on les pourroit regarder comme des Histoires embellies de quelque invention, & qui par ces ornemens ne perdent peut-estre rien de leur beauté. (unpaginated)

[they are not done justice by the name which they are given, although perhaps they were well enough received in the world, and in place of calling them novels, like Amadis and other similar works, in which there is neither truth nor *vraisemblance* nor precedent nor chronology, they could be regarded as histories embellished by some invention and by these ornaments perhaps lose nothing of their beauty.]

He continues by stretching the nature of *la vérité*:

En effet je peux dire avec raison, que dans la Cassandre, ny dans la Cleopatre non seulement il n'y a rien contre la verité; quoi qu'il y ayt des choses au dela de la verité; mais qu'il n'y a aucun endroit, dans lequel on me puisse convaincre de mensonge, & que par toutes les circonstances de l'Histoire, je ne puisse soustenir pour veritable quand il me plaira. (unpaginated)

[In fact, I can rightly say that in *Cassandra* and *Cleopatra* not only is there nothing that contradicts the truth (although there are things that go beyond it) but that there is no place where one can convict me of lying, and in all historical circumstances, I could take for true when it pleased me.]

He claims that his *Cassandre* and *Cléopâtre* should be called histories and not novels, and then also claims for himself the standard poetic prerogative of contradicting history while maintaining truth. He is, in fact (as, he says, several intelligent people have said of him), “un homme mieux instruit des affaires de la Cour d’Auguste, & celle d’Alexandre, que ceux qui on simplement écrit leur Histoire” [a man better instructed in the affairs of the court of Augustus and Alexander than those who simply write their History.]. History is better told by a fiction writer than a historian.

The argument that a novelist is more historian than poet continues in the next decades. In his preface to *Les Nouvelles galantes, comiques, et tragiques* (1680), Donneau de Visé tells the reader:

Je ne doute point qu’on ne trouve dans quelques-unes de mes Nouvelles, des choses qui paroissent un peu contre la vray-semblance; mais le lecteur sera, s’il luy plaist, reflexion, que je ne suis pas Poëte dans cet Ouvrage, & que je suis Historien. Le Poëte doit s’attacher à la vray-semblance, & corriger la verité qui n’est pas vray-semblable. l’Historien au contraire ne doit rien écrire qui ne soit vray; & pourveu qu’il soit assuré de dire la verité, il ne doit point avoir d’égard à la vray-semblance. (de Visé A6r-v)

[I have no doubt that some things which appear to be a little bit contrary to *vraisemblance* will be found in my *Nouvelles*; but the reader will please reflect that I am not a poet in this work, but a historian. The poet must stick to *vraisemblance*, and correct the truth that is not *vraisemblable*. The historian, on the contrary, must write nothing that is not true; and provided that he is sure of telling the truth, he need not have a concern for *vraisemblance*.]³⁹

As Corneille tried to argue in the 1630s and ‘40s, de Visé more successfully relegates *vraisemblance* to the background. Fiction becomes aligned with history instead of opposed to it, and so is able to dispense with *vraisemblance*.

³⁹ Lennard Davis quotes the contemporary English translation (see page 33); mine is adapted from it.

Lafayette's writing also demonstrates the epistemological shift in thinking about fiction from a desire to keep fiction and History in separate spheres that grant fiction the realm of morality to a strategy for legitimizing fiction as a kind of History.⁴⁰ Her *La Princesse de Clèves* is often cited as one of the first novels (by those for whom the novel doesn't always first appear in England in the 1740s), and she is credited with being the inauguratrice of the *nouvelle* as opposed to the *roman*, and of exemplifying psychological realism in fiction. *La Princesse de Clèves* differed from the multi-volume *roman* in several ways: length (it was a modest four volumes); use of indirect discourse; and historical setting -- the action takes place, not in ancient Rome or Greece, but in France within recent memory, during the reign of Henri II (1547-59). Its resemblance to the longer *romans* is maintained through its use of intercalated tales and its narrative of love, which is shown to be the primary catalyst of politics. There was a storm of public debate about the work when it was published anonymously in 1678. The private correspondence of Bussy-Rabutin and his cousin Mme de Sevigné (June-July 1678) documents what some early readers were thinking, as does a series of special issues of *Le Mercure galant* (1678; edited by Donneau de Visé), which invited readers to express their opinion about whether wives should confess their passion for another man to their husbands. Two separate books devoted to critiques of the novel were also published: Valincour's two-volume *Lettres à Madame la Marquise de*** sur le sujet de La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), and *Conversations sur la critique de La Princesse de Clèves*, attributed to Charnes (1679). Most of the criticism was centered on the idea of *vraisemblance*, and looking at the

⁴⁰ Before Lafayette, though, Villedieu pioneered "the conception and consecration of *la nouvelle historique*" (Stanton, "The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*" 339), which as a genre offered "an implicit critique of (and corrective to) History's lacunae" (342). I work with Lafayette's text here because of the richness of the contemporary responses to it.

specific uses of the term in relation to the novel will illustrate the change in attitude to fiction since Scudéry's 1641 preface.

3. *La Princesse de Clèves*

Lafayette, too, reiterates Segrais' and La Calprenède's distinction between *roman* and *histoire* and, unlike Scudéry, defends the kind of fiction exemplified by *La Princesse de Clèves* as being close to History and not the *roman*. Fiction's merit lies not in its opposition to historical discourse, but in its similarity to it. While Lafayette always denied authorship, in a letter to Lescheraine on the merits of *La Princesse de Clèves*, she praises it in the following terms:

Je le trouve très agréable, bien écrit sans être extrêmement châtié, plein de choses d'une délicatesse admirable et qu'il faut même relire plus d'une fois. Et surtout, ce que j'y trouve, c'est une parfaite imitation du monde de la cour et de la manière dont on y vit. Il n'y a rien de romanesque et de grimé; aussi n'est-ce pas un roman: c'est proprement des mémoires et c'était, à ce que l'on m'a dit, le titre du livre, mais on l'a changé. (Laugaa 16n1)

[I find it very pleasing, well written without being extremely polished, full of things that are admirably delicate and that one must even reread more than once. And above all I find it a perfect imitation of the world of the court and the way people live there. There is nothing either romanesque or laborious about it; in fact it is not a novel; it is more properly a memoir, and that was, according to what I have been told, the title of the book, but it was changed.]

Lafayette wants to distance the merit that this *mémoire* has from anything *romanesque*. Its perfect imitation of life makes the appellation *roman* inaccurate and the occasion for protest. The short publisher's note at the beginning marks the work as an "histoire," and these three nominations, *roman*, *mémoire*, and *histoire*, all compete for authority. The themes that the novel investigates center around appearance and reality, dissimulation and truth, *vraisemblance* and *la vérité*. Both the novel itself and the extended contemporary cultural debate surrounding it illustrate the unstable significations of *vraisemblance* and the understanding of the purpose and value of fiction, and mark the distance from the

critical alignment of prose fiction with the ethical and aesthetic functions of poetry that were operative earlier in the century.

Bussy-Rabutin's objections to the novel revolve around his judgment that "[il] sent le roman." He asserts that "il n'est pas vraisemblable qu'une passion d'amour soit longtemps, dans un coeur, de même force que la vertu" [it is not *vraisemblable* that a feeling of love and desire would endure in one heart with the same force as virtue] (Laugaa 18). The princess's struggle is inconsistent with experience and usage, and is therefore *invraisemblable*; the constellation of coincidences that allows Nemours to overhear the princess's confession "n'est pas vraisemblable, et sent le roman" [it's not *vraisemblable*, and it smells of a novel] (18-19); and the narrative techniques employed, such as the use of indirect discourse that allows the author to explore the inner thoughts of characters also expose it as a *roman*: "Cela sent encore bien le roman, de faire parler les gens tout seules" [This smells again much like a novel, to make people speak to themselves] (19). Bussy-Rabutin's most prominent and pressing objection is to the confession the princess makes to her husband, and he objects not because this, too, "sent le roman," but because it does not conform to what he as a reader (and writer) of novels expects:

l'aveu de Mme de Clèves à son mari est extravagant, et ne se peut dire que dans une histoire véritable; mais quand on en fait une à plaisir, il est ridicule de donner à son héroïne un sentiment si extraordinaire. L'auteur, en le faisant, a plus songé à ne pas ressembler aux autres romans qu'à suivre le bon sens. (19)

[Mme de Clève's confession to her husband is extravagant, and can only be said in a true story; but when one makes up a story for pleasure, it is ridiculous to give such extraordinary feelings to one's heroine. In doing so the author was more concerned with not resembling other novels than with following common sense.]

He objects to the novel and the character of the princess not because, like Chimène, her actions are contrary to notions of ideal feminine virtue, but because they are contrary to common sense. Thus its formal features and devices draw attention to its fictionality, and

this is displeasing to the reader who would be deceived. With her husband dead, why should she deny herself the pleasure of a legitimately consummated passion with Nemours?⁴¹ What woman would make such a confession to her husband? Who in their right mind has conversations with themselves? For Bussy-Rabutin, *La Princesse de Clèves* is both too novelistic (“il sent le roman”) and not novelistic enough (“l’aveu ... ne se peut dire que dans une histoire véritable”). That he can hold such contradictory standards simultaneously emphasizes the precarious epistemological status of fiction that is emblematic of the period.

Valincour’s *Lettres à Madame la Marquise de*** sur le sujet de La Princesse de Clèves* also voices objections to the novel on the basis of *vraisemblance*. He reiterates other readers’ objections to the princess’s behavior, and he examines this behavior minutely. Thus the scene in which the prince de Clèves sees his future bride for the first time is judged lacking in *vraisemblance* because, according to the women who tell him so, no mother would allow her single daughter to pick out jewels by herself. It is the form of Valincour’s argument, however, that indicates most forcefully the epistemological status of fiction, and how tropes of femininity are deployed in its articulation. The criticism is presented as a series of letters from the author to the marquise ***, and Valincour exploits the conventions of epistolarity by drawing attention to the private and unintended exposure of the correspondence:

[C]ette lettre n’est que pour vous. Vous m’avez promis de ne la faire voir à personne. [...] Je vous ai tenu parole, en vous écrivant ce que vous désiriez de moi: tenez-la moi à votre tour, en ne publiant point mes Lettres, et surtout en ne me nommant point à celles de vos amies à qui je sais que vous ne vous empêcherez jamais de les montrer. (Laugaa 47)

[This letter is for you only. You have promised not to show this letter to anyone. [...] I gave you my word when you wrote me what you wanted. Give me yours then, and don’t publish my letters, at least don’t name me to

⁴¹ Others have made the answer to this question the basis for a feminist poetics that is a rewriting of female eroticism. See in particular Miller, “Empahsis Added”.

your women friends to whom I know that you will never forbear showing them.]

We suppose the temptation has been too great, and that the marquise has published the letters. Who could resist? The letters were written at the marquise's prompting, and their publication is predicated precisely on the author's modesty. Their publication is inevitable -- why otherwise would he extract a promise from a woman? Valincour exploits not just the letter form and its aura of privacy and hence illicit voyeurism, but the convention of anonymity, too. Like the novel the letters examine, they are published anonymously, and for some time they are attributed to the Bouhours.⁴² The publication of letters or manuscripts against the desire of the author is a topos in this period, and one that is shared by both female and male writers.⁴³ It can be attributed in part to real concerns about censorship and punishment, and the aristocratic unease with publication. But in Valincour's instance it also exploits an association of women with deceptive and pleasurable fiction.

The construction of the marquise as the addressee of the letters also exploits this association. Valincour proceeds with his critique of the novel by reporting conversations he has had with various learned and society members, sometimes reproducing the dialogue directly, sometimes narrating it. His interlocutors occasionally take a more extreme or permissive position than Valincour himself would take, but, throughout, the marquise remains an ideal reader of both the novel and his criticism of the novel. She is, as Williams also points out, an ideal reader not solely by virtue of her understanding of the terms of literary debate and her ability to appreciate other forms of narrative besides the novel; she is also an ideal reader because she is a *woman*, and Valincour inscribes her femininity in his

⁴² For an extensive examination of Valincour's literary and political career, see Williams, particularly chapter 3 "The Pleasures of Criticism" for his literary criticism.

⁴³ Ballaster comments on this convention in France and England. See pages 56-57.

criticism by making frequent reference to her as a reader of his letters, and at one point by specifically comparing her to the princess:

Vous ne connoissez pas ces mouvemens-là, Madame; & c'est pourquoy, je vous les fais remarquer en cet endroit, dont sans cela vous ne pourriez voir toute la beauté. J'y suis obligé par reconnoissance: c'est vous, qui m'avez appris à les sentir; il est bien juste que je vous apprenne au moins à les connoistre. (Valincour 17)

[You know no such feelings, Madame, and that is why I point them out to you in this passage, otherwise you might not notice all its beauty. I must do so out of gratitude, for you are the one who taught me to feel such emotions. It is fitting that I teach you at least to comprehend them.]

The ideal feminine reader doesn't comprehend the kind of disorder that comes from desire, but she is the cause of such disorder in men.⁴⁴ The marquise's ignorance of such sentiments is contrasted with the knowledge of the princess, whose emotional education is one of the themes of the novel. In fact, the innocent (and to Valincour, charming) ignorance Valincour attributes to the marquise is parallel to that of the princess in the face of her soon-to-be husband's ardor and his disappointment in her obvious indifference. He complains to her: "Je ne me trompe pas à votre rougeur [...] c'est un sentiment de modestie, et non pas un mouvement de votre coeur" [I am not misreading your blush [...] a feeling of modesty causes it and not a movement of your heart] (Lafayette 51). The princess can't conceive of the distinction he makes, nor what her heart's movement would look like:

Mlle de Chartres ne savait que répondre, et ces distinctions étaient au-dessus de ses connaissances. M. de Clèves ne voyait que trop combien elle était éloignée d'avoir pour lui des sentiments qui le pouvaient satisfaire, puisqu'il lui paraissait même qu'elle ne les entendait pas. (51)

[Mademoiselle de Chartres didn't know how to respond, and these distinctions were beyond her comprehension. M de Clèves saw only too well how far she was from having those feelings for him which would have satisfied him, since it appeared to him that she didn't even understand them.]

⁴⁴ An image of the sexualized woman reader gains ground in the eighteenth century. I am thinking of Rousseau's masturbating lady. See Miller, "Repairing the Tradition".

While Valincour plays upon the gulf between *sentir* and *connaître*, Lafayette emphasizes that before one can “avoir les sentiments” one must first “les entendre.” The way that Valincour and Lafayette play with this opposition between *sentir* and *connaître* is illustrative of the currency of concerns about knowledge and the difference between thinking and feeling, and which, if they are separate processes, is prior and causal.

The comparison between the marquise and the princess is not an idle one, and it foregrounds one of the terms of defense of the novel and criticism of Valincour brought by Charnes, to whom *Conversations sur la critique de La Princesse de Clèves* is attributed. Charnes defended the novel by attacking the fictionalized structure of Valincour’s critique, which includes the “fictional” marquise. His strategy is to draw attention to the constructed quality of Valincour’s text, thereby exposing him as a professional critic who is suspect and out of touch with what other readers expect and enjoy from their reading: “A quelques critiques et à quelque bizarre pres, il [cet ouvrage] a eu l’avantage de plaire tout le monde. C’est aux regles à s’accomoder au goût d’un siècle aussi poli que le nôtre” [With the exception of a few critics and eccentrics, this work has the advantage of captivating everyone. Rules must be adapted to the tastes of an age as refined as ours] (quoted in Goldsmith 36). Novels, particularly ones that the majority of readers enjoy and approve, should not be subjected to the artificial critique that Valincour writes. If Valincour, as his biographer notes, “turns for a model [for his critique] to the Académie’s criticism of *Le Cid*” (Williams 77), and thereby continues to judge fiction on its fidelity to the standards of epic poetry and the moral inflection of *vraisemblance*, Charnes argues that *La Princesse de Clèves* is representative of a new genre. This new genre is “l’histoire galante” and he characterizes it thus:

Ce ne sont pas de ces pures fictions, où l’imagination se donne une libre étendue, sans égard à la vérité. Ce ne sont pas aussi de celles où l’Auteur prend un sujet de l’histoire, pour embellir et le rendre agréable par ses inventions. C’en est une troisième espèce, dans laquelle, ou l’on invente un sujet, ou l’on en prend un qui ne soit pas universellement connu; et on

l'orne de plusieurs traits d'histoire, qui en appuient la vrai-semblance, et réveillent la curiosité et l'attention du Lecteur. (Laugaa 81)

[It is not pure fiction, where the imagination gives itself freedom without regard for the truth. It is also not one of those where the author takes a historical subject in order to embellish and render it pleasing by his own inventions. It is a third type, in which you invent a subject or take for one which is not universally known; and you adorn it with several historical facts, which gives it *vraisemblance* and arouses the curiosity and attention of the reader.]

This “troisième espèce” requires new rules⁴⁵ and Charnes takes Valincour to task for being too prescriptive and rigid in his criticism of the novel. His objection to the narrative techniques Valincour employs reminds us of Bussy-Rabutin’s objection to the narrative techniques that mark the novel. Objections to those techniques that inform novels, criticism, and history (Valincour was later named court historiographer as were Racine and Boileau), highlight the epistemological instability of those discourses. Two contradictory positions are present in these discussions: narrative is not allowed to draw attention to its own fictionality by having episodes and structures that contradict a reader’s expectations or expose its own constructedness; but adherence to *vraisemblance* requires a certain contortion of technique that enables narrative to conform to expectations of unity and transparency.

Lafayette’s novel itself rehearses these concerns, and stages the dilemma of *vraisemblance* and truth in fiction. Bussy-Rabutin suspects that Lafayette was more concerned with foiling readers’ expectations of a novel than with conforming to them, and this is part of his overall objection to the novel: “L’auteur, en le faisant, a plus songé à ne pas ressembler aux autres romans qu’à suivre le bon sens” [The author, in doing so, thought more of not resembling other novels than with following common sense] (18). He

⁴⁵ This is an argument that was used by Girdi and Pigna to defend Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1512) from critics who objected to its lack of conformity to their interpretation of rules of epic poetry. Girdi and Pigna argued that it was a manifestation of a new genre, the *romanzo*. See Javitch and Rhu.

sees this as a failure on the author's part. The plentiful moments in which Lafayette draws the reader's attention to the way her fiction is different from others and the way her characters' expectations of *vraisemblance* are frequently found to be mistaken, shadow the reader's expectations, and, instead of being a sign of its failure, are its genius. The novel is an illustration of the folly of judging by appearances. To be at court is to be surrounded by appearances that do not correspond to reality. The Queen and Nemours are early illustrations of the difficulty of making judgments and discerning the truth: "mais elle [la reine] avait une si profonde dissimulation qu'il était difficile de juger de ses sentiments" [but the queen was so profoundly adept at dissimulation that it was difficult to discern her feelings] (Lafayette 35) and "ainsi il [Nemours] avait plusieurs maîtresses, mais il était difficile de deviner celle qu'il aimait véritablement" [thus Nemours had several mistresses, but it was difficult to divine which one he truly loved] (37). Mme de Chartres' educational program for her daughter can be summed up thus: "Si vous jugez sur les apparences en ce lieu-ci [...] vous serez souvent trompée: ce qui paraît n'est presque jamais la vérité" [If you judge by appearances in this place ... you will often be mistaken: that which appears is nearly never the truth] (56).

The reader's attention is constantly drawn to the discontinuity between "l'apparence" and "la vérité," and similarly to moments when "la vraisemblance" is shown to be misleading and far from being an ideal criterion for judgment and action. In one telling example of the perils of putting credulity in what seems *vraisemblable*, the monarch himself is duped by *vraisemblance*. During a conversation about horoscopes and predictions the king says: "J'ai eu autrefois beaucoup de curiosité pour l'avenir [...] mais on m'a dit tant des choses fausses et si peu vraisemblables, que je suis demeuré convaincu que l'on ne peut rien savoir de véritable" [I used to have a great deal of curiosity in the future [...] but I have been told so many false and scarcely *vraisemblable* things that I live convinced that you can't know anything true] (87). While the second half of the statement

might be as true a statement as any, he comes to his skepticism because he has been told by an astrologer that he will be killed in duel, a fate which is improbable for a monarch. It does, however, come to pass, and the reader is led to consider that if truth and *vraisemblance* are not always continuous, neither is falsehood and *invraisemblance*. The King's experience is echoed by the princess after her famous confession and its subsequent repetition. Because she has heard her own extraordinary story repeated at court, she is forced to consider how it was made public: "elle trouvait également impossible que son mari eût parlé et qu'il n'eût pas parlé" [she found it equally impossible that her husband had spoken and that he hadn't spoken] (137), but appearances convince her to (incorrectly) accuse her husband: "et cette vraisemblance la déterminait à croire que M. de Clèves avait abusé de la confiance qu'elle avait en lui" [and that *vraisemblance* made her determined to believe that M. de Clèves had abused that trust that she had placed in him] (137). The princess is deceived by the *vraisemblance* of her own construction of events.

Vraisemblance is manipulated by the characters, and its lack is even used as an alibi by Mme de Clèves in order to avoid gossip about her confession. When the queen tells her the story she has heard about a woman's confession to her husband concerning her feelings for another man, the princess undermines its credibility by saying, "[c]ette histoire ne me paraît guère vraisemblable, madame [...] et je voudrais bien savoir qui vous l'a contée [this story seems hardly *vraisemblable* to me, madame [...] and I would really like to know who recounted it to you] (132). Both M. and Mme de Clèves conspire to construct the story as a tale or "fable," and M. de Clèves encourages his wife "de faire voire que l'histoire que l'on avait contée était une fable où elle n'avait aucune part" [to make it seem that the story that was told is a fable in which she played no role] (137). By having them emphasize the *invraisemblance* of the confession and making *that* the basis of their alibi -- that it is complete fiction with no historical precedent or actual referent -- Lafayette calls into question the relation between truth and fiction.

An elegant use of the intercalated story to reflect the themes of the main story also investigates the relation between belief and falsehood. The powerful and dissembling queen as presented in the vidame de Chartres's tale of his intrigues tells her lover: "Je le veux croire, repartit la reine, parce que je le souhaite" [I believe it, replied the queen, because I wish it] (105). The princess believes Nemours for the same reason: "comme on persuade aisément une vérité agréable, il convainquit Mme de Clèves qu'il n'avait point de part à cette lettre" [as a pleasing truth persuades more easily, he convinced Mme de Clèves that he had no part in that letter] (115). Belief follows desire and not the truth.⁴⁶

The *invraisemblance* of the *aveu* itself is almost obsessively pointed out by the main actors. The princess tells her husband (and the reader) "je vais vous faire un aveu que l'on n'a jamais fait à son mari" [I am going to make a confession to you that no wife has ever made to her husband] (122); after the fact, she continues her reflection that her confession is unprecedented:

Lorsque ce prince fut parti, que Mme de Clèves demeura seule, qu'elle regarda ce qu'elle venait de faire, elle en fut si épouvantée qu'à peine put-elle s'imaginer que ce fût une vérité [...] Elle se demandait pourquoi elle avait fait une chose si hasardeuse, et elle trouvait qu'elle s'y était engagée sans en avoir presque eu le dessein. La singularité d'un pareil aveu, dont elle ne trouvait point d'exemple, lui en faisait voir tout le péril. (125)

[When the prince was gone, when Mme de Clèves remained alone, when she reflected on what she had just done, she was so amazed that she had difficulty imagining that it was true [...] She asked herself why she had done such a hazardous thing, and she found that she had engaged upon it without having any plan. The singularity of such a confession, for which she found no example, made her see all its peril.]

⁴⁶ That the powerful queen is deceived by her own desires, and the princess's desire to believe Nemours is not in fact against "the truth" is a topic which deserves further exploration, but that should not diminish the argument here that credulity follows desire and not truth. There are to my knowledge only two instances where *vraisemblance* is consistent with the truth: the princess's belief in Nemours' involvement with the letter, and later when the prince is dying and finally (almost) believes his wife's protestations of innocence: "Elle lui parla avec tant d'assurance et la vérité se persuade si aisément lors même qu'elle n'est pas vraisemblable, que M. de Clèves fut presque convaincu de son innocence" (163).

Later, when she and her husband accuse each other of telling the story, she defends herself by saying “il n’y a point une autre femme capable de la même chose. Le hasard ne peut l’avoir inventer; on ne l’a jamais imaginée et cette pensée n’est jamais tombée dans une autre esprit que le mien” [there is no other woman capable of the same thing. Chance could not have invented it; you never imagined it and this thought never fell from another mind but my own] (136). Nemours, too, repeatedly reflects on the *invraisemblable* nature of the confession. At first, the confession is “une remède extraordinaire,”⁴⁷ but later its status shifts: “Il ne savait quasi si ce qu’il avait entendu n’était point un songe, tant il y trouvait peu de vraisemblance” [He no longer knew if what he had heard was not a dream, so little *vraisemblance* did he find there] (128). By drawing attention to moments when characters interpret and judge their own actions and those of the people around them according to *vraisemblance* and the disastrous consequences of so doing, Lafayette foregrounds the new problematic for fiction that defines the *vraisemblable* less by reference to an idea about *devoir* but more by ideas about standards of evidence.

Looked at together with Lafayette’s extra-textual assertion that “ce n’est pas un roman,” the internal discussion of *vraisemblance* illustrates the changing conception of fiction. Romanesque *vraisemblance* is no longer required, and, in fact, Lafayette’s use of the term in her own fiction highlights the problematics of the concept -- even if things seem *invraisemblable*, it doesn’t alter the truth (in a narrative sense) of them. Characters in the novel, foreshadowing the readers of the novel, call the *aveu* “invraisemblable,” but it is a narrated event. That Lafayette has her own characters draw attention to the problem is more than a strategy for diffusing criticism: it reflects the engagement with questions of

⁴⁷“qu’il ne peut s’imaginer qu’il eût donné une passion qui devait être bien violente pour avoir recours à un remède si extraordinaire” (124) and “il était impossible d’engager une personne qui avait recours à un remède si extraordinaire” (125).

truth and fiction and an interest in interrogating the boundary between the two within a context that investigates feminine exemplarity, all of which mark the epistemological shift.

4. England

The movement seen in France, from a defense of fiction in terms of its ability to convey moral truths that History cannot to a defense of fiction in terms of its being *not* “romanesque” but historically true, is also visible in England in the same period. English fiction in the first sixty or seventy years of the seventeenth century was dominated by reprints of sixteenth-century fictions -- *Arcadia*, *Euphues*, *Pandosto* -- and by translations from other languages -- Italian, Spanish, and most importantly and profusely, French.⁴⁸ The literary commerce between France and England was mostly one-sided, and translations of French materials outpaced translation the other way. Unfortunately, scholarship in this area has been slim, and there is no comprehensive cliometric tabulation or analysis of translations. It wasn't until Richardson that the French began translating English fiction. However, many works of theology and natural philosophy were written in Latin by both English and French authors, and so translation statistics would not provide a full picture of intellectual exchange between France and England.⁴⁹ Charles Mish argues that seventeenth-century English fiction did not live up to the potential suggested by the flowering of Elizabethan fiction, and that “[w]hat might have been a vital kind of writing sank into a sort of exercise in futility” (Mish vii). Contemporaries, too, remarked on the lack of original fiction available in England. The preface to *Cloria and Narcissus* (1653)

⁴⁸ See Baldner and Haviland for bibliographical research via printer's registers, library catalogues, and bookseller records.

⁴⁹ See Simon for a discussion of critical terms in Restoration translations from the French. A recently published volume, *La Traduction des langues modernes au XVIIIe ou "La Dernière Chemise de l'amour"* is not yet available, but might speak to this issue, although its topic seems to be eighteenth century.

laments that “for many years past, not any one Romance hath been written in the English tounge; when as daily from other Nations so many of all sorts fly into the world to be seen” (unpaginated). Mish goes on to assert that

[n]ot until halfway through the Restoration period did that new impetus so badly needed come to revive English fiction and to take it out of the doldrums. The new animating spirit when it arrived came from France; under the influence of translations and imitations of French short fiction English fiction found itself transformed. (Mish vii)

Mish is correct in noting that something happens to English fiction around 1670;⁵⁰ this is when, as in France, fictions begin asserting their difference from romance and insisting upon their referential and not poetic or allegorical “truth.” Lennard Davis also remarks on the similarities between French and English defenses of fiction at this point, noting that “[l]ike French novelists, the English distinguished between novel and romance by noting that novels were not made up or based on remote history, but were true” (Davis, L. J., Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel 104). But before the fictionality of these narratives was denied, England, like France, developed arguments for the superiority of fiction for mediating reality, relying on the traditional opposition between historical and fictional discourse that also exploited and informed constructions of gender.

William Davenant⁵¹ articulates the basic and familiar argument that poetry has a different function from History in his *Preface to Gondibert* (1650),⁵² an extended defense

⁵⁰ He goes on to attribute this change in a vague manner to the importation of *vraisemblance*, a concept that, as I hope is clear, had various interpretations and applications.

⁵¹ Davenant, like a great number of fiction writers in France and England throughout the century, had started (and would return to) writing for the stage. Others include, in France: Cyrano, Gombauld, La Calprenède, Merschal, Scarron, Scudéry, Tristan L’Hermite, Theophile de Viau, Villedieu, d’Aubignac, Barbier, Bernard. And in England: Nicholas Breton, Dekker, Deloney, Greene, Thomas Lodge, Lyly, George Peele, Baron, Boyle, Cavendish, Francis Kirkman, Settle, Behn, Congreve, Centlivre, Pix. For a discussion of the drama and the novel, see Zimbaro.

of fiction that argues for the superiority of a poet's fictions over a historian's Truth. Although Davenant uses the vocabulary of poetry and not prose fiction, his arguments imply and are consistent with the assumption that poetry is fictional discourse and encompasses a wide range of forms and practitioners, including Demosthenes, Agrippa, and Jesus's parables as well as Homer, Virgil, Tasso, and Spenser. Davenant's main contribution to the debate over the nature and utility of fiction is his argument that Poetry (story, fiction) is superior to History for its ability to inspire imitation and create obedient subjects. The poet serves a greater political and cultural function than statesmen or military men because "to make great actions credible is the principall Art of Poets" (Davenant 11) and, "contriving the lastingnesse of Government [...] is the principall worke of Art" (40). For Davenant, the poet is the key to successful governance.

Poetry has an essential and conservative role to play; it is to govern people's manners and make them content with government.⁵³ Insinuating poetry is better able to do this than coercive force, Davenant employs gendered metaphors of sexual conquest to make his argument. He contends that brute authority cannot be the basis for effective and long-term government, because force can never constrain people's minds, and it is precisely the minds of the people that need constraining in order for government to work. He argues:

⁵² The *Preface*, dedicated to Thomas Hobbes, was published without the poem but with a reply from Hobbes in Paris in 1650. Designed to be based on the dramatic five-act form, the first three books came out in 1651, and the remaining two were never written (Gladish ix).

⁵³ Timothy J. Reiss asserts that Davenant's "conclusion that the most important socio-political role is in fact played by the poet" (Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* 152) is typical of what he calls the dominant analytico-referential discourse, whose hegemony began in the seventeenth century and continues to today. His analysis of Davenant is also available in "Power, Poetry, and the Resemblance of Nature."

Because the subject they [Poets] should worke is the Minde; and the Minde can never be constrain'd, though it may be gain'd by Persuasion: And since Persuasion is the principall Instrument which can bring to fashion the brittle and misshapen mettall of the Minde, none are so fitt aides to this important worke as Poets. (38)

The persuasion employed by Poets is superior because it is effective. It is effective because it works on reason:

But the persuasions of Poesy in stead of menaces, are Harmonious and delightful insinuations, and never any constraint; unlesse *the ravishment of Reason* may be call'd Force. And such Force, (contrary to that which *Divines, Commanders, Statesmen, and Lawyers* use) begets such obedience as is never wearied or griev'd. (38; first emphasis mine)

The persuasions of Poetry result in the ravishment of reason, which becomes willingly and untiredly obedient. Davenant expands the metaphor of sexual conquest by likening poetic force to a husband's prerogative:

when the minde is conquered, like a willing Bride, Force should so behave it selfe, as noble Husbands use their power; that is, by letting their Wives see the Dignity and prerogative of our Sex (which is the Husbands harmlesse conquest of Peace) continually maintain'd to hinder Disobedience, rather than rigorously impose Duty: But to such an easy government, neither the People (which are subjects to Kings and States) nor Wives (which are subject to Husbands) can peacefully yield, unlesse they are first conquer'd by Vertue; and the Conquests of Vertue be never easy, but where her forces are commanded by Poets. (39)

Virtue is able to make wives yield to husbands,⁵⁴ and, when commanded by Poets, make People yield to Kings and States.

A poet is only able to accomplish this by maintaining his difference from the role of the historian. While cataloging the shortcomings of other poets, Davenant singles out Lucan, who was a model for Republican writers and therefore a target of the royalist Davenant.⁵⁵ Even though the choice is politically motivated, the terms on which Davenant

⁵⁴ See Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* for analysis of the cultural and political life of the analogy between state and household.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of Lucan's *Pharsalia* as a Republican literary model, see Norbrook and Quint.

bases his objections are important. Davenant asserts that Lucan's subject matter and method are more suitable to a Historian than a Poet:

Lucan who chose to write the greatest actions that ever were allow'd to be true (which for feare of contemporary witnesses, oblig'd him to a very close attendance upon Fame) did not observe that such an enterprize rather beseem'd an Historian then a Poet: for wise Poets think it more worthy to seeke out truth in the passions, then to record the truth of actions; and practise to describe Mankinde just as wee are persuaded or guided by instinct, not particular persons, as they are lifted, or levell'd by the force of Fate, it being nobler to contemplate the generall History of Nature, then a selected Diary of Fortune. (4-5)

Davenant sets up a series of oppositions: Historian versus Poet, truth in the actions versus truth in the passions, Diary of Fortune versus "generall History of Nature." The rules of poetry allow for a more "noble" contemplation, but it is necessary that his readers have knowledge of these rules in order to "preserve [him] from their improper examinations who know not the requisites of a Poem, nor how much pleasure they lose [...] who take away the liberty of the Poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of an Historian" (10). The truth conveyed by the poet serves a greater purpose than that of the historian. Davenant continues:

For why should a Poet doubt in Story to mend the intrigues of Fortune by more delightfull conveyances of probable fictions, because austere Historians have enter'd into bond to truth? an obligation which were in Poets, as fooling and unnecessary as in the bondage of false Martyrs, who lye in chaines for a mistaken opinion: But by this I would imply, that Truth narrative, and past, as the Idoll of Historians, (who worship a dead thing) and truth operative, and by effects continually alive, is the Mistresse of Poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason. (10-11)

Truth narrative, a "dead thing," worshipped by Historians, is inferior to the "Mistresse of Poets," truth operative, continually alive, and is aligned with reason and not gross matter. The alliance between Poetry (which encompasses Story and probable fiction) and reason is another indication of Poetry's superior cultural and aesthetic function.

That cultural function is to make great actions credible and so inspire imitation.

Davenant echoes Scudéry in the following description of how a poet combines truth and fiction:

But to make great actions credible is the principall Art of Poets; who though they avouch the utility of Fictions, should not (by altering and subliming Story) make use of their Priviledge to the detriment of the Reader: whose incredulity (when things are not represented in proportion) doth much allay the relish of his pittie, hope, joy, and other Passions: For wee may descend to compare the deceptions in Poesy to those of them that professe dexterity of Hand, which resembles Conjuring, and to such we come not with the intention of *Lawyers*, to examine the evidence of the facts, but are content (if wee like the carriage of their feign'd motion) to pay for being well deceiv'd. (11)

Deception is a necessary part of the Art of Poetry, and the audience is content to accept that. The operative truth of fiction, as opposed to the narrative truth of the historian, makes use of deception, and is evidence of the underlying epistemological argument that fiction is defensible not in spite of its distance from historical discourse, but because of it.

The political role of poetry described by Davenant is extended to other modes of fiction, including the romance. Annabel Patterson argues that writers and translators of fiction during the Protectorate transformed the function of fiction: "From being an attractive but untrustworthy alternative to the serious, romance itself came to be redefined as serious, as a way of perceiving history and even a means of influencing it" (Patterson 168).⁵⁶ The heroic fiction of La Calprenède and Scudéry became a way for royalists in England to interpret recent historical events and to consolidate sympathy for the exiled and then beheaded king (Patterson 188). In this context, English defenses of fiction differ from the French, which are their models, because instead of basing the defense on re-evaluations and definitions of *vraisemblance*, they emphasize the ambiguous nature of fiction,⁵⁷ and the ineffectiveness of historical discourse to represent either the Truth or to

⁵⁶ Although fiction and romance are not identical terms, my consistent argument throughout is that the term "fiction" encompasses many genres, of which romance is one. Therefore my drawing an equivalence between fiction and Patterson's "romance" is justified.

⁵⁷ Although Patterson's broad argument in *Censorship and Interpretation* is that writers employed "functional ambiguity" in a variety of discourses, she does not make the specific argument that I make here.

inspire imitation.

As Patterson suggests, the political and cultural upheaval of the 1650s was the basis for the privileging of romance over History for English writers and translators of fiction. In the preface to his translation of La Calprenède's *Cassandra* (1652), Sir Charles Cotterell explains to his readers why the story, set during the Persian Wars, is relevant to them:

Yet neither can the strange successes of the Graecian Conqueror, the fatal destruction of the Persian Monarchy, the deplorable end of unfortunate Darius, the afflicted estate of his Royal Family in exile and Captivity, the easie compliance of his subjects with the prevailing Party, nor any other passage in it seem improbable to us, whose eyes have in as short a space, been witnesses of such Revolutions, as hardly any Romance, but sure no History can parallel. (quoted in Patterson 197-98)

While *Cassandra* may have been judged improbable by English readers before the events of the English Civil War, recent experience has rendered Romance more effective and appropriate than History for representing this experience because it can be read allegorically. The preface to the 1653 translation of Scudéry's *Artamène* has another variation on this theme:

Designs of War and Peace are better hinted and cut open by a Romance, than by downright Histories; which, being bare-fac'd, are forced to be often too modest and sparing; when these disguiz'd Discourses, freely personating every man and no man, have liberty to speak out. (quoted in Patterson 197)

Romance, a kind of disguised discourse, offers the opportunity for oppositional speech that would be dangerous in historical discourse. Fiction is privileged over historical discourse by these royalists⁵⁸ because of its ambiguous epistemological status. The preface to Roger Boyle's *Parthenissa* (1655) includes an analysis of the epistemological function of History and fiction that argues for the superiority of fiction in providing knowledge. He begins by discrediting written histories:

⁵⁸ That defenses of fiction come primarily from royalist writers into the Restoration is an interesting circumstance, and one that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Though many Historyans, write the same History, yet they write not the same things; now it being impossible that there should be but one Truth, 'tis as impossible that those Disagreeing writers should all write that Truth; which cleerly evinces, that Historyes are for the most Part but mixt Romances (Boyle unpaginated).

Because historical discourse can represent the same historical events in disparate ways,⁵⁹ Boyle concludes that written histories are hybrid romances, or fictions. His judgment is based on his assumption that Romance and Truth are in opposition. This does not lead him to conclude, however, that Romance is a degraded or degrading form. He goes on to assert:

and yet the Pure Romance Part, may be as Instructive as, if not more than, the Historically, since 'tis not the Truth of a wise Councell, or Ingenious Designe which invites Men to an imitation thereof, but the Rationallity and Probability of it, whither it be reall or Imaginary. (unpaginated)

The political and cultural upheaval of the Civil War expanded the understanding of what was probable, as well as made the apprehension of the Truth impossible. Romance is better able than Truth to instruct.

4.1. Mackenzie's *Aretina*

In England fiction continues to be defended on these terms into the 1660s. George Mackenzie, another royalist, who, like Cotterell, also wrote historical accounts of events during the Civil War, asserts the superiority of fiction in moral and epistemological terms. He argues

I am confident, that Where Romances are Written by excellent Wits, and perused by intelligent Readers, that the judgement may pick more sound information from them, then from History, for the one teacheth us onely what was done, and the other what should be done. (Mackenzie, 6-7)

Repeating the French distinction between things "comme elles sont" and "comme elles

⁵⁹ For discussion of Civil War historiography, see Smith, N., Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660; Norbrook and McKeon (69 passim). A comparative analysis of the effects of the Fronde and the English Civil War on historiography is needed.

doivent être,” Mackenzie amplifies the moral imperative of fiction and personifies virtue as female:

whereas Romances presents to us, vertue in its holy-day robes, History presents her only to us in these ordinary, and spotted sutes which she weares whilst she is busied in her servile, and lucrative employments: and as many would be incited to vertue and generosity, by reading in Romances, how much it hath been honoured; So contrary wise, many are dettered by historical experience from being vertuous, knowing that it hath been oftner punished then acknowledged. (7)

Romance enjoys a greater moral authority than History because it is more likely to inspire imitation and virtuous behavior than history, in which virtue is no guarantee of reward.

Romance also has a superior epistemological status because romances are not implicated in biased accounting. Mackenzie says that “Romances are the vessels which strain the christal streams of vertue from the puddle of interest; whereas history suffers the memory to quaff them in their mixt impuritie” (7). History and fiction are epistemologically opposed.

Fiction in the romance mode is not only superior to history, it also is the mode best able to convey the truths of “moral Philosophy”:

albeit essayes be the choicest Pearls in the Jewel house of moral Philosophy, yet I ever thought that they were set off to the best advantage, and appeared with the greatest lustre, when they were laced upon a Romance[.] (7)

The essay is unable to set moral philosophy off to its best advantage. Moral philosophy in a fictional mode is appropriate because it is the most effective in engaging the reader:

so the curiosity might be satisfied, as well as the judgement informed, especially in this age wherein the appetit of mens judgements is become so queasie, that it can relish nothing that is not either vinegared with Satyres, or sugared with Eloquence. (7-8)

Because the reader “in this age” is so spoiled and jaded, romance is particularly suited to the tastes of the day.

This rather cynical assessment of the reader and the appeal of fiction indicates that Mackenzie does have some criticism of romance. He maintains that the first writers of

romance, such as the author of *Amadis de Gaule*, erred in that “they stuffed their books with things impracticable, which because they were above the reach of man’s power, they should never have fallen within the circle of his observation” (8). More contemporary writers have made errors in style, and Mackenzie notes four different styles that will be contrasted with the approach he will take. The first is “the university style,” exemplified by Thomas Browne and Walter Charleton, which is at best “bastard oratory.” The second is that of moral philosophers, “where the periods are short and the sense strong,” and which is best suited to preachers. The third style belongs to the barristers, and Mackenzie says that it is “the most preferable,” lawyers having learned to argue from reason.

The fourth style he criticizes is that “where the cadence is sweet, and the epithets well adapted, without any other varnish whatsoever” (10). This style is “used at Court, and is patterned to us by eloquent *Scuderie*.” Most commonly associated with heroic romance and so the kind of style Mackenzie’s own readers are used to in fiction, his flattering description descends into mockery, however, when he gossips with the reader:

I hear there is now a ridiculous caball of Ladies at *Paris*, who terme themselves the precious, and who paraphrase every thing they speak of, terming a mirrour, the counselour of beauty, and a chair, the commoditie of conversation, &c. And thus they have progressed from painting of faces to paint expressions. (10)

Mackenzie is anxious to distinguish his fictional style from that of the caricature of the *précieuses*, which was successfully launched by Molière in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659). Domna Stanton has analyzed the mythic life of the notion of “preciosity” as a literary impulse and its dependence upon the fear of women.⁶⁰ Mackenzie seems to be an early adopter of this myth that connects what is purported to be a literary style with misogyny. He talks about Scudéry and moves on to the *précieuses* as abusers of language and asserts that “it was to form to myself a style that I undertook this Piece.” Mackenzie,

⁶⁰ See her “The Fiction of *Préciosité* and the Fear of Women.”

however, declines to elaborate on what his style is exactly or how it differs from any of the four he identifies.

Mackenzie's 1660 preface is one of the last to defend fiction by its opposition to History. As in France, defenders of fiction soon abandon the opposition of romance and History, and assert that their narratives are neither fictitious nor romance, but historically true. In 1692 John Bentley published *Modern Novels*, a collection in twelve volumes of more than three dozen novels originally published between 1670 and 1692. Most of them were translations from the French, and those that included a preface denied their fictional nature and asserted their "truth." The author of *Casimir* assures the reader that

you will find but little of Fiction or Romances and therefore cannot pretend to meet with that delicate turne of Thought and of Expression that might be expected in a piece that depended wholly, or principally upon fancy. Yet the Naked truth has such charmes, as I hope will more than countervail for that disadvantage. (Bentley, Vol II, unpaginated)

The author is apologetic and deferential (though perhaps ironically) to the fiction that fancy produces. Such deference disappears, however, from later apologies. The preface to *The Amorous Conquests of the Great Alcander, or, the Amours of the French King, and Madam Montespan* (1685) begins: "Although these Memoirs seem to have very much of the Air of a Romance, yet there are very few that are more true" (Bentley, Vol XI, unpaginated). In the preface to *The Cabinet Open'd, or the Secret History of the Amours of Madam de Maintenon, with the French King* (1690) the author tells the reader that they are memoirs, and that

altho' several persons, having wrote upon the like subjects, have deliver'd nothing but pure Romance, nevertheless what I have Wrote is an unquestionable truth; for the better part of the Memoires, from whence this Little History is drawn, came out of the Cabinet of Madam de Maintenon, and were partly written in her own Hand. (Bentley, vol XI, unpaginated)

Fiction is no longer allied with Poetry and the greater moral and cultural use ascribed to it by Davenant, Mackenzie, and Scudéry. The reader is no longer cajoled with arguments about the universal truths of humanity inscribed, but rather with assurances of eyewitness accounts and naked truth displayed with all her charms.

4.2. Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*

*Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave. A True History*⁶¹ (1688) is a complex example of this movement, because, as in Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, the themes of truth and falsehood, dissimulation and belief, are investigated on the level of narrative, and the epistemological status of fiction and History is one of its concerns. Rosalind Ballaster agrees that *Oroonoko* "mediates obsessively upon the seductive power and unstable status of fictional writing in relation to the simple dichotomy of truth and lie" (Ballaster, "New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*; The Body, the Text, and the Feminist Critic" 293) and Lennard Davis, too, makes this point: "fiction-making and lying are central to the work" (Davis, L. J., *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* 110). Behn's facile use of different types of narratives in this novel point to the confusion between historical and fictional discourse, and the uses to which such a confusion could be put. Behn's narrative uses many different types of discourse: it begins as a travel narrative, detailing the novelty of the colonies; and it incorporates elements of heroic romance, historical biography, hagiography. It is, in other words, "a heterogeneous blend of realism and romance, a tale of fabulous adventures anchored in vivid social particularities, told by a charmingly intrusive narrator" (Behn, *Oroonoko* xv).

The details of Aphra Behn's biography are slim.⁶² Born (most likely) in the decade of the 1640s (possibly to parents with connections to the aristocracy), she (plausibly) travelled to Surinam, and later (definitely) worked as a royalist spy in Antwerp. She is the

⁶¹ The half-title is somewhat different; *Oroonoko: or the History of the Royal Slave*.

⁶² See especially Janet Todd's *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn*, Angeline Goreau's *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn*, and Maureen Duffy's *The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640-89*.

first woman known to have made her living by her writing and she was a successful playwright and translator as well as a poet and novelist. Behn's cultural and intellectual milieu included the notorious Rochester and the respected Dryden. Behn participated in the wealth of translations from French to English, choosing not works of fiction or romance per se, but philosophical and scientific works.⁶³ Her translations of La Rochefoucauld (in 1685) and Fontenelle (in 1688, the same year as *Oroonoko*) indicate her interest in both skeptical and anti-Stoic philosophy and the New Science. Robert Chibka has suggested that *Oroonoko* be read as an "education in skepticism" (Chibka 515),⁶⁴ and indeed in *Oroonoko* skeptical themes such as reason's ability to control the passions, and the reliability of sense perception and judgment are woven into a story about the enslavement and rebellion of an African prince. This skeptical engagement that investigates the limits of human knowledge and the ability of narrative to establish truth and authority is combined with an exploration and use of tropes of femininity that show how questions of epistemology are bound with questions of gender, and how both of these in turn are fruitfully articulated by an interrogation of fiction.

Oroonoko is dedicated to Lord Maitland, a Stuart supporter who followed James II into exile after the Glorious Revolution. In her dedicatory epistle, Behn styles herself as both a poet and a historian, laying claim to both vocations to vouch for the authority of her story. Drawing upon standard metaphors of the poet as painter (*ut pictura poesis*), Behn states: "A Poet is a Painter in his way; he draws to the Life, but in another kind, we draw the Nobler part, the Soul and the Mind; the Pictures of the Pen shall out-last those of the Pencil, and even Worlds themselves" (Behn, Works, Vol 3 54). Immediately after

⁶³ *Reflections on Morality or Seneca Unmasked* (1685), *A Discovery of New Worlds* (1688), and *The History of Oracles* (1688).

⁶⁴ Chibka, however, does not develop the idea of skepticism in a concerted way, nor does he connect it to other cultural currents.

comparing the poet (and fiction-writer) most favorably to a painter, she styles herself a historian, saying “[t]his is a Short Chronicle of those Lives that possibly wou’d be forgotten by other Historians, or lye neglected there, however deserving an immortal Fame” (54). Behn here offers a critique of History, implying that there is a great deal missing from the historical record. Her critique of History is gentler than Villedieu’s who asserts “je le [un incident] donne plus étendu qu’on ne l’avoit vû dans aucuns Historiens” and “Nos *Annales Galantes* suppléent à son défaut, comme elles ont fait en plusieurs occasions” [“I treat it [an incident] more broadly than one has ever seen in other Historians” and “Our *Annales Galantes* remedy this lack, as they have done on several occasions”] (quoted in Stanton, “The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*” 342), but complementary. “Other Historians” might neglect Oroonoko, but not Behn; and Maitland is the ideal reader of this “short Chronicle” because he has “Read innumerable Volumes of Men, and Books, not Vainly for the gust of Novelty, but Knowledge, excellent Knowledge” (Behn, *Works*, Vol 3 55). His taste for knowledge and not novelty, apparent in his reading in “Volumes of Men” or historical biography and other “books” bears fruit in that, like the “industrious Bee, from every Flower you return Laden with the precious Dew, which you are sure to turn to the Publick Good” (55). The true story of Oroonoko will be another source of knowledge (not vain novelty) for Maitland and the reader, and as such is granted an epistemological function.

Apart from asserting its status as truth in the prefatory letter, the narrative also begins with a truth claim, this time forgoing any suggestion of a relation with Poetry:

I do not pretend, in giving you the History of this *Royal Slave*, to entertain my Reader with Adventures of a feign’d *Hero*, whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poet’s pleasure; nor in relating the Truth, design to adorn it with any Accidents, but such as arriv’d in earnest to him: And it shall come simply into the World, recommended by its own proper Merits, and natural Intrigues; there being enough of Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the addition of Invention. (Behn, *Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave*. 1)

The narrator distances herself from the Poet, denying any adornments or invention; she is relating the Truth, which is sufficiently diverting. She continues her defense of the narrative by discussing her sources:

I was myself an Eye-witness to a great part of what you will find here set down; and what I cou'd not be Witness of, I receiv'd from the Mouth of the chief Actor in this History, the *Hero* himself, who gave us the whole Transactions of his Youth: And though I shall omit, for brevity's sake, a thousand little Accidents of his life, which, however pleasant to us, where History was scarce, and Adventures very rare, yet might prove tedious and heavy to my Reader, in a World where he finds Diversions for every Minute, new and strange. (2)

Her testimony is that of an eyewitness, and the rest was told her by “the Hero himself.” She does acknowledge that she had to make editorial choices in constructing the narrative, in order to keep it short and not bore the reader. “Accidents” are contrasted with “History” which can be “scarce.” There are events and circumstances that don’t merit the name “History”; in any case, the world represented in the narrative is a place where the reader will find new and strange diversions. Behn articulates the editorial imperative with which narrative -- historical or otherwise -- is faced. The raw material of real life experience must be transformed in order to be effective.

Her introductory truth claim sets up the narrative as a true History that “shall come simply into the World, recommended by its own proper Merits.” This History will tell itself. It is a History, but it is also a story and as such it is “diverting.” The editorial choices that she confesses to in the beginning, and her own status as eyewitness as opposed to Actor or Hero (those titles belong to Oroonoko), begin to intrude upon the reader. Behn posits a History which comes simply into the world, but there is an embarrassment of plot and authorial insertion. The narrator interrupts the story to provide what she feels will lend credence to the story. The narrative often breaks down at those moments when the lovers are in an intense emotional exchange, and the narrator intrudes to assert their passion rather than show it:

I believe he omitted saying nothing to this young Maid, that might persuade her to suffer him to seize his own, and take the Rights of Love. And I believe she was not long resisting those Arms where she so longed to be[.] (23)

The narrator draws attention to her remove from the action and actual knowledge of what transpired between them. In another example Behn draws attention to the fact that her narration is based on hearsay:

‘tis not to be doubted, but the parting, the eternal leave-taking of two such Lovers, so greatly born, so sensible, so beautiful, so young, and so fond, must be very moving, as the Relation of it was to me afterwards. (72)

Other moments of authorial intrusion come when Behn’s narrator draws on the reputation of Behn the playwright to bolster her authority, even as she apologizes for the inadequacy of her female pen:

[Oroonoko] wanted no part of the personal Courage of that *Caesar*, and acted things as memorable, had they been done in some part of the World replenished with People and Historians, that might have given him his due. But his Misfortune was, to fall in an obscure World, that afforded only a Female Pen to celebrate his Fame[.] (40)

The idea that non-European cultures like Africa and the New World are without a means of representing themselves in ways recognizable to Europeans⁶⁵ enables Behn to make use of the reputation of her female pen to help establish the authenticity and authority of her narrative. As proof of her actually having been in Suriname, she says “I had a set of these [feathers] presented to me, and I gave ‘em to the King’s Theater, and it was the Dress of the *Indian Queen*, infinitely admired by Persons of Quality; and was inimitable” (2). She even advertises her new play, which features someone she knew in Surinameeee, one “Colonel *Martin*, a man of great Gallantry, Wit, and Goodness, and whom I have celebrated in a character of my new Comedy” (68)[.]

These intrusions simultaneously establish authority and undermine it. The authority established is based on the integrity of the individual self, while the authority of

⁶⁵ For a discussion of this idea, see Mignolo.

universal history is undermined by such an individual. Hayden White articulates this tension in historical discourse. He explains that

the reality represented in the historical narrative [...] displays to us a formal coherency to which we ourselves aspire. [...] This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as “found” in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques. (White 21)

This should remind us of the tension articulated by Bussy-Rabutin in his objections to *La Princesse de Clèves* on the grounds that “il sent le roman,” and that such things could only happen in “l’histoire véritable.” That Behn’s authorial intrusions undermine her fiction is not a function of an ill-formed technique for representing passion, or a naive self-consciousness about narrative authority. The tension that arises between her assertion of the truth and the techniques that draw attention to the necessarily partial knowledge and authority she has is a technique that registers the unstable epistemological ground of fiction. That both historical and fictional discourse can be objected to on the same grounds indicates the extent to which they present similar epistemological problems.

Oroonoko is tricked into captivity by an English captain of great wit, and he learns not to trust Europeans the way we are told he usually trusts. For him, trust and truth telling are matters of honor: “And Oroonoko, whose Honour was such as he had never violated a Word in his Life himself, much less a solemn Asservation, believ’d in an instant what this Man said” (Behn, *Oroonoko* 34), and “for it was one of his Maxims, A Man of Wit cou’d not be a Knave or a Villain” (39). His honorable credulity is contrasted with that of the natives⁶⁶ who “by the extreme ignorance and simplicity of ‘em it were not difficult to establish and unknown or extravagant Religion among them, and to impose any Notions or Fictions upon ‘em” (56). His credulity reaches its limit as he begins to suspect

⁶⁶ See Ferguson, M. W., “Juggling Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko*” for an analysis of the multiple subject positions Behn deploys and contrasts in *Oroonoko*.

that his promised freedom has been a lie. Reunited with his love from his homeland, Imoinda, and expecting their first child, Oroonoko becomes anxious for his freedom. The narrator tells us that “other,” nameless whites in the neighborhood “fed him from day to day with Promises, and delay'd him till the Lord-Governour should come; so that he began to suspect them of Falsehood” (45). Even after his failed rebellion, Oroonoko still makes the mistake of trusting the English, and he is betrayed and dies a slow and painful death.

There is one aspect of Oroonoko's story in which he displays quite a deep and rich capacity for deception and falsehood. The whole first half of the narrative takes place in Africa, in Oroonoko's native kingdom that Behn calls Coramantien. The action revolves around the obstacles (namely the King's own desire for Imoinda) preventing the legally consummated love of Oroonoko and Imoinda, and the adventures that ensue during the surmounting of those obstacles. In the history of the critical reception of *Oroonoko*, this part of the story is dismissed as a digression or the embarrassing residue of Continental romance, awkward and out of place in the novel.⁶⁷ Some very important themes and motifs are raised in this part, however, including that of deception and dissimulation. The young lovers deceive the old king into thinking that they have no feelings for each other, and Oroonoko learns how to “[shew] a face not at all betraying his Heart” (16) and Imoinda dissimulates “to save her own Life, 'twas absolutely necessary she should feign this Falsity” (25). Thus the part of the narrative that draws most heavily on heroic romance conventions acknowledges the necessity of falsehood and dissimulation in love, while the part that narrates the contact between Oroonoko and the English emphasizes his

⁶⁷ See especially Guffey. Current criticism for the most part has focused on issues of colonialism and “the other.” See, for example, Ferguson, M. W., “Juggling Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*” and Brown. Janet Todd recognizes the specific influence of La Calprenède's *Cassandre*. See volume 3, page xiii of *The Works of Aphra Behn*.

honorable credulity and inability to dissimulate with the English, who continually and unworthily abuse his trust.

Oroonoko proves credulous not only to manipulative and deceptive Englishmen like the slave captain and Byam (acting Lieutenant Governor in Suriname), but he is also susceptible to all manner of discourse or narrative. While Oroonoko is mourning Imoinda's apparent death, he distracts himself with the business of empire and capturing slaves. One of his captives, a prince like himself called Jamoan,

by a thousand Tales and Adventures of Love and Gallantry, flatter'd his Disease of Melancholy and Languishment: which I have often heard him say, had certainly kill'd him, but for the Conversation of this Prince and *Aboan* and the *French Governour*⁶⁸ he had from his Childhood. (31)

Oroonoko's taste for story is undiminished in Suriname, where the narrator is prevailed upon to satisfy and assure Oroonoko of the good intentions of the English who promise him freedom on the arrival of the new governor: "I was obliged, by some Persons who fear'd a Mutiny [...] to discourse with *Caesar* [Oroonoko], and to give him all the satisfaction I possibly cou'd" (46). She does this by "entertaining" him "with the Loves of the *Romans*, and great Men, which charmed him to my Company" (46). In other words, she uses the narrative of History to distract Oroonoko from rebellion. Oroonoko in turn uses the narrative of History to inspire the other slaves to rebellion when he stops believing the promises of imminent freedom:

he spoke to them of the impassable Woods and Rivers; and convinced them, the more Danger the more Glory. He told them, that he had heard of one *Hannibal*, a great Captain, had cut his way through Mountains of solid Rocks; and should a few Shrubs oppose them, which they could fire before 'em? (62)

History and fiction, as well as theological and mathematical discourses, are used to distract Oroonoko. Chibka notes that Behn's narrator "will use any discursive tradition

⁶⁸ This Frenchman was a man "of Wit and Learning who [...] took a great pleasure in teaching [Oroonoko] Morals, Language, and Science" (7).

(‘Loves of the Romans,’ no less than ‘Notions of the Trinity’) to ‘divert’ him from ‘Captivity’ and ‘liberty’” (Chibka 525). That Behn highlights the uses and effects of narrative discourse in a narrative that also has fiction-making and dissimulation as one of its themes serves to illustrate the purposeful exploitation of the ambiguous epistemological status of fiction.

Neither Behn nor the narrator are concerned to defend the narrative as poetry, and assert its superiority to history, or as Davenant puts it, “the Diary of Fortune.” Oroonoko’s story might have been ignored by historians, but this does not impeach the integrity of the genre as Villedieu does. It is History told by a female pen, and Behn asserts the referential nature of her narrative. While modern readers identify two opposing styles in the narrative -- the African material modeled on heroic romance and the more “novelistic” Suriname material -- what Behn identifies as romantic is not the plot of crossed lovers in Coramantien, but rather the description of the New World. What needs her authorial protection is not the African material, but what happens in Suriname, where she herself was supposedly an eyewitness. In an episode designed to illustrate Oroonoko’s bravery and physical prowess, the narrator warns the reader that she “shall now relate a thing that, possibly, will find no credit among Men; because ‘tis a Notion commonly receiv’d with us, That nothing can receive a Wound in the Heart and live” (52). Oroonoko goes on to kill a “Tyger” whose heart had “seven Bullets of Lead in it” (52). The episode contradicts popular opinion. Just as it is necessary for Oroonoko to learn that experience can contradict the maxim “a Man of Wit cou’d not be a Knave or a Villain,” the reader, too, is required to revise his or her understanding of the way the world works. The preface also contains a defense of what Lord Maitland and other readers might find “romantick”:

If there be any thing that seems Romantick, I beseech your Lordship to consider, these Countries do, in all things, so far differ from ours, that they produce unconceivable Wonders; at least, they appear so to us, because New and Strange (Behn, Works, Vol 3 56,).

Those elements that might seem “Romantick” only appear so because of the readers’ limited exposure to the New World and the wonders that are produced there. Like Cotterell’s assertion that aspects of *Cassandra* might have seemed implausible before the recent experience of the Civil War, Behn argues that experience expands the bounds of belief, and neutralizes what was heretofore “Romantick.”

Behn’s exploration of the relation between and the effects of different kinds of discourse illustrates the distance travelled from Davenant’s argument that fiction and poetry have a unique, vital, and instrumental role to play in statecraft and the regulation of social and civic behavior. Behn’s deployment of different kinds of narrative exploits the growing skepticism about the foundations of knowledge, while asserting the privilege of individual authority and experience under the name of History. Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* similarly registers the distance from Scudéry’s poetics by the ways in which fiction and dissimulation are explored, also by recourse to “histoire.” Constructions of gender figure in this revision of the status of fictional discourse. Scudéry’s “la charmante trompeuse” posits an equivalence between fiction and femininity. Lafayette’s inimitable and exemplary princess and Valincour’s fictional Marquise stage the hermeneutics of fiction. Davenant deploys gendered metaphors of conquest to illustrate his theory of fiction. Mackenzie personifies the virtue that fiction conveys as female, and Behn uses her female authorial persona to intervene in her narrative. The deployments of gender do not operate in consistent ways. Like Bussy-Rabutin’s complaint that *La Princesse de Clèves* is both too novelistic and not novelistic enough, the deployments of gender -- femininity as deceptive and femininity as a figure for virtue -- are paradoxical. I agree with Danahy, who asserts that “[t]he task at hand is not to determine which of the varied and contradictory views [...] is correct. Rather, the task is to identify the common ground that made contradictory enunciations conceivable and speakable at the same time” (Danahy 3). This common ground is the intersection of theories of fiction, epistemology, and gender.

Chapter 2

Human Nature and Natural Philosophy in the Fiction of Walter Charleton and Margaret Cavendish

The previous chapter shows how fiction writers defined and defended their craft by comparing it to historical discourse. Where Scudéry and Mackenzie and others insisted on the difference between fiction and History, granting fiction greater liberty and authority, Lafayette and Behn revised the grounds on which fiction was legitimated and claimed the status of History for their works. The former argued that fiction had access to greater truths than did the “dead thing” of History, while the latter made a critique of *vraisemblance* and knowledge a central theme, the effect of which was to question the basis of both historical and fictional discourse. Stanton argues that this development represents the devaluing of History; it also represents the devaluing of fiction, because it no longer has special or privileged access to truth. The changing epistemological status of fiction is legible when its theoretical elaborations are read for the involvement of a rhetoric of History. This chapter examines the relation between fiction and another discourse and how each invokes the other in order to define its epistemological territory. The 1650s fiction of Walter Charleton and Margaret Cavendish dramatizes a convergence of the philosophical-scientific and the fictional that shows them to be complementary and not oppositional discourses, at the same time they both construct categories of gender to articulate their positions.

Other critics have noted the ways in which fictional discourse and scientific discourse inform each other, emphasizing that the epistemological issues raised by the “Scientific Revolution” found articulation in new forms of narrative -- the travel narrative, the novel, and journalism. Standards of evidence and authority were changing, and in

science as in History, fiction was a way of exploring these. Barbara Shapiro rightly contends that “poetry and history gradually came to terms with a new intellectual environment that emphasized truth and factual accuracy rather than imagination or fancy” (Shapiro 261), and that the emergence of the travel narrative, the novel, and the newspaper all “suggest how such epistemological interests and standards might help shape literary forms and genres” (262). Anne Bratach, who reads Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* for evidence of scientific discourse in the same way I did for historical discourse, argues that

[n]ovels raised the same questions about representation that seventeenth-century science did. Both the early novel and natural philosophy sought legitimate ways to articulate and represent the world -- and to articulate the forms with which they made those articulations. (Bratach 224)

My argument is not that fiction and natural philosophy are the same, but rather that fiction provided a framework for exploring epistemological questions and issues raised in and by the discourse of natural philosophy. This framework is not dependent upon specific narrative techniques or available only in a tightly defined genre. The framework provided by fiction is based on a belief in the legitimacy of knowledge arrived at through means other than mathematical or logical proofs, and the construction of an equivalence between fiction and scientific knowledge as “plausible.” Walter Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron* (1659)⁶⁹ and Margaret Cavendish’s *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* (1656) belong to different genres and narrative traditions, but both use fiction to interrogate themes and hypotheses of natural philosophy, and deploy tropes of femininity to convey in fiction their understanding of human nature and the mechanics of body and soul.

⁶⁹ George Williamson asserts that it was first published in 1653, and although I can find no record of it in Wing or elsewhere, that date has a certain attraction, being prior to Cavendish’s narrative and the same year as Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. The received text, however, is that of 1668, which differs from the 1659 edition only in the inclusion of quotations from Chaucer and pseudo-Chaucer.

Both Charleton and Cavendish are credited with attempting to make Epicurean atomism palatable to an English audience.⁷⁰ Epicurean atomism and related philosophical schools of thought such as “mechanism” and “skepticism” are difficult concepts to situate historically. Lynn S. Joy writes:

The history of Renaissance Epicureanism is replete with interpretive puzzles and whether one focuses on ethics or natural philosophy, it is extremely difficult to construct a coherent narrative which adequately accounts for all manifestations of Epicurean beliefs and practices in Europe from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. (Joy 573)

She usefully draws attention to the fact that Epicureanism has implications for both moral philosophy (ethics) and natural philosophy, and that manifestations of Epicurean thought are various. Atomism, as conceived in the seventeenth century, was a theory of matter based on the writings of Lucretius and Epicurus that was feared to have moral, theological, and political implications. Stephen Clucas notes that the concepts of “atomism” and “atom” create difficulties for historians of science, in part because they are taken up by a variety of thinkers and deployed in various and sometimes contradictory ways in the seventeenth century. He suggests that

these difficulties might perhaps be resolved by eschewing categorical criteria for the definition of atomism, and instead viewing atomism as a series of overlapping and idiomatically constituted conceptual fields determined by the philosophical predilections of its seventeenth-century exponents. (Clucas 247)

He questions whether we should “in fact, speak of ‘neo-atomism’ in the way that we quite comfortably discuss ‘neo-stoicism’ or ‘neoplatonism’” (247). Clucas’s point is helpful because it illustrates the pervasive and diffuse nature of philosophical-scientific theory.

This is consistent with Margaret C. Jacob’s argument that, thanks to the trial and condemnation of Galileo in 1632, the New Science was

suddenly brought [...] out of the domain of the universities and the learned disputations of natural philosophers. Science made its way onto the intellectual agenda of all educated Europeans. What might have remained

⁷⁰ See especially Kargon, Rogers, and Sheehan.

matters for debate among experts -- for example, the relative merits of the Copernican system in relation to the geocentric system of Ptolemy, or the possibility of reconciling heliocentricity with the teachings of Aristotle -- now became topics of widespread philosophical interest. (Jacob 25)

This widespread philosophical interest was worked out not just in theories of natural philosophy, but also in moral and political theory. Epicurean atomism was a hypothesis about how the universe worked that posited that all matter is made up of discrete particles and that nothing immaterial exists. Barbara Shapiro explains: “[a]lthough the existence of atoms could not be empirically proved, the ‘atomical hypothesis’ was widely adopted as that best able to link appearances, to describe the behavior of phenomena in mechanical laws, and to predict future observable events” (Shapiro 46). Atomism functioned as a plausible fiction. The implications for theology and moral philosophy are significant for it suggests that the immateriality and immortality of the soul (a basic tenet in both Roman Catholic and Anglican doctrine) are false.⁷¹ Natural philosophy also has implications for moral philosophy. An example is in the branch of moral philosophy that interrogates the nature of the passions, a branch that was rigorously explored in the early seventeenth century.⁷² The way the passions acted upon the body and the mind and to what extent it was necessary or possible to control them was a relevant question for natural philosophers who held a mechanical view of nature. Descartes and Charleton both wrote treatises about the passions,⁷³ and Hobbes’s political theory is dependent upon a conception of

⁷¹ Hobbes and Cavendish are the only contemporary philosophers to make the claim. All others, including Descartes and Charleton, are very concerned to show how a material natural philosophy is not necessarily at odds with institutional religion, be it Roman Catholic or Anglican.

⁷² See Levi for a discussion of French theories of the passions in this early period.

⁷³ Erica Harth argues that it is Descartes’s moral philosophy that was most heavily scrutinized by cartésiennes. She says that “for the seventeenth-century cartésiennes, it is moral philosophy that crowns all philosophical endeavor” (Harth, *Cartesian Women* 112). See Descartes’s *Passions de l’ame* (1649) and Charleton’s *Natural History of the Passions* (1674), a translation of Senault.

human nature and the priority of appetite.

Epicurean atomism had implications for political theory, too. John Rogers argues that atomism and mechanism became central metaphors by which to explain politics, and that there was “an intellectual imperative to forge an ontological connection between physical motion and political action” (Rogers ix). Anna Battigelli also argues that Cavendish’s “interest in atomism was less an interest in physical theories of matter than a fascination with a metaphor that served to explain political and psychological conflict” (Battigelli 49). In his discussion of the impact of Hobbes’s *De Cive* (1642) in France,⁷⁴ Mark Bannister draws attention to the intersecting concerns of political, moral, and natural philosophy. He notes that

[t]hese ideas [of Hobbes] aroused considerable interest in intellectual circles, being seen as a radical new approach toward the understanding of the foundations of society, but their particular significance lies in their relationship to the rapid development of the mechanistic concept of nature taking place at the time. (Bannister, “Human Nature, Hobbes and Heroism: An Ambiguity at the Heart of *Homnêteté*” 135)

This concept of nature in turn has moral implications, for “if nature is a machine, it has no claim to be a model of virtue or to impose any moral standards on humanity and it is possible to argue that man’s moral status derives from principles equally as mechanistic as his physical being” (136).

Charleton’s and Cavendish’s fiction illustrate the widespread philosophical interest in questions raised by the New Science and the ways in which, as Joy argues, it is difficult to construct a coherent narrative about these philosophical trends that are manifest in different genres and different moral, theological, and political agendas. In Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron* and Margaret Cavendish’s *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*, this interest is evidenced not by discussions of heliocentrism per se, but can be found in attitudes

⁷⁴ Sorbière translated it, and in the preface to the 1649 edition, he claims that he has done so in order that someone else might refute it. See Bannister, “Human Nature, Hobbes and Heroism: An Ambiguity at the Heart of *Homnêteté*” 137.

toward sense perception, the nature of human passion, and the relation between the body and the soul.

Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron* and Margaret Cavendish's *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* are complementary texts in this context: they have similar interests in the New Science, and they both use the fictional mode to articulate their arguments and ideas about human nature. The authors were also friends.⁷⁵ Lindsay Sharp asserts that their relationship was important for Charleton's intellectual development, arguing

[t]here are two reasons why Margaret Cavendish is relevant to this period in Charleton's life [the 1650s]. Firstly, they both share an active and early interest in atomism. Secondly, Walter Charleton sent a letter to her in 1655, the earliest of his letters written during this decade to have survived. It has already been suggested by her modern biographer than [sic] the atomistic ideas propounded by Margaret Cavendish in her first book [*Philosophical Fancies* (1653)] bear a striking resemblance in certain aspects to those outlined by Charleton in his *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana* (1654). (Sharp 330)

Both writers are known more by reputation than for their work, and their reputations rest, in Charleton's case, as a fellow of the Royal Society and Christian apologist of atomism, and in Cavendish's, as an eccentric aristocratic woman who wrote repetitive volumes of natural philosophy, poetry, drama, and fiction.

Their fiction has been left relatively unexamined by literary critics, and these two stories together represent responses to and articulations of mechanical theories of nature and language. Margaret C. Jacob is urgent in her argument that the 1650s in England was a critical moment for the assimilation of scientific discourse into broader intellectual concerns:

What must be grasped in the crisis of the 1650s is the important role played by philosophies of nature in giving expression to human goals and aspirations. Natural philosophical and religious language constituted the stuff of scientific discussions; it also shaped discussions about the nature of political authority, the rights of the church, and the relationships between master and servant, husband and wife, lord and commoner. (Jacob 56)

⁷⁵ He was instrumental in getting her invited to the Royal Society in 1667. See Mintz for a discussion of the circumstances of her invitation.

The Ephesian Matron and *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* illustrate Jacob's point. Moreover, both stories depend upon configurations of gender and use ideas of femininity to make their arguments. Charleton writes within the assumptions of an empirical epistemology whereas Cavendish challenges those assumptions. Although both engage a philosophical discourse that seeks to define the relation between body and soul, matter and language, appetite and reason, they do not tell the same story, and the difference rests on their investment in categories of gender.

1. Walter Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron*

Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron* is a retelling of a story whose *locus classicus* is Petronius Arbiter's *Satyricon*. It has been retold over the centuries and in many languages.⁷⁶ The basic plot elements of the story are a grieving widow in her husband's tomb, a soldier who successfully persuades her to stop mourning and transfer her affections to him, and the widow's substitution of her husband's body for another corpse in order to save the soldier from punishment. Whether the tone is satirical or earnest, it has most often been retold to exemplify the theme of woman's inconstancy, and Charleton's version is no exception. In his hands, however, the theme of inconstancy and passion is used to explore universal human nature and to draw the mechanics of the relation between body and soul and the role reason plays in human motivations.

Charleton's twentieth-century critics have emphasized his originality in his sympathy for the matron, one asserting that "Charleton's story is less misogynistic than Petronius'" (Jensen, J. H., "The Ephesian Matron" 42), and another that the discussion of the nature of love is "largely devoted to undermining the assumptions of those who would

⁷⁶ See Ure for a discussion of the manifestations of the story in Europe in the Renaissance and Early Modern period.

censure the matron's promiscuity" (Guibbory ii). Charleton's narrative, however, is firmly in the tradition of satire and undermines any "defense" of the matron. Although much of the narrative is devoted to deconstructing the difference between love and lust and the argument that the matron was acting in accordance with human nature and should therefore not be condemned, Charleton also takes the opportunity to be sarcastic about women and their affectations of virtue.

The story is prefaced with an epigraph from the original of misogynist satire.⁷⁷ Charleton quotes Juvenal's Sixth Satire: "Scilicet expectus, ut tradat Mater honestos, Aut alios Mores, quam quos habet?" [Do you really expect the mother to pass on good morals, or any morals different from what she herself has?] (Charleton, "The Ephesian Matron" 46) As a good epigraph should, it effectively points to several themes that the narrative will raise. Its provenance is a good indication of the thrust of the story -- satire against women. It raises the expectation in the reader that moral philosophy will be its theme. It addresses ideas about maternity and influence that will be important in the body of the narrative.

Charleton begins with an address to a male reader, "a person of honor." Apologizing for "the *harshness* of [his] *style*, and the *morosity* of [his] *humor*" (45), Charleton defends the story "whose *truth* might supply the barrenness of my *invention*" (45). This truth is not supposed to be historically referential -- he does not argue that it really happened, or that he was an eyewitness -- but exemplary, whose proof is in the longevity and prolific nature of the story's incarnations. He gives a history of the fictional narrative, but talks about it not as a text or story that has been retold in different cultures, but as a personified woman. He literalizes the title of the "Ephesian Matron," "a *beautiful*

⁷⁷ See Nussbaum, The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750 for a discussion and analysis of satire and its misogynist tradition in the early modern period. She does not discuss Charleton or *The Ephesian Matron*.

and good natured creature, whose adventures have been thought so memorable, that time itself hath not been able to sink them in that abyss of oblivion” (45), and explains her provenance and her appeal:

After I had seen her in the *Greek, Roman, German, and French* habits, and observed such a natural comeliness, as made her appear lovely and pleasant in each dress, that ingenious foreigners had clad her in [...] I had a humor also to put her into our *English* garb, that you might be acquainted with her, and judge, whether that be not as becoming and graceful as any of the rest. (46)

Opening a theme that language is ornamental and not constitutive, he extends the metaphor of language as a garment that suits not just different national tongues, but different discourses as well, saying that he has

set her forth in an equipage somewhat too *grave* and *solemn*, according to the fashion of my own fancy, which is most delighted with sad colors, and plain useful garments; so that she may now seem the mistress rather of a *philosopher* than of a courtier. (46)

If language is a necessary garment, Charleton scorns the use of jewels, which are “fit only for such, who wanting native beauty enough to fill the beholder’s sight, avert him from discerning their defects, by catching his eyes with the lustre of pearls, diamonds, and rubies” (46). Charleton distinguishes between nature and art, asserting the greater virtue of the former, exemplified in “this our *matron* [who] is so largely beholding to the bounty of *nature*, that she scorns the mean charity of art” (46).

Charleton gives an account of the matron’s “religion,” saying, “if I may have the liberty of conjecturing from some actions of hers, I should take her to be of old *Epicurius*’s faith, following the simple dictates of *mother-nature*, and living by the plain rule of her *inclinations*” (47). He asks his reader to “imprison her in your own private cabinet” (47), not because he should suspect her chastity, but rather to protect her from the affronts of “ladies, who will never be reconciled to a woman that is so weak, as to betray the *frailties*, and lay open the secrets of her own sex” (47). The secrets of her sex that she betrays are the physical and material nature of love. Unlike the ladies whose

“own darling, *Platonic love*” (47) insists on a bodiless and sexless connection of souls, the matron confesses that

she knows no flames, but such as arise from the difference of sex, and are kindled in the blood, and other luxuriant humors of the body; and that her amours always tend to the propagation of somewhat more material, than the simple *ideas of virtue*, of which our philosophical ladies so much talk. (47-48)

The philosophical ladies who subscribe to ideas of Platonic love are targets of Charleton’s sarcasm, and his narrative is in part an exposé of their hypocrisy. Who these ladies are is more difficult to determine. The ideal of Platonic love in England was brought into vogue by Henrietta Maria,⁷⁸ French wife of Charles I, and George Williamson identifies Katherine Philips’s “Society of Friendship” (1651) as a likely source for Charleton’s “philosophical ladies.”⁷⁹ Charleton’s deployment of the trope serves not only to support a conventional reading of *The Ephesian Matron* as a satire against women, but also as a satire against a philosophy that is idealist as opposed to materialist in its epistemology and specifically figured by “Ladies.”

He opens this line of argument in the prefatory letter, defending his equipage of the matron in dress that is more suited to the mistress of a philosopher than a courtier. It is not only due to his “own fancy,” but also because he “would not have her appear altogether a stranger, and ignorant of the *mode* of the time, wherein the greatest *levity* and *licentiousness*, is commonly wrapt up in the most *austere looks*, and sober formality of dress” (46). Charleton contrasts the hypocrisy of Platonic love with the Epicurean materialism, which, while escaping the charge of hypocrisy, in the figure of the Ephesian matron, is still subject to derision and satire. The story of the Ephesian matron allows him

⁷⁸ See Veevers for a discussion of Henrietta Maria and the influence of preciosity in England through the Caroline court.

⁷⁹ See Williamson 446. For a discussion of the influence of French preciosity and Platonic love on Katherine Philips, see Andreadis and Swaim.

to launch a defense of Epicurean materialism, and at the same time expose human nature in the figure of the woman.

The occasion for Charleton's display of his conception of human nature and how it functions is provided by the plot points of the matron's story. The matron, recently widowed and in a state of grief "too excessive to fall under the description of the most tragical pen" (48), is discovered by a soldier who (shirking his duty as guard of a criminal's corpse) seeks shelter in her husband's tomb on a cold night. After he assures her that he has "no such black purpose, as to dislodge [the] relics, or violate their sepulchre" (53), the matron faints while attempting to thank him for his civility, "her exhausted spirits failing to be obedient to her soul, she sunk down in a swoon, and lay speechless and enervated, across her husband's coffin" (53). Charleton makes the distinction between her spirit and her soul, and suggests that the soul has priority even in the spirits's failure to obey. The soldier administers some wine, which

so repaired her defect of spirits, that her heart and arteries renewing their intermitted pulses, she soon came to herself again; but so imperfectly, that though her vital organs seemed to perform their offices aright, yet those of voluntary motion wholly failed in theirs. (53-54)

Charleton here links the body to the spirit, making reference to her heart, arteries, and pulses, predicating her spirits's repair on her body's revitalization. He again makes a distinction, this time between the offices of vital organs, or involuntary motion, and voluntary. The soldier, who is observant and makes the connection between the wine and "her coming to herself again," concludes "that the virtue of that cordial, which infused into her in a small quantity, had so happily begun his cure, it administered in a greater dose, would not fail to finish it" (54). He continues his cure, and the matron is "now able to command a truce to her sorrow" (55).

It is the change in the matron that has historically been taken as the point of the tale as an illustration of woman's inconstancy. Charleton takes the opportunity to

examine the causes of the change, and although he makes use of conventional ideas of the fickle nature of women, he is not satisfied with either an outraged or a wry conclusion.

He ponders,

whether we ought to ascribe it to the sole hand of *fate*, which laughs at the vanity of men's resolutions, and by turning our hearts like rivers of water, delights to convince us, *how little that power is, we arrogant mortals think we have over ourselves*. Or to the benigne and sweetening efficacy of the *wine*, which (doubtless) is the most sovereign and present antidote in nature against excess sorrow: or, to the force of the soldier's *persuasions*, which, though not delivered with the advantage of smooth and courtly language, appear to have been strong and prevalent: or, to the secret strokes of *love* (as philosophers call them). (54)

Fate, wine, persuasion, and love are all "probable causes" (55), but Charleton declines to determine the correct one, saying that he "willingly resign[s] that nice enquiry to those sages, who pretend to understand the secrets of women's hearts" (55). His inquiry is not able to reach certainty, and he relinquishes the responsibility for determining the cause of the phenomenon, satisfying himself with recording the effects.

Charleton is known as one of the foremost disseminators of Epicurean atomism in England, and, like most natural philosophers, finds it necessary to argue his case on theological and moral as well as scientific grounds.⁸⁰ As a Christian apologist, he believed that one of the tenets of Epicurean philosophy that needed purifying for Christian England was the idea of a material and mortal soul. Establishment Christianity -- both Anglican and Roman Catholic -- insists on the immateriality and immortality of the soul. Charleton takes the opportunity to distance himself from a strict interpretation of Epicurus and his disciples:

Here some witty disciple of *Epicurus* (arresting us in the middle of our narration) may take advantage to disparage the *excellency and immortality* of that noble essence, the *reasonable soul* of man; and from the example of the sovereign operation of the wine upon this deplorable lady, thus argue against it. (56)

⁸⁰ Jacobs, too, makes this point. Charleton's bibliography illustrates his commitment to both the dissemination of Epicurean atomist philosophy and its compatibility with Christian morality. See Works Cited list.

Charleton's defense of the immortal soul against his Epicurean interlocutor is in three parts: a traditional Scholastic distinction between a rational soul and the sensitive soul (a distinction already alluded to previously in his description of the matron's swoon as the sensitive failing to be obedient to the rational); an argument for the immortality of the soul; an argument for the sovereignty of the soul.

First, Charleton rehearses the arguments of the Epicurean, granting that appearances seem to be in his favor based on the behavior of the matron:

If our inclinations and wills be so nearly dependent upon the humours and temperament of our bodies [...] both which seem verified in the instance of this Ephesian woman [...] why should not men believe, with his master *Epicurus*, that the soul is nothing else but a certain *composition or contexture of subtile atoms*, in such manner figured and disposed, and natively endowed with such activity, as to animate the body and actuate all the members and organs of it [...] Especially, if they reflect upon the admirable effects of wine, which hath the power to alter, not only the temperament of the body, but even that of the mind also. (56-57)

His answer to this Epicurean tenet that the soul is material, which challenges orthodox Christianity, is to assert that

every individual man hath two distinct souls, the one *rational*, or *intellectual*, and *incorruptible*, as being of divine origin, the breath of the *Creator*: The other only *sensitive*, produced from the womb of *elements*; common also to brute animals, and therefore capable of dissolution. (57)

Rational, intellectual, immortal, and divine describe the soul, unique to man. The latter soul, renamed "spirit," is mortal and common to all living creatures, and proceeds not from "the breath of the Creator" but from "the womb of elements." Setting up a maternal metaphor here that relies upon associations of female generation that is in contrast to divine creation, Charleton argues that the spirit is the "common viniculum, cement, or tie" between the soul and the body. The spirit is the instrument whereby the soul acts on the body. He also concedes that

the rational soul, in respect of this her alliance with the body, is in some degree subject to the laws of matter; and consequently, that the humors and temperament of the body, have some influence or power to alter and work upon the mind, especially in weak-minded persons, who make no use of the

arms of their reason, to encounter and subdue the insurrections and assaults of sensual appetites. (57)

Charleton is inconsistent in his terminology. Here he seems to suggest that the rational soul is *not* equivalent to the mind, but soon after he conflates mind and soul when he likens “the mind, or reasonable soul itself” to an “excellent musician” and the “sensitive or the brain” to a substandard instrument, arguing

so that as it doth not derogate from the skill and ability of an excellent musician, that he cannot make good music upon an ill and untuneable instrument; so likewise doth it not from the dignity of the soul, that it cannot maintain the harmony of its government, where the brain is out of tune. (58)

He denies, however, that this is an argument against the immortality or sovereignty of the rational soul. He advances his argument by using maternal and monarchical metaphors to illustrate the immortal and sovereign aspects of the soul, respectively.

Charleton’s maternal metaphor is grounded in the body, not in abstract ideas of femininity or the maternal nature of “woman.” He argues that the rational soul’s relation to the body is like the

infant in the mother’s womb, though sympathising with the mother in all distempers, accidents, and symptoms that befall her, during the time of the child’s connection to her body; is yet capable of being, in his due season, separated from her, and emancipated from his first state of compatibility into another of single subsistence: so the rational soul, though, during its connection to the body, subject to all affections and sufferings thereof, is yet nevertheless capable of being separated, in due season, from the body, and surviving it to eternity, in a state of simplicity and incompatibility. (57-58)

Although Charleton neglects to round out his metaphor with a comparison of the sensitive spirits to the umbilical cord, his point is well made. The mortal body is female, and this second reference to maternity betrays a certain anxiety about women and their influence. The soul may be “the breath of the Creator,” but the body might have too much influence in material and, remembering Juvenal, in moral matters. That Charleton uses a gendered trope is significant. The maternal metaphor is used to illustrate what for Charleton is a

scientific and a moral principle and shows how tropes of femininity are constitutive of ideas about authority and knowledge.

Charleton reverses the gender of the metaphor in order to advance his argument for the sovereignty of the soul. Using a monarchical metaphor that is expressly male,⁸¹ he posits the soul:

as a monarch, notwithstanding he hath sovereign and absolute power over his subjects, may sometimes be inclined by the sway of his servants; and yet without either subjection of his person, or diminution of his power: so the soul, though sometimes the affections of its subject, the body, may incline or dispose it to assent and compliance: yet doth not that detract from either the excellency of its nature, or the absoluteness of its dominion over the body. (58)

Writing as a royalist during the interregnum, Charleton uses a monarchical metaphor pointedly. To argue for the sovereignty of the soul on the same basis as the sovereignty of the king at a moment when that sovereignty has been successfully violated registers the instability of the metaphor. Like the maternal metaphor, the monarchical metaphor contains within it the means for reversing the stated intention: the assertion of the priority of the soul over the body, or the rational mind over the passions. While Charleton starts with the idea that every individual is endowed with a rational soul, and continues to assert its immortality and sovereignty, the Epicurean view of appetite, figured by a woman, quickly overshadows it.

At first, however, the prospect of an Epicurean philosophy that bears liberating (and not satirical) aspects for women seems promising. His take on the classic story is something more than a petulant whine about woman's lack of discrimination when it comes to men. Having already acknowledged the prevalent view that the story illustrates woman's inconstancy, he wants to explain how such a change, from grieving widow to passionate lover, could take place. The intrusive first-person narrator comments that,

⁸¹ Although English law, unlike French, allowed for a female monarch.

after the wine, food, and rational arguments of the soldier, “I perceive certain symptoms in her, which signify not only a change of humor, but even a perfect metamorphosis of her person also [...] seriously I should not easily be persuaded that she is the same woman” (59). His next opportunity for a dilation on the philosophical themes of woman’s inconstancy comes when the matron and the soldier are about to consummate their desire. The narrator baldly states that the soldier “stands ready to do that *act*, which, though the most pleasant and entrancing of all others, cannot yet be, with good manners, named, much less looked upon in the doing, by strangers” (61). The physical satisfaction that the matron and the soldier are taking provides the backdrop for Charleton’s next discourse on the change in the matron. He suggests to the reader, “And while they are busy at their silent devotions let us have recourse to the oracle of reason, and there consult about the powerful *cause* of this great and admirable change in our *matron*, who (you see) is no longer either mourner, or widow” (61).

Charleton has already declined to deliver judgment on the causes of phenomena. Observation can render sound knowledge about effects, but not causes. This doesn’t stop him, however, from pondering the question, once again first repeating the classical conclusion “[t]o charge this sudden and prodigious metamorphosis, upon the inherent *mutability and levity of woman’s nature*” (61). Charleton’s rejection of this explanation is not based on rational or scientific grounds, but rather on practical and social ones. He continues, “though it may have somewhat of philosophy in it, yet cannot have much of wisdom; as importing more reason, than safety” (61). An assertion of the levity and mutability of woman’s nature is a reasonable proposition, and philosophically sound:

For, albeit, it be well known, that the softness and tenderness of their constitution is such, as renders them like wax, capable of any impressions, and especiall such as correspond to their own inclinations, that nature hath implanted in them as goads to drive them on toward that principal end, for which it hath made them. (61)

But from a practical point of view, unwise because it is likely “to incense that revengeful

sex, by calling in question that constancy in affection, which every woman so much boasteth of, and is ready to defend even with her blood” (61). Charleton continues in a sarcastic vein, conceding the constancy of woman, citing, not notable examples themselves, but books compiling notable examples of woman’s virtue:

Moreover, when I read those witty and elegant writers, who have exercised their pens in illustrating *female glories*, in erecting *galleries of heroical women*, and collecting *examples* of their *constancy*, *conjugal love*, and other *virtues* [...] I had a design in my head, to have compiled a *History of the Lives of Constant Wives and Mistresses*: nor did any thing hinder my proceeding in that work, but the discouragement I received from the vast *multitude* of them. (62)

Charleton’s reference here is to such sixteenth-century examples as Agrippa’s *Nobilitie and Excellencye of Woman Kynde* and Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Defense of Good Women*.⁸² His sarcasm here functions to debase the strategies of those who seek to ennoble women by asserting their moral superiority as evidenced by their chastity and constancy and their valorization of spiritual love as opposed to physical lust. His next move is to deconstruct the distinction people make between love and lust, a distinction that Platonists insist upon and Epicureans abjure.

Charleton, having declined to ascribe the change in the matron to woman’s fickle nature, also denies the agency of wine, which, “though good wine be the *milk of Venus*, and as subtle and powerful a betrayer of chastity, as a nurse or midwife, as night, as opportunity, yea as gold itself” (63), is not a sufficient cause, for, he says,

⁸² Hilda Smith makes the argument that rational feminists of the period eschewed arguing by compiling examples of illustrious women. She asserts that “the 17C feminists seldom supported their belief in women with evidence culled from the accomplishments of past exceptional (and often mythical) females; rather, they argued from the axiom that men and women were given equal rational abilities (Smith, H., Reason’s Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists 7). In France, the story is somewhat different, there being a strong tradition of *portraits*, a series of character descriptions of famous or exemplary people. See, for example, Montpensier’s *Galerie des portraits et éloges* and *Divers portraits* (1659), Scudéry’s *Les femmes illustres* (1642), and Campion’s *Les hommes illustres* (1657).

as all natural agents have their power and energy limited by the capacity of their patients, upon which they operate, so in particular, wine is not so universal inspirer of amorous and hot inclinations, as not sometimes to meet with reistance and suppression, in persons of cold temperaments, or chaste resolutions. (63)

If not woman's nature, or wine, it must be love, which "is a kind of *magic*, against which nature hath given us no power of resistance; for, insinuating insensibly into the soul, like a masked enemy" (63-64). Kings and philosophers all succumb to it, and Charleton has recourse to literary precedent, arguing that "when the ancient poets meant no other thing, by their fictions of the amours of *Jupiter* and other *deities*, but this, that *Love mastereth the greatest and wisest men in the world*" (64). Why should the matron be exempt?

Charleton defends the matron against those who would judge her not just for the feeling of love, but also its satisfaction. Drawing a moral equivalence between love and hunger, he asks his reader,

[w]hat reason is there, then, that anyone should think it so heinous an offense against the modesty of woman-hood, that our matron addressed herself to the satisfaction of an appetite as natural, (and many times as impatient of delay) as hunger, as soon as fortune had proffered her the means wherewithal to do it? For my part, seriously (think others what they please) though I will not justify the act she did, yet I do not judge it to be the worse, because done so *soon*. (65)

He anticipates the objection that his equivalence of love and hunger, making love a bodily appetite without moral consequences, is untenable:

But, you (perhaps) may think, that I have clothed the deformity of this woman's fact, in too favorable and plausible a dress of phrase; making that noble and heroique passion, love, to be the cause of her so easie prostitution, which was, indeed the mere and proper effect of a carnal appetite, or base and unbridled *lust*. (65-66)

Charleton responds by asserting that love and lust are but different words for the same thing, and it is only hypocrisy that prevents acknowledging it. Such a position he acknowledges

will be somewhate distasteful to the pure and refined disciples of the *Platonic* sect, who profess to be enamored only of the beauties of the *soul*, wholly rejecting all respects of flesh and blood, and entirely devoting their courtship to contemplate, and entrance themselves in admiration of the lovely ideas of *virtue*. (66)

From the Platonics he moves on to acknowledge the objections of “the *ladies*,” who will not be pleased to “hear their sweet and cleanly flames should be aspersed with the mixture of gross and sooty exhalations, such as arise from ardors of the body” (66).⁸³ To prove his assertion of the mechanical and moral equivalence between love and lust, Charleton outlines an idea of human nature, derived from Hobbes,⁸⁴ that is based on the priority of appetite and self-preservation. “There is no such thing in the world, as Good *absolute*; not [sic] do we account anything good, but with *respect* to ourselves” (67). He argues for an epistemology in which the senses interpret the outward signs of objects and present them to the appetite, “to be embraced or rejected” (67):

to know a thing, is to have a conception, or notion of it, correspondent to its *nature*, which declareth or manifesteth its self only by its qualities and proprieties: those qualities are the *signs* or *marks*, by which the *faculty cognitive* is enabled to judge of its good, or evil, and accordingly present it to the *appetite*, to be embraced or rejected (67).

He relates this to human action and language by asserting the slip that human beings make in conflating the “good, profitable, or agreeable” with the “good, fair, or beautiful”:

whatsoever the senses (the observers of the marks of good and evil) represent to the imagination (which formeth conceptions of them accordingly) for good, profitable, or agreeable, is accounted good, or fair, or beautiful, and afterward desired or pursued by the appetite. (67)

⁸³ Here Charleton succinctly illustrates what Harth, Smith, and others argue was a primary mode of feminist thought in the seventeenth century: the attraction of body-less reason for women.

⁸⁴ Charleton’s argument is a rendition of Hobbes’s conception of human nature outlined in Part I, Chapter 6 of *Leviathan* (1651). For example: “But whatsoever is the object of any mans Appetite or Desire; that is it, which he for his part calleth *Good*: And the object of his Hate, and Aversion, *Evill*; And of his Contempt, *Vile* and *Inconsiderable*. For these words of Good, Evill, and Contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: There being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common Rule of Good and Evill, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves ...” (Hobbes 41). Jensen, J. H., “The Ephesian Matron” and Guibbory also draw attention to Charleton’s debt to Hobbes.

Corporeal beauty is only a “mark or sign” of the bearer’s ability to satisfy the appetite of the beholder to “attain that perfection, which is required to its nature” (67). This requirement of nature is self-preservation, in single and in kind. Love is the name we give to the appetite for “the conservation of him *in specie*, or in his kind” (68):

Now this *power-generative* (for the rest belong not to our present theme) being not wholly in the male, nor wholly in the female, but divided betwixt them, the *active* part being the propriety of the male, and the *passive* of the female; so that the conjunction of both sexes is necessary to the perfection of this Power, which consisteth in the actual production of their like. (68)

The appetite for self-preservation animates all individuals, women as well as men. Its satisfaction is attainable through the power-generative of heterosexual union which, as imagined here, is the coming together of the active male and passive female, or essentialized gender difference.⁸⁵ Charleton asserts that common usage assigns the word “lust” to describe the general desire between male and female and “love” to the determined desire for a particular person, but argues that “the indefinite desire of different sex (which is generally called lust) and desire of some one particular person of that different sex (which is generally called love) are one and the same appetite to the act of procreation” (70). He acknowledges that the words “love” and “lust” are used to express different interpretations of the appetite, but still maintains that they describe the same thing: “when we *condemn* this appetite, we give it the disparaging name of *lust*; and when we *approve* it, we clothe it in the neater word, *love*” (71).

Having made his fundamental argument on the equivalence between love and lust, Charleton next refutes the claims of the Platonics. He first analyzes Plato’s *Symposium*,

⁸⁵ In this passage, Charleton subscribes to the Aristotelian one-sex model that Laqueur investigates, though he would argue that what is essentialized in the one-sex model is not sexual difference, but gender, because sex before the seventeenth century is “a sociological and not an ontological category” (Laqueur 8).

which he calls the original of his contemporary Platonics and sums up “*Plato’s* opinion concerning this kind of love”:

That a man, whose mind is full of wisdom and other virtues, is naturally inclined to seek out, and dearly affect some beautiful person, of age and capacity to conceive, in whom he may by frequent instructions and familiar ways of insinuation, beget or produce the like wisdom and virtues: and that the delight he receives therein is very great, as the motive to it is very honorable. And this is the idea of true Platonic love. (71)

Charleton is skeptical about this honorable love, questioning why “they select none but beautiful and youthful persons to become their scholars, since beauty of the body is not always a certain mark of singular capacity in the mind to science and virtue” (72). He goes on to argue that even continence is not a sign of virtue, because continence is contingent on the presence of instinct or appetite. He quotes Hobbes, “the greatest philosopher of our age,” who had the same thing to say about Platonic love: “*The continent have the passion they contain, as much, and more than they that satiate the appetite*”⁸⁶ (72).

Having called into question the Platonic ideal in the original, Charleton goes on to demystify the Platonics of his own time, and lists four reasons why he suspects “that this Platonic passion is but an honorable pretence to conceal a sensual appetite” (73):

First, our Platonics are generally of *different sexes*, whereas *Socrates* and his darling *Alcibiades*, were both masculine. Secondly, ours are commonly both *young*, and in the canicular or scorching years of life [...] Thirdly, *ours* are generally far short of that wisdom and those virtues, that are requisite to engender the like excellencies in others [...] Lastly, ours (especially the women) are for the most part *married* to others, and so ought to propogate virtue (if they had so much as to spare) rather in their husbands and children, than in strangers. (73)

Charleton’s first two reasons for doubting the virtue of contemporary Platonic lovers,

⁸⁶ Guibbory quotes Hobbes’s original: “though *Socrates* be acknowledged for continent, yet the *continent* have the passion they *contain*, as *much* and more than they that satiate the appetite; which maketh me suspect the *platonic* love for merely sensual; but with an honorable pretence for the old to haunt the company of the young and beautiful” (iii).

their youth and different sexes,⁸⁷ are complemented by others that have more basis in personal judgment than objective observation. He is scornful of their wisdom and, finally, scolds the women of the pairs to pay more attention to their husbands and children. That he resorts to figuring the Platonic as a woman is indicative of the utility of the trope of the feminine for his argument.

The satire against women is paired with a satire against philosophy, the philosophical ladies thematizing the pairing. In this narrative, “philosophy” is often contrasted to “reason,” the “philosophical ladies” representing a neoplatonic moral philosophy and sometimes associated with rhetoric and obfuscation. The soldier, Charleton tells us,

though he were no philosopher, nor orator, his head not being altogether so well furnished with arguments of consolation, as his scrip and bottle had been with provision; yet he had so competent a share of the light of nature (which, as many wise men hold, shineth always clearest in the darkness of necessity, and sudden occasions) as directed him bluntly to tell her, that [...] an intemperate sorrow, and afflicting ourselves beyond measure, was not only unreasonable, but also unnatural. (55)

Reason is operative without philosophy, and is immanent within individuals to greater and lesser degrees. “Reason” and “philosophy” signal two different approaches to human knowledge, reason being associated with an inductive, experimental method, and philosophy with a deductive, metaphysical method.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See Bruckmann for the seventeenth-century interpretation of Platonic love which disallows a sexual component (not in the original) and, as Charleton points out, modifies Plato in that the partners are members of the opposite sex, not two men.

⁸⁸ Charleton, a founding member of the Royal Society whose experimental method became the model for scientific investigation, is also an admirer of Hobbes (who was never invited to join the Royal Society) who was skeptical of the reliability of sense perception, and insisted upon the priority of reason and rational thought. Charleton’s experimental and empirical method side by side with a Hobbesian metaphysics is illustrative of his synthesizing impulses.

The soldier is presented as an observant experimentalist who uses reason instead of rhetoric or philosophy to develop conclusions and make his arguments. When he first encounters the matron weeping in her husband's tomb, we are told that

he could perceive something resembling a *woman*, in a mournful dress [...] Having a while stood wondering at this strange and doleful spectacle, and considering with himself, that it could not be a mere apparition; all those stories of ghosts, spectres, and devils in human shape, being but the politic fictions of rulers and priests, to keep the vulgar honest in the dark. (51)

When he convinces the matron to stop her mourning and refresh herself, we are told that he “began with gentle reasons (for rhetorical arguments he had none) to make her sensible of the extreme need she was in of some speedy *corporeal refectio*n” (54). The language Charleton uses to describe the soldier's “administration” of wine and food is the vocabulary of science and experiment: “Which the soldier observing, and concluding with himself, that the virtue of that cordial, which infused into her in a small quantity, had so happily begun his cure, if administered in a greater dose, would not fail to finish it” (54), and “[t]he *soldier* [...] fearing a relapse, had immediate recourse to the *antidote of the bottle*, of whose cordial juice he had so admirable experience” (56). The soldier's ability to read the signs of the matron's physical attributes is mirrored by the narrator's ability to interpret the soldier. The narrator compliments the soldier in terms that are applicable to the narrator himself:

This our *man of war* (who, it seems by the story, was no fool), perceiving and understanding withal, that some seasonable relief from reason and wise counsel was as requisite, to the re-composure of her disordered mind, as his meat and drink had been, to the instauration of her enfeebled body; he bethought himself what to say, that might conduce to the mitigation of her violent sorrow. (55)

The evidence of the story allows the narrator to judge that the soldier is no fool, just as the evidence of the wine and food on the matron allows the soldier to judge its effects.

Human knowledge and understanding, however, whether acquired through reason or philosophy, is dependent upon a third source of knowledge, divine revelation. One

aspect of Charleton's attempt to Christianize Epicurean thought is his recourse to the divine when human reason and observation fail. His defense of the immortality and sovereignty of the human soul ends with a concession to his Epicurean interlocutor that he cannot tell what kind of substance the soul is. While many Christian philosophers and theologians insisted upon the immateriality of the soul, materialism did not support such a view. Charleton's way out of the dilemma is to assert the limitations of human knowledge:

But if the *adversary* shall further urge us to inform him, what kind of *substance* we then conceive the soul to be, we shall ingeniously confess, we do not understand it. Nor are we ashamed of that ignorance, forasmuch as the knowledge thereof is to be fetched, not from reason or philosophy, but from *revelation divine*. [...] But inspirations divine being very rare, our best way will be to suspend such subtle and metaphysical enquiries, till death. (58)

The suspension of metaphysical questions was a strategy of the new scientists, and is often the sign of an experimental approach to knowledge: we can only know what we observe, understanding effects but not causes. Charleton's experimental acceptance of the limitations of human knowledge is evident in another instance:

to which of all these probable causes (or to the conspiracie of them all together), the miracle is to be imputed, I confess, I cannot determine; and therefore willingly resign that nice enquiry to those sages, who pretend to understand the secrets of women's hearts. (55)

Here the appeal is not to divine revelation for enlightenment, but rather it is an ironic reference to women's nature. Experimental restraint here looks a lot like satire against women.

Being able to read and interpret signs and events is both evidence of human reason and constitutive of it. But expectations and conventions can get in the way of judgment. The narrator, like the soldier, sees evidence in the matron's behavior that justifies his belief that she is willing to transfer her affections from her dead husband to the live soldier. "I discern," he says, "a concourse of all those signes, which, as natural and inseparable

characters, are proper to great *joy and pleasure*” (59). That this should be so, however, seems to him incongruous:

To imagine (I say) that this woman should be so soon engulfed in the delightful transports of a *new love*, and that with a fellow so much a stranger, so much her inferior: This certainly is not only highly improbable, but unpardonably scandalous. (59)

This is familiar as an invocation of the standard of *vraisemblance* without the specific vocabulary, one that equates the improbable with the scandalous and is elaborated through and by the figure of a woman. It is an ironic invocation, however, much different from Scudéry’s outraged “Il est vrai que Chimène epousa le Cid, mais il n’est point vraisemblable qu’une fille d’honneur épouse le meurtrier de son père.”⁸⁹ Charleton invokes it not to insist upon its adherence, but to play with the idea. His point is that it might *appear* to be improbable and scandalous, yet an honest and unprejudiced reflection on the matron’s behavior will reveal that her actions are in accordance with human nature. The boundaries of plausibility expand with experience and thought.

It is significant that Charleton uses an appetitive matron as a synecdoche for universal humanity. The intertextuality of the narrative, with the references to Juvenal, Petronius, Plato, and Hobbes, supplies sarcastic and satirical possibilities of interpretation that Charleton exploits. While Charleton argues against a hierarchy of love and lust, his example of the matron betrays the problematics of this dissolution. As such, the narrative is more an exposé than a defense of human nature (Guibbory vii). Margaret Cavendish’s *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* is an interesting contrast to Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron* because it also uses philosophical arguments and dramatizes the epistemological debates of the day within the discourse of fiction. It, too, uses the thematics of female chastity and constancy to problematize conceptions of human nature and knowledge, but to very different effect.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Genette and Phillips. See Chapter One.

2. Margaret Cavendish

I am not covetous, but as ambitious as ever any of my sex was, is, or can be; which makes, that though I cannot be *Henry* the Fifth, or *Charles* the Second; yet I endeavour to be *Margaret* the *First*; and although I have neither power, time nor occasion to conquer the world as *Alexander* or *Ceasar* did; yet rather than not to be mistress of one, since Fortune and the Fates would give me none, I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is in everyone's power to do the like. (Cavendish, BW 124)

Margaret Cavendish was already considered eccentric when these words were published in 1666 in the preface to her *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*, her reputation having been made in 1653 with the publication of *Poems and Fancies* and *Philosophical Fancies*. She wrote and published these first books while she was in England with her brother-in-law Charles to petition parliament for damages during her and her husband's exile.⁹⁰ Dorothy Osborne, writing to her future husband, William Temple, tells him that he "need not send me my Lady Newcastle's book [*Poems and Fancies*] at all, for I have seen it, and am satisfied that there are many soberer people in Bedlam; I'll swear her friends are much to blame to let her go abroad" (quoted in Blaydes 52). Other contemporaries agreed with Osborne. The diarist Pepys comments after reading her biography of her husband, that she is a "mad, conceited ridiculous woman [... whose husband was] an asse to suffer her to write" (quoted in Blaydes 52). Mary Evelyn, wife of Royal Society member John Evelyn, noted that "her books aiming at science, difficulties, high notions, [terminate] commonly in nonsense, oaths, and obscenity"

⁹⁰ William, Marquis and later Duke of Newcastle, went into exile after the disastrous battle of Marston Moor (1644), where the royalist troops he commanded suffered a stunning defeat. Margaret Cavendish's petition was based on the fact that she was the dependent of a delinquent, and entitled to monies; her claim was denied on the basis that she married William after his delinquency and was therefore not entitled to support.

(quoted in Bowerbank 92). Although her contemporaries largely found her ridiculous, her philosophical interventions and her generic heterogeneity are beginning to be legible to varying degrees.

Recent scholarship has tried to illuminate the context of Cavendish's writing, in the hopes of making her writing more comprehensible to modern readers. A consensus has been reached about one aspect of her writing: that her aristocratic and royalist loyalties during the Civil War and the interregnum enabled her.⁹¹ While some are made uncomfortable by the pairing of expressions of feminist sentiment with an undemocratic or imperial worldview, Catherine Gallagher is able to forgo apologies for Cavendish's position and argue that

Toryism and feminism converge because the ideology of absolute monarchy provides, in particular historical situations, a transition to an ideology of the absolute self. It is the paradoxical connection between the *roi absolu* and the *moi absolu* that I wish to trace in the early history of feminism. (Gallagher 135)

Drawing attention to the political context in which Cavendish was living makes her writing more legible. One critic, for instance, has reevaluated the fact that Cavendish wrote plays during the interregnum when the theaters were closed, seeing it not as an eccentric or irrelevant gesture, but a politically motivated one.⁹² Examining the scientific and philosophical context as well shows her fiction to be more than eccentric, and part of a larger conversation. For Cavendish, fiction was not seen in opposition to natural philosophical discourse but was a suitable mode of expression for some of its central questions.

⁹¹ Two influential essays in this regard are Natalie Zemon Davis's "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820" and Catherine Gallagher's "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England." Davis's 1980 essay was an early foray into the ground covered later by critics like Beasley, discussed in a previous chapter.

⁹² See Wiseman.

Margaret Cavendish née Lucas came from a royalist family, and she spent her young womanhood in the exiled court of Queen Henrietta Maria. She met and married William Cavendish, many years her senior, and lived with him in exile in Paris and Antwerp until the Restoration. It was in those days of exile that William and his brother Charles cultivated the intellectual companionship of what came to be known as the Cavendish Circle,⁹³ a group of thinkers, often meeting more through correspondence than in person, that included Gassendi, Mersenne, Hobbes, and Descartes. In an often-cited letter to the English mathematician John Pell, Charles Cavendish asks

for his reaction to Descartes's book on the soul (*Les Passions de L'ame*, 1649), looks forward to reading Gassendi's book on Epicurean philosophy, asks about Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* he awaits, and reports that Sir William Davenant has "lately sent my Brother a Preface to an intended Poem [*Gondibert*] of his not yet printed" with Hobbes's additions. (Battigelli 47)

The Cavendish Circle is recognized as being instrumental in the circulation and spread of atomism, and even though Margaret claims never to have learned French, and never to have spoken more than a few words to any of the famous philosophers who came to her house, her writings bear witness to her engagement with those same philosophical concerns.

Walter Charleton contributed to a volume of letters in her honor, commissioned by her husband on her death in 1676, and comments on her intellectual contributions and philosophical interests. "For your *NATURAL Philosophy*," he says,

is ingenious and free, and may be, for ought I know, Excellent, but give me leave, *Madam*, to confess, I have not yet been so happy, as to discover much therein that's *Apodictical*, or wherein I think my self much obliged to acquiesce. (Bowerbank 305)

An odd observation to put in a letter designed to pay her honor, Charleton continues by

⁹³ See Clucas, Jones, and Popkin for an appraisal of the Cavendish Circle's importance.

referencing the Royal Society, that “Tribunal of Philosophical Doctrines,” and their “strict and rigid” standards of proof. She is in good company, however, and he adds that:

[t]his, *Madam*, can be no discredit to your Philosophy in particular, because common to all others: and he is a bold Man, who dares to exempt the *Physics* of *Aristotle* himself, or of *Democritus*, or *Epicurus*, or *Des Cartes*, or *Mr Hobbs*, or any other hitherto known. For my part, Seriously, I should be loath to affirm, that they are any other but ingenious Comments of Mens Wits upon the dark and inexplicable Text of the World; plausible Conjectures at best; and no less different, perhaps, from the true History of Nature, than Romances are from the true actions of *Heroes*. (306)

If her philosophy lacks certainty, she is in excellent company with Aristotle, Democritus, Epicurus, Descartes, and Hobbes. The homology Charleton offers between natural philosophy and fiction is crucial to understanding both his and Cavendish’s interventions in that genre. The “true History of Nature” and the “true actions of Heroes” are both made available through representation, they are both aspects of “the dark and inexplicable Text of the World,” both granted the status of “plausible conjectures.” Charleton suggests that natural philosophy and fiction operate in a similar way and have similar authority and legitimacy. He might reasonably be suspected of tongue-in-cheek here, but this understanding of fiction and philosophy as aligned rather than competing or incommensurable discourses is illustrated by others, too. Thomas Glanvill recuperates the epithet “Romantick” by reminding his readers that it is a matter of perspective and contingency. Speaking on the uses of telescopes and microscopes, those instruments that Margaret Cavendish so abhorred, he avers:

What success and information we may expect from the *Advancements* of this *Instrument*, it would perhaps appear *Romantick* and *ridiculous* to say; As, no doubt, to have talk’d of the *spots* in the *Sun*, and vast *inequalities* in the *surface* of the *Moon*, and those other *Telescopical certainties*, before the *Invention* of that *Glass*, would have been thought *phantastick* and *absurd*.⁹⁴

This is the same defense of experience for enlarging the boundary of plausibility that Behn

⁹⁴ Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), quoted in McKeon 69-70.

makes use of in her preface to *Oroonoko*, saying

If there be any thing that seems Romantick, I beseech your Lordship to consider, these Countries do, in all things, so far differ from ours, that they produce unconceivable Wonders; at least, they appear so to us, because New and Strange. (Behn, Works, Vol 3 56)

The homology that Charleton deploys between natural philosophy and fiction in the Romance mode, “the true History of Nature” and “true actions of Heroes,” is echoed by Thomas Sprat, apologist for the Royal Society. In his *History of the Royal Society*, he acknowledges that it can be accused “of framing *Romances*, instead of solid Histories of Nature.” He continues by asserting that scientific knowledge and experience expand the limits of plausibility, saying “it is certain that many things, which now seem *miraculous*, would not be so, if once we come to be fully acquainted with their compositions, and operations” (quoted in McKeon 70). Cavendish has a similar approach to natural philosophy and fiction that posits them as complementary, not oppositional, discourses.

In the preface to *The Blazing World* she offers an explanation of the mechanics of fiction: “*fictions* are an issue of man’s fancy, framed in his own mind, according as he pleases, without regard, whether the thing he fancies, be really existent without his mind or not” (Cavendish, BW 123). *Fiction* springs from man’s *fancy*, which she opposes to *reason*:

so that reason searches the depths of nature, and enquires after the true causes of natural effects; but fancy creates of its own accord whatever it pleases and delights in its own work. The end of reason, is truth; the end of fancy, is fiction. (Cavendish, BW 123)

Fancy and reason are the faculties from which fiction and truth spring but just because they come from different sources does not mean that they are opposed or incommensurable. If fiction is not the same as truth, Cavendish hastens to clarify the common source of reason and fancy:

but mistake me not, when I distinguish *fancy* from *reason*: I mean not as if fancy were not made by the rational parts of matter; but by *reason* I understand a rational search and enquiry into the causes of natural effects; and by *fancy* a voluntary creation or production of the mind, both being

effects, or rather action of the rational parts of matter. (Cavendish, BW 123-24)

Reason and fancy, and therefore truth and fiction, are both the “action of the rational parts of matter,” and that phrase signals Cavendish’s engagement with a mechanist and materialist natural philosophy. Her vocabulary of rationality, however, is opposed to a natural philosophy based on experiment and observation exemplified by the Royal Society and operative in Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron*.

The Royal Society, founded in 1660 and chartered in 1662, had its beginnings in the 1640s and ‘50s, and some of its more famous members include Hooke, Boyle, Evelyn, Charleton, Berkeley, Wren, Dryden, and Newton. Taking for its model the vision of scientific inquiry offered by Francis Bacon in *The New Atlantis* (1627) of “Salomon’s House,” the Royal Society was a place where experimental scientists in the Baconian tradition could share their findings and experimental procedures. The inductive method of the scientist of the Royal Society relied on observation and sense perception to amass data from which conclusions could be drawn. Cavendish, on the other hand, was suspicious of sense perception and relied on reason and rational inquiry, a deductive approach based on first principles. It would be a mistake to conclude that induction was the tool of forward-thinking modern experimenters and deduction the tool of retrograde Aristotelians. Cavendish’s reliance on deduction and skepticism of sense perception was in line with both Descartes and Hobbes,⁹⁵ and she boldly scolds Aristotle for being in thrall to “vulgar senses” and links empiricism with Aristotelianism:

for the World, or the most part, judges not according to truth and right, but condemns according to malice and spight: but when time hath rotted the teeth of spight, and blunted the edges of malice, it may gain an applause, although not so many dotting Lovers as *Aristotle*’s Works hath gained; yet his is only what the vulgar senses have brought in, not what the subtil Conceptions have found out; his Knowledge was got by untimely deaths and cruel dissections, not by deep and serious contemplations, at least his contemplation followed his Dissectings: but had *Aristotle* studied the

⁹⁵ See Hutton.

motions of nature, or Natural Motions, as he did the Parts of Nature, or Natural Parts, he would have been far more learned than he was and his Scholars would have profited more thereby. (Cavendish, NP 400)

Her critique of empirical scientific inquiry continues in her later work, too. *The Blazing World* contains the argument that optical tools like microscopes and telescopes are false and betray the senses. The Empress tells her bird- and bear-men philosophers that:

now I plainly do perceive that your glasses are false informers, and instead of discovering the truth, delude your senses; wherefore I command you to break them, and let the bird-men trust only to their natural eyes, and examine celestial objects by the motions of their own sense and reason [...] if their glasses were true informers, they would rectify their irregular sense and reason; but, said she, nature has made your sense and reason more regular than Art has your glasses, for they are mere deluders, and will never lead you to the knowledge of truth. (Cavendish, BW 141-42)

This is an attack on the methodology and epistemology of the Royal Society in general, and Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) in particular.⁹⁶ Sense and reason lead to knowledge and truth, not experimental tools that distort vision.

Cavendish's embrace of rational inquiry as opposed to experimentation is consistent with the strategy of other seventeenth-century women thinkers. The idea of a rational, sex-less soul was used to explore and advance the cause of women's equality and their rights in education and marriage.⁹⁷ Erica Harth identifies 1640-1660 in France as a "Cartesian moment allowing for exceptional discursive openness" (Harth, Cartesian Women 64) of which some women took advantage. Hilda Smith argues the case in England, identifying 1650-1680 as the significant years for the development of feminist rational thought. Smith articulates what it was that women interested in advancing

⁹⁶ See Battigelli (97) and Eileen O'Neill's Introduction to Cavendish's *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* for textual analysis that makes clear her objections to Hooke.

⁹⁷ Besides Harth and Smith, cited below, others who have argued that an appeal to reason was a particularly useful strategy for women in this period are Bordo, O'Neill, and Riley.

equality found useful in an appeal to reason and the rational faculty as a universal human resource:

What these women needed was a set of ideas which, while not necessarily focused on the issue of sex roles, would lend itself to analyzing such roles. They also required ideas that were sufficiently abstract and separate from contemporary institutions so that they could be used in new ways. Finally, these ideas had to be susceptible to formulations of fundamental principles. Science provided some limited impetus and justification for their questioning of customary beliefs and relations, and in rationalism they found the ideology that best answered their desire to assert equality and to develop a framework for questioning the status quo. (Smith, H., Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists 60)

For Cavendish, the theories of rationalism and skepticism associated with the New Science were liberating and useful tools: they justified her participation in the philosophical questions of her day by denying the importance of formal education (both Hobbes and Descartes emphasized the importance of reading “the Book of the World”) and insisting upon the rational capabilities of the human, not just male, mind.

Her commitment to the rational abilities of the human mind is evident throughout her writing career,⁹⁸ and to look at her fiction and her statements about romance narrative in light of her assertion that it is an expression of rational matter is informative. If fiction, like natural philosophy and scientific inquiry are the effects of rational matter, not all fiction is equal, and Cavendish is anxious to distance her fiction from romance. Her critique of romance rests upon calling into question its morality and utility. William

⁹⁸ Her natural philosophy does undergo a change, however, and several critics have noted how she shifts from an early embrace of a mechanistic conception of matter and motion, to one that is vitalist in nature. John Rogers has a powerful reading of Cavendish's rejection of mechanism as a rejection of “the Hobbesian conjecture of the priority of force” (Rogers 188) She comes to a position that refutes what Rogers calls an “implicitly masculinist explanation of motion as reactivity to violent impulsion,” arguing instead that motion is a consequence not of force, but of volition. Stephen Clucas argues that this represents a synthesis of mechanism and vitalism, because she argues in her philosophical texts that “all natural phenomena are reducible to matter,” but also insists “that matter is living and sentient” (Clucas 262). See also Moore and Sarasohn for a discussion of Cavendish's incorporation of vitalism into her natural philosophy.

Cavendish in a prefatory poem to *Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life* (1656), a heterogeneous collection of different fictional modes, sets the tone:

Gallants and Ladies, what do you lack? pray buy
 Tales a la mode, new fashion'd here do lye:
 So do Romancies, your grave studies too,
 Acadamies of Love, teaching to woo
 And to be woo'd, corrupts more Virgins then
 Hot Satyrs turn'd to Amorous Courtly Men (Cavendish, NP sig b r).

If the reading of “Romancies” corrupts more virgins than it reforms rakes, it might be because, as Margaret Cavendish asserts in *The Worlds Olio* (1655), the genre itself is “an adulterate Issue, begot betwixt History and Poetry” (9). She then gives a definition of Romance that reiterates the distinction between poetry and History, and she asserts, as Scudéry did, that romance mixes truth and falsehoods:

Romancy is as it were poetical fancies; put into a Historical stile; but they are rather tales than fancies; for tales are a number of impossibilities put into a methodical discourse, and though they are taken from the grounds of truth, yet they are heightened to that degree, as they become meer falsehoods; where poetry is an Imitatour of nature to create new, not a falsifying of the old; and History gives a just account, not inlarging the reckoning. (9)

She preserves the distinction between Poetry and History; poetry creates anew and history gives a just account, Romance does neither, being a “lie made from truth” (9).

Cavendish does include many “romantical tales” in *Natures Pictures*, but she explains at length in one of the numerous prefatory pieces that her “Romancicall Tales” are different:

As for those tales I name Romancicall, I would not have my readers think I write them either to please, or to make foolish whining lovers, for it is a humor of all humors, I have an aversion to; but my endeavor is to express the sweetness of Vertue and the Graces, and to dress and adorn them in the best expressions I can, as being one of their servants, that do unfeignedly, unweariedly, industriously, and faithfully wait upon them. (sig C2 r)

In writing “romancical” tales, she is not pandering to lovers, but expressing virtue and grace. Using the classical trope of language as clothing as Charleton and later Mackenzie do, she implies that at least some virtues and graces are best adorned in fiction. She continues with a denial that she herself has ever read a romance:

Neither do I know the rule or method of Romancy Writing; for I never read a Romancy Book throughout in all my life, I mean such as I take to be Romances, wherein little is writ which ought to be practised, but rather shunned as foolish Amorosities, and desperate Follies, not noble Loves discreet Vertues and true Valour. (sig C2 r)

In this definition of “Romance” the critical aspect is the wisdom of imitating the actions represented there. Romance narrative contains nothing that should be imitated, and any narrative that does contain “noble Loves discreet Vertues and true Valor” does not fit her definition of romance. This leaves room for interpretation, especially as she is silent on any titles. If she doesn’t name names, she is specific about numbers, asserting:

The most I ever read of Romances was but part of three Books, as the three parts of one, and the half of two others, otherwise I never read any; unless as I might by chance, as when I see a Book, not knowing of what it treats, I may take and read some half a dozen lines, where perceiving it a Romance, straight throw it from me, as an unprofitable study, which neither instructs, directs, nor delights me. (Sig C2 v)

Reading is only profitable if it instructs, directs, or delights, and Cavendish denies romances the ability to perform any of those functions as part of its definition. The classical dictum “plaire et instruire” is invoked here, in an illustrative example of how the literary precept participates in the epistemological network.

Transforming the noun “Romance” into the adjective “Romancical” accomplishes the transformation of “unprofitable romance” into “instructive romancical tales,” and although romances should be shunned as models of behavior, she is still able to exploit some of the conventions in a number of her works as well as hold an expansive view of fiction that takes its status as an epistemological practice seriously.⁹⁹

Cavendish’s *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* is a “romancical tale” that like Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron* stages philosophical controversies in fiction. Where

⁹⁹ “The Contract,” “Assaulted and Pursued Chastity,” and *The Blazing World* are the lengthiest of her romance narratives and all have elements that are self-consciously in the romance tradition, with shipwrecks, mistaken identity, and a love plot. Other pieces in *Natures Pictures* also employ romance conventions.

Charleton used the fictional narrative to frame discursive asides that amount to soliloquies, Cavendish embeds her philosophical engagement more firmly within the narrative itself. Cavendish offers a different interpretation of human nature, one that can be seen as a challenge to Charleton's empiricism and gender ideology. Where Charleton mobilized conventional misogynist fears about woman's inconstancy and bodily appetites, Cavendish's narrative argues that constancy and love of chastity are the very essence of femininity. As part of her argument she deploys various ideas about human nature and language that show her engagement with the new philosophy even as she revises some of its basic tenets. In both, human nature is figured by a woman and tropes of femininity are constitutive of the articulation of the argument.

Assaulted and Pursued Chastity contains a critique of narrative modes that indicates Cavendish's preferences. The heroine, during a time of captivity, is offered different kinds of reading to occupy herself:

Whereupon the old lady asked her, if she would have some books to read in; she answered, yes, if they were good ones, or else, said she, they are like impertinent persons, that displease more by their vain talk, than they delight with their company. (Cavendish, *BW* 54)

She refuses, however, a great many kinds, beginning with romances:

Will you have some **romances**, said the old lady? She answered no, for they extol virtue so much as begets envy, in those that have it not, and know, they cannot attain unto that perfection; and they beat infirmities so cruelly, as it begets pity, and by that a kind of love; besides their impossibilities makes them ridiculous to reason; and in youth they beget wanton desires, and amorous affections. (54, my emphasis)

Didacticism, impossibilities, and licentiousness are the contradictory qualities she holds against romances. She objects to other genres as well, including the two philosophical modes:

What say you to **natural philosophy**, said she? She answered, they were mere opinions, and if there be any truths said she, they are so buried under falsehood, as they cannot be found out. Will you have **moral philosophy**? No said she, for they divide the passions so nicely, and command with such severity as it is against nature, to follow them, and impossible to perform them. (54-55, my emphasis)

The list continues with logic, history, and religion:

What think you of **logic**? said she. Answered she, they are nothing but sophistry, making factious disputes, but conclude nothing. Will you have **history**? No said she, for they are seldom writ in the time of action, but a long time after, when truth is forgotten; but if they be writ at present, yet partially or ambition, or fears bear too much sway, (said she) you shall have **divine books**, no said she, they raise up such controversies, as they cannot be allayed again, tormenting the mind about that they cannot know whilst they live, and frights their conscience so as makes man afraid to die. (55, my emphasis)

The only books that the young lady will allow as useful and enjoyable are “play-books” and “mathematical ones.”

The first, said she, discovers and expresses the humours and manners of men, by which I shall know myself and others the better, and in shorter time than experience can teach me. (55)

Mathematics will provide not just “all arts useful and pleasant for the life of man, as music, architecture, navigation, fortification, water works, fire-works, all engines, instruments, wheels and many more such like” (55), but the ability to

measure the earth, to reach the heavens, to number the stars, to know the motions of the planets, to divide time and to compass the whole world, the mathematics is a candle of truth, whereby I may peep into the works of Nature to imitate her in little therein, it comprises all that truth can challenge, all other books, disturb the life of man, this only settles it and composes it in sweet delight. (55)

Because mathematics is “a candle of truth,” it will allow people to

demonstrate the truth by reason, and measure out my life by the rule of good actions, to set ciphers and figures on those persons to whom I ought to be grateful, to number my days by pious devotions, that I may be found weighty, when I am put in the scales of God’s justice. (55)

Historians of science have agreed on the importance of mathematics and mathematical models for the New Science and the Scientific Revolution, and so Cavendish’s approval of mathematics is consistent with the seventeenth-century philosophical consensus that mathematics might be used to build certainty in the face of skepticism and the epistemological crisis.¹⁰⁰ If she asserts her preference for mathematics, however, there are

other aspects of the New Science that she disputes, and fiction in the romance mode offers her an ideal heuristic.

One aspect of the New Science that Cavendish wishes to critique is the empirical method, with its privileging of appearances. Her prefatory remarks include an apology for the story that follows in which, she says, her “endeavor was to show young women the dangers of travelling without their parents, husbands or particular friends to guard them” (47). She warns that “Heaven doth not always protect the persons of virtuous souls from rude violences” and complains that women,

if they do avoid dangers, they seldom avoid a scandal. For the world in many causes judges according to what may be, and not according to what is, for they judge not according to the truth, but show; no not the heart but the countenance, which is the cause that many a chaste woman hath a spotted reputation. (47)

Cavendish wants to overthrow the tyranny of appearances, asserting that “what may be” is an illegitimate standard for judging a woman’s reputation. Cavendish links this critique of appearance to natural philosophy, joining the debate between reason and empiricism, arguing on the side of reason that “show” or “countenance” is not the correct standard for making judgments, scientific or otherwise.

Beginning with an obvious reference to the English Civil War, the narrative opens with an allegory that will continue to be invoked throughout:

In the Kingdom of Riches, after a long and sleepy peace, overgrown with plenty and ease[,] luxury broke out into factious sores, and feverish ambition, into a plaguey rebellion (48).

A daughter from that kingdom, on her way home after peace was made (having been sent

¹⁰⁰ See Shapin for a very useful bibliographic essay on the historiography of the Scientific Revolution that complicates my necessarily simplified explanation of the importance of mathematics. See also Reiss, Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism for an argument about the importance of mathematics for seventeenth-century epistemological revision.

abroad for the wars), was “cast by a storm, from the place she steered to, upon the Kingdom of Sensuality” (48). She ends up in the care of a bawd, who,

having commerce with most nations, could speak many languages; and this Lady’s amongst the rest, [so] that what with her languages and her flattering words, she enticed this young Lady to live with her, and this old bawd (her supposed virtuous mistress) used her kindly, fed her daintily, clothed her finely. (49)

To prepare her unsuspecting guest for the life of a prostitute, the bawd “began to read her lectures of Nature, telling her she should use her beauty whilst she had it, and not to waste her youth idly, but to make the best profit of both, to purchase pleasure and delight” (49).

To these *carpe diem* arguments, the bawd adds a description of human nature that sounds a great deal like Charleton’s depiction in *The Ephesian Matron*:

besides, nature hath made nothing vainly, but to some useful end; and nothing merely for itself, but for common benefit and general good, as earth, ether, air and fire, sun, moon, stars, light, heat, cold, and the like. So beauty with strength and appetites, either to delight her creatures that are in being; or to the end, or ways to procure more by procreation; for Nature only lives by survivors, and that cannot be without communication and society. Wherefore it is a sin against Nature, to be reserved and coy, and take heed, said she, of offending Nature, for she is a great and powerful goddess, transforming all things out of one shape into another, and those that serve her faithfully and according as she commands, she puts them in an easy and delightful form; but those that displease her, she makes them to be a trouble, and torment to themselves. (49)

The bawd repeats Charleton’s argument that “power generative” is the driving force of nature, and burlesques his suggestion that adherence to nature’s dictates is a religion. The bawd’s natural philosophical discourse slips into the moral and theological, and both are used to convince the lady of the necessity and nobility of “serving nature.” The bawd advises her to forgo worship of the gods and submit to nature:

wherefore serve Nature, for she is the only and true goddess, and not those that men call upon, as Jupiter, Juno, and a hundred more, that living men vainly offer unto; being only men and women which were deified for invention, and heroic actions. (49)

In Charleton’s hands, these arguments are used to explain and justify the behavior of the matron. Cavendish’s heroine, however, sees these arguments as a trap that is used by self-

serving bawds: “The young Lady being of quick apprehension began to suspect some design and treachery against her” (50). The rest of the narrative is about the lady’s determination to preserve her chastity against appetitive male desire.

When the Prince, who was “a grand monopolizer of young virgins” (50), comes, Miseria (as she is now allegorically named) “disputing in controversies with herself, whether she should lose her honour and live, or save her honour and die” (51), challenges the Prince to “show [him]self a master of passion, a king of clemency, a god of pity and compassion, and prove not [him]self a beast to appetite, a tyrant to innocence, a devil to chastity, virtue and piety” (52). She does not deny the existence of appetite, but asserts that only beasts are subject to it. Making the opposite argument to Charleton’s, she makes humanity dependent not on appetite, but the control of appetite, and articulates a neo-stoical moral position that emphasizes control of the passions.¹⁰¹ Miseria comes to love the Prince, but his prior (loveless) marriage precludes their own legal union and she is continually forced to flee him, her sense of honor being bound entirely in her right to sexual continence. She chides him, “You cannot condemn me for going away, since my stay might prove my ruin, you having not power over your passions” (77), and pleads “let me not live here to please his appetite” (84). Women are the victims of men’s passions, and the ability to moderate the passions or appetites is the sign of reason. The Prince is compared with an old captain who befriends the Lady in her boy’s disguise: “he was most temperate not only in moderating his passion, but appetites with reason, honour, and religion” (108).

¹⁰¹ See Margaret Osler and Letizia A. Panizza’s introduction to *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquility: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought* for a discussion of the tension between Epicurean and Stoic views of human nature and the influence of the tension in early modern thought. This is a huge and controversial topic, and my treatment here is necessarily cursory. Determining the specific influence of Stoic versus Epicurean philosophy is not necessary to my argument that for Charleton and Cavendish, fiction was a valid forum for their exploration.

The Lady runs; the Prince follows. Disguised as a boy, the Lady (now called Travellia) and the captain, who becomes her adoptive father, are shipwrecked in a far kingdom which gives Cavendish the opportunity for ethnographic commentary on the appearance, customs, government, and religion of another people. She and the captain are kept by these people for a year who, “not employing them to any labour [...] fed them daintily of what they could eat: for some meats they could not eat, as man’s flesh, for they had a custom in that country, to keep great store of slaves, both males and females, to breed on, as we do breed flocks of sheep, and other cattle” (69). Travellia and the captain surmise that the intention is to sacrifice them, and the captain notes: “there is no way to escape, unless we had their language, and could make them believe we came from the gods; and that the gods would punish them, if they put them to death” (69). This instrumental conception of language has a different inflection from Charleton’s argument about the linguistic conflation between love and lust, which suggests that for him words are only and always arbitrary and chimerical. In Cavendish’s narrative, language has an effect on reality, in this case, a lifesaving one. Travellia learns the language, and studies their religion, so that she might persuade them to spare her and the captain. The moment for the display of language comes at the preparation for the sacrifice, when

the King being placed at the head of the altar with a dart in his right hand, the spear of the dart being an entire diamond, cut with a sharp point, to signify the piercing beams of the sun, which spear, he usually struck into the heart of the sacrificed; which heart the priest used to cut out, and gave the King to eat raw, whilst the priest sang songs in the praise of the sun, as the father of all things. (71)

Travellia, as a boy, “called to them, in their own language, at which they grew mute with wonder, and being all silent, he thus spake” (71). Representing herself and the captain as messengers from the gods, the speech includes references to the will of the gods and demonstrations of the power of the gods.

The King and his subjects are suitably awed by this display and are eager to be obedient to these messengers. After an imposed two-day fast and order of silence,

Travellia delivers a sermon to the people, a sermon that outlines a vision of the way in which human beings operate. Theology and philosophy converge neatly here, and the sermon begins with a discourse on free will:

the gods hath strewn lots among mankind of moveable things which chance gathers up, and chance being blind mistakes both in the gathering and distributing: now the gods made this chance by their providence when they made man, for man hath no more knowledge of the transitory things of the world, than what chance gives them. (73)

Chance works to the gods' advantage because it guarantees that "none have perfect knowledge" and "the gods govern the world by ignorance" (73). Human knowledge and understanding are imperfect by design, a corollary to Charleton's assertion of the role of divine revelation in human knowledge, and this imperfection is the grounds for an analogy between gods and their subjects, as well as the human soul and sensitive spirits, which is similar to Charleton's:

For the soul is a kind of god in itself, to direct and guide those things that are inferior to it; to perceive and descry into those things that are far above it, to create by invention, to delight in contemplations. (74)

The sovereign soul is also, in line with the orthodox Christian view, immortal, for "though it is not a god from all eternity, yet it is a kind of deity to all eternity, for it shall never die" (74). Instead of Charleton's maternal metaphor, Cavendish uses one that is less precise in terms of the mechanics of body-soul communication: "and though the body hath a relation to it [the soul], yet no otherwise than the mansion of Jove hath unto Jove" (74). As in Charleton, communication between the body and the soul is mediated by the "sensitive spirits." Travellia in her sermon continues, "[t]he body is only the residing place, and the sensitive spirits are as the soul's angels, or messengers and intelligencers; so the souls of men are to the gods as the sensitive spirits to the soul" (74). The homology of soul is to god as sensitive spirit is to soul recapitulates the favored Scholastic figure of microcosm mirroring the macrocosm.¹⁰² Cavendish refrains from having Travellia assert the

universality of the human soul or reason:

And though it is not every creature that hath that soul, but only man, for beasts have none, nor every man, for most men are beasts, only the sensitive spirits and the shape maybe, but not the soul; yet none know when the soul is out or in, but the gods; and not only other bodies may not know it, but the same body be ignorant thereof. (74)

The distinction between men and beasts is difficult to maintain without the human soul, and human understanding once again pales next to the divine.

If Charleton and Cavendish share a strategy for explaining the relation of body and soul, Cavendish does not agree with his wry nonchalance about the role of appetite. Charleton asserts the equivalence of lust (desire for the many) and love (desire for the particular) as being a manifestation of one and the same natural and normal appetite. Cavendish grants an equivalency between the two, also, but she demonstrates how the appetite for the particular is as harmful and base as that for the many, because the male appetite for the particular, in her fictional illustration, still victimizes women. When the Lady escapes the Prince for a second time, fleeing the uninhabited island they and their ships were both cast upon, “he grew so enraged that he lost all patience” (86) and, appealing to his comrades’ will to reproduce, says “My friends,”

we have here a pleasant island uninhabited, but what is possessed by ourselves; and certainly, we might become a famous people, had we women to build posterity; making a commonwealth: but as we are all men, we can only build us houses, to live and die in, but not children to survive us. (87)

He proposes that they “go a-piracing for women,” an idea that is met with great enthusiasm, “so pleased they were with the imagination of the female sex, as those whose lot was to stay, prayed for the others’ good success, that seldom or never prayed before”

¹⁰² See Sawday for a discussion of this analogy being the basis for the attack on metaphor and figurative language that some argue was characteristic of a seventeenth-century epistemological-semiotic crisis.

(87). This lust for the female sex in general is marshaled by the Prince's desire for the individual lady, and this is made clear: "but the Prince's intention was only to find that female he lost; caring not to seek those he never saw" (87). His particular desire authorizes the general desire as Cavendish, too, conflates lust and love as appetitive and injurious to woman's own capacity for self-determination.

Cavendish's conception of the human soul and her defense of chastity against appetite come together at the end of the narrative. The Lady, having been (disguised as a boy) loved by the Queen of the Kingdom of Amity, is given command of her army for the protracted war with the Kingdom of Amour. Amour's army is commanded by none other than the Prince, since the people of Amour, are "a people given to ease, and delighting in effeminate pleasures, [who] shunned the wars, sending out only the most vulgar people who were rather slaves than subjects" (89). Victory in the war between Amity and Amour is fickle, "so equally hath Nature distributed her gifts, that everyone would have a just proportion, did not Fortune disorder and misplace her works by her several accidents" (93). The crucial moment comes when, the Queen of Amity being the prisoner of the King of Amour, the Queen's army, under Travellia, wins a decisive victory. The King offers his ambassador to discuss terms of surrender, but Travellia wants to press on, insisting on not just the return of the Queen, "but the resigning of his [the King of Amour] crown, and so his kingdom to her" (103). Travellia's indignation and enthusiasm is checked by one of the council "who was like Nestor for years and experience" (103), and who offers advice on diplomacy and state-craft, saying

But states cannot subsist with valiant hands alone; unless they hold the politic head, which is the guide to great designs; it burns more cities than granadoes do, it undermines strong towns, pulls down great works, ruins forts, sets battles, takes prisoners, makes slaves, and conquers kings and kingdoms; and that we call policy in a public state, is called discretion in a private family; and it is not, as the vulgar think it, a cheat, or mere deceit, but a wise prudence, to prevent the worst of ills, or to keep peace, or get tranquility. (103-4)

Convinced by the speech that employs a well-known analogy between the family and the state that had much currency for royalists during the interregnum and the Restoration,¹⁰³ Travellia agrees to abide by diplomatic protocols. In the meantime, the King and the Queen have made their own peace: The King, not being able to surrender the Queen to her people, instead surrenders his crown to her, saying, “since you must, and will go from this place, let me go with you to set your triumphs out, and lead me as your slave” (106). The Queen for her part assures him that “I will stay until there is such a peace made, as you may receive as much profit, and as little losses thereby as I” (106).

This peace between the King and Queen anticipates the peace between Travellia and the Prince, whose wife has fortuitously died:

when Travellia heard he was a widower, her heart did beat like to a feverish pulse, being moved with several passions, fearing it was not so, hoping it was so, joying if it were so, grieving that she ought not wish it so.
(113)

She must cast off her male disguise and

make herself known unto the army by word of mouth, that she was a woman, otherwise they might think she was made away by a violent death; and that the report of being a woman, was only a trick to deceive them; and from thence arise such a mutiny, as might bring ruin on both kingdoms.
(114)

The speech she makes to the troops is a defense against the charge of immodesty for dressing like a man: “I am come here at this present to declare I am a woman, although I am habited like a man, and perchance you may think it immodesty;¹⁰⁴ but they that will

¹⁰³ See Ezell, *The Patriarch’s Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* for a discussion of the analogy between state and family in England during the period. The analogy has currency in France, too. See also Stone.

¹⁰⁴ When Travellia confesses to the Queen, who has been in love with her, she does not defend herself against a charge of immodesty, but deceit: “Travellia begged her pardon, telling her, it was the cause of her misfortunes that concealed her, and not out of any evil design she had to deceive her” (113).

judge charitably, will inquire the reason before they give their censure” (115). The reason for her disguise is not immodesty, or a willful deception, but rather necessity. “Necessity,” she says, “did enforce me to conceal my sex, to protect my honour” (115). She then makes the love of chastity the sovereign nature of women, as the soul is sovereign of the body:

for as the love of soul and a body is inseparable, so should the love of chastity, and the effeminate sex; and who can love, and not share in danger? And since no danger ought to be avoided, nor life considered, in respect of their honours; and to guard that safe from enemies, no habit is to be denied; for it is not the outward garments that can corrupt the honest minds, for modesty may clothe the soul of a naked body, and a sword becomes a woman when it is used against the enemies of her honour; for though her strength be weak, yet she ought to show her will; and to die in the defense of honour, is to live with noble fame; therefore neither camp, nor court, nor city, nor country, nor danger, nor habit, nor any worldly felicity, must separate the love of chastity and our sex. (115)

Here she effectively opposes Charleton’s sardonic position that for human beings, represented by the matron, lust is an appetite equivalent to hunger, and its satisfaction just as natural and unremarkable. In Cavendish’s formulation, love of chastity is the inseparable feminine attribute and is the motivating force in action, instead of appetitive lust, which is an expression of the will to reproduce. The idea that a woman’s virtue is dependent on her chastity reinforces restrictive cultural attitudes towards women’s sexual activity. It also illustrates how an embrace of chastity can offer opportunities and freedom to women. Because for Cavendish a woman’s virtue resides solely in her chastity, she revises the dictate that women be “chaste, silent, and obedient.”¹⁰⁵ Miseria/Travellia is neither silent (she uses her speech to great effect as both a god and a general), nor obedient.

Charleton’s *The Ephesian Matron* and Cavendish’s *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity* are fictional narratives that explore the questions raised by the New Science and

¹⁰⁵ See Suzanne Hull’s important and foundational work in this area.

natural philosophy. Both have at their center a woman who illustrates their arguments. Charleton's retelling of Petronius's tale exploits cultural anxieties about femininity to develop an ironic portrait of human nature as appetitive that exposes the hypocrisy of "female philosophers" and the arbitrary nature of language. Cavendish, on the other hand, uses conventional *topoi* of romance to oppose Charleton's argument, exposing materialist and experimentalist methodology as the tools of the self-serving. They both illustrate that fiction is a powerful and flexible medium for exploring and dramatizing issues that were central to the turbulent natural philosophical concerns of the day. Fiction's utility for philosophic discourse goes beyond being a suitable and enjoyable mode.¹⁰⁶ Fiction and philosophy, both natural and moral, share an epistemological premise that, as Charleton argues, "plausible conjecture" is all the authority either can claim. Cavendish's emphasis is different, offering a critique of plausibility that defends chaste women from being judged by appearance, and that censures Aristotle for accepting appearance as ontology. For Cavendish, the epistemological premise that fiction and philosophy share is not based on plausible conjecture as in Charleton, but rather based on fiction's ability to absorb and refract the concerns and themes of a variety of discourses and to instruct, direct, and delight.

¹⁰⁶ Though it is this, too. Recall Charleton's prefatory remarks that "she may now seem the mistress rather of a philosopher than of a courtier" (46), and Cavendish's assertion that she writes "romancical tales" in order to "express the sweetness of Virtue and the Graces" (*Natures Pictures*, unpaginated).

Chapter 3

Pierre-Daniel Huet's Plausible Historiography of the Novel

1. Introduction to Huet

Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Lettre de Monsieur Huet à Monsieur de Segrais de l'origine des romans* offers the first extended discussion of the history and function of the fictional form *roman*.¹⁰⁷ The influence that the *Lettre* had on literary history was significant in its own time and place, as well as in the following centuries and in other countries. It went through seven French editions in the seventeenth century, and another ten in the eighteenth. It was translated into English by 1672, and again in 1715, with additional editions in 1720 and 1729.¹⁰⁸ Latin and Flemish editions were issued in 1682. There was significant demand for Huet's *Lettre*. The editor of the seventh edition (1693) speaks to this demand and justifies the reprint:

Quoy qu'il semble que les divers Traductions qu'on a faites de cet Ouvrage, en Latin, en Anglois, & en Flamand, & les diverses Editions qui en ont paru en François, dussent avoir rempli le desir du Public; néanmoins son empressement qui continuë, & le defaut des exemplaires qui commencent à me manquer, m'ont fait resoudre de l'imprimer de nouveau. (Huet, 1693 unpaginated)

[Although it seems that the diverse translations that have been made of this work, in Latin, in English, and in Flemish, and the diverse editions that have appeared in French, should have satisfied the Public's desire, nonetheless I am resolved to reprint it as the interest around it continues and I am beginning to feel the lack of any models.]

¹⁰⁷ It was published as the preface to *Zayde: Histoire espagnole*, which had the authorial signature of Segrais. It is now attributed to Lafayette. Huet remarks in his *Mémoires* that Lafayette told him that "nous avons marié nos fils ensemble" (quoted in Kok 10).

¹⁰⁸ See Gégou's edition of Huet, *Lettre* and Malcolm, R. C., "Pierre-Daniel Huet: The History of Romances: An Annotated Text Edited, with Introduction" for publication history. See Huet, *Lettre* (Hinterbauser edition) for facsimile reprint of first edition. I have checked Gégou's edition against the facsimile for any significant changes in what I quote

Both the public's desire and the lack of any other similar attempt encourage the reprint.

The 1715 English edition carries a translator's preface that illustrates Huet's influence and the difference between the perceived state of fiction in France and England:

And tho' we have been hitherto, for the most part, supply'd with Translations from the French [...] it is to be hoped, that we won't any longer subsist on the Reverse; but that some English Genius will dare to Naturalize Romance into our soil: which (I don't doubt) it will agree with, as well as that of a Neighbouring Country; since we are acknowledged to be very Ingenious, in Improving Foreign Inventions. (Malcolm, R. C., "Pierre-Daniel Huet: The History of Romances: An Annotated Text Edited, with Introduction" 30)

The translator here, echoing the complaint of the author of *Cloria and Narcissus* (1653) more than fifty years earlier, acknowledges England's lack of native talent, but asserts the possibility of the romance being "naturalized" to England's fertile ground.

Huet's influence on our understanding of the novel and its history continues, and he is credited with being both a comparatist and an early defender of the genre. Even those who dismiss him as "out of date," or as retrograde because they think he failed to note the changes in novelistic practice, or so culturally prejudiced that his historical narrative is illogical and corrupt, still acknowledge his influence and rehearse his arguments.¹⁰⁹ Huet does have his defenders as well: Joan DeJean argues that Huet was a champion of women writers and readers and was a defender of cultural diversity.¹¹⁰ Eric Rabkin eulogizes Huet as looking forward to our own post-Freudian culture and argues

¹⁰⁹ Mark Bannister says that Huet is speaking only of the multi-volume heroic novel which by 1670 was no longer being written (Bannister, *Privileged Mortals: The French Heroic Novel, 1630-1660* 8). English Showalter cites Huet as one of those "critics and theorists of fictional genres [who] failed to comprehend the changes that the authors were making" (Showalter 29). Geoffrey Bennington briefly analyzes part of Huet's distinction between Oriental and Occidental standards of historical veracity and finds him to be sadly illogical and chauvinistic (Bennington 80-81). Coulet says, "cette apologie du roman heroique arrive plus tard" (181).

¹¹⁰ See DeJean, Chapter 5 "The Origin of Novels: Gender, Class, and the Writing of French Literary History", pages 159-199

that “Huet leaves behind the moralizing world view of his time and makes way for the cultural relativity of our own age” (Rabkin 321). Margaret Ann Doody fashions her own *True History of the Novel* in the footsteps of Huet, saying “[i]n a sense, what I have done is to reinvent Huet’s version of the history of the novel” (Doody 482).

Apart from the theoretical influence with which Huet is credited, Nathalie Fournier documents and argues for his linguistic originality and influence. She demonstrates that his treatise is the source for the entries on *romans* in the three great dictionaries of the era: Richelet (1680), Furetière (1690), and *Académie française* (1694). Looking closely at Huet’s use of the word *roman* and its cognates -- *romaniser*, *romanesque* -- Fournier argues that “La dette des lexicographes envers Huet est manifeste sur deux points: d’une part à travers les exemples et le rapide développement encyclopedique de Furetière, d’autre part dans leur travail definitionnel” [The lexicographer’s debt to Huet is manifest in two ways: one, in regard to examples and the rapid encyclopedic development of Furetière, and two, in their definitional work] (Fournier 113). Huet puts the word *roman* into circulation in a way that garnered attention.

Looking at the place the *Lettre* has in Huet’s own oeuvre, and exploring Huet’s involvement in the epistemological debates of the day, will show that the *Lettre* is an expression of the tension between history versus fiction as the ideal vehicle for truth, and that this tension is a manifestation of the issues raised by the epistemological debates in natural and moral philosophy. Like Lafayette and Behn, Huet blurs the boundaries between the two discourses, but like Scudéry and Davenant, he also makes special claims for each. His *Lettre* on the origins of the novel investigates the difference between *Histoire* and *roman* as genres by arguing that all narrative is a manifestation of a universal human impulse to and thirst for knowledge which will in some cases result in *Histoire* and in some cases *roman*. He concludes that the *roman* and not *Histoire* is the genre best suited to expressing humanity, teaching the young, and glorifying the nation, and that

France is superior to other nations in the practice of the art because of the relative freedom of movement women have. Constructions of gender are constitutive of Huet's theory of fiction and his history of the *roman*, a particular manifestation of fiction.

If students of the novel know Huet best for his apology of the genre, theologians remember him for his defense of the Roman Catholic faith in *Origeniana* (1668) and *Demonstratio evangelico* (1679); classicists for his scholarly editions of Greek and Latin texts (the Dauphin editions); historians of science for his patronage of the first provincial scientific society; and philosophers for his articulation of the radically skeptical argument against Descartes's conception of the *cogito* in *Censura philosophiae cartesianae* (1689), *Alnetanae quaestiones* (1690), and the posthumous *Traité de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain* (1724).¹¹¹ He was a linguist and scholar, knowing at least seven languages apart from the standard Latin and Greek, including Arabic, Hebrew, and Syrian. He traveled to Sweden with Bochart in 1652 to the court of Queen Christina, and on his travels met with Saumaise, Anna Maria Von Shurman, and Rabbi Mennasah Ben Israel. With Bossuet, he tutored the Dauphin from 1671 to 1680. Elected into the *Académie française* in 1674, he was the friend and correspondent of contemporaries like Ménage, Perrault, Segrais, Lafayette, and Scudéry, displaying a liberal range of friendships, offering to intercede to obtain a pardon for the exiled *libertin* Saint-Evremond.¹¹² He was ordained in 1676, when he was in his forties, eventually becoming the archbishop of Avranches, and he retired to Paris and his studies for the last part of his life. His erudition and learning made Sainte-Beuve later remark that "il a décidément trop lu" (quoted in Salazar 237).

¹¹¹ He also wrote a treatise on translating, a history of Caen, the naval history of the Dutch, the synodal statutes of Avranches, where he was archbishop, and his memoirs. Of all his works, only the *Traité sur l'origine des romans* was originally published in French; the rest were written in Latin, and few have been translated into French, fewer into English.

¹¹² See Hope for a discussion of Huet's offer.

Huet's first published work was *De optimo genere interpretandi* (1661), in which he argues against the "belles infidèles" method of translating. Taking his principal model the translation of Greek to Latin, Huet argued for a literal word-for-word translation, supplemented by copious extra-textual commentary and analysis. His twentieth-century translator remarks that

[w]hile Huet's insistence on accuracy and precision in translating may have been repellant to many literati of his age, he seems to have drawn strength from his case from the example of the development of sixteenth and seventeenth century historical and comparative philology as well as from the influence of contemporary models in the experimental and deductive sciences. (DeLater 17)

The influence of contemporary trends in philosophy -- experimental versus Aristotelian, skeptical versus Scholastic, as well as his position as a scholar as opposed to *mondain* -- is interesting to note here in Huet's first published work. His treatise on translating came about as a reflection on his translation of Origen, a manuscript he found while visiting Queen Christina. The Origen manuscript occupied him for more than a decade, and occasioned the rupture of his friendship with Bochart, who accused him of an intentional scribal error that favored the Catholic interpretation of the Eucharist.¹¹³ Huet's work on Origen took place in the 1650s and 1660s, during his tenure as a member of de Brieux's heavily Protestant and pro-Fronde *Grand Cheval*, a provincial academy of letters that "was also the academy of morality, politics, religion, and social consciousness" (Lux 40). Lux argues that in preparing his work on Origen, Huet began "to face the skeptical crisis he ultimately resolved through extreme fideism" (Lux 28). He turned for a time to

¹¹³ See Shelford for a description of the effects of the quarrel. While many mention the quarrel, I have found no detail about the particular error or the theological debate, and although a discussion of it would be beyond the scope of this dissertation, the theological defenses and explanations of the Eucharist would be interesting to examine in terms of changing ideas about *vraisemblance* and appearance, and in light of Huet's epistemological skepticism. Lux claims that "when Bochart died in an apoplectic stroke at one of the sessions of the *Grand Cheval* (May 1667), it was in the midst of a shouting match with Huet" (Lux 43).

experimental science, and was the patron of the first provincial scientific academy whose empirical studies focused on astronomy and optics.¹¹⁴ The academy folded in 1672, and much of the rest of Huet's oeuvre is committed to challenging the Cartesian *cogito*.

Huet records in his *Mémoires* his early fascination with Cartesian ideas and “les principes de sa secte (c'est-à-dire celle de Descartes)”:

il me serait difficile de dire quel enthousiasme excitèrent en moi, jeune encore et ne sachant rien des anciennes sectes philosophiques, la nouveauté de cette méthode et ces merveilles éblouissantes issues des principes les plus simples et les plus clairs [...] Durant plusieurs années, j'appartins corps et âme du cartésianisme, d'autant plus que je le voyais exercer sur les personnages les plus graves et les plus doctes de l'Allemagne et de la Hollande une sorte de fascination. (quoted in Kok 23)

[it would be difficult for me to say what enthusiasm was excited in me, still young and knowing nothing of the ancient philosophical sects, by the novelty of this method and those marvellous dazzling issues of the simplest and clearest principles [...] For several years, I held body and soul to Cartesianism, all the more so because I saw that it exercised a sort of fascination on the most serious and learned persons in Germany and Holland.]

Huet turns away from this fascination, and Richard Popkin demonstrates how skeptics cast their gaze from Scholasticism to Cartesianism in the second half of the seventeenth century.¹¹⁵ Popkin identifies Huet, along with Gassendi and Bayle, as a philosopher who challenged the Cartesian method of doubt by calling into question the validity of the *cogito* and Descartes's criterion of clear and distinct ideas. Skeptical thinkers throughout the second half of the seventeenth century (like Gassendi, Huet, Sorbière, Foucher, and Bayle) “tried to show that the classical sceptical problems about knowledge could be raised

¹¹⁴ See Lux for a discussion of Huet's interest and patronage as direct result of his epistemological crisis. Lux argues that the *Académie de physique* failed because Huet eventually lost interest, turning his attention to anti-Cartesian philosophy.

¹¹⁵ See his *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*; especially the Introduction: “the sceptical arguments had to be altered to fit the new opponent, and scepticism in the last half of the seventeenth century changed from being anti-Scholastic and anti-Platonic, to being anti-Cartesian” (Popkin, *HS* xviii).

against the Cartesian theory, by asking for a criterion by which we could tell when some ‘truth’ *was* really clear and distinct, and not just that it appeared to be clear and distinct”¹¹⁶ (Popkin, “The High Road to Pyrrhonism” 19). As Alain Michel puts it, for Descartes, “il y avait une rupture radicale entre le probable et le vrai. La vérité par sa clarté, sa distinction, s’opposait absolument au vraisemblable, dont le probable est une espèce” [there was a radical rupture between the probable and the true. Truth by its clarity and distinction, was absolutely opposed to the *vraisemblable*, of which the probable is a kind] (Michel 764-65). This tension between ontology and appearance is relevant not just to semantic philosophical arguments but also to literary theory and the changing use of *vraisemblance*. Huet’s *Lettre* stages this tension by offering a history of the *roman* that draws attention to its *vraisemblance* and interrogates the opposition of *Histoire* and *roman* and their relative functions.

That Huet’s investment in a skeptical orientation to knowledge was operative in his *Lettre* is signaled by the 1682 Latin translation of the *traité* which is signed by “Gulielmus Pyrrho,” but his anti-Cartesian position embarrasses Fabienne Gégou, editor of the available edition: she says that “sa hargne qui va croissant avec l’âge ne peut trouver d’excuse” [his spite that goes against the grain of the age has no excuse] (Huet, *Lettre* 21). In fact, Huet’s engagement in the philosophical, theological, and scientific concerns of the day have a direct bearing on his defense of the novel and his argument about its origins and functions.

¹¹⁶ The theological implications of this are significant, and Descartes’s opponents, coming from both within and without the Church establishment, faulted him for maintaining a metaphysical view of the nature of reality. For Descartes, only God can guarantee the authenticity of clear and distinct ideas and of the *cogito*; for the sceptics, as Popkin says, “an empirical study of nature and a fideistic acceptance of the faith should go hand in hand” (Popkin, “The High Road to Pyrrhonism” 25). The existence of God must be taken on faith alone and cannot either be proven by or itself prove the *cogito*.

Huet is also in conversation with other literary critics. Giraldi and Pigna are quoted and refuted several times over the course of the *Lettre*. These Italian critics are best known for their defense of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516, 1532), which was attacked for its lack of Aristotelian unity. Giraldi and Pigna argued for a broader interpretation and application of Aristotelian categories, and Giraldi attempts to define the terms for what he argues is a new genre, *il romanzo* as opposed to epic.¹¹⁷ Instead of looking to them as models of scholarship and argument, Huet takes them to task for sloppy research and faulty logic: "L'erreur de Giraldi n'est pas supportable, quand il dit que la multiplicité d'actions est de l'invention des Italiens. Les Grecs et nos vieux Français les avaient multipliées avant eux" [Giraldi's error, when he says that multiplicity of action is the invention of the Italians, is insupportable. The Greeks and our Old French had multiplied actions before them] (Huet, *Lettre* 86-7). And later, citing Giraldi:

Le témoignage d'un Italien (Giraldi parlant des romans) contre sa propre nation ne peut être suspect et ferme la bouche à ceux qui voudraient disputer à la France, en faveur de l'Italie ou de l'Espagne, la gloire de cette invention. (119)

[The testimony of an Italian (Giraldi speaking of novels) against his own nation, cannot be suspect, and it shuts the mouth of those who would like to dispute that the glory of this invention belongs to France in favor of Italy or Spain.]

This citation not only speaks to Huet's interest in garnering glory for France (and as such is an early example of literary criticism as an expression of national interest), but in terms of genre theory it is consistent with his larger view of the novel, one that doesn't draw a distinction between *roman* and *nouvelle*. When Huet says that Giraldi is speaking of *romans*, he is deliberately conflating terms. Giraldi's strategy for defending *Orlando Furioso* is to say that it represents a new genre, one that is exempt from Aristotelian prescription. Huet has a different strategy: he emphasizes *l'esprit romanesque* and

¹¹⁷ See Javitch for a discussion of the reception of Ariosto.

argues that all narrative discourses -- historical, theological, philosophical, and poetic -- are expressions of this orientation of the mind. The implications of this inflection of the term are significant for the *crise de l'histoire* and for the epistemological issues.

Another important interlocutor for Huet is Nicolas Boileau-Déspreaux. Both DeJean and Doody argue that Huet's *Lettre* is a direct response to Boileau's attacks on the novel. Noting that the composition of Boileau's *Dialogue des héros de roman* can be dated to between 1664 and 1666 and that Huet's treatise was written in 1666, Joan DeJean argues that Boileau and Huet are representative of competing literary histories. She sets up her argument by contrasting what she calls "the two principal versions of the period's literary history proposed by contemporary critics and commentators" (DeJean 159). Margaret Doody also maintains that "Huet's *Traité* was written explicitly to counter Boileau" (Doody 267). She continues that

[i]n order to counter the visions of the Novel as a middle-class upstart, and hence a wispy lightweight, Huet tried to give it a pedigree. He illustrated its depth, diversity and appeal in considering its age and ancestry. But his answer only intensified the fears of the Novel's enemies. This foreign and polyglot thing looks like an invader. (267)

DeJean and Doody are correct in calling attention to Boileau as one of Huet's most significant interlocutors. In fact, the conflict between Boileau and Huet goes beyond the novel. They again come in conflict over the nature of the sublime.¹¹⁸ Referring to Boileau in his memoirs as "le prince des poètes médisants" (quoted in Declercq 238), Huet signals his intense objection to Boileau's writing practices and influence. My emphasis will not be on Huet's conversation with a particular person or tradition of criticism, but about the way in which history and fiction and philosophy -- as objects of analysis and as modes of discourse -- play out in Huet's *Lettre*.

¹¹⁸ See Declercq for a summary of the argument, which turns on Huet's rejection of Boileau's distinction between "the sublime" and "the sublime style."

The *Lettre*, as has been noted, is a unique attempt in the seventeenth century to defend the novel as a genre through its history, or documentation of its existence through time. While it includes a definition and judgments about the proper execution of the genre, it is not an *ars poetica*.¹¹⁹ Huet's long and wide reach attempts to inventory a form of fiction across time and place. The purpose of Huet's display of the range and longevity of the novel is to defend its relevance and utility to his contemporaries. He documents the existence through time of "romans reguliers"¹²⁰ or "*histoires feintes d'aventures amoureuses, écrites en prose avec art, pour le plaisir et l'instruction des lecteurs*" [made-up histories of love adventures, written artfully in prose, for the delight and instruction of the readers] (Huet, *Lettre* 46-7). The identity "roman" is on a continuum, "et les romans sont plus ou moins réguliers selon qu'ils éloignent plus ou moins de cette définition et de cette fin" [and novels are more or less standard according to whether they are in line more or less with this definition] (47). Even standard or "reguliers" novels have quite a broad definition. Referring to *Amours de Dinias et de Dercyllis* (an ancient Greek novel by Antonius Diogenes¹²¹), he remarks that

ce roman, bien que défectueux en plusieurs choses et rempli de faidases et de récits peu vraisemblables et à peine excusables même dans un poème, se peut néanmoins appeler régulier. (73)

[this novel, while defective in many ways, and full of nonsense and episodes that are hardly *vraisemblable* and barely excusable even in a poem, can nonetheless be called standard.]

For his inventory of "standard" novels he selects and weeds by making reference to "ouvrages qui meritent proprement le nom de Romans," and by narrowing his topic with

¹¹⁹ Kok argues that this is Huet's most significant contribution, but to read Huet as an instruction manual for novelists is to ignore his more pressing agenda.

¹²⁰ "j'appelle régulier ceux qui sont dans les regles du poème heroique" (102).

¹²¹ Antonius Diogenes's dates are controversial and contested, though most scholars agree on the first century C.E. See the introductory remarks in Reardon.

“je ne comprends point icy,” and “j’exclus.” He creates sub-classifications (*romans réguliers, vieux romans, romans en prose, romans comiques, grands romans*) and he offers models of the *roman*, such as Heliodorus’ *Theagène et Chariclée* (a.k.a., *The Aithiopika*, date unknown, fourth century) and D’Urfé’s *L’Astrée* (1621).¹²² He is careful to narrow the field and further define his scope of inquiry, excluding epic poetry, historical narratives, and fable from the realm of the novel. His reasons for excluding these different types are important for understanding his definition of the novel as a genre, and his conception of the differences between history and the novel as modes of discourse.

Huet’s one-sentence definition of the *roman* as “histoires feintes d’aventures amoureuses, écrites en prose avec art, pour le plaisir et l’instruction des lecteurs” contains several ideas that need to be further explored in order to understand Huet’s position. *Histoires feintes* are opposed to *histoires véritables*, *prose* to *vers*, *aventures amoureuses* indicates subject matter, *avec art* suggests that some mechanics are involved, and *plaire et instruire* is invoked; each has implications for Huet’s theory of the *roman*. First, he says that “il faut qu[e les romans] soient écrites en prose, pour être conformes à l’usage de ce siècle” they must be written in prose to conform to the usage of this century”] (47). He makes clear that his definition of the novel is grounded in common usage, and not on any supposedly timeless values or formal features. He explains that “[a]utrefois, sous le nom de roman, on comprenait non seulement ceux qui étaient écrits en prose, mais plus souvent encore ceux qui étaient écrits en vers [...] Mais aujourd’hui l’usage contraire prévalu” [in other times, the name “novel” comprehended not only those that were written in prose, but more often those that were written in verse [...] But today the contrary usage prevails] (Huet, *Lettre* 46). This relative definition of the novel, adjusted to time and place, suggests that while proper novels follow the conventions of the epic poem, the novel is

¹²² Huet does not, however, define the differences between and among these sub-classifications.

not a form like a sonnet or an alexandrine that has specific formal features. The *roman* is a plastic and adjustable form that is able to accommodate itself to different circumstances.

He defines the *roman* by subject matter to distinguish it from *poèmes épiques*, whose subject is “une action militaire ou politique” [one military or political action] (48), and explains that *avec art* means that *romans* are subject to certain rules, “autrement ce sera un amas confus sans ordre et sans beauté” [otherwise it will be a confused mass, without order and without beauty] (47). Although Huet opposes *romans* to *poèmes épiques*, and will detail their differences, *romans* are required to abide by the rules of epic poetry if they are to be called “régulier,” and he makes the argument, as Scudéry did, that the *roman* is a species of poetry. He cites the authority of the ancients and argues that:

suivant cette maxime d’Aristote, établie avant lui par Platon et suivie après lui par Horace, Plutarque et Quintilien, que le poète est plus poète par les fictions qu’il invente que par le vers qu’il compose, on puisse mettre les faiseurs de romans au nombre des poètes. (47)

[following this maxim of Aristotle, established before him by Plato and followed after him by Horace, Plutarch and Quintilian, the poet is more a poet by the fictions he invents than by the verse he composes, one can place the makers of romans in the number of poets.]

“Le plaisir et l’instruction des lecteurs” [the delight and instruction of readers] that Huet includes in his definition of *roman* is also an Aristotelian maxim, repeated by Horace, Plutarch, and Quintilian. In the beginning of the *Lettre*, Huet subordinates “plaire” to “instruire,” arguing that instruction is most effective when disguised:

Car comme l’esprit de l’homme est naturellement ennemi des enseignements et que son amour le révolte contre les instructions, il le faut tromper par l’appât du plaisir et adoucir la sévérité des préceptes par l’agrément des exemples et corriger ses défauts en les condamnant dans un autre. Ainsi le divertissement du lecteur que le romancier habile semble se proposer pour but n’est qu’une fin subordonnée à la principale qui est l’instruction de l’esprit et la correction des moeurs. (47)

[For as the mind of man is naturally the enemy of learning and his pride revolts against instruction, it is necessary to deceive him by the lure of delightful pleasure and to sweeten the severity of the precepts by the pleasantness of the examples and to correct his shortcomings by condemning them in another. Thus the entertainment of the reader that the skillful novelist seems to have as his goal, is rather an end subordinated to

the principle, which is the instruction of the mind and the discipline of mores.]

Entertainment is subordinated to instruction, which is accomplished (by the skillful novelist) through the deceit of pleasurable entertainment. Although Huet introduces the familiar maxim early in his text, he quickly moves on to other issues. He takes the moral work of the *roman* seriously, however, and will return to it toward the end with an argument that the novel is a vehicle for moral instruction that relies on an epistemology informed by debates in natural philosophy.

The *roman* is an *histoire feinte* as opposed to *véritable*. Nathalie Fournier makes the point that: “Ce qui est intéressant dans la définition de Huet, c’est le commentaire qui l’assortit. Seul le genre commun *histoire* n’est pas glosé; si *histoire* peut fonctionner comme hyperonyme de *roman*, c’est au sens de ‘narration’ [What is interesting in Huet’s definition is the commentary that goes with it. Only the genre *history* is not glossed; if *history* can function as a superordinate for *roman*, it is in the sense of “narration”] (Fournier 111). When he does provide a gloss on the kind of history that is opposed to *roman*, it is the negative examples of those histories that

sont reconnues pour avoir beaucoup de faussetés: telles sont celles d’Hérodote et de Ctésias, la *Navigation* d’Hannon, la *Vie d’Apollonius* écrite par Philostrate, celles de ces saints personnages desquelles Siméon le Métaphraste a obscurci la vérité en la voulant embellir, et plusieurs semblables. Ces ouvrages sont véritables en gros, et faux seulement dans quelques parties; les romans au contraire sont véritables dans quelques parties, et faux dans le gros (48).

[are known to have a great deal of falsities: such as those of Herodotus and Ctesias, Hannon’s *Navigation*, *The Life of Apollonius* written by Philostratus, those [lives] of holy people the truth of which Simeon obscured in wanting to embellish it, and several similar works. Those works are true in their broad outlines and false in some parts, novels on the other hand are true in some parts, and false in the outline.]

Truth and falsity are here seen on a continuum and are not ontological categories, and he does not concur with Scudéry that artful mixing of truth and lies gives the *roman* its character. Huet expands the kinds of historical narratives he excludes from the novel:

“J’exclus aussi du nombre des romans, de certaines histoires entièrement controuvées et dans le total et dans les parties, mais inventées seulement au défaut de la vérité: telles sont les relations de ces origines imaginaires de la plupart des nations et polies et barbares” [I also exclude from the rank of novels certain histories, entirely fabricated in the whole and in parts, but invented only because truth was lacking: such are the relations of the imaginary origins of most nations, civilized and barbarous] (49). A narrative lacking any truth, in the whole and in part, does not qualify as a novel. Instead of explaining what the missing element, “la vérité,” consists of, Huet is anxious to elaborate on the difference between the kind of falsity novels make use of, and the kind those narratives of national origin do.

Je mets la même différence entre les romans et ces sortes d’ouvrages qu’entre ceux qui, par un artifice innocent, se travestissent et se masquent pour se divertir en divertissant les autres, et ces scélérats qui, prenant le nom et l’habit de gens morts ou absents, usurpent leur bien à la faveur de quelque ressemblance. (49-50)

[I put the same difference between novels and those sorts of works as between those who, by an innocent artifice disguise and mask themselves in order to entertain themselves in entertaining others, and those villains who, taking the name and dress of people who are dead or absent, usurp their estate because of some resemblance to them.]

Those histories that are entirely contrived usurp the authority of History.¹²³ While novels make use of artifice and falsity, they are innocent because they seek to entertain and not deceive, and presumably those they entertain are aware of the artifice. This is quite different from Scudéry’s argument that the art of the novel consists of the mixing of truth and lies so that the reader cannot tell the difference. Huet seems to be saying here that the novel’s innocence depends upon a clear understanding of what is fiction and what is not. It is also different from the defense that Behn makes, when she insists on the historical

¹²³ Peggy Kamuf makes much of Huet’s use of sartorial figures throughout his *Lettre* and she argues via Nietzsche that Huet’s aim in emphasizing the difference between novels and “certaines histoires entièrement controuvées” is to “narrate the crucial translation from East to West, from fable to history” (Kamuf 237).

truth of her narrative. Huet's articulation of the relation between narratives of fiction and narratives of History must be followed through his whole narrative in order to understand what, if any, the difference is and how that difference gets determined.

One might expect Huet to determine this difference by appealing to a standard of *vraisemblance*, as others had done. He does repeat the commonplace that *vraisemblance* is not necessary for History, but that it is essential for the *roman*, as a species of poetry. He transplants Aristotle's argument that the plot of tragedy must be taken from the narrative of history and applies it to the novel:

Il faut dire la même chose des romans avec cette distinction toutefois, que la fiction totale de l'argument est plus recevable dans les romans dont les acteurs sont de condition médiocre [...] parce qu'il ne serait vraisemblable que des grands événements fussent demeurés cachés au monde et négligés par les historiens; et la vraisemblance qui ne se trouve pas toujours dans l'Histoire est essentielle au roman. (49)

[The same thing must be said of novels, always with this distinction: that a completely fictitious plot is more admissible in novels in which the characters are of middling stature [...] because it would not be *vraisemblable* that great events would remain hidden from the world and neglected by historians, and *vraisemblance*, which is not always found in History, is essential in the novel.]

Here the gap between "la vérité" and "la vraisemblance" is implied, as is the understanding that the *vraisemblable* of novels sometimes comes into conflict with *la vérité* of History. This *vraisemblance*, however, is one based on narrative plausibility and not the moral imperative to represent things "comme elles doivent être."

He also invokes *vraisemblance* in his comparison between *romans* and *poèmes épiques*. Although *romans* must follow the rules of epic poetry in order to be judged standard, Huet details some of their differences:

Les romans sont plus simples, moins élevés et moins figurés dans l'invention et dans l'expression; les poèmes ont plus du merveilleux quoique toujours vraisemblables; les romans ont plus du vraisemblable quoiqu'ils aient quelquefois du merveilleux; les poèmes sont plus réglés et plus châtiés dans l'ordonnance et reçoivent moins de matière, d'événements et d'épisodes; les romans en reçoivent davantage parce qu'étant moins élevés et moins figurés, ils ne tendent pas tant l'esprit et le laissent en état de se charger d'un plus grand nombre de différentes idées;

enfin les poèmes ont pour sujet une action militaire ou politique et ne traitent l'amour que par occasion. (47-48)

[Novels are more simple, less elevated and less figured in the story and in expression; poems have more of the marvellous, though always *vraisemblable*; novels have more of the *vraisemblable* although they sometimes have the marvellous. Poetry is more ordered and more strictly organized, and receives less material from the addition of events and episodes; novels receive more of them because being less elevated and less figured, they don't tax the mind so, and leave it in a state to take in a greater number of different ideas. Finally, poems have for their subject one military or political action and treat love only on occasion. Novels, on the other hand, have love as their principle subject and treat politics and war only incidentally.]

The difference between the genres is stylistic and rhetorical: novels use fewer tropes. It is also evident on the level of plot and subject matter: novels have more complicated and multiple story lines and events, all driven by love; the epic is more tightly organized and focuses on military and political events. The difference also lies in their use of *vraisemblance*, and Huet's syntax demonstrates the ambiguous quality of that attribute. He says "les poèmes ont plus du merveilleux quoique toujours vraisemblables; les romans ont plus du vraisemblable quoiqu'ils aient quelquefois du merveilleux." How can novels have more of the *vraisemblable* than poems, which are always *vraisemblable*? Huet's inadvertent paradox draws attention to the ambiguous status of *vraisemblance*. Is it an ontological attribute, or a stylistic one, like the use of *apostrophe* or beginning in *medias res*? Is it something a poem or a novel *is*, or something it *has*? This ambiguity will be played out again in his use of the term *romanesque* and his discussion of the ratio between truth and lies in history and fiction.

That he chooses not to use *vraisemblance* in a way that ties it to the imperative to represent things "comme elles doivent être," is evident in his distinction between *romans* and *fables*: "car les romans sont des fictions de choses qui ont pu être et qui n'ont point été, et les fables sont des fictions de choses qui n'ont point été et qui n'ont pu être" [for novels are fictions of things that could have been and weren't, and fables are fictions of

things that weren't and that could not have been] (50). Huet uses the conditional form of "pouvoir être" instead of the imperative "devoir être," and that he abandons the formula here alerts us that he has something different to say about the *roman*.

Although Huet repeats some platitudes about the *roman* and appeals to the authority of the ancients to make his case, his argument over the course of the *Lettre* involves a dilation on the dictum *plaire et instruire* that exemplifies its participation in the epistemological network, and how this is rendered in his account of the causality and genesis of the *roman* whose opposite is not *Histoire*, but *histoire fabuleuse*. His *Lettre* is unique not only because it offers the first history and defense of the *roman*, but also and more importantly because that defense is based on an idea about the nature of the human mind, and an argument that invests the *roman* and *l'esprit romanesque* with serious moral, spiritual, intellectual, and political purpose.

It is important to keep in mind that, as the full title of the *Lettre* suggests, Huet is offering a narrative about the origin of a genre. His narrative begins with a compliment to Segrais, whose authorial signature is on the title page of *Zayde*, the *roman* which is the occasion of his writing: "il sied bien de vouloir savoir l'origine des romans à celui qui entend si parfaitement l'art de les faire" [it is fitting that he who understands so perfectly the art of novel-making should want to know their origin] (45). Huet is, however, reluctant to undertake such a project because he knows how difficult it will be:

Ce n'est ni en Provence ni en Espagne comme plusieurs le croient qu'il faut espérer de trouver les premiers commencements de cet agréable amusement des honnêtes paresseux; il faut les aller chercher dans des pays plus éloignés et dans l'antiquité la plus reculée. (46)

[It is neither in Provence nor in Spain, as many believe, where one should hope to find the first beginnings of this appealing amusement of cultured and noble idle folk: one must go to the most distant countries and the most remote antiquity to search for them.]

Having said that the origin of *romans* will be found not in Provence or Spain but in the Orient, the geographical Near and Far East, Huet explains that

je dis qu'il faut chercher leur première origine dans la nature de l'esprit de l'homme inventif, amateur des nouveautés et des fictions, désireux d'apprendre et de communiquer ce qu'il a inventé et ce qu'il a appris, et que cette inclination est commune à tous les hommes de tous les temps et de tous les lieux. (51)

[I say that you need to look for their first origin in the mind of inventive man, lover of novelties and fictions, desirous to learn and to communicate that which he has invented and that which he has learned, and that this inclination is common to all people in all times and in all places.]

The origin of the *roman* -- a form of fiction that today is signaled by its subject matter (love) and its expression (prose) -- is found in the mental architecture of man who loves both fiction and the communication of his thoughts. This *inclination* is universal and natural, but

les Orientaux en ont toujours paru plus fortement possédés que les autres, et que leur exemple a fait une telle impression sur les nations de l'Occident, les plus ingénieuses et les plus polies, qu'on peut avec justice leur en attribuer l'invention. (51)

[Orientals always appeared more strongly possessed of it than others, and that their example made such an impression on the most ingenious and civilized Occidental nations that one can with justice attribute to them the invention of them.]

In this nascent genealogy of the novel, the example of "les Orientaux"¹²⁴ made such an impression on the most advanced Western nations that the honor of invention belongs to them. Huet continues by adding that

tous ces peuples ont l'esprit poétique, fertile en inventions et en fictions: tous leur discours sont figurés; ils n'expliquent que par allégories; leur théologie, leur philosophie et principalement leur politique et leur morale sont toutes enveloppées sous des fables et des paraboles. (52-53)

[all these peoples have a poetic mind, rich in inventions and fictions: all their discourses are figurative; they explicate only through allegories; their theology, their philosophy and principally their politics and their morality are all wrapped in fables and parables.]

The implication is that this inclination to figures of speech, allegories, and parables all

¹²⁴ Huet defines "les Orientaux" as "les Egyptiens, les Arabes, les Perses, les Indiens et les Syriens" (51).

contributed to these peoples' successful invention of the *roman*, and that therefore the *roman* is dependent upon this kind of linguistic orientation. Huet's search for the origin of *romans* will encompass many types of discourse that are also rooted in this inclination, including theology, philosophy, politics, morality, and even those specific genres he has already excluded from the ranks of *romans*, like *histoires fabuleuses* and fable.

L'esprit poétique is operative in many kinds of discourse, and Huet suggests that is a way of apprehending the world, not merely the presence of rhetorical flourish or conceit. His conception of metaphor and figurative language as fundamental and not aberrant to human language is representative of what some argue is a pre-epistemological shift view. Andrew Ortony posits two opposed approaches to metaphor: "metaphor as an essential characteristic of the creativity of language, and metaphor as deviant and parasitic upon normal usage" (Ortony 2). Historians of science also identify this approach to metaphor as constitutive of opposing epistemologies differentiating themselves in the seventeenth century, Gentner arguing that "[t]he shift from metaphor to analogy is one aspect of the general change in the style of scientific thought that occurred in this period" (Gentner 475). This thesis is also demonstrated by Sawday and R.F. Jones, as well as by Harth. Sawday argues that "the status of figurative discourse was under considerable attack" (Sawday 21) from people like Glanvill and Sprat and Hobbes, and R. F. Jones's career was made on the thesis that the approach to language exemplified by the Royal Society repudiated metaphor and figurative language and whose goal was instead to "bring words and things as close together as possible and thus give a true picture of material reality" (Jones, "The Rhetoric of Science in England of the Mid-Seventeenth Century" 20-21).¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Jones is not doctrinaire in his thesis, for he also argues that "Imaginative visualization has throughout the ages played no inconsiderable part in the development of scientific theory, but probably never to such an extent as it did in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, when it was in fact the whole theory" (Jones, "The Rhetoric of Science in England of the Mid-Seventeenth Century" 8).

Erica Harth's argument that, for a limited time, aspects of Cartesian thought provided women with expanded opportunities is predicated on the assertion that

It was in the idiom of metaphor and analogy that learned précieuses framed their thoughts on Cartesian philosophy. Their critique of Descartes is informed by an epistemic conflict between a metaphorical and an objective concept of truth. (Harth, *Cartesian Women* 83)

This epistemic conflict is not so much in evidence in Huet's *Lettre*, as the argument that figurative language is a mental reflex is apparent. Huet is ambivalent about this, and judges this aspect of human language to be sometimes obfuscating and sometimes illuminating. He argues that Pythagoras and Plato learned to use figurative language from the Egyptians: "ce fut sans doute de ces prêtres que Pythagore et Platon, aux voyages qu'ils firent en Egypte, apprirent à travestir leur philosophie et à la cacher dans l'ombre des mystères et des déguisements" [it was without a doubt from those priests that Pythagoras and Plato, during their voyages in Egypt, learned to disguise their philosophy and to hide it in the shadow of mysteries and disguises] (53). The use of the pejorative "travestir" signals Huet's ambivalence. While for the Arabs, "si vous consultez leurs ouvrages, vous n'y trouverez que métaphores, tirées par les cheveux, que similitudes et que fictions" [if you consult their works, you will find only tortured metaphors, similitudes, and fictions] (54).

That this inclination to metaphor and figurative language, or *l'esprit romanesque*, is universal and not always to be suspected, Huet cites Holy Scripture and notes that

Il déclare dans la Sainte Ecriture qu'il fait entendre sa volonté aux prophètes par des figures et par des énigmes. Il dit en autre endroit qu'il proposera ses lois sous le voile des paraboles. (64-65)

[It is declared in Holy Scripture that he made his will understood to the prophets through figures and enigmas. It is said in another place that he offered his laws under the veil of parables.]

He adds that "L'Ecriture Sainte est toute mystique, toute allégorique, toute énigmatique [...] Saint Paul même, dans ses *Epîtres* développe en passant de grandes vérités cachées

sous les figures de l’Ancien Testament” [Holy Scripture is all mystical, allegorical, all enigmatical [...] Even Saint Paul, in his Epistles develops great truths hidden under the figures of the Old Testament] (64-65). The inclusion of “Holy Scripture” in the catalog of works and people that display “la nature de l’esprit de l’homme inventif” signals the breadth of Huet’s understanding of fiction and his liberal theology. Its inclusion can be used to stay the tongues of moralists who argue that all fiction is lies and therefore evil. La Mothe Le Vayer made the same point a decade earlier in *Observations sur la composition des livres* (1659), also arguing that there are aspects of fiction of which philosophy can legitimately make use:

la Philosophie ne reçoit pas toute sorte de contes faits à plaisir, elle ne les rejette pas tous aussi, ne condamnant que ceux qui sont dangereuse consequence, *nec omnibus fabulis repugnat Philosophie, nec omnibus acquiescit*. Cét [sic] axiome de Macrobe est d’autant plus recevable, que nous voions une infinité de paraboles employées dans la sainte Ecriture, comme étant très instructives. Quant aux Romains, je ne voudrois pas en interdire trop rigoureusement la lecture (La Mothe Le Vayer 118).

[philosophy doesn’t welcome every kind of tale made for pleasure, it also doesn’t reject every kind, only condemning those of dangerous consequence: *nec omnibus fabulis repugnat Philosophie, nec omnibus acquiescit*. This axiom of Macrobius’s is all the more allowable when we see the infinity of parable employed in Holy Scripture as being very instructive. As for *romans*, I would not like to forbid the reading of them too rigorously.]

Although no other scholar to my knowledge has discussed La Mothe le Vayer’s influence on Huet, his appearance as an (unacknowledged) source alerts us to Huet’s interest in skeptical and *libertin* modes of thought. Huet will rely upon the arguments made by La Mothe Le Vayer again later in the *Lettre*.

While Huet argues that the inclination to fiction, *l’esprit poétique* or *romanesque*, is universal and appears in all places and times and in different kinds of discourse, the art and craft of the *roman*, however, is transmissible and its movement traceable. Thus he argues that the Greeks received it from the Persians after the conquest:

Je n’en [romans] vois aucun devant Alexandre le Grand, et cela me persuade que la science romanesque n’avait pas fait de grans progrès parmi

les Grecs, avant qu'ils l'eussent apprise des Perses mêmes, lorsqu'ils les subjuguèrent et qu'ils eussent puisé à la source. (72)

[I see none [novels] before Alexander the Great, and this persuades me that the novelistic science made no great progress among the Greeks before they could learn them from the Persians, when they subjugated them and they could draw from the source.]

After the birth of Islam and the Arab expansion, the art of the novel passed through Africa and up to Spain, where he acknowledges that “notre art romanesque s’enrichit peut-être par le commerce que le voisinage de l’Espagne et les guerres nous donnerent avec eux [les Arabes]” [our novelistic art was perhaps enriched by the commerce that proximity to Spain and the wars gave us with the Arabs] (123). Huet, however, draws a distinction between the *inclination to fiction* and *the art of the novel*. He denies that “nous leur devons cette inclination, puisqu’elle nous possédait longtemps avant qu’elle se soit fait remarquer en Espagne” [we owe this inclination to them, for it possessed us long before it becomes apparent in Spain] (123).

Huet goes on to explain how different cultures can manifest this *esprit romanesque*. Contrasting the ignorance of Europe in the Middle Ages with the polished culture of the Persians, he demonstrates that the inclination to fiction is a human reflex. Both cultures produced extensive fictions, one from the position of advanced civilization and the other from their relative barbarity.¹²⁶ “un art qui était le fruit de notre ignorance et de notre grossièreté, et qui avait été le fruit de la politesse des Perses, des Ioniens et des Grecs” [an art which was the fruit of our ignorance and our coarseness, and which had been the fruit of the civility of the Persians, the Ionians, and the Greeks] (127). He then uses an extended metaphor to instruct the reader on how this could be so:

En effet, comme dans la nécessité, pour conserver notre vie, nous nourrissons nos corps d’herbes et de racines lorsque le pain nous manque, de même lorsque la connaissance de la vérité qui est la nourriture propre et

¹²⁶ The high culture of “Les Orientaux” produced novels; the ignorance of Europe in the Middle Ages produced false history. These particular differences will be taken up in the next few pages; here I want to note Huet’s argument about the universal reflex.

naturelle de notre esprit vient à nous manquer, nous les nourrissons [sic] du mensonge qui est l'image de la vérité; et comme dans l'abondance, pour satisfaire notre plaisir, nous quittons souvent le pain et les viandes ordinaires et nous cherchons des ragoûts, de même lorsque nos esprits connaissent la vérité, ils en quittent souvent l'étude et la spéculation pour se divertir dans l'image de la vérité qui est le mensonge, car l'image et l'imitation selon Aristote et selon notre expérience sont souvent plus agréables que la vérité même; de sorte que deux chemins tout à fait opposés qui sont l'ignorance et l'érudition, la rudesse et la politesse, mènent souvent les hommes à une même fin qui est l'étude des fictions. De là vient que les nations les plus barbares aiment les inventions romanesques comme les aiment les plus polies. (127-28)

[Because, as in times of necessity to preserve our life we nourish our bodies on herbs and roots when we lack bread; the same is true when knowledge of truth, which is the proper and natural nourishment of the human mind, is lacking, we nourish it with lies which are the image of truth. And as in abundance, to satisfy our pleasure, we often leave bread and ordinary meat to search for stews: the same is true when our spirits know the truth; they often leave study and speculation to divert themselves in the image of the truth, which is lies: but the image and imitation, according to Aristotle and our experience, are often more agreeable than the truth itself. So that two completely opposite roads, which are ignorance and erudition, rudeness and politeness, often bring people to the same end, that is the study of fiction. Thus the most barbarous of nations love novelistic inventions, as the most polished love them.]

That fiction has an epistemological function is made apparent in this metaphor. Truth, like bread, is not always available. But the human mind must have nourishment and finds it in the image of truth, which Huet equates here with the lie. This equivalence of lie and fiction cannot hold, and Huet abandons it for a different equation, one that allows fiction to serve truth.

Wielding the authority of both Saint Augustine, neoplatonic Church father, and Sextus Empiricus,¹²⁷ pagan philosopher and father of skepticism, Huet argues that there is an order of fiction that illuminates rather than obscures truth. He first cites Augustine,

¹²⁷ Richard Popkin argues that with Sextus Empiricus's rediscovery in the sixteenth century, "the arguments and views of the Greek sceptics became part of the philosophical core of the religious struggles then taking place. The problem of finding a criterion of truth, first raised in theological disputes, was then later raised with regard to natural knowledge, leading to the *crise pyrrhonieme* of the early seventeenth century". (Popkin, HS 1)

asserting that “[il] dit en quelque endroit que ces faussetés qui sont significatives et enveloppent en sens caché, ne sont pas des mensonges, mais des figures de la vérité dont les plus sages et les plus saints personnages se sont servis” [he says someplace that those falsities which are significative and enveloped in a hidden sense, are not lies, but figures of truth of which the most saintly personages made use] (133). For those who maintain that fictions are lies and have no epistemological or positive moral value, Huet cites Sextus Empiricus’s distinction between lying and telling a lie:

Ou si l’on veut appeler mensonge tout ce qui n’est pas conforme à la vérité, il faudra avoir recours à la distinction du philosophe Sextus Empiricus qui dit qu’il y a une grande différence entre mentir et dire un mensonge, et que le sage peut dire un mensonge, c’est-à-dire proposer une fiction pour établir la vérité, mais qu’il ne peut mentir c’est-à-dire proposer une fiction pour détruire la vérité. (133)

[Or if you want to call “lies” all that which does not conform to the truth, it is necessary to have recourse to the distinction of the philosopher Sextus Empiricus who said that there is a great difference between “lying” and “telling a lie,” and that a sage can tell a lie, that is to say propose a fiction in order to establish the truth, but that he cannot lie, that is to say propose a fiction in order to destroy the truth.]

The subtlety of the distinction that Sextus Empiricus makes between “mentir” and “dire un mensonge” and Augustine makes between “mensonges” and “faussetés” reminds us of Huet’s earlier elaboration of the difference between false history and fiction: “Ces ouvrages sont véritable en gros, et faux seulement dans quelques parties; les romans au contraire sont véritables dans quelques parties, et faux dans le gros” [Those works are true in their broad outlines and false in some parts; novels on the other hand are true in some parts, and false in the outline] (48). The lack of precision in these categories is tantalizing, and it saves a place for fiction and its particular expression in the form of *roman*.

Distinguishing between the lie that destroys or disfigures the truth and the fiction that illuminates it is an important part of Huet’s argument, and he does so by tracing the cross-cultural manifestations of false history as an expression of *l’esprit romanesque*. In outlining this general *esprit romanesque chez les Orientaux*, Huet asserts that

Les Perses n'ont pas cédé aux Arabes en l'art de mentir agréablement, car encore que le mensonge leur fût autrefois fort odieux dans l'usage de la vie et qu'ils ne défendissent rien à leur enfants avec tant de sévérité, néanmoins il leur plaisait infiniment dans les livres et dans le commerce des lettres, si toutefois les fictions se doivent appeler mensonges. (57-58)

[The Persians ceded nothing to the Arabs in the art of pleasantly lying, for even though formerly lies were very odious to them in daily life that they forbid nothing else from their children with such severity. Nonetheless lies enchanted them infinitely in books and in literary matters, if, however, fictions must be called lies.]

Here, the Persians demonstrate their ability to separate lying and fiction, a quality that is the hallmark of advanced civilizations, like the Greeks. In Huet's narrative, however, the Persians do not maintain this ability to separate different kinds of discourses, and their fictions infect their Histories:

Il n'y a point de poètes que égalent les Perses des derniers siècles en la licence qu'ils se donnent de mentir dans leurs Histoires, et principalement celles qui regardent l'origine de leur religion et les vies de leurs saints. Ils ont tellement défiguré celles dont nous savons la vérité par les relations des Grecs et des Romains qu'on ne les reconnaît pas. Et même, dégénéralant de cette louable aversion qu'ils avaient autrefois contre ceux qui se servaient du mensonge pour leur intérêts, ils s'en font un honneur aujourd'hui. (60)

[There are no poets who equal the Persians of the last centuries in the license they give themselves to lie in their Histories, principally those regarding the origin of their religion and the lives of their saints. They so disfigured those of which we know the truth from the relations of the Greeks and the Romans that they are not credited. Degenerating from this laudable aversion they used to have of those who used lies to advance their own interests, they make an honor of it today.]

It is in narratives of the origins of their religion that they lie (*mentir*, not *dire un mensonge*) most egregiously, and we know this because we have the testimony of the Greeks, whom Huet believes are more trustworthy in their historiography. The Persians degenerated from an aversion to lies to an embrace of lies, evidenced by their false histories that disfigure truth.

The Greeks are “plus diligents et de meilleure foi dans la chronologie et dans l'Histoire” [more diligent and are more faithful in chronology and in History] (59) than

“les Orientaux” whose Histories “sont pleine de mensonges [...] peu exacts et peu fidèles” [are full of lies [...] little accurate and little faithful] (59). The Greeks are also credited with improving upon the *roman*, invented in the East. Huet eulogizes Greek civilization, and applauds it for bringing the rules of epic poetry to bear upon the *roman*:

Les Grecs qui ont si heureusement perfectionné la plupart des sciences et des arts, qu'on les en a crus les inventeurs, ont aussi cultivé l'art romanesque, et de brut et inculte qu'il était parmi les Orientaux, ils lui ont fait prendre une meilleure forme, en le resserrant sous les règles de l'épopée, et joignant en un corps parfait les diverses parties sans ordre et sans rapport qui composaient les romans avant eux. (102)

[The Greeks who so happily perfected most of the sciences and arts, so that they are believed to be the inventors of them, also cultivated the art of the novel, and from the crude and unkempt form it had among the Orientals, they made it take a better shape, by subjecting it to the rules of epic, and joining the diverse parts, unordered and undisciplined, to a perfect body.]

The discipline and order supplied by the Greeks perfects the arts and sciences, including the *roman*. “Perfection” and “cultivation,” however, do not signify “invention,” and not all Greek novelists wrote standard novels. Huet only grants that status to Antonius Diogenes, Heliodorus, and a few others.

Huet moves from the Greeks to the Romans. He says that the ethos (“l'esprit”) of the first century of the Common Era “était romancier” (108), and he discusses the works of Petronius, Lucan, and Apuleius. The *roman* suffers as the Empire declines, and in the period of the Middle Ages both *romans* and History disappear, subsumed in the single genre of fabulous history. Under the influence of invading and barbarous Northern tribes, ignorance and barbarism spread over the Empire and Europe:

Jusqu'alors l'art des romans s'était maintenu dans quelque splendeur, mais il déclina ensuite avec les Lettres et avec l'Empire, lorsque ces nations farouches du Nord portèrent partout leur ignorance et leur barbarie. L'on avait fait auparavant des romans pour le plaisir, on fit alors les histoires fabuleuses parce qu'on n'en pouvait faire de véritables, faute de savoir la vérité. (111)

[Until then the art of novels maintained itself in some splendor, but it declined following Letters and the Empire, when the ferocious nations of the North brought their ignorance and their barbarity everywhere. Whereas

before novels were made for pleasure, fabulous histories were made because true ones were not possible, since they did not know the truth.]

Les romans that were heretofore made for *le plaisir* give way to *histoires fabuleuses* that were fabricated in the absence of truth. Huet cites Thaleisin, Melkin, and Hunibladus Francus as writers of histories that are nearly nothing but “un amas de mensonges grossièrement imaginés” [a collection of grossly imagined lies] (112). Also included are the histories of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gildas. Huet explains why this is so:

Ces histoires faites à plaisir, plurent à des lecteurs simples et plus ignorants encore que ceux qui les composaient. On ne s’amusa donc plus à chercher de bons mémoires et à s’instruire de la vérité pour écrire l’histoire; on en trouvait la matière dans sa propre tête et dans son invention. Ainsi les historiens dégénérent en des romanciers. (114)

These histories made to enchant, pleased those simple readers, more ignorant than those who composed them. They did not then look into the past and instruct themselves in the truth in order to write history; they found the material in their own heads and in their own inventions. Thus historians degenerated into novelists.]

This conflation of history and the novel in the single genre of *histoires fabuleuses* is evidence of the age’s ignorance and barbarity. Like the Persians who degenerated from an aversion to lies in their daily life to an embrace of lies in their History, writers of the Middle Ages were unable to distinguish between historical and fictional discourse, and *plaisir* was ascendant over *instruire*.

This ignorance and inclination to fabulous history becomes, in Huet’s argument, the foundation for the spontaneous birth of the *roman* in France. Marshaling the forces of chronology, Huet respectfully refutes Salmasius’s claim that Spain taught the rest of Europe “l’art de romaniser” after learning it from the Arabs:

Pour soutenir cette opinion il faut dire que Thalesin et Melkin, l’un et l’autre de le Grande-Bretagne, et Hunibaldus Francus, lesquels on dit avoir composé tous trois leurs histoires romanesques vers l’an 550, sont plus récents du moins de près deux cents ans que l’on ne s’imagine, car la révolte du comte Julien et l’entrée des Arabes en Espagne n’arriva que l’an 91 de l’hegire, c’est-à-dire l’an 712 de Notre-Seigneur, et il fallut quelque temps pour donner cours en Espagne aux romans des Arabes, et dans le reste de l’Europe à ceux que l’on prétend que les Espagnols firent à leur imitation. (119-20)

[To maintain this opinion, Thalesin and Melkin (both from Great Britain) and Hunibaldus Francus (those who wrote all three of their novelistic histories around 550) would have to be at least 200 years later than we now imagine, because the revolt of Count Julian and the entrance of the Arabs into Spain happened in the year 91 of the hegira, that is to say in the year 712 of our Lord, and it would take some time for the novel and those which they claim the Spanish imitated, to wend their way through Spain and the rest of Europe.]

Because the “*histoires romanesques*” of Thalesin, Melkin, and Hunibaldus Francus date from the middle of the sixth century, and Arabs didn’t reach Spain until the beginning of the eighth, Huet argues that it is a chronological impossibility for France to have learned the art of the novel from Spain.

But how can *romans*, a particular expression of *l’esprit romanesque*, result independently from both the cultured and polished society of the Persians and other Levantine peoples, and the ignorance and barbarism that covered Europe after the Roman Empire? Huet’s explanation rests on an understanding of *l’esprit romanesque* as a universal human instinct, and how it exercises itself. He posits a conception of human reason and knowledge that challenges Cartesian rationalism and requires a tolerance for fiction as a legitimate human instinct. The result of this is a theory of how and why the *roman* is in a unique position to impress itself upon its readers. He begins once again by asserting the universal inclination to fiction:

Cette inclination aux fables, qui est commune à tous les hommes, ne leur vient pas par raisonnement, par imitation ou par coutume; elle leur est naturelle et a son amorce dans la disposition même de leur esprit et de leur âme, car le désir d’apprendre et de savoir est particulier à l’homme et ne le distingue pas moins des autres animaux que sa raison. On trouve même en quelques animaux des étincelles d’une raison imparfaite et ébauchée, mais l’envie de connaître, je veux dire de porter ses connaissances au-delà des objets présents, ne se remarque que dans l’homme. (130)

[This inclination to fable, which is common to all people, comes to them not through reason, imitation, or custom; it is natural to them and begins in the disposition of their intellect and their soul, for the desire to learn and to know is particular to human beings and it distinguishes them from animals no less than their reason. The flicker of imperfect and skeletal reason is found even in some animals, but the longing to know, I mean to say to carry his knowledge beyond present objects, is found only in man.]

Huet argues that it is not reason that distinguishes men from beasts. “Le désir d’apprendre et de savoir” is the necessary human attribute, not reason, whose flickerings are found in some animals. The inclination to fable is an expression of this distinguishing human characteristic, and comes, not from reason, imitation, or custom, but from the legitimate needs of the human soul and mind:

Cela vient, selon mon sens, de ce que les facultés de notre âme étant d’une trop grande étendue et d’une capacité trop vaste pour être remplies par les objets présents, l’âme cherche dans le passé et dans l’avenir, dans la vérité et dans le mensonge, dans les espaces imaginaires, et dans l’impossible même, de quoi les occuper et les exercer. Les bêtes trouvent dans les objets qui se présentent à leurs sens de quoi remplir les puissances de leur âme et ne vont guère au-delà, de sorte que l’on ne voit point en elles cette avidité inquiète, qui agite incessamment l’esprit de l’homme et le porte à la recherche de nouvelles connaissances pour proportionner, s’il se peut, l’objet à la puissance, et y trouver un plaisir semblable à celui qu’on trouve à apaiser une faim violente ou à se désaltérer après une longue soif. (130-31)

[In my opinion, this comes from the fact that the faculties of our soul were of so great an understanding and a too great capacity to be filled by present objects; the soul searches in the past and in the future, in truth and in lie, in imaginary places and even in the impossible, for objects to occupy and exercise it. Brutes find the impulses of their soul satisfied by present objects and go no further, so that there is not found in them that impatient avidity which incessantly agitates the mind of man and brings him to search out new knowledge to adjust, if he can, the object under his power, and finds there a similar pleasure as is found in appeasing a violent hunger or sating a brutal thirst.]

It is the soul that searches for understanding beyond what is immediately accessible, and the mind that seeks new objects of knowledge to bring under its purview. Beasts are content with what is immediate, but our soul and mind find pleasure in the search and attainment of knowledge.

Huet explores the nature of this pleasure in order to lay the foundation for his argument that *romans* are an expression of this basic human need:

Or l’inquiétude et l’agitation que lui donne ce désir est récompensée par le plaisir qui le suit, quand on peut le satisfaire, mais ce plaisir n’est pas toujours égal: il nous coûte quelquefois du travail et des peines, comme quand nous nous appliquons aux spéculations difficiles et à l’étude des sciences cachées dont la matière n’est pas présente à nos sens, et où

l'imagination qui agit avec facilité a moins de part que l'entendement dont les opérations sont plus laborieuses. Et parce que naturellement le travail nous rebute, l'âme ne se porte à ces connaissances épineuses que dans la vue de fruit ou dans l'espérance d'un plaisir éloigné ou par nécessité; mais les connaissances qui l'attirent et la flattent davantage sont celles qu'elle acquiert sans peine et où l'imagination agit presque seul, et sur des matières semblables à celles qui tombent d'ordinaire sous nos sens, particulièrement si ces connaissances excitent nos passions qui sont les grands mobiles de tous les désirs, de toutes les actions et de tous les plaisirs de notre vie. (131-32)

[Anxiety and agitation that give him this desire are recompensed by the pleasure that follows, when it can be satisfied, but this pleasure is not always equal: it sometimes costs us work and trouble, as when we apply ourselves to difficult speculation and the study of hidden sciences of which the material is not present to our senses, and where the imagination which acts with facility, has less involvement than the understanding whose operations are more laborious. And because work is naturally tedious, the soul doesn't bring itself to prickly knowledge except in the expectation of some fruit or in the hope of a later pleasure or in necessity. But knowledge that attracts and delights it most is that which is acquired without trouble and where the imagination acts almost alone, and on material which is similar to that which ordinarily falls under our senses, particularly if that knowledge excites our passions which are the great movers of all desires, all the actions, and all the pleasures of our life.]

Huet distinguishes between knowledge (*connaissances*) gained through “entendement” which is difficult and laborious, and knowledge gained through “imagination.” Knowledge acquired through imagination is the most attractive and delightful, especially when it stirs our passions.

La Mothe Le Vayer had earlier observed that “[t]out le monde semble être capable de lire les Romans. Il ne s’y rencontre point de ces difficultez épineuses qu’on trouve dans les Traitez fait exprès pour examiner les opinions de Platon & d’Aristote, ou quelque paralogisme d’un problème de Mathématique” [Everyone seems to be capable of reading *romans*. One encounters there no prickly difficulties that one finds in treatises made expressly to examine the opinions of Plato and Aristotle, or some paralogism of a mathematical problem] (La Mothe Le Vayer 119). He challenges the conclusion that therefore novels only please women and children, and have nothing to offer the more serious-minded males. Like Huet, La Mothe Le Vayer argues that *romans* excite the passions, something *entendement* does not:

Le but principal des [romans] est d'exciter agréablement les passions [...] Ceux qui tirent une conséquence de ce que les Romains plaisent sur tout aux femmes & aux jeunes gens, soutenant là-dessus qu'ils doivent déplaire aux hommes sérieux & de savoir, argumentent fort mal ce me semble. (119-20)

[The principle purpose of [romans] is to agreeably excite the passions [...] It seems to me that those who take as a consequence that *romans* captivate above all women and the young concluding therefore that they ought to disenchant serious and knowledgeable men, argue very badly.]

Huet expands upon Le Vayer's earlier observations on the *roman* and its readers and develops a theory on the work *romans* perform, and the opportunities they provide their readers.

This, Huet asserts, is what novels do: they provide material on which the imagination can work "presque seul."

C'est ce que font les romans: il ne faut point de contention d'esprit pour les comprendre, il n'y a point de grands raisonnements à faire, il ne faut point se fatiguer la mémoire; il ne faut qu'imaginer. Ils n'émeuvent nos passions que pour les apaiser, ils n'excitent notre crainte ou notre compassion que pour nous faire voir hors de péril ou de la misère, ceux pour qui nous craignons ou que nous plaignons; ils ne touchent notre tendresse que pour nous faire voir heureux ceux que nous aimons; ils ne nous donnent de la haine que pour nous faire voir misérables ceux que nous haïssons; enfin toutes nos passions s'y trouvent agréablement excitée et calmées. (132)

[This is what novels do: they require no great exercise of the mind to understand them, there are no great cogitations to make, they do not tire the memory; they require only imagination. [Novels] don't move our passions except to appease them, they don't excite our fear or our compassion except to make us see delivered from peril or misery those for whom we are frightened or for whom we plead; they arouse our tenderness only to make us see happy those we love; they don't make us hate except those whom we will see miserable; finally, all of our passions find themselves pleasantly excited and calmed.]

Romans require only imagination, which doesn't tax the mind. They work by fulfilling the readers' expectations, pleasantly delivering happiness to those whom the readers wish to see happy and making miserable those whom the readers dislike. The distinction between *romans*, which require only imagination, and "l'étude des sciences cachées," which require laborious mental cogitations, leads him to distinguish between two kinds of people, those

who work more through reason or understanding, and those who work more through passion or imagination. *Romans* appeal to those who are moved more by passion and imagination than by reason and understanding:

C'est pourquoi ceux qui agissent plus par passion que par raison, et qui travaillent plus d'imagination que l'entendement, y sont plus sensibles, quoique les derniers soient aussi, mais d'une autre sorte. Ils sont touchés des beautés de l'art et de ce qui part de l'entendement; mais les premiers, tels que sont les enfants et les simples, le sont seulement de ce qui frappe leur imagination et agite leur passions, et ils aiment les fictions en elles-mêmes, sans aller plus loin. Or les fictions n'étant que des narrations vraies en apparence et fausses en effet, les esprits des simples qui ne voient que l'écorce, se contentent de cette apparence de vérité et ils s'y plaisent, mais ceux qui pénètrent plus avant et vont au solide, se dégoûtent aisément de cette fausseté. (132-33)

[That is why those who act more out of passion than reason, and who work more with the imagination than with understanding, are more sensitive to them, although the latter ones are too, but in another way. They are moved by the beauty of the art and that which comes from understanding; but the former, such as children and simpletons, are moved only by that which excites their imagination and agitates their passions. They like fictions in themselves without going any further. Fictions are only narrations true in appearance and in fact false, simple minds see that only the surface content themselves with this appearance of truth and please themselves with it. But those who penetrate further and come to solidity, are easily disgusted by this falsity.]

This would seem like an obvious place for Huet, were he so inclined, to assign women the role of imaginative and passionate novel readers and men the role of reasonable readers who are unresponsive to the lures of fiction and who are easily disgusted by its falsity. But he does not. Fiction has something even for those readers who work through understanding and reason, provided the fiction is well-crafted, and he declines to make a distinction based on gender. Making the distinction between the two kinds of readers once more, Huet argues that

les premiers [les enfants et les simples] aiment la fausseté à cause de la vérité apparente qui la cache, et les derniers [ceux qui agissent plus par raison] se rebutent de cette image de vérité à cause de la fausseté effective qu'elle cache, si cette fausseté n'est d'ailleurs ingénieuse, mystérieuse et instructive, et ne se soutient par l'excellence de l'invention et de l'art. (133)

[the former love falsity because of the apparent truth that hides it, and the latter reject this image of truth because of the actual falsity that it hides,

unless this falsity is otherwise ingenious, mysterious, and instructive, and supported by the excellence of the invention and the art.]

He doesn't assign a division of labor based on gender, but instead he emphasizes different attitudes to falsity and truth.

This long digression on how *romans* work upon the human soul brings Huet back to his argument that the ignorance and barbarity of the Middle Ages in Europe brought about the spontaneous generation of the *roman*. He reasons that:

Il n'y a donc pas lieu de contester que les romans français, allemands et anglais et toutes les fables du Nord sont du cru du pays, nées sur les lieux, et n'y ont point été apportées d'ailleurs; qu'elles n'ont point d'autre origine que les histoires remplies des faussetés qui furent faites dans des temps obscurs, pleins d'ignorance, où l'industrie et la curiosité manquaient pour découvrir la vérité des choses et l'art pour les écrire: que ces histoires mêlées du vrai et du faux ayant été reçues par des peuples demi-barbares, les historiens eurent la hardiesse d'en faire de purement supposée qui sont les romans. (133-34)

[There is then no reason to argue that French, German, and English novels and all the fables of the North aren't the fruit of those countries, born in those places and were not brought there from elsewhere; that they have no other origin than the histories filled with falsities which were written in obscure times, full of ignorance, where the industry and curiosity to discover the truth of things and the art to record it was lacking; that these histories mixed with the true and the false having been well received by the semi-barbarous peoples, their historians had the audacity to make some that were purely forged, which are novels.]

The *romans* of France have no other origin but false histories born out of ignorance, and so do not owe their existence to foreign importation. Making the origin of the *roman* in France false and fabulous history allows Huet to claim that the *roman* is a native genre, and it allows him to differentiate between the relation of History and the novel in the West and in the East: "Les fables ont donné la naissance aux histoires fabuleuses chez ces peuples du Levant; les histoires fabuleuses ont donné la naissance aux fables et aux romans chez nous et chez tous ces autres peuple du Nord" [These fables gave birth to the fabulous histories of the Levantine peoples; these fabulous histories gave birth to our fables and novels, and those of all other Northern people] (134). The novel as cause or

effect of fabulous history is one way to define the difference between West and East.¹²⁸

History, national interest, and fiction are seen to converge in those narratives of national origin that are also common to all people. He states that

nos Hurons et nos Iroquois [... et] les peuples de la Floride, de Cumana, du Pérou et des îles Mariannes s'excitent au travail et aux combats par les chansons, les harangues et les narrations fabuleuses des beaux faits de leurs prédécesseurs; tout ce que ces barbares racontent de leur origine est plein de fictions. (128-29)

[our Hurons and our Iroquois [... and] the people of Florida, Cumana, Peru, and the Mariana Islands excite themselves in work and combat by the songs, harangues and fabulous narrations of great deeds of their predecessors; all that these barbarians tell of their origin is full of fictions.]

He adds to the list the people of Madagascar and Guinea, and the Scandinavian nations, and notes that in Denmark, kings had court poets (“poètes” and “poétesses”) “dont l'unique occupation était de faire des vers sur tout ce qui arrivait de mémorable” [whose unique occupation was to make verses about all memorable things that happened] (129). These poets in the service of the crown composed songs that the people learned and “en se répandant dans le monde, ils portaient dans les contrées éloignées la gloire des rois, de la nation et des poètes qui en étaient les auteurs” [and in scattering themselves throughout the world, they brought into faraway countries the glory of the kings, of the nation and of the poets who were the authors of them] (129). Narratives of national origin play a role not just in fulfilling basic human needs, they are also a tool for advancing national glory and interest.

In fact, fiction is a legitimate tool of statecraft. Fiction and the *roman* can have an effect on government. Huet gives historical examples of the political effects that cultural productions, including *romans*, can have on populations. The Ionian culture, he says, is

¹²⁸ This construction implies the purity of Western historiography as well. Huet does not define or give examples of History with a capital “H,” but if Europe followed the opposite course of the Levant, which went from fable to false history, the implication is that Europe’s movement from false history to *roman* offers the possibility of true history.

well-known for its historical voluptuousness and self-indulgence. The Persian King Cyrus,

pour prévenir les révoltes et amollir le courage des Lydiens, voisins de l'Ionie, dont l'esprit remuant et turbulent l'inquiétait, leur ordonna, par le conseil de Crésus, d'élever leurs enfants dans les exercices de plaisir, de les instruire à la débauche et d'en faire des danseurs, des musiciens et des bateleurs. Les Lydiens obéirent à cet ordre, et en changeant de vie ils changèrent d'humeur. (69-70)

[to prevent revolts and to soften the courage of the Lydians, neighbors of the Ionians, whose turbulent nature made him nervous, commanded them, on the advice of Cresus, to raise their children in the pleasurable pursuits, to instruct them in debauchery and to make dancers and musicians of them. The Lydians obeyed this command, and in changing their mode of life, they changed their humor.]

National culture is malleable, and art can work on it. Huet's version of literary history also shows how permeable national borders are. The art of the *roman* travels and spreads, mutates and develops, in many different cultures. Again the example is the voluptuous

Ionians:

Les Ioniens qui étaient sortis de l'Attique et du Péloponèse se souvenaient de leur origine et entretenaient un grand commerce avec les peuples de la Grèce. Ils s'envoyaient réciproquement leurs enfants pour les dépayser et leur faire prendre les moeurs et les coutumes les uns des autres. Dans cette communication si fréquente, la Grèce qui était assez portée aux fables d'elle-même, apprit aisément des Ioniens l'art de composer les romans et le cultiva avec succès. (71)

[The Ionians who had come from Attica and the Peloponnese remembered their origin and maintained a great relationship with the peoples of Greece. They reciprocally sent their children to each others' countries to have them learn the ways and customs of each other. In this frequent communication, Greece (already inclined to fable) easily learned from the Ionians the art of composing novels and cultivated it with success.]

Huet's literary history envisions an environment where there is cross-fertilization between and among cultures. DeJean and Doody both see this as threatening to Louis XIV's burgeoning absolutist state and the reason that Huet's version of literary history did not catch on. The universal nature of fiction (and the *roman* as a particular expression of that inclination that is developed and shared across national and cultural boundaries) suggests a common humanity that the French share with not just Spain and Italy, but with the newly encountered Iroquois as well.

A nation's glory, Huet contends, is still located in and disseminated by the fiction it produces, although today it is *romans* and not fabulous histories where this work is done.

France represents the highest achievement of the art of the novel:

Il est vrai qu'il y a sujet de s'étonner que notre nation ayant cédé aux autres le prix de la poésie épique et de l'histoire, ait emporté celui-ci [romans] avec tant de hauteur, que leurs plus beaux romans égalent à peine les moindres des nôtres. (139)

[True, it is surprising that our nation, having ceded to others the prize of epic poetry and history, has brought these [novels] to such eminence, that their most beautiful novels do not equal the least of ours.]

Madeleine de Scudéry is the author who now best represents the art of the novel, and

Huet credits her with working for the national glory of France:

[Cette] fille,¹²⁹ autant recommandable par sa modestie que par son mérite, avait mis au jour sous un nom emprunté, se privant si généreusement de la gloire qui lui était due, et ne cherchant sa récompense que dans sa vertu, comme si, lorsqu'elle travaillait ainsi à la gloire de notre nation, elle eût voulu épargner cette honte à notre sexe. (148)

[This girl, as much to be commended for her modesty as for her merit, published under a borrowed name, generously depriving herself of the glory which was her due, searching for recompense only in her virtue: as if, when she worked thus for the glory of our nation, she had wanted to spare the shame of our sex.]

Huet is careful here to stress Scudéry's modesty and virtue because he is sensitive to the charge that novels corrupt morals and because women who write are vulnerable to attacks on their femininity. And he echoes the fear that a woman's share of glory comes at the expense and shame of men.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ This is the first time that Madeleine de Scudéry is acknowledged in a professional critical context (DeJean 170) as the author of the novels, though her authorship was known and acknowledged by her contemporaries, as documented by private correspondence; in her lifetime, all her works were published either anonymously or under the signature of her brother Georges.

¹³⁰ DeJean sees this as an intentional tweak of Boileau: "Huet praises Scudéry in terms that seem calculated to provoke Boileau's wrath" (DeJean 170).

With his example of Scudéry as the most significant contributor to the contemporary *roman*, and his troping of her femininity to illustrate the “glory of our nation,” Huet demonstrates a way in which articulations of gender are fundamental to theories of fiction. In fact, Madeleine de Scudéry is not an isolated individual woman responsible for France’s superior national position. Women collectively are responsible for it; or rather, it is to the particular gender arrangements that are operative in France that the nation owes its glory. France’s preeminence in the art of the novel is due to the unique freedom of movement and unrestricted interaction with men that French women enjoy, and which distinguishes France from other countries. In France, the novel developed as a sophisticated tool of courtship:

Je crois que nous devons cet avantage à la politesse de nôtre galanterie, qui vient à mon avis de la grande liberté dans laquelle les hommes vivent en France avec les femmes. Elles sont presque recluses en Italie et en Espagne, et sont séparées des hommes par tant d’obstacles, qu’on les voit peu, & qu’on ne leur parle presque jamais, de sorte que l’on a négligé l’art de les cajoler agréablement, parce que les occasions en étaient rare; l’on s’applique seulement à surmonter les difficultés de les aborder, et cela fait, on profite du temps sans s’amuser aux formes. Mais en France, les dames vivant sur leur bonne foi et n’ayant point d’autres défenses que leur vertu et leur propre coeur, elles s’en sont fait un rampart plus fort et plus sûr que toutes les clés, que toutes les grilles et que toute la vigilance des duègnes. Les hommes ont donc été obligés d’attaquer ce rampart par les formes, et ont employé tant de soin et d’adresse pour le réduire qu’ils s’en sont fait un art presque inconnu aux autres peuples. C’est cet art qui distingue les romans français des autres romans et qui en a rendu la lecture si délicate qu’elle a fait négliger des lecteurs plus utiles. (139)

[I believe that we owe this advantage to the polish of our gallantry, which comes, in my opinion, from the great liberty in which, in France, men live with women. Women are nearly sequestered in Italy and in Spain, and are separated from men by such obstacles, that they are little seen, and hardly ever spoken to. Therefore, the art of agreeably cajoling them is neglected, because the occasions for it are so rare. They apply themselves only to surmounting the difficulties of approaching them, and that done, they profit from the time without bothering with forms. But in France, ladies living by their good word, and, having no other defenses save their own virtue and their own hearts, make there a fort stronger and surer than all the keys, grills and vigilance of duennas. Men have thus been obliged to attack the fort through forms and have employed such care and skill to bring it down, that they have made of it an art nearly unknown to other people. It is this art that distinguishes French novels from other novels, and that renders the reading of them so delicious that it causes more useful reading to be neglected.]

The novel is able to reach its highest art only when a particular gender system is in place and seduction is its motive. However, he also holds women accountable for the antipathy *belles-lettres* has for the genre, an antipathy that Georges May asserts is the structuring dilemma of eighteenth-century French literature.¹³¹ The French novel is so superior and pleasing, that it has made more useful reading neglected, causing a cycle of ignorance: “comme l’ignorance les [romans] avait fait naître, ils ont aussi fait renaître l’ignorance” [as they [novels] were born from ignorance, so they bred ignorance anew] (140). Women readers are also responsible for this negative consequence:

Les dames ont été les premières prises à cet appât: elles ont fait toute leur étude des romans et ont tellement méprisé celle de l’ancienne fable et de l’Histoire qu’elles n’ont plus entendu des ouvrages qui tiraient de là autrefois leur plus grand ornement. Pour ne rougir plus de cette ignorance dont elles avaient si souvent occasion de s’apercevoir, elles ont trouvé que c’était plutôt fait de désapprouver ce qu’elles ignoraient que de l’apprendre. (139-40)

[Ladies were the first to take this step: they made novels the object of all their study and so scorned the study of ancient fable and history that they no longer understood those works from which they used to take their greatest ornament. In order to not blush at this ignorance of which they so often had occasion to notice, they found it more expedient to disapprove of what they were ignorant rather than learn it.]

Women as readers¹³² and as objects of desire are responsible for the rise of the *roman* in France, which is the glory of the French nation, but they are also responsible for the bad effects that come from it.

Huet acknowledges these bad effects directly, and although he acknowledges that “la beauté de nos romans a attiré le mépris des belles-lettres” [the beauty of our *romans*

¹³¹ See his *Le Dilemme du roman au XVIII siècle; étude sur les rapports du roman et de la critique, 1715-1761*.

¹³² The presentation of the ignorant female novel-reader was a familiar one in 1670. Boileau relies on this image and also targets Scudéry as a female novelist. Molière, too, put this image into circulation in *Les Precieuses ridicules* (1659).

attracted the scorn of *belles-lettres*] (140), he argues both against literary critics like Boileau by asserting the pedigree and the art of the novel and against moralists like Pierre Nicole who say that novels are corrupting.¹³³ He takes into account the charges that have been leveled at the genre: “je sais de quoi on les accuse: ils dessèchent la dévotion, ils inspirent des passions déréglées, ils corrompent les mœurs” [I know of what they are accused: they wither devotion, they inspire unruly passions, they corrupt morals] (140). Huet acknowledges that this can sometimes happen, but rebuts “mais de quoi les esprits mal faits ne peuvent-ils point faire un mauvais usage?” [but what can’t badly formed minds not make bad use of?] (140), and puts the onus on the reader, not the *romans*: “[l]a cause de ce désordre n’est pas dans l’ouvrage, mais dans la mauvaise disposition du lecteur” [the cause of this disorder is not in the work, but in the corrupted disposition of the reader] (141).¹³⁴

Far from corrupting morals, the best novels instruct, and are especially useful for those “jeunes gens qui sont destinés à vivre dans le commerce du grand monde où ils sont obligés de n’être pas ridicules, et où ils le seraient souvent s’ils n’entendaient rien au langage de la galanterie” [young people who are destined to live in the midst of the high society, where they are obliged to not seem ridiculous, and where they would be often if they understood nothing of the language of gallantry] (142). Novels help the young to negotiate “le grand monde,” giving the novel the task of educating readers not just in the

¹³³ Nicole, in *Les Imaginaires* (1667), asserts that “un faiseur de romans... est un empoisonneur public...” (quoted in Huet 140fn4).

¹³⁴ This is again an echo of La Mothe Le Vayer who queried: “Mais quoi, il n’y a gueres de livre si retenu, ne même si saint, dont un esprit mal-fait & dépravé ne puisse abuser par quelque mauvaise interpretation” [However there are hardly any books so restrained and so saintly that a badly made and depraved mind can’t abuse by some bad interpretation] (La Mothe Le Vayer 119).

forms of gallantry, but in the ways and feelings of love, so that they can protect themselves from that powerful and sometimes criminal passion:

Si l'on dit que l'amour y [dans romans] est traité d'une manière si délicate et si insinuante que l'amorce de cette dangereuse passion entre aisément dans de jeunes coeurs, je répondrai que non seulement il n'est pas périlleux, mais qu'il est même en quelque sorte nécessaire que les jeunes personnes du monde connaissent cette passion, pour fermer l'oreille à celle qui est criminelle et pouvoir se démêler de ses artifices, et pour savoir se conduire dans celle qui a une fin honnête et sainte. Ce qui est si vrai que l'expérience fait voir que celles qui connaissent moins l'amour en sont les plus susceptibles et que les plus ignorantes sont les plus dupes. (141-42)

[If one says that love is treated [in novels] in a manner so delicate, so insinuating, that the charm of this dangerous passion enters easily into young hearts, I reply that not only is it not perilous, but that it is even in some way necessary that young people of the world know this passion, in order to close their ears to that which is criminal and to be able to disentangle its artifices and in order to know how to conduct themselves in that which the goal is honorable and saintly. This is so true that experience shows us that those women who know less of love are the most susceptible to it, and that the most ignorant women are the most fooled.]

Ignorance is not bliss, and Huet invokes the verb *connaître* to signal the epistemological work of the novel. Gender also comes into play here as the gender-neutral “jeunes personnes” becomes sexed in the next sentence when he cautions “que *celles* qui connaissent moins l'amour en sont les plus susceptibles.”

Foreshadowing the controversy over *connaître* versus *sentir* discussed in the first chapter, Huet argues that the knowledge of human passions that novels provide is not corrupting but is rather the very safeguard of virtue. There is, however, an ambiguity in this construction. Huet does not offer a neat opposition between *connaître* and *sentir* the way “l'imagination” was contrasted to “l'entendement” earlier. It is instructive to compare Huet's formulation about the kind of knowledge that *romans* deliver to Rapin's formulation a few years later.¹³⁵ Rapin maintains the superior pedagogical advantage poetry offers. He cites Aristotle to support his argument that

¹³⁵ Rapin's subject is “la poésie,” but since Huet sees *les romans* and *la poésie* as expressions of the same human inclination to fiction, the comparison is pertinent.

la poésie est une meilleure école de la vertu que la philosophie mesme: parce qu'elle va plus droit à la perfection, par la vray-semblance, que la philosophie n'y va par la vérité, parce que le poète ne rend jamais raison de ce qu'il dit, comme fait le philosophe, mais il la fait sentir, sans le dire. (Rapin 74)

[poetry is a better school for virtue than even philosophy: because it moves directly to perfection, by way of *vraisemblance*, than does philosophy that goes by way of the truth, because the poet never gives a reason for what he says, as the philosopher does, but he makes it felt, without saying it.]

Rapin in this statement argues that poetry works by *sentir*, not by Huet's *connaître*, and it is poetry's *vraisemblance* that grants it its pedagogical status, a formulation to which Huet does not subscribe. For Huet, the *roman* functions as a supplement to experience and is useful as a cautionary tale.

Rapin's assertion that it is through poetic *vraisemblance* that virtue will be learned is consistent with Chapelain's earlier assertion that "la vraisemblance [...] et non la vérité sert d'instrument au poète pour acheminer l'homme à la vertu" [*vraisemblance* [...] and not the truth serves as the poet's instrument for guiding man to virtue] (quoted in Phillips 268). Although Huet does not ascribe the pedagogical function of the *roman* to *vraisemblance*, he too asserts that fiction has a serious moral purpose and epistemological function. Rapin opposes "la poésie" to "la philosophie," and Chapelain "la vraisemblance" to "la vérité." Huet will exploit a tension between *roman* and *histoire* that is evident throughout the period in question.

It is important to examine the role *vraisemblance* plays in Huet's *Lettre*. Instead of the moral imperative that structured *vraisemblance* for many theorists in the decades prior to and following Huet's *Lettre*, Huet's use of *vraisemblance* is more in keeping with an idea of plausibility that has more to do with internal narrative consistency and appearance. This in turn is consistent with his skeptical opposition to dogmatic Cartesianism that insists on a criterion of clear and distinct ideas for certainty, which is the only rational basis for knowledge. Recalling that Huet's own narrative is one about

origins, and that “tout ce que ces barbares racontent de leur origine est plein de fictions” (128-29), Huet draws attention to the fact that all narratives of origin are susceptible to fiction. Speaking about which people can rightfully claim Aesop, the Greeks or the Arabs, Huet cautions the reader about believing narratives of origin. Showing the chauvinism of his conception of a Graeco-Roman lineage of knowledge, he says:

je dirai seulement en passant qu’il faut se souvenir que les Histoires de ces peuples d’Orient, selon le témoignage de Strabon, sont pleine de mensonges, qu’ils sont peu exacts et peu fidèles et qu’il est assez vraisemblable qu’ils ont été fabuleux en parlant de l’auteur et de l’origine des Fables comme en tout le reste. (59)

[I will only say in passing that you should remember that the Histories of these Oriental people (according to the testimony of Strabon) are full of lies, that they are minimally exact and faithful, and that it is quite *vraisemblable* that they were as fantastic in speaking of the author and the origin of the fables as in all the rest.]

Huet asks the reader to apply the criterion of *vraisemblance*, not to the narrative of “ces peuples d’Orient” but to his own narrative. He doesn’t impeach the histories or the origin of the fables for lack of *vraisemblance*, but rather asserts the *vraisemblance* of his own story.

Huet appeals to the *vraisemblance* of his narrative at other moments as well. In the middle of his argument that France’s novel-writing practice is indigenous and not owed to the Arabs via Spain, he draws a parallel between the novel and the custom, common in both Provence and Fez, of the king giving his robes to story-tellers and singers in appreciation. After conceding that *perhaps* France owes to the Arabs the enrichment of the art of the novel but not the inclination, he adds:

Je ne puis croire non plus que nos princes aient pris des rois arabes la coutume de se dépouiller en faveur des trouvères; cette sorte de libéralité a été pratiquée par tant d’autres nations [...] que ce qui arrivait souvent en France par hasard, se faisait tous les ans à Fez par une coutume qui vraisemblablement y fut aussi introduite par hasard. (123-24)

[Neither can I believe that our princes took from Arab kings the custom of disrobing themselves in favor of the troubadors; this kind of generosity was practiced in many other nations [...] that which often happened in France by chance, was made all the years at Fez by custom, which *vraisemblablement* was introduced there also by chance.]

Vraisemblance here becomes the standard of truth, and Huet asks the reader again to use that standard. Although *vraisemblance* seems to be only a function of historical plausibility arrived at by careful attention to chronology, this plausibility is constructed in a narrative of national glory and so is not a disinterested standard. Huet's fundamental assertion that the French novel stems from the false histories of the Middle Ages is again made on the basis of its *vraisemblance*:

n'est il pas bien vraisemblable que cette ignorance produisit dans l'Europe le même effet qu'elle a toujours produit partout ailleurs? Et n'est-ce pas en vain que l'on cherche dans le hasard ce que nous trouvons dans la nature? Il n'y a donc pas lieu de contester que les romans français, allemands, et anglais et toutes les fables du Nord sont du cru du pays, nées sur les lieux, et n'y ont point été apportées d'ailleurs; qu'elles n'ont point d'autre origine que les histoires remplies des faussetés qui furent faites dans des temps obscurs, pleins d'ignorance, où l'industrie et la curiosité manquaient pour découvrir la vérité des choses et l'art pour les écrire. (133-34)

[Is it not quite *vraisemblable* that this ignorance produced in Europe the same effect that it always produced elsewhere? And is it not in vain that we look for in chance that which we find in nature? There is then no reason to argue that French, German, and English novels and all the fables of the North aren't the fruit of those countries, born in those places and were not brought there from elsewhere; that they have no other origin than the histories filled with falsities which were written in obscure times, full of ignorance, where the industry and curiosity to discover the truth of things and the art to record it was lacking.]

The crux of his argument rests on probability as the criterion for truth. This articulation of the relation between *la vraisemblance* and *la vérité*, probability and truth, gets at the heart of the epistemological debate of the period. The skeptical Huet relies on *vraisemblance* to make his argument, and in doing so, mirrors the terms of the art form he is describing.

The opposition between History and the *roman* current in critical thinking is refigured here in a way that offers a critique of historiography at the same time it creates significant opportunity for the enlarged political and moral scope of the *roman*. The *vraisemblance* of Huet's own narrative of origin implicates contemporary historiography in the work of fiction, and the *Lettre* ends with the conflation of History and *roman*.

Praising the *roman* to which the *Lettre* serves as introduction, Huet asks the putative author of *Zaïde* and recipient of his *Lettre*: “quel succès ne devez-vous pas espérer de *Zaïde*, dont les aventures sont si nouvelles et si touchantes, et dont la narration est si juste et si polie?” [what success ought you not to hope for *Zaïde*, in which the adventures are so novel and so touching, and in which the narration is so appropriate and polished?] (149). He continues by expressing a patriotic desire to see the King and his reign so narrated:

Je souhaiterais pour l'intérêt que je prends à la gloire du grand roi que le Ciel a mis sur nos têtes, que nous eussions l'histoire de son règne merveilleux, écrite d'un style aussi noble et avec autant d'exactitude et de discernement. La vertu qui conduit ses belles actions est si héroïque et la fortune qui les accompagne est si surprenante que la postérité douterait si ce serait une histoire ou un roman. (149-50)

[I would wish for the interest that I take in the glory of the great king that Heaven has put over our heads, that we could have a history of his marvelous reign, written in a style as noble and with such exactitude and discernment. The virtue that drives his lovely and noble actions is so heroic, and the fortune that accompanies them is so surprising, that posterity would wonder whether this was a history or a novel.]

Although Huet means this as a compliment and praise of the King is formulaic, he boldly states that the novel is the form best suited to History and to displaying the King's glory. Posterity's confusion would lie in the fact that the heroism displayed by the King in the imagined narrative would be novelistic, and the narrative technique would be noble and precise. This suggests that the novel and History are becoming one genre, recapitulating the novel's origin at a period when ignorance, and not Louis XIV, ruled Europe.

This conflation of historical and fictional discourse that Huet is advocating is problematic in light of his earlier argument about the difference between “les Orientaux” and the Greeks and their orientation to History and fiction. He suggested that the Greeks' ability to separate historical and fictional discourse was what made them more trustworthy and credible historians, as well as better novelists. At the end of his *Lettre* on the origin of *romans*, he expresses a desire for a narrative of the reign of Louis XIV that confuses

“histoire” and “roman.” Because Huet has put in place an idea of *l'esprit poétique*, or *l'esprit romanesque* that is, more than reason itself, the fundamental human characteristic, all forms of narrative share a common origin.

Huet may or may not be aware of what later critics view as the demise of the multi-volume *roman héroïque* and the rise of the *nouvelle* or *histoire*, but in any case he insists on a continuity of fiction. Unlike Huet, most literary histories posit a radical and complete disjunction between the models of heroic and historical fiction, or romance and the novel. If this disjunction between fictional forms is assumed, Huet is misread and devalued as a critic who is out of step and too late. As DeJean argues, Huet presents the novel “as an entity unaffected by the formal evolution from an ample, looser format that would now be termed ‘romance’ to a more concise model that would today be identified as ‘novel’” (DeJean 176). In Huet’s terms, the *roman*, as an expression of humanity’s impulse to knowledge and communication, changes over time and is not defined by its formal features, or by *vraisemblance*, but by its effect (the exercise of the passions) and content (love).

In his *Lettre*, Huet argues that the impulse to fiction is universal but that the unique status of women in France is to be thanked for the fact that the art of the novel is particularly well practiced there. Some of his arguments are unique, and some of them draw on already established tenets of literary theory. His treatment of the genre as being enriched by cross-fertilization with other countries and cultures calls for the opposite move on his part of establishing the cultural superiority of France; for him, the foundation of the genre in France is to be found in its particular gender arrangements and in the ignorance of the Middle Ages that produced fabulous histories. The teleology of his historical narrative is dependent upon the operation of a specific set of gender relations, and his argument for the pedagogical utility of the *roman* relies upon the instruction of female readers. Huet’s theory of *roman* -- which influenced the lexicography of the period

and literary history through today -- posits the *roman*, not History, as the narrative form that is the best vehicle for teaching morality and glorifying the nation, and as such he argues for an epistemology of fiction that takes the moral and cultural work of the *roman* seriously.

Conclusion:
Fontenelle's Fictional Marquise

Je ne demande aux Dames pour tout ce Système de Philosophie, que la même application qu'il faut donner à la Princesse de Clèves, si on veut en suivre bien l'intrigue, et en connoître toute la beauté.

-- Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle,
Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes, 1686

The ambiguity with which Huet ends his history of the *roman -- la posterité douterait si ce serait une histoire ou un roman* -- is mirrored by Fontenelle more than fifteen years later. When he tells his readers that all he asks of his women readers is that they apply themselves to this system of philosophy as they would to *La Princesse de Clèves*, he posits an equivalence between two modes of discourse, but it is an equivalence that bears within it marks of difference. His request that women apply themselves to the reading of philosophy as they would to fiction (which posits an equivalence between the two), is predicated on the assumption that philosophy and fiction are different in form and effect. Throughout the *Entretiens*, Fontenelle reminds the reader of this difference in order to again assert the equivalence, and he uses the conceit of a dialogue between a philosopher and an unschooled but intelligent and curious female aristocrat, La Marquise, to interrogate and illustrate the ambiguous epistemological terrain that fiction inhabits.

Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* was a tremendous success when it was published in 1686. The periodical *Mercurie galant*¹³⁶ paved the way for its popularity by giving it an advance review that characterized the author's intent and method:

Le dessein en est extrêmement singulier. La Phisique y est amenée à la portée de toutes les Dames, sans exception, quand mesme elles n'en

¹³⁶ *Mercurie galant* was edited by Fontenelle's uncle, Thomas Corneille.

auroient jamais entendu parler. Elle y est soutenue de toutes les reflexions morales que le sujet peut produire; elle y est ornée de traits d'Histoire, et égayée par tous les agrémens, mesme de galanterie, qui peuvent naistre dans la conversation d'un homme et d'une femme d'esprit. Enfin, c'est de la Philosophie déguisée, qui avec la vérité qu'elle doit toujours avoir a les graces qu'elle n'a pas ordinairement. Le but de l'Auteur est de vous donner une idée generale et fort claire de l'arrangement et de la construction de tout ce grand Univers. (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* vii-viii)

[The plan in it is extremely singular. Physics is brought to the door of all the Ladies, without exception, even to those who have never heard it spoken of. It is subjected to all the moral reflections that the subject can produce; it is ornamented with historical effects, and enlivened by all the pleasantries, even *galanterie*, that can be born in the conversation of a man and woman of quick mind. Finally, it is disguised philosophy, which with the truth it must always have, has graces that it doesn't ordinarily. The author's aim is to give you a general and strongly clear idea of the arrangement and construction of all of the great Universe.]

Readers were interested in this work whose stated aim was to make natural philosophy and cosmology accessible to all women, and the *Entretiens* went through eight Parisian editions by 1742, and two English translations appeared in 1688, one by Aphra Behn and the other by Joseph Glanvill.¹³⁷ The *Entretiens*, which renders Copernican cosmology and the Cartesian method of doubt accessible, was not the first to use fiction to address the issues of natural philosophy (as we saw in Chapter Two), nor the first to posit life on other planets: John Wilkins, Pierre Borel, and Cyrano de Bergerac all did so.¹³⁸ Fontenelle's use of fictional discourse in tandem with tropes of femininity makes his particular articulation

¹³⁷ Fontenelle revised the *Entretiens* throughout his life. The second edition (1687) included the addition of a sixth evening, and he updated the scientific content as new discoveries were made. The accepted scholarly edition is based on the 1742 edition, which incorporates Fontenelle's last corrections. Both 1688 English translations are based on the first edition, as is the only recent English translation. See Aileen Douglas for more detailed publication history, including the Irish edition by W.D. Knight that appeared in 1687.

¹³⁸ For example, John Wilkins, *Discovery of a World on the Moon*, 1638; Pierre Borel, *Discours nouveau prouvant la pluralité des mondes*, 1657; and Cyrano de Bergerac, *l'Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune* (1657). See Gelbart's introduction to Fontenelle, 1990.

of natural philosophy an appropriate conclusion to this dissertation that argues that fictional discourse and theoretical elaborations of fiction exploit and articulate the changing ideas about epistemology, and that it does so by also exploiting and articulating ideas about gender. Aphra Behn's translation and her prefatory remarks also specifically take up this question of the utility of tropes of femininity in fiction and philosophy, and provide the comparative context for these questions.

While granting Fontenelle's reputation as a popularizer of the New Science and Copernican cosmology, Nina Ratner Gelbart rightly emphasizes his emblematic status for a moment when disciplines and discourses were not as rigid or fixed as they would become. She asserts that

the author of the *Entretiens* gives us an invaluable insight into the early modern world, when science was still in its adolescence, still searching for its purpose and its self-image, still seeking a public to understand it, make it welcome, foster and even guide it [...] The *Entretiens* were written at a time when the pursuit of knowledge still enjoyed a great unity, and fields had not yet separated to lose touch with each other. (Fontenelle, Conversations xix)

Fontenelle speaks to this unity by using variable vocabulary to describe his project -- *philosophie, physique, science* -- and his ease in using the language of fiction and *galanterie* to model philosophy. He also illustrates the difference between philosophy and fiction by justifying their equivalence. He tells the reader that his aim in writing the *Entretiens* was "traiter la Philosophie d'une maniere qui ne fût point Philosophique; j'ai tâché de l'amener à un point, où elle ne fût ni trop seche pour les Gens du monde, ni trop badine pour les Sçavans" [to treat philosophy in a manner that was not philosophical; I tried to bring it to a point where it wasn't too dry for the worldly, nor too frivolous for savants] (Fontenelle, Entretiens 4). Fontenelle will try and tread a middle ground between the dry and the frivolous, risking that his fiction might make philosophy too much like fiction, too entertaining. Distinguishing between "la Philosophie" and "une maniere Philosophique," he posits a distinction between content and form: philosophy will be the subject matter, but fiction will be the form.

He is anxious, however, that perhaps this combination will please no one, and appeals to the old saw “plaire et instruire” to advise his audience on how to read:

Il se peut bien faire qu'en cherchant un milieu où la Philosophie convînt à tout le Monde, j'en aye trouvé un où elle ne convienne à personne [...] Je dois avertir ceux qui liront ce Livre, et qui ont quelque connoissance de la Physique, que je n'ai point du tout prétendu les instruire, mais seulement les divertir en leur présentant d'une manière un peu plus agréable et plus égayée, ce qu'ils sçavent déjà plus solidement; et j'avertis ceux à qui ces Matieres sont nouvelles, que j'ai crû pouvoir les instruire et les divertir tout ensemble. Les premiers iront contre mon intention, s'ils cherchent ici de l'utilité; et les seconds, s'ils n'y cherchent que de l'agrément. (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 4-5)

[Perhaps in searching for a middle ground where philosophy suits everyone, I found a place where it suits nobody [...] I have to inform those who will read this book, and who have some knowledge of physics, that I have not intended to instruct them, but only to divert them in presenting to them that which they already know solidly, in a manner a little more pleasant and lively; and I warn those for whom the materials are new, that I believed to be able to instruct and divert them at the same time. The first will go against my intention if they look for utility here; and the second, if they look only for pleasure.]

Instruction and diversion, the classical goals of poetry, are here also in the service of philosophy. But there are two sorts of readers: those who have some knowledge of the subject, and those who have none, and the classical dictum adheres differently to each. Diversion is all that is claimed for the former, while for the latter, Fontenelle believes he is able “les instruire et les divertir tout ensemble.”

The latter group of readers, it becomes apparent, are specifically female,¹³⁹ and Fontenelle uses the figure of a woman to inspire them in their reading and learning about the new cosmology. He describes the mechanism by which the *Entretiens* will “les instruire et les divertir tout ensemble,” as a fiction:

¹³⁹ Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women*, argues that over the course of the next half century, and in Fontenelle's own revisions of the text, the feminine specificity of the readers and the Marquise's own ability to intervene in philosophical discourse are ellided. See her chapter “Fontenelle and the Ladies” in *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*.

J'ai mis dans ces Entretiens une Femme que l'on instruit, et qui n'a jamais ouï parler de ces choses-là. J'ai crû que cette fiction me serviroit et à rendre l'Ouvrage plus susceptible d'agrément, et à encourager les Dames par l'exemple d'une Femme, qui ne sortant jamais des bornes d'une personne qui n'a nulle teinture de Science, ne laisse pas d'entendre ce qu'on lui dit, et de ranger dans sa tête sans confusion les Tourbillons et les Mondes. Pourquoi des Femmes cederoient-elles à cette Marquise imaginaire, qui ne conçoit que ce qu'elle ne peut se dispenser de concevoir? (Fontenelle, Entretiens 5-6)

[I've placed a woman in these Conversations who is being instructed, one who has never heard a syllable about such things. I thought this fiction would serve to make the work more enticing, and to encourage Ladies through the example of a woman who, having nothing of an extraordinary character, without ever exceeding the limitations of a person who has no knowledge of science, never fails to understand what's said to her, and arranges in her mind, without confusion, vortices, and worlds. Why would any woman accept inferiority to this imaginary Marquise, who only conceives of those things of which she can't help but conceive?] (Fontenelle, Conversations 4) [translation adjusted]

Fontenelle identifies the construction of the Marquise as a useful fiction that will, by representing an example, encourage other women to also apply themselves to philosophy. He mobilizes female vanity and competitiveness to do this, and suggests that those who don't follow her lead have accepted their inferiority. "Cette Marquise imaginaire" serves as a model to other women readers, and so the explicit gender identification is in the service of inspiring similar behavior and application.

The fiction of "cette Marquise imaginaire" also, though, serves "à rendre l'Ouvrage plus susceptible d'agrément," and it is important to ask why this should be so, and then, further, if a fictionalized woman renders the work more pleasurable, what is the relation between this pleasure and the knowledge therein? Fontenelle reiterates the relation throughout the *Entretiens*. The preface is followed by a letter "à Monsieur L..." which supplies the *raison d'être* for the following *entretiens*: the author had promised Monsieur L. "un conte exact de la maniere dont j'ai passé mon tems à la Campagne" [an exact tale of the manner in which I passed my time in the country] (Fontenelle, Entretiens 10). Male philosopher addressing male philosopher ("[h]eureusement vous êtes

Philosophe” [10]), the Marquise is subsumed into an object whose acquisition embellishes philosophy: “Peut-être même serés-vous bien-aise que j’aye attiré Madame la Marquise dans le parti de la Philosophie. Nous ne pouvions faire une acquisition plus considérable; car je conte que la beauté et la jeunesse sont toujours des choses d’un grand prix” (Fontenelle, Entretiens 10-11). [Perhaps you will even be pleased that I have drawn Madame the Marquise into the philosophical fold. We could not have made a more considerable acquisition, for I reckon beauty and youth are always things of great value] (Fontenelle, Conversations 7). In acquiring knowledge and understanding of philosophy, the Marquise herself becomes an acquisition. Alluding to the Marquise as an allegory of wisdom, the narrator conflates the pursuit of wisdom with the pursuit of pleasure, and these are both figured by the pursuit of a woman:

Ne croyés-vous pas que si la Sagesse elle-même vouloit se présenter aux hommes avec succès, elle ne feroit point mal de paroître sous une figure qui approchât un peu de celle de la Marquise? Sur-tout si elle pouvoit avoir dans sa conversation les mêmes agrémens, je suis persuadé que tout le monde courroit après la Sagesse. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 11)

[Don’t you believe that if Wisdom wished to present herself successfully to men, she would do well to take a form much like that of the Marquise? Indeed, if Wisdom could make her conversation equally agreeable, I assure you that all the world would run after her.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 7)

The reader here is male (“aux hommes”) and sexual, and intellectual pleasures converge.

Fontenelle is more interested in showing women readers the convergence of sexual and intellectual pleasure. The Marquise’s own acquisition of knowledge and understanding is at once easy (“qui ne conçoit que ce qu’elle ne peut se dispenser de concevoir?”) and a pleasure. Fontenelle concedes that the Marquise makes some effort, but that it is an effort equal to that of reading *La Princesse de Clèves*:

A la vérité elle s’applique un peu, mais qu’est-ce ici que s’appliquer? Ce n’est pas pénétrer à force de méditation une chose obscure d’elle-même, ou expliquée obscurément, c’est seulement ne point lire sans se représenter nettement ce qu’on lit. Je ne demande aux Dames pour tout ce Système de Philosophie, que la même application qu’il faut donner à la Princesse de Clèves, si on veut en suivre bien l’intrigue, et en connoître toute la beauté. Il est vrai que les idées de ce Livre-ci sont moins familières à la plupart des

Femmes que celles de la Princesse de Cleves, mais elles n'en sont pas plus obscures, et je suis sûr qu'a une seconde lecture tout au plus, il ne leur en sera rien échappé. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 6)

[To be honest, this Marquise applies herself a bit, but what does applying oneself mean in this context? It's not necessary to penetrate by means of concentrated thought something either obscure in itself or obscurely explained; it's merely required that one read and at the same time form a clear idea of what one is reading. I only ask of the ladies, for this whole system of Philosophy, the same amount of concentration that must be given to *The Princesse of Cleves* in order to follow the plot closely and understand all its beauty. It's true that the ideas of this book are less familiar to most women than those of *The Princesse of Cleves*, but they're no more obscure; one cannot read them more than twice at the very most without grasping them very accurately.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 4-5)

Both *La Princesse de Clèves* and the proposed system of philosophy require concentration and representation to oneself while reading. It is the ideas a book contains, whether fiction or philosophy, that need to be grasped, and while the ideas in *La Princesse de Clèves* may be more familiar to women, it does not mean that the philosophical ideas in the *Entretiens* are more obscure or difficult. Careful reading requires concentration, no matter what the subject matter.

The philosophical system Fontenelle is trying to illustrate is luckily, he says, easily visualized and grasped. He emphasizes that it is based on scientific principles and proofs, and asserts that these principles in themselves are pleasurable:

Comme je n'ai pas prétendu faire un Système en l'air, et qui n'eût aucun fondement, j'ai employé de vrais raisonnemens de Physique, et j'en ai employé autant qu'il a été nécessaire. Mais il se trouve heureusement dans ce sujet les idées de Physique y sont riannes d'elles-mêmes, et que dans le même tems qu'elles contentent la raison, elles donnent à l'imagination un spectacle qui lui plaît autant que s'il étoit fait exprès pour elle. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 6-7)

[Since I had no intention of creating a make-believe system, without any foundation, I've employed verifiable physical tenets, as many as were necessary. But fortunately it happens that on this subject the ideas of physics are pleasing in themselves and, at the same time that they're satisfying the mind, they provide a spectacle for the imagination which pleases as much as if they had been made expressly for that purpose.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 5)

Scientific principles both satisfy reason and give the imagination an appropriate spectacle.

Scientific principles, “riantes d’elles-mêmes,” serve a dual purpose, and the demands of reason and imagination, which are posited as opposed faculties,¹⁴⁰ are equalized in the presence of these principles.

Pleasure is important to Fontenelle’s epistemology and his explanation of how knowledge is acquired. The Marquise is a figure of this pleasure and is both an example of the epistemology of pleasure in action and an emblem of the kind of pleasure that the pursuit of knowledge provides. Georges Van Den Abbeele argues that “if the feminine face figures wisdom itself, as well as the lay reader, as well as the topography of the moon, as well as the beauty of the cosmos itself, then she would seem to be the very figure of figuration itself, the representation of the pleasure of representation” (Van Den Abbeele 172). That the Marquise as an allegorical figure for the pursuit of pleasure resonates more for the male reader is posited by Fontenelle in the preface: recall that “[il est] persuadé que tout le monde courroit après la Sagesse.” But she also, he argues, is a fiction that can resonate for women, as an example and model of the kind of pleasure women can find in philosophy.

The pleasure that Fontenelle narrates for women is likened to the pleasure of love, and he exploits both the language of *galanterie* and romance fiction to convince the Marquise. He plays upon the readers’ expectations of a different kind of pleasure to be operative in the interaction between a man and a woman, and the tension between the pleasure of philosophy and the pleasure of sexual desire is maintained throughout the

¹⁴⁰ Fontenelle has the Marquise articulate the gap between these two modes: “Ma raison est assés bien convaincuë, dit la Marquise mais mon imagination est accablée de la multitude infinie des Habitans de toutes ces Planetes, et embarrassée de la diversité qu’il faut établir entre eux” (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 95). [“My reason is pretty well convinced, said the Marquise, but my imagination’s overwhelmed by the infinite multitude of inhabitants on all these planets, and perplexed by the diversity one must establish among them”] (Fontenelle, *Conversations* 45).

Entretiens, and is suggestive of the ultimate equivalence and substitutability of the two.

The philosopher tells the Marquise:

je suis bien fâché qu'il faille vous l'avouer, je me suis mis dans la tête que chaque Etoile pourroit bien être un Monde. Je ne jurerois pourtant pas que cela fût vrai, mais je le tiens pour vrai, parce qu'il me fait plaisir à croire. C'est une idée qui me plaît, et qui s'est placée dans mon esprit d'une manière riante. Selon moi, il n'y a pas jusqu'aux Vérités à qui l'agrément ne soit nécessaire. (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 15-6)

[I'm ashamed to admit it, I said, but I have a peculiar notion that every star could well be a world. I wouldn't swear that it's true, but I think so because it pleases me to think so. The idea sticks in my mind in a most delightful way. As I see it, this pleasure is an integral part of truth itself.] (Fontenelle, *Conversations* 10)

Truth and pleasure are necessary parts of each other. But he needs to be prodded into discussing philosophy with the Marquise, who commands him: "Eh bien [...] puisque votre folie est si agréable, donnés-la moi, je croirai sur les Etoiles tout ce que vous voudrés, pourvû que j'y trouve du plaisir" ["Well [...] if your folly is so pleasurable, share it with me, I will believe that the stars are anything you like, provided I find pleasure in it"] (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 16). The philosopher is reluctant, however, and cautions the Marquise as to the nature of the pleasure that she can expect to find: "ce n'est pas un plaisir comme celui que vous auriés à une Comedie de Moliere; c'en est un qui est je ne sçai où dans la raison, et qui ne fait rire que l'esprit" ["it is not the kind of pleasure that you will have at a comedy by Molière; it is one which is found in reason, and which makes only the mind laugh"] (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 16). The Marquise is quick to protest: "Quoi donc [...] croyés-vous qu'on soit incapable des plaisirs qui ne sont que dans la raison? Je veux tout à l'heure vous faire voir le contraire, apprenés-moi vos Etoiles" (16) ["What [...] do you think I'm incapable of enjoying intellectual pleasures? I'll show you otherwise right now. Tell me about your stars" (Fontenelle, *Conversations* 10-1)]! Intellectual pleasures are contrasted with the pleasures of the theater,¹⁴¹ but the

Marquise's insistence on her ability to be open to all kinds of pleasure suggests an analogy between intellectual and sexual pleasure and openness.

The pleasures of philosophy are related to the ease and simplicity of comprehension. Philosophical truths are apprehended whole, and at the end of the first evening, the Marquise and philosopher agree to subscribe to a Copernican view of the universe: "et enfin il fut resolu que nous nous en tiendrions à celui de Copernic, qui est plus uniforme et plus riant, et n'a aucun mélange de préjugé. En effet, la simplicité, dont il est persuade, et sa hardiesse fait plaisir" (Fontenelle, Entretiens 44-5) ["Finally we resolved to hold to the system of Copernicus, which is more uniform and enticing and free of prejudice. In fact, its simplicity is persuasive and its boldness pleasing" (Fontenelle, Conversations 22)]. Later, Fontenelle's philosopher describes a Platonic pedagogy that likens learning to remembering:

je veux seulement vous faire voir qu'on peut assés bien soutenir une opinion chimérique, pour embrasser une personne d'esprit, mais non pas assés bien pour la persuader. Il n'y a que la vérité qui persuade, même sans avoir besoin de paroître avec toutes ses preuves. Elle entre si naturellement dans l'esprit, que quand on l'apprend pour la première fois, il semble qu'on ne fasse que s'en souvenir. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 75)

[I only want to make you see that one can support a whimsical theory well enough to perplex a clever person, but not enough to persuade her. Only the truth can persuade, and it needs to bring no array of proofs with it. Truth enters the mind so naturally that learning it for the first time seems merely like remembering it.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 36)

Truth needs no asserted proofs. In fact, truth's only proof is the pleasure it gives and is subject to revision. When the Marquise and the philosopher discuss the possibility of

¹⁴¹ Fontenelle's choice of Molière is a motivated one. Molière's *Les Femmes savantes* (1672) was a satire on learned women and the interest in Cartesian philosophy, and that Fontenelle contrasts the pleasure found in one of his comedies with the pleasures of philosophy is ironic. Erica Harth, Cartesian Women, discusses Molière as an example of an anti-feminist, anti-Cartesian backlash, but does not quote this passage.

inhabitants on the moon, the philosopher is able to argue both that the moon is populated and that it is unpopulated, and the Marquise is frustrated and disappointed in the uncertainty that the new philosophy contains. She wants certitude, and to know if there are inhabitants on the moon. She calls this desire a weakness, and the philosopher is happy to indulge it:

Je vous avouë ma foiblesse, repliqua-t-elle, je ne suis point capable d'une si parfaite indétermination, j'ai besoin de croire. Fixés-moi promptement à une opinion sur les Habitans de la Lune; conservons-les, ou anéatissons-les pour jamais, et qu'il n'en soit plus parlé; mais conservons-les plutôt, s'il se peut, j'ai pris pour eux une inclination que j'aurois de la peine à perdre. Je ne laisserai donc pas la Lune deserte, repri-je, repeuplons-la pour vous faire plaisir. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 78)

[I confess my weakness, she replied. I'm not capable of such perfect impartiality; I need to believe. Quickly, help me to a definite opinion on the inhabitants of the Moon. Let's preserve them or annihilate them forever and not discuss it anymore -- but let's preserve them if possible. I've taken a liking to them that I'd be sorry to lose.

Then I won't leave the moon deserted, I replied. Let's repopulate her to give you pleasure.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 38)

The Marquise's pleasure is the only justification for repopulating the moon.

Pleasure, beauty, truth are concatenated, and Fontenelle exploits the mix when he draws analogies between philosophy and fiction, and between philosophy and *galanterie*. The *Entretiens* open with the Marquise and philosopher discussing day and night in terms of an analogy between the different complexions of women and the phases of the twenty-four-hour day. They agree that the night is more beautiful than the day, the Marquise being the first to use a trope of femininity to describe the day and the night: "la beauté du jour est comme une beauté blonde qui a plus de brillant; mais la beauté de la nuit est une beauté brune qui est plus touchante" ["day's beauty is like the dazzling beauty of a blonde woman; but night's beauty is the more moving beauty of a brunette"] (Fontenelle, Entretiens 13-4). The philosopher compliments the blonde Marquise on her generosity in granting brunettes the superior position. He then attempts to rehabilitate blonde beauty by reference to heroines of romance fiction: "Il est pourtant vrai que le jour est ce qu'il y a de

plus beau dans la Nature, et que les Héroïnes de Roman, qui sont ce qu'il y a de plus beau dans l'imagination, sont presque toujours blondes (Fontenelle, Entretiens 14). [But it's certainly true that the day is the most beautiful thing in nature, and that the most beautiful things in the imagination, the heroines of Romances, are nearly always blondes too] (Fontenelle, Conversations 9). The philosopher playfully asserts that both nature and imagination, when they create the most beautiful things, necessarily create blondes. The Marquise, however, requires that beauty be moving (*touchante*) if it is going to have any status, and does not comment on the philosopher's reference to the authority of romance fiction.

The philosopher, in his turn, persists in drawing an equivalence between romance fiction and philosophy that the Marquise denies. He explains the origins of astronomy and other branches of natural philosophy to her:

Voilà comme les choses parurent à ces anciens Bergers de Chaldée, dont le grand loisir produisit les premiers observations, qui ont été le fondement de L'Astronomie; car l'Astronomie est née dans la Chaldée, comme la Géométrie naquit, dit-on, en Egypte, où les inondations du Nil, qui confondoient les bornes des champs, furent cause que chacun voulut inventer des mesures exacts pour reconnoître son champ d'avec celui de son voisin. Ainsi l'Astronomie est fille de l'Oisiveté, la Géométrie est fille de l'Interêt, est s'il étoit question de la Poësie, nous trouverions apparemment qu'elle est fille de l'Amour. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 21-2)

[That's the way things appeared to the Chaldean Shepherds long ago, whose great leisure produced the first observations that were the foundation of astronomy; for astronomy was born in Chaldea, just as geometry was born in Egypt where the flooding of the Nile, which obliterated the boundaries of all the fields, was the reason that everyone wished to invent exact measures in order to distinguish his field from that of his neighbor. As astronomy is the daughter of idleness, geometry is the daughter of property, and if it were a question of poetry we would likely find that she is the daughter of love.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 13)

The Marquise decides that the study of astronomy is the science that best suits her soul, geometry requiring one that is too calculating and poetry one that is too tender. The great leisure of the Chaldean shepherds is paralleled by the great leisure the Marquise and the philosopher find they have: "Heureusement encore nous sommes à la Campagne, et nous y

menons quasi une vie pastorale; tout cela convient à l'Astronomie" (Fontenelle, Entretiens 22). ["Happily, too, we're in the country, and here we lead a fairly pastoral life, quite conducive to astronomy."] (Fontenelle, Conversations 13). But the philosopher is quick to point out that the pastoral life of leisure has another consequence besides astronomy. He makes reference to *L'Astrée*, d'Urfé's heroic romance that Scudéry and Huet praised. "Ne vous y trompés pas, Madame, repris-je. Ce n'est pas la vraie vie pastorale, que de parler des Planetes, et des Etoiles Fixes. Voyés si c'est à cela que les Gens de l'Astrée passent leur tems" (Fontenelle, Entretiens 22). ["Don't deceive yourself, Marquise, I replied, it's not a true pastoral life merely because one talks of the planets and the fixed stars. Think how the people in *Astrea* pass their time."] (Fontenelle, Conversations 13). Pastoral can lead not only to astronomy, but to the pastimes of the people in romance fiction. The Marquise insists that the kind of pastoral represented by *L'Astrée* is too dangerous, and that she is modeling her pastoral leisure on the Chaldeans: "Oh! [...] cette sorte de Bergerie-là est trop dangereuse. J'aime mieux celles de ces Chaldéens dont vous me parliés" (Fontenelle, Entretiens 22) ["Oh [...] that sort of shepherd's life is too dangerous. I prefer those Chaldeans you were telling me about"] (Fontenelle, Conversations 13). The Marquise once again shuts down the philosopher's attempt to make love instead of philosophy and is unresponsive to his allusions to *romans*, which he uses to deflect her from philosophy to more material pleasures. Philosophy, however, is the more effective discourse for seduction; romance fiction is a red herring, and the kind of danger that she alludes to and fears in *L'Astrée* is lurking in philosophy as well.

On the fourth evening, after the Marquise and the philosopher have discussed the Copernican cosmology and the possibility, indeed likelihood,¹⁴² of the moon being inhabited, the philosopher initiates her in Descartes's theory of vortices, which seems to

¹⁴² E.D. James points out that Fontenelle's "possibility" slides "between meaning ranging from fittingness to plausibility, from probability to necessity" (James 135).

her at first to go against the principle of simplicity and order that she and he had agreed to previously. He pleads with her to follow him in his explanation, saying: “Ah! Madame, [...] si vous sçaviés ce que c’est que les Tourbillons de Descartes, ces Tourbillons dont le nom est si terrible, et l’idée si agréable, vous ne parleriés pas comme vous faites” (Fontenelle, Entretiens 114). [“Ah, Madame [...] if you knew what the vortices of Descartes are, those vortices whose name is so terrible and whose essence is so pleasing, you wouldn’t speak as you do”] (Fontenelle, Conversations 52). The Marquise is convinced and replies in language evocative of sexual seduction:

Achevés de me rendre folle, je ne me ménage plus, je ne connois plus de retenue sur la Philosophie; laissons parler le monde, et donnons-nous aux Tourbillons. Je ne vous connoissois pas de pareils emportemens, repris-je; c’est dommage qu’ils n’ayent que les Tourbillons pour objet. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 114-5)

[Finish driving me to madness -- I can’t control myself anymore; I no longer know how to hold out against philosophy. Let the world talk, while we abandon ourselves to vortices.]

“I’ve never seen you so transported,” I answered. “It’s a shame all this should be wasted on mere vortices.” (Fontenelle, Conversations 53)

Philosophy’s pleasures are endless, and the Marquise requires that this be so if she is to remain faithful to it. At the end of the fourth evening, the Marquise counts her blessings, musing that

[l]a mesure de bonheur qui nous a été donnée, est assés petite, il n’en faut rien perdre, et il est bon d’avoir pour les choses les plus communes, et les moins considerables un goût qui les mette à profit. Si on ne vouloit que des plaisirs vifs, on en auroit peu, on les attendroit long-tems, et on les payeroit bien (Fontenelle, Entretiens 131-2).

[t]he measure of happiness which has been given to us is small enough; we musn’t lose any of it, and it’s good to have a taste for the most common, least important things which make them worthwhile. If we wanted only intense pleasures, we’d have few of them, we’d wait a long time for them, and we’d pay dearly for them.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 60-1)

The philosopher then extracts a promise that she will not abandon him or philosophy for these *plaisirs vifs*:

Vous me promettés donc, repliquai-je, que si on vous proposoit de ces plaisirs vifs, vous vous souviendriés des Tourbillons et de moi, et que vous

ne nous negligeriés pas tout-à-fait? Oüi, répondit-elle, mais faites que la Philosophie me fournisse toujours des plaisirs nouveaux. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 132)

["Can you promise me," I replied, "that if anyone offered you these intense pleasures you'd remember the vortices and me, and not shut yourself away from us?"]

"Yes," she answered, "but you must make sure Philosophy always furnishes me with new pleasures." (Fontenelle, Conversations 61)

Philosophy seems well able to keep up with the Marquise's desire for new pleasures. At the very moment when she questions the logical foundations of the new cosmology, the philosopher again likens philosophy to love and the logic of seduction. She is skeptical about the logical sequence of reasonings that the philosopher has presented to her and she asks him:

Mais aussi parlés-moi franchement, votre Sistême est-il bien vrai? Ne me déguisés rien, je vous garederai le secret. Il me semble qu'il n'est appuyé que sur une petite convenance bien leger. Une Etoile Fixe est lumineuse d'elle-même comme le Soleil, par consequent il faut qu'elle soit comme le Soleil le centre et l'ame d'un Monde, et qu'elle ait ses Planetes qui tournent autour d'elle. Cela est-il d'une necessité bien absoluë? (Fontenelle, Entretiens 137)

[But tell me frankly, is your system really true? Don't conceal anything; I'll keep your secret. It seems to me that it's founded on a very flimsy expedience. A fixed star is self-illuminated like the Sun, and consequently like the sun it must be the center and soul of a vortex and have planets that rotate around it. Is this absolutely necessary?] (Fontenelle, Conversations 64)

The philosopher answers her by drawing an analogy between the language and tactics of a mathematician advancing his proof and the language and tactics of a lover's conquest in progress:

Ecoutez, Madame, répondis-je, puisque nous sommes en humeur de mêler toujours des folies de galanterie à nos discours les plus serieux, les raisonnemens de Mathematique sont faits comme l'Amour. Vous ne sçauriés accorder si peu de chose à un Amant, que bien-tôt après il ne faille lui en accorder davantage, et à la fin cela va loin. De même accordés à un Mathematicien le moindre principe, il va vous en tirer une consequence, qu'il faudra que vous lui accordiés aussi, et de cette consequence encore une autre; et malgré vous-même, il vous mene si loin, qu'à peine le pouvés-vous croire. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 137-38)

[Listen, Madame, I answered, since we're inclined to keep mixing foolish lovetalk with our serious conversation, the logic of mathematics is like that of love. You can't grant a lover the least favor without soon having to grant more, and still more, and in the end it's gone awfully far. Well, if you grant the mathematician the least principle, he'll draw a conclusion from it that you must grant him too, and from that conclusion another, and in spite of yourself he'll lead you so far you'll have trouble believing it.] (Fontenelle Conversations 64)

Natural philosophy -- whether under the name astronomy, or vortices, or mathematics -- is more pleasurable and more enticing than the fiction the philosopher used as his opening gambit with the Marquise on the first evening. The mathematician and the rake have a great deal in common.

The emphasis on the ease of combining *galanterie* with more serious discourse, and the analogy between mathematics and the seduction of a woman by a man, makes clear the utility of Fontenelle's Marquise and the signifying power of gender. Fontenelle's strategy of making a woman figure the pleasure principle and the combining of philosophy and *galanterie* that is so important to his stated epistemology is not the only strategy available. Poulain de la Barre in his 1673 treatise, *Sur l'égalité des deux sexes*, rejected this strategy on general epistemological as well as practical grounds that are specific to his own discourse on sex equality. Unlike Fontenelle who believed it possible to "les instruire et les divertir tout ensemble," Poulain holds the two aims to be incompatible. He says that

Ce sujet pouvoir estre traité en deux façons, ou galamment, c'est à dire, d'une maniere enjouée et fleurie, ou bien en Philosophe et par principes, afin d'en instruire à fond.

Ceux qui ont une idée just de la veritable Eloquence, savent bien que ces deux manieres sont presque inalliables, et qu'on ne peut gueres éclairer l'Esprit et l'égayer par la même voye. Ce m'est pas qu'on puisse joindre la fleurette avec la raison; mais ce mélange empêche souvent la fin qu'on se doit proposer dans les Discours, qui est de convaincre et de persuader; ce qu'il y a d'agreable amusant l'Esprit, et ne luy permettant pas de s'arrêter aux solide. (Poulain de la Barre, De l'Égalité 11)

[This issue about equality can be discussed in two ways: either in a gallant fashion, that is in a flowery and playful style, or philosophically and by reference to principles, so that one understands it thoroughly

Those who have an accurate idea of genuine eloquence realise that these two ways are almost incompatible, and that one can rarely enlighten the mind and entertain it at the same time. It is not as if one could not combine flowery speech with reason; it is rather that such a combination often hinders achieving the objective which one should have for discourses, namely to convince and persuade. When something pleasant enters the mind, it prevents it from concentrating on substantive issues.] (Poulain de la Barre, Equality 47)

”Plaire et instruire” does not hold on general principle. For Poulain de la Barre, the pleasant distracts from the instruction instead of aiding it. To mix the language of *galanterie* in a serious discourse on women would be to compound the present general problem by compromising women who already suffer from an emphasis on *plaire* rather than *instruire*. He says,

Et comme l’on a pour les Femmes des regards particuliers, si dans un ouvrage fait sur leur sujet, on mêle quelque chose de galant, ceux qui le lisent poussent leurs pensées plus loin, et perdent de veüe ce qui les devoit occuper. (Poulain de la Barre, De l’Égalité 11)

[People look at women from their own point of view. Thus, if one includes some element of gallantry in a book about women, those who read it let their thoughts run too far afield and lose sight of what they ought to be concerned with.] (Poulain de la Barre, Equality 47)

To mix the pleasant with the serious is already a mistake; to do so in a discourse that concerns women magnifies it, given the signifying power of gender. Poulain de la Barre believes that this power cannot be controlled or contained -- the cultural prejudice is too ingrained and diffuse -- but Fontenelle attempts to exploit the metaphorical richness and diversity of figurations of “woman.”

In her function as both example of the process of knowledge acquisition and an emblem of that same knowledge, the specifically gendered Marquise’s interventions (and those by the philosopher that are framed in acknowledgment of her gendered specificity), show the interdependence of epistemology and gender. Fontenelle’s deployment of an idea of fiction -- he calls the Marquise herself a fiction, and he makes reference to specific works of fiction (drama and romance) in his attempt to draw both women readers and the

Marquise into “le parti de la Philosophie” -- shows the synergy of the three terms when used together.

Fontenelle’s deployment of fictional discourse is evident in several ways. He calls the Marquise a fiction, and argues that “cette fiction” will serve two purposes: to make the work more pleasing, and to serve as a model for his women readers. He incorporates references to romance fiction and the language of *galanterie* that one finds there in order to draw an equivalence between the pleasures of philosophy and the pleasures of fiction. Fiction is thus thematized in relation to gender and to epistemology. When he instructs his female readers to read the *Entretiens* with the same attention they would *La Princesse de Clèves*, he posits an analogy between the plot of fiction and the argument of philosophy. In his use of the Marquise as an allegory for wisdom, he likens the pleasure in apprehending the female form to the pleasure of apprehending a philosophical idea. His consistent use of the language of seduction in conjunction with references to fiction makes the pursuit of philosophy and the pursuit of a woman metaphors for each other. In his narrative the Marquise is a willing and able participant in her own seduction.

Fontenelle’s representation of the search for knowledge as analogous to the way fiction is understood and the way the Marquise figures in this pursuit form part of the analysis of how fiction, epistemology, and gender are related in this period. Aphra Behn’s translation of the *Entretiens* is an interesting interpretation of Fontenelle’s project to make philosophical ideas accessible to women, because she specifically rejects Fontenelle’s foundational fictions.

Aphra Behn, as well as writing prose fiction and plays and poetry, also translated philosophical works from the French. Her translation of Fontenelle’s *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* as *A Discovery of New Worlds*, was prefaced by a treatise on the art of translation,¹⁴³ and a description and defense of the work. The opening letter of

dedication contains her formulaic demur that her femininity mitigates any errors:

My Lord, I presume to dedicate this little Book to your Lordship, which I ventured to translate, because it pleased me in the *French*; and tho but a trifle, has something in it out of the way of ordinary *Wit*, which renders it more worthy to be laid at your Lordships Feet. If it is not done with that exactness it merits, I hope your Lordship will pardon it in a *Woman*, which is not supposed to be well versed in the Terms of Philosophy, being but a new beginner in that Science. (Behn, *Works*, Vol 4 72)

Although, she says, it is a trifle, it is worthy, and her status as a woman makes any failure on her part forgivable. The popularity of the *Entretiens* and Fontenelle's reputation induce her to undertake the translation. The fact that one of the participants in the dialogue is a woman further justifies Behn's translation. She tells the reader that:

the Authors introducing a Woman as one of the speakers in these five Discourses, were further motives for me to undertake this little work; for I thought an *English* Woman might adventure to translate anything, a *French* Woman may be supposed to have spoken. (73)

Not only does the Marquise's femininity justify Behn's translation, national pride also

¹⁴³ Fontenelle's preface also opens with a discussion on the difficulty of translation: modeling his *Entretiens* as a translation from philosophy to a more accessible mode, he says:

Je suis à peu près dans le même cas où se trouva Cicéron, lorsqu'il entreprit de mettre en sa Langue des matieres de Philosophie, qui jusques-là n'avoient été traitées qu'en Grec. Il nous apprend qu'on disoit que ses Ouvrages seroient fort inutiles, parce que ceux qui aimoient la Philosophie s'étant bien donné la peine de la chercher dans les Livres Grecs, négligeroient après cela de la voir dans des Livres Latins, qui ne seroient pas Originaux, et que ceux qui n'avoient pas de goût pour la Philosophie, ne se soucioient de la voir ni en Latin, ni en Grec (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 3).

[I am almost in the same situation Cicero found himself in, when he undertook to put in his language philosophical subjects, which until then had only been treated in Greek. He tells us that one could say that his works were quite useless, because those who loved philosophy, having already taken the trouble to look for it in Greek books, would neglect after that to look for it in Latin books, being not in the original, and those who didn't have a taste for philosophy, would not seek it in Latin or in Greek.]

plays a role, and Behn develops this idea of national difference into a treatise on the art and difficulty of translation.

Of all the romance languages, French is the most difficult to translate into English because the humors of the nations are opposed: “the nearer the Genius and Humour of two Nations agree, the Idioms of their Speech are nearer; and every Body knows there is more Affinity between the *English* and *Italian* People, than the *English* and the *French*” (74). Other factors make the translation of French into English more difficult than other languages: Behn asserts that the fact that the French language has changed in the past one hundred years, and that “*French* Authors take a liberty to borrow whatever word they want from the *Latin*, without farther ceremony, especially when they treat of the Sciences” (75) further add to the difficulty. The French language does, however, have some advantages. She argues that “it [*French*] has as many Advantages of the *English*, as to the Sound, as ours has of the *French*, as to the Signification: which is another Argument of the different Genius of the two Nations” (75). This advantage of sound, however, causes French authors to “confound their own Language with needless repetitions and Tautologies; and by certain Rhetorical Figure, peculiar to themselves, imply twenty Lines, to express what an *English* Man would say, with more Ease and Sense in five” (76). Behn’s comments on the difficulty of translating French display a protectiveness of English national interest that has a larger scope than language. She complains:

I confess the *French* Arms, Money and Intrigues have made their Language very universal of late, for this they are to be commended. It is an Accident, which they owe to the greatness of their King and their own Industry; and it may fall out hereafter to be otherwise. ... It is modish to Ape the *French* in every thing: Therefore, we not only naturalize their words, but words they steal from other languages. I wish in this and several other things, we had little more of the *Italian* and *Spanish* humour, and did not chop and change our language, as we do our Cloths, at the Pleasure of every *French* Tailor. (75)

The influence of French customs and fashions, linguistic and sartorial, makes Behn uncomfortable, and she takes pains to assert the advantages that the English language and humor have.

She next gives an overview of Fontenelle's text, and what the reader can expect to find in a "treatise of this nature" (76): "The Designe of the Author is to treat of this part a Natural Philosophy in a more familiar Way than any other hath done, and to make every body understand him" (77). She repeats Fontenelle's own prefatory assertion that the fictional Marquise helps him accomplish this: "For this End, he introduceth a Woman of Quality as one of the Speakers in these five Discourses, whom he feigns never to have heard of any such thing as Philosophy before" (77). Behn is not convinced of the efficacy of this fiction, and she cautions the reader:

How well he hath performed this Undertaking you will best judge when you have perused the Book: But if you would know before-hand my Thoughts, I must tell you freely, he hath failed in his Design; for endeavoring to render this part of Natural Philosophy familiar, he hath turned it into Ridicule; he hath pushed his wild Notion of the *Plurality of Worlds* to that heighth of Extravagancy, that he most certainly will confound those readers, who have not the Judgement and Wit to distinguish between what is truly solid (or, at least, probable) and what is trifling and airy; and there is no less Skill and Understanding required in this, than in comprehending the whole Subject he treats of. (77)

Behn judges Fontenelle to have failed in his aim in making natural philosophy familiar by way of fiction because some readers will be unable to distinguish between the solid (or probable) and the trifling. Repudiating the Scuderian tenet that the art of fiction lies in the fact that "le mensonge & la verité sont confondus par une main adroite," Behn asserts that separating the two is no less important than comprehending the subject matter. This is consistent with the authorial position in *Oroonoko* where she emphasizes that truth is historically and empirically verifiable. Fontenelle himself also maintains that separating the true and the false is important, but he asserts that he has made this easy to do:

Je n'ai rien voulu imaginer sur les Habitans des Mondes, qui fût entièrement impossible et chimerique. J'ai tâché de dire tout ce qu'on en pouvoit penser raisonnablement, et les visions même que j'ai ajoutées à cela, ont quelque fondement réel. Le vrai et le faux sont mêlés ici, mais ils y sont toujours aisés à distinguer. Je n'entreprends point de justifier un composé si bizarre, c'est-là le point le plus important de cet Ouvrage, et c'est cela justement dont je ne puis rendre raison. (Fontenelle, *Entretiens* 7-8)

[I did not wish to make up anything about the inhabitants of worlds which would be totally fantastic. I've tried to say everything one might reasonably think about them, and even the imaginings I've added to this have some foundation in reality. The true and the false are mixed here, but they are always easy to distinguish. I make no attempt to justify so bizarre a mixture; it is the single most important point of the work, and it is precisely the one for which I cannot supply a reason.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 5)

This “bizarre mixture” is the most important aspect of the work and one of the hallmarks of self-identified fiction, but it is also the one that defies justification or explanation.

Fontenelle is unwilling to analyze it. He finds the fiction of the dialogue and the Marquise useful, but Behn finds fault not only in the confusion between the solid and airy, the true and the false, but also in the fictional figure of the Marquise herself whom Fontenelle makes “say a great many very silly things, tho’ sometimes she makes Observations so learned that the greatest Philosophers in *Europe* could make no better” (Behn, Works, Vol 4 77). This demonstrates that not only does she have a different understanding of the epistemology of fiction and the relation of fiction to philosophy from both Scudéry and Fontenelle, but also that her attitude toward the way gender functions is different from Fontenelle’s.

That Behn refuses to grant the Marquise, whom Fontenelle posits as the foundational fiction as analogy and *exempla*, currency is suggestive of George Levine’s thesis that “the theoretical foundations of Western science were established not through pure epistemology and method but through narrative constrained by ethical imperatives” (Levine 234). Critiques of the value of objectivity in Western science are also available from a specifically feminist perspective. For instance, Evelyn Fox Keller speaks of the “objectivist illusion” in her critique of scientific epistemology and method, meaning the requirement that the scientist be apart from the object of analysis or research, and even from him or herself, and Sandra G. Harding critiques both traditional scientific epistemology and other feminist approaches.¹⁴⁴ Erica Harth, quoting Keller, argues that

the philosopher instructs the Marquise in the objective discourse of science, which requires this alienated subjectivity: “The thinking subject must remain impassive before the self as object” (Harth, Cartesian Women 127), and this is certainly part of his project.

Fontenelle’s philosopher opines:

Nous voulons juger de tout, et nous sommes toujours dans un mauvais point de vûë. Nous voulons juger de nous, nous en sommes trop près; nous voulons juger des autres, nous en sommes trop loin. Qui seroit entre la Lune et la Terre, ce seroit la vraye place pour les bien voir. Il faudroit être simplement Spectateur du Monde, et non pas Habitant. (Fontenelle, Entretiens 50-1)

[We want to judge everything, and we’re always at a bad vantage point. We want to judge ourselves, we’re too close; we want to judge others, we’re too far away. If one could be between the Earth and the Moon, that would be the proper place to see them well. One should simply be a spectator of the world, not an inhabitant.] (Fontenelle, Conversations 25)

This problem of finding a place from which to view the earth and the moon is not resolved by the imperative: “Il faudroit être simplement Spectateur du Monde, et non pas Habitant,” and Fontenelle doesn’t really suggest this as a possibility even as he posits it as the ideal perspective. But if part of the subject matter of the *Entretiens* is the problem of perspective and objectivity in scientific observation, inquiry, and epistemology, then Behn’s refusal of Fontenelle’s fictional Marquise can be seen as illustrative of how the problem of subjectivity inheres in the reading of fiction as well.

Toni Morrison provides an interesting recent example of the importance of subjectivity in theories of fiction and a mirror to Behn’s own refusal. Morrison comments upon her reading of Marie Cardinale’s *The Words to Say It*, which is a “fictional autobiography” of the author’s mental illness and recovery. Cardinale identifies her first encounter with madness at a Louis Armstrong concert, and later in psychoanalysis identifies the roots of her illness in her conflicted identity as a French girl in Algeria.

¹⁴⁴ See Works Cited .

Morrison analyzes the effects of metaphors of blackness in Cardinale's writing, and explains that she includes

the thoughts [she] had while reading this particular work because they identify the stages of [her] interest, first, in the pervasive use of black images and people in expressive prose; second, in the shorthand, the taken-for-granted assumptions that lie in their usage; and finally, to the subject of this book: the sources of these images and the effect they have on the literary imagination and its product. (Morrison x)

It is possible to substitute other kinds of images, like images of femininity, for Morrison's black images, and this is helpful for exploring Behn's skeptical reception of the Marquise.¹⁴⁵ Morrison continues:

The principal reason these matters loom large for me is that I do not have quite the same access to these traditionally useful constructs of blackness. Neither blackness nor "people of color" stimulates in me notions of excessive, limitless love, anarchy, or routine dread. I cannot rely on these metaphorical shortcuts. (Morrison x)

Morrison's insight that subjectivity and context matters to how metaphor functions, and that metaphors and fictions don't have the same effect on all readers, is applicable to Behn's rejection of the Marquise. Behn understands that the Marquise is supposed to be a figure of the process of knowledge acquisition and a figure of knowledge itself, but this fiction does not resonate for her, or operate effectively. I am not asserting that this is because Behn is a woman and as such she resists what Judith Fetterly calls "the immasulation of the woman reader" (Fetterley xi). Drawing a parallel between Morrison's (who is black) articulation of the different resonances or lack thereof that blackness conjures for her and Behn's rejection of the fictional Marquise is as far as I can go, given the evidence. Her rejection might be predicated on her position as a resisting woman

¹⁴⁵ Fontenelle's fictional Marquise is not just female; she is female in a specific social and cultural context. She is French, and an aristocrat, and these two aspects of her identity are also salient. See Douglas for an interesting analysis that argues: "While Fontenelle's text draws attention to gender difference, it firmly places both men and women within a shared cultural context; ultimately, it is racial difference that the text finds insuperable" (Douglas 3).

reader. It is more clearly predicated on her position that the concept of fiction it implies is uncongenial to her.

This is suggestive for understanding the interrelations of fiction, gender, and epistemology, whose interdependence can be difficult to understand if one takes too rigid an approach. One way to begin to see that they are in relation to each other is by looking at other critics who disagree with each other. Ian Watt argued that the rise of the novel is “essentially an epistemological problem” (Watt 11). Robert Uphaus disagrees with Watt, arguing that the problem is “not an epistemological problem, but a moral problem” (Uphaus 183), keeping questions of epistemology and morality separate. Uphaus denies fiction an epistemological status, characterizing the eighteenth century’s “fear of fiction” as a fear that novels “would serve as an influence and instrument of moral education and therefore become rival to, and possibly supersede, such traditional avenues of moral education as conduct books, moral tracts, the sermon, and perhaps scripture itself” (183). Morality and epistemology for Uphaus are separate issues, and fiction is implicated by the former. Michael McKeon’s thesis about the rise of the novel, which posits the novel as a problem-solving genre, able to address a particular constellation of early modern English concerns, makes epistemology and morality the opposite poles of his dialectic. The novel, argues McKeon, is able “to confront on the level of narrative form and content, both intellectual and social crisis simultaneously” (McKeon 22). Questions of truth address the intellectual crisis, questions of of virtue the social crisis. For McKeon, the ascendance of the novel is thanks to its ability to bring these separate questions together. George Levine, however, intervenes in this debate not to say that “fiction is epistemology” with Watt or “fiction is morality” with Uphaus, and he doesn’t ascribe a synthesizing function to the novel as does McKeon. He argues instead that “the hidden narratives of epistemology make clear that the ethical is present in the inception, in the object, in the very process of viewing” (Levine 230). Epistemology and morality are not opposed, either ontologically or dialectically, but coeval.

Georges van den Abbeele suggests how these three concepts -- fiction, gender, and epistemology -- operate in Fontenelle, but he opposes epistemology not to morality as Uphaus does, but to “something else.” He contends that “[f]or the *figure de la femme* to appear as the fundamental object of male philosophy is to suggest that something besides epistemology is at work here” (Van Den Abbeele 171). This “something else” van den Abbeele identifies as desire, specifically male heterosexual desire, and it is opposed to epistemology in the same way Uphaus opposes the moral to the epistemological. But the opposition of epistemology to desire or to morality obfuscates the ways in which they are constitutive of theories of knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Watt, Uphaus, and Levine all focus on the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century English novel to make their case, but a comparative view of seventeenth-century fiction shows that the complications of epistemology and fiction were operative earlier, and that this is legible in narratives in which tropes of femininity are important.

This dissertation has looked at specific texts in French and English between 1641 and 1688 that illustrate the interpenetration of theories of fiction with constructions of epistemology and gender. The Introduction discussed some of the different approaches to understanding the mid-seventeenth century, and introduced the structuring concepts of the dissertation: fiction, gender, and epistemology. Chapter One was concerned with

¹⁴⁶ I do not mean to suggest by this that the relation between epistemology and social, cultural, or political consequences is obviously apparent. Richard Kroll, analyzing the convergence of the epistemological and the political has argued that “there is no necessary logic that binds a certain critique or form of representation to a certain set of ethical and political points of view” (Kroll 53). In his analysis of Restoration literary and philosophical texts, he says “what makes a particular rhetoric political is not its epistemological orientation but its social condition, its position within the institutions that promote it. Politics is not a question of how symbols are constructed in themselves, but how they are used” (53). Toni Morrison makes a similar point when she asks “When does racial ‘unconsciousness’ or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it?” (Morrison xii)

outlining the shift in thinking about fiction across the time period and in two literatures. Writers moved from a defense of prose fiction by aligning it with poetry and poetry's claim to greater access to moral truths by virtue of *vraisemblance* to a defense of prose fiction that aligned it not with poetry, but with History. Chapter Two looked at two English fictional narratives, whose engagement with the debates current in natural philosophy is illustrative of a moment when fiction was a useful tool for exploring other modes of discourse. Chapter Three examined Huet's influential history of the novel and showed how his historiography of a fictional form was implicated in the very language by which he defines the object of his inquiry. All three chapters identified how tropes of femininity and constructions of gender are constitutive in these texts that use theories of fiction to construct and explain their epistemological foundations. The Conclusion has offered a reading of Fontenelle's *Entretiens* and Behn's interpretation of his enterprise in order to show the range and limits of the deployment of fiction in comparative contexts whose tropes of femininity are a determining factor in the epistemological framework and in the translation.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship in a number of ways. It looks not only at texts that have received significant attention (for instance *La Princesse de Clèves* and *Oroonoko*) but also at lesser-known texts whose inclusion broadens and deepens our understanding of fiction and related discourses. The Charleton and Cavendish texts have gotten very little attention by literary critics up to now, but they are illuminating. Huet's history of the novel is often cited, but little read, and one of the things this dissertation does is suggest that a reexamination of Huet would be worthwhile because of his diverse engagements with the issues of his time. From a methodological point of view, this dissertation provides a comparative look at a period and some of the larger cultural concerns operative across national boundaries, boundaries which are themselves constituted in this period in and through and by fictional narratives. In terms of literary

history, this dissertation has implications for how we conceive genre. The texts examined are fictional narratives and theories of fictional narrative that are articulated before “the rise of the novel.” There is a wealth of scholarship around questions of the origins and characteristics of the novel, and my thesis is not involved with arguing for an origin, model, or definition of the novel. Rather it seeks to illustrate the range and depth of the uses to which fiction was put. A by-product of this is to provide a richer context for understanding the novel as part of a larger cultural conversation about knowledge.

Works Cited

- Albanese, Denise. New Science, New World. Durham: Duke UP, 1996.
- Alliston, April. "Gender and the Rhetoric of Evidence in Early-Modern Historical Narratives". Comparative Literature Studies 33.3 (1996): 233-57.
- . Virtue's Faults: Correspondences in Eighteenth-Century British and French Women's Fiction. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.
- Andreadis, Harriette. "The Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips, 1632-1664". Signs 15.1 (Autumn 1989): 34-60.
- Aronson, Nicole. "Mlle de Scudéry: Du Roman héroïque à la nouvelle". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature 12.22 (1985): 169-90.
- Azim, Firdous. The Colonial Rise of the Novel. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Baldner, Ralph W. Bibliography of Seventeenth-Century Prose Fiction. New York: Columbia UP, 1967.
- Ballaster, Rosalind. "New Hystericism: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*; The Body, the Text, and the Feminist Critic". New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts. Ed. Isobel Armstron, 1992. 283-95.
- . Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740: With Particular Reference to Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, and Eliza Haywood. Oxford New York: Clarendon Press Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Bannister, Mark. "Human Nature, Hobbes and Heroism: An Ambiguity at the Heart of *Honnêteté*". Seventeenth-Century French Studies 17 (1995): 135-46.
- . "'Imagination et Jugement': History and the Novel in Mid-Seventeenth-Century France". Seventeenth-Century French Studies 13 (1991): 19-32.
- . Privileged Mortals: The French Heroic Novel, 1630-1660. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.
- Battigelli, Anna. Margaret Cavendish and the Exiles of the Mind. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

- Beasley, Faith Evelyn. Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.
- Beaujour, Michel. "Speculum, Method, and Self Portrayal: Some Epistemological Problems". Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, From Augustine to Descartes. Eds. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols. Hanover: UP of New England, 1982. 188-96.
- Behn, Aphra. The Fair Jilt and Other Stories. Ed. Janet Todd. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1995. Vol. 3 of The Works of Aphra Behn.
- . Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave. Ed. Lore Metzger. New York: Norton, 1973.
- . Oroonoko or, The Royal Slave. Ed. Lore Metzger. New York: Norton, 1973.
- . Seneca Unmasked and Other Prose Translations. Ed. Janet Todd. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1995. Vol. 4 of The Works of Aphra Behn.
- Bennington, Geoffrey. Sententiousness and the Novel: Laying Down the Law in Eighteenth-Century French Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- Bernbaum, Ernest. The Mary Carleton Narratives, 1663-1673: A Missing Chapter in the History of the Novel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1914.
- Blaydes, Sophia B. "Nature is a Woman: The Duchess of Newcastle and Seventeenth-Century Philosophy". Man, God, and Nature in the Enlightenment. Ed. Donald C. Mell Jr. Theodore E.D. Braun and Lucia M. Palmer. East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1988. 51-64.
- Boileau Despreaux, Nicolas Despreaux. Oeuvres Complètes. Ed. Françoise Escal. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.
- Bordo, Susan. The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture. Albany: State U of New York P, 1987.
- Borgerhoff. The Freedom of French Classicism. New York: Russell & Russell, 1968.
- Bowerbank, Sylvia and Sara Mendelson, ed. Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000.

- Bratach, Anne. "Following the Intrigue: Aphra Behn, Genre, and Restoration Science".
Journal of Narrative Technique 26.3 (Fall 1996): 209-27.
- Braudy, Leo. Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding & Gibbon. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970.
- Brinks, Ellen. "Meeting Over the Map: Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte du Pays de Tendre* and Aphra Behn's *Voyage to the Isle of Love*". Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700 17.1 (Spring 1993): 39-52.
- Brown, Laura. "The Romance of Empire". The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, and English Literature. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Bruckmann, Patricia. "Virgins Visited by Angel Powers: "The Rape of the Lock", Platonic Love, Sylphs and Some Mysticks". The Enduring Legacy: Alexander Pope Tercentenary Essays. Ed. G.S. Rousseau and Pat Rogers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 3-20.
- Butler, Judith. Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- La Calprenède, Gaultier de Coste. Faramond, Ou l'Histoire de France. Paris: Sommaville, 1664.
- Cavendish, Margaret. The Blazing World and Other Writings. Ed & introd by Kate Lilley. London: Penguin, 1992.
- . Natures Pictures Drawn by Fancies Pencil to the Life. London, 1656.
- . Observations Upon Experimental Philosophy. Ed. Eileen O'Neill. New York: Cambridge UP, 2001.
- . The Worlds Olio. London, 1655.

- Chapco, Ellen. "Historical Verisimilitude and Literary Creation: The Rise of the Petit Roman in Seventeenth-Century France". Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History 12 (1985): 50-57.
- Charleton, Walter. The Darknes of Atheism Dispelled by the Light of Nature. London, 1652.
- . "The Ephesian Matron". The Sensational Restoration. Ed. James Jensen. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996.
- . Epicurus's Morals. London, 1656.
- . The Immortality of the Human Soul, Demonstrated by the Light of Nature. London, 1657.
- . Natural History of the Passions. London, 1674.
- . Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charletoniana. London, 1654.
- Chibka, Robert L. "'Oh! Do not Fear a Woman's Invention': Truth, Falsehood and Fiction in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*". Texas Studies in Literature and Language 30.4 (Winter 1988): 510-37.
- Clarke, D. R. "Corneille's Differences with the Seventeenth-Century Doctrinaires Over the Moral Authority of the Poet". Modern Language Review 80.3 (1985).
- Clarke, David. "Echoes of a Provincial Discussion of the Morality of the Novel: Pierre Corneille's Sonnet and Nicolas de Campion's Preface to Alexandre de Campion's *Les Hommes Illustres* (1657)". The Modern Language Review 84.2 (1989): 319-30.
- Cloria and Narcissus. London, 1653.
- Clucas, Stephen. "The Atomism of the Cavendish Circle: A Reappraisal". Seventeenth Century 9.2 (Autumn 1994): 247-73.
- Coulet, Henri. Le Roman Jusqu'à la Revolution. Paris: A. Colin, 1967.
- Danahy, Michael. The Feminization of the Novel. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991.

- Davenant, William. Gondibert. Ed. David F. Gladish. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Davis, Lennard J. Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996.
- Davis, Natalie Zemon. "Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820". Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past. Ed. Patricia H. Labalme. New York: New York UP, 1980. 153-82.
- de Visé, Donneau. Les Nouvelles Galantes, Comiques, et Tragiques. Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1669.
- Dear, Peter. "Narrative, Anecdotes, and Experiments: Turning Experience Into Science in the Seventeenth Century". The Literary Structure of Scientific Argument. Ed. Peter Dear. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1991. 135-63.
- Declercq, Gilles. "Boileau -- Huet: La Querelle Du *Fiat Lux*". Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721); Actes Du Colloque de Caen (12-13 Novembre 1993). Paris: Biblio 17, Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1994. 237-62.
- DeJean, Joan E. Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France. Gender and Culture. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- DeLater, James Albert. "The 1683 *De Optimo Genere Interpretandi (On the Best Kind of Translating)* of Pierre-Daniel Huet: Introduction, English Translation, Notes, and Commentaries". Diss. University of Washington, 1997.
- DiPiero, Thomas. Dangerous Truths and Criminal Passions: The Evolution of the French Novel, 1569-1791. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992.
- Donawerth, Jane. "'As Becomes a Rational Woman to Speak': Madeleine de Scudery's Rhetoric of Conversation". Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women. Molly Meijer Wertheimer. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1997. 305-19.
- Doody, Margaret Anne. The True Story of the Novel. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996.

- Douglas, Aileen. "Popular Science and the Representation of Women: Fontenelle and After". Eighteenth-Century Life 18.2 (May 1994): 1-14.
- Douthwaite, Julia V. Exotic Women Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France. New Cultural Studies. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1992.
- Duffy, Maureen. The Passionate Shepherdess: Aphra Behn 1640-89. London: Methuen, 1989.
- Ezell, Margaret J. M. The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- . "The Politics of the Past: Restoration Women Writers on Women Reading History". Pilgrimage for Love. Ed. Sigrid King. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999. 19-40.
- Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault. Ed. Susan J. Hekman. Pref. by Nancy Tuana. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.
- Ferguson, Arthur B. Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England. Durham: Duke UP, 1979.
- Ferguson, Margaret W. "Juggling Categories of Race, Class and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*". Women's Studies 19.2 (1991).
- Fetterley, Judith. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.
- Fielding, Henry. Joseph Andrews. Ed. Martin C. Battersin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier de. Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds. Trans. H. A. Hargreaves, Introd. by Nina Ratner Gelbart. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- . Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes. Ed. Alexandre Calame. Paris: Didier, 1966.
- Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Random House, 1970.

- Fournier, Nathalie. "Comment Définir un Genre?". Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721); Actes Du Colloque de Caen (12-13 Novembre 1993). Paris: Biblio 17, Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1994. 109-17.
- Fraser, Nancy. Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.
- Gallagher, Catherine. "Embracing the Absolute: Margaret Cavendish and the Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England". Early Women Writers: 1600-1700. Ed. Anita Pacheco. London: Longman, 1998. 133-45.
- Genette, Gerard. "Vraisemblance et Motivation". Figures II. Paris: Seuil, 1969. 71-99.
- Gentner, Dedre and Michael Jeziorski. "From Metaphor to Analogy in Science". Metaphor and Thought. Ed. Andrew Ortony. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 447-80.
- Gladish, David F. "Introduction". Gondibert. Ed. David F. Gladish. By William Davenant. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Goldsmith, Elizabeth C. Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1988.
- Goreau, Angeline. Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn. New York: Dial, 1980.
- Guffey, George Robert. Two English Novelists: Aphra Behn and Anthony Trollope. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1975.
- Guibbory, Ashsah. "Introduction". The Ephesian Matron. By Walter Charleton. Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 172-3, 1975.
- Haraway, Donna. Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Harding, Sandra G. The Science Question in Feminism. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990.
- Harth, Erica. Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime. Reading Women Writing. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.

---. Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983.

Haviland, Thomas Philip. "The *Roman de Longue Haleine* on English Soil". Diss..
University of Pennsylvania, 1929.

Hazard, Paul. La Crise de la conscience européenne. Paris: Boivin, 1935.

Hinds, Leonard. "Literary and Political Collaboration: The Prefatory Letter of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artemène, Ou le Grand Cyrus*". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature 23.45 (1996): 491-500.

Hipp, Marie-Thérèse. Mythes et Réalités: Enquête sur le Roman et les Mémoires, 1660-1700. Paris: Klincksieck, 1976.

Hobbes, Thomas. Hobbes's Leviathan. Ed. W. G. Pogson Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909.

Hogg, Chloe. "Strong Women, Illustrious Men: Constructing History and Civic Virtue in the Grand Siècle". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature 26.50 (1999): 19-27.

Hope, Quentin M. "Huet and Saint Evremond". Modern Language Notes 72 (Dec 1957): 575-77.

Huet, Pierre-Daniel. Alnetanae Quaestiones, 1690.

---. Censura Philosophiae Cartesianae, 1689.

---. De Optimo Genere Interpretandi, 1661.

---. Demonstratio Evangelico, 1679.

---. Lettre-Traité de Pierre-Daniel Huet sur l'Origine Des Romans. Édition du tricentenaire, 1669-1969. [follows 8th edition]. Ed. Fabienne Gégou. Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1971.

---. Origeniana. Rothmagi: J. Berthelini, 1668.

---. Traité de l'Origine Des Romans. Septième édition. Paris: Thomas Moette, 1693.

---. Traité de la Faiblesse de l'Esprit Humain, 1724.

- Hull, Suzanne. Chaste, Silent, and Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640. San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1982.
- Hunter, Michael. Science and Society in Restoration England. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Hutton, Sarah. "In Dialogue with Thomas Hobbes: Margaret Cavendish's Natural Philosophy". Women's Writing 4.3 (1997): 421-32.
- Jacob, Margaret C. Scientific Culture and the Making of the Industrial West. New York: Oxford UP, 1997.
- James, E.D. "Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* and their Intellectual Context". Biblio 17, Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature (1990): 133-147.
- Javitch, Daniel. Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of *Orlando Furioso*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.
- Jensen, James H. "Introduction to The Ephesian Matron". The Sensational Restoration. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. 42-45.
- Jensen, Katharine Ann. "Madeleine de Scudéry (1607-1701)". French Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. 430-39.
- Jones, Richard Foster. Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England. New York: Dover Publications, 1961.
- . "The Rhetoric of Science in England of the Mid-Seventeenth Century". Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Ed. Carroll Camden. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. 5-24.
- . "Science and Criticism in the Neo-Classical Age of English Literature". The Seventeenth Century: Studies in the History of English Thought and Literature from Bacon to Pope. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1951. 41-74.

- Joy, Lynn S. "Epicureanism in Renaissance Moral and Natural Philosophy". Journal of the History of Ideas 53.4 (1992): 573-83.
- Kamuf, Peggy. "The Gift of Clothes: Of Mme de Lafayette and the Origin of Novels". Novel 17.3 (1984): 233-45.
- Kargon, Robert Hugh. Atomism in England from Harriot to Newton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- Keller, Evelevyn Fox. Reflections on Gender and Science. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.
- Kelley, Donald R., and David Harris Sacks, ed. The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction 1500-1800. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997.
- Kok, Arend. Traité de l'origine des romans. Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1942.
- Kroll, Richard W. F. The Material Word: Literate Culture in the Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1991.
- Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Lafayette, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, Comtesse de. La Princesse de Clèves. Ed. Maurice Favergeat. Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1966.
- Laqueur, Thomas. Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990.
- Laugaa, Maurice. Lectures de Mme de Lafayette. Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1971.
- Levi, Anthony. French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions, 1585 to 1649. Oxford, 1964.
- Levine, George. "The Narrative of Scientific Epistemology". Narrative 5.3 (Oct 1997): 227-51.
- Lougee, Carolyn. Le Paradis Des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.

- Lux, David Stephan. "Royal Patronage and Seventeenth Century Science: L'Académie de Physique de Caen, 1662-1672". Diss. University of Michigan, 1983.
- Mackenzie, George. Aretina; or, the Serious Romance. London, 1660.
- Malcolm, Noel. "Hobbes and the Royal Society". Perspectives on Thomas Hobbes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 43-66.
- Malcolm, Robert Clark. "Pierre-Daniel Huet: The History of Romances: An Annotated Text Edited, with Introduction". Diss. University of Michigan, 1983.
- Mallinson, G. J. "Fiction, Morality, and the Reader: Reflections on the Classical Formula *Plaire et Instruire*". Continuum: Problems in French Literature from the Late Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment. New York: AMS Press. 203-28.
- May, Georges. Le Dilemme Du Roman au XVIII Siecle; Étude sur les Rapports Du Roman et de la Critique, 1715-1761. Paris: PUF, 1963.
- McKeon, Michael. The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Mersenne, Marin. La Verité des Sciences contre les Sceptiques ou Pyrrhoniens. Paris: T. Du Bray, 1625.
- Merton, Robert K. "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England". Osiris 4 (1938): 360-632.
- Michel, Alain. "L'Influence de l'Academisme Ciceronien sur la Rhetorique et la Philosophie au XVII Siecle: La Mothe le Vayer, Huet, Pascal, Leibniz". Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Amstelodamensis (1979). Munich: Fink.
- Mignolo, Walter. The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995.
- Miller, Nancy K. "Empahsis Added". Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing. Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing. Gender and Culture. New York: Columbia UP, 1988. 25-46.

- . "Repairing the Tradition". French Dressing: Women, Men, and Ancien Régime Fiction. New York: Routledge, 1995. 3-42.
- Mintz, Samuel I. "The Duchess of Newcastle's Visit to the Royal Society". JEGP 51 (1952): 168-78.
- Mish, Charles C. "Introduction". Restoration Prose Fiction, 1666-1700. Ed. and comp. Charles C. Mish. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1970. vii-xv.
- Moore, Judith. "Twentieth-Century Feminism and Seventeenth-Century Science: Margaret Cavendish in Opposing Contexts". Restoration 26.1 (Spring 2002): 1-14.
- Moore, Megan. "Skirting the Issue: Henrietta Maria and the Staging of Queenly Maternity". Unpublished essay. University of Michigan, 2001.
- Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- La Mothe Le Vayer. "Observations sur la Composition Des Livres". Pour et Contre le Roman: Anthologie Du Discours Théorique sur la Fiction Narrative en Prose Du XVIIe Siecle. Ed. and comp. Gunter Berger. Paris, 1996. 118-20.
- Norbrook, David. Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric, and Politics, 1627-1660. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Nussbaum, Felicity. The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1984.
- . Torrid Zones Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995.
- O'Neill, Eileen. "Women Cartesians, "Feminine Philosophy," and Historical Exclusion". Feminist Interpretations of Rene Descartes. Ed. Susan Bordo. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. 232-57.
- Ortony, Andrew. "Metaphor, Language, and Thought". Metaphor and Thought. Ed. Andrew Ortony. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 1-16.

- Osler, Margaret and Letizia A. Panizza. "Introduction". Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquility: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought. Ed. Margaret Osler. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Patterson, Annabel M. Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England. With a New Introduction. Madison, Wisc.: U of Wisconsin P, 1984.
- Phillips, Henry. "'Vraisemblance" and Moral Instruction in Seventeenth-Century Dramatic Theory". Modern Language Review 73 (1978): 267-77.
- Popkin, Richard H. "The High Road to Pyrrhonism". American Philosophical Quarterly 2.1 (Jan 1965): 18-32.
- . The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza. Berkeley: U of California P, 1979.
- Poulain de la Barre, François. De l'égalité des deux sexes. Corpus Des Oeuvres de Philosophie en Langue Française. Paris: Fayard, 1984.
- . The Equality of the Sexes. Trans. and Ed. Desmond M. Clarke. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.
- Quint, David. Epics and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.
- Rabkin, Eric S. "The Modern Criticism of Pierre Daniel Huet". College Language Association Journal 25.3 (Mar 1982): 315-21.
- Rapin, René. Les Réflexions sur la Poétique de ce Temps et sur les Ouvrages Des Poètes Anciens et Modernes. Ed. E.T Dubois. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970.
- Reardon, B. P., ed. Collected Ancient Greek Novels. Berkeley: U of California P, 1989.
- Reiss, Timothy J. "Classical Criticism and Ideology". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature 10.18 (1983): 149-71.
- . The Discourse of Modernism. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982.

- . Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- . "Power, Poetry, and the Resemblance of Nature". Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, From Augustine to Descartes. Eds. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols. Hanover: UP of New England, 1982. 215-47.
- Rhu, Lawrence. The Genesis of Tasso's Narrative Theory. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993.
- Riley, Denise. Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988.
- Rogers, John. The Matter of Revolution. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.
- Rose, Mary Beth. "Gender, Genre, and History: Seventeenth-Century English Women and the Art of Autobiography". Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives. Ed. Mary Beth Rose. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986. 245-78.
- Rossi, Paolo. Philosophy, Technology and the Arts in the Early Modern Era. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
- Salazar, Philippe-Joseph. "Huet, Ou l'Amour Des Lettres". Le Loisir Lettre à l'Age Classique. Ed. Marc Fumaroli Philippe-Joseph Salazar, and Emmanuel Bury. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1996.
- Sarasohn, Lisa T. "A Science Turned Upside Down: Feminism and the Natural Philosophy of Margaret Cavendish". The Huntington Library Quarterly 47 (1984): 289-307.
- Sawday, Jonathan. "The Mint at Segovia: Digby, Hobbes, Charleton, and the Body as Machine in the Seventeenth Century". Prose Studies 6.1 (1983): 21-35.
- Schulz, Dieter. "Novel, Romance and Popular Fiction in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century". Studies in Philology 70.1 (1973): 77-91.
- Scudéry, Madeleine de. Artamène. Paris: Augustin Corbé, 1649-53.
- . Clélie. Paris: Augustin Corbé, 1654-60.

- . "Ibrahim Ou l'Illustre Bassa: Preface". Pour et Contre le Roman: Anthologie Du Discours Théorique sur la Fiction Narrative en Prose Du XVIIe Siècle. Ed. and comp. Gunter Berger. Paris, 1996. 79-88.
- . Ibrahim ou l'Illustre Bassa. Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1641.
- Shapin, Steven. The Scientific Revolution. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Shapiro, Barbara J. Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983.
- Sharp, Lindsay. "Walter Charleton's Early Life 1620-1659, and Relationship to Natural Philosophy in Mid-Seventeenth Century England". Annals of Science 30.3 (Sept 1973): 311-40.
- Sheehan, Richard Johnson and Denise Tillery. "Margaret Cavendish, Natural Philosopher: Negotiating Between Metaphors of the Old and New Sciences". Eighteenth-Century Women: Studies in Their Lives, Work, and Culture. Ed. Linda V. Troost. New York: AMS Press, 2001. 1-18.
- Shelford, April G. "Amitié et Animosité dans la République Des Lettres: La Querelle Entre Bochart et Huet". Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721); Actes Du Colloque de Caen (12-13 Novembre 1993). Paris: Biblio 17, Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1994. 99-108.
- Showalter, English. The Evolution of the French Novel, 1641-1782. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972.
- Simon, Irene. "Critical Terms in Restoration Translations from the French". Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire 43 (1965): 902-26.
- Smith, Hilda. Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982.
- Smith, Nigel. Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.

- Spencer, Jane. The Rise of the Woman Novelist from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen. Oxford [Oxfordshire] New York, NY: B. Blackwell, 1986.
- Spender, Dale. Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen. London New York: Pandora, 1986.
- Stanton, Domna C. "The Demystification of History and Fiction in *Les Annales Galantes*". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature. Paris: Biblio 17, 1987. 339-60.
- . "The Fiction of *Préciosité* and the Fear of Women". Yale French Studies 62 (1981): 107-34.
- Stone, Lawrence. The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.
- Swaim, Kathleen M. "Matching the "Matchless Orinda" to Her Times". Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era III. Ed. Kevin Cope and Laura Morrow. New York: AMS, 1997. 77-108.
- Thompson, Helen. "Plotting Materialism: W. Charleton's *The Ephesian Matron*, E. Haywood's *Fantomina*, and Feminine Consistency". Eighteenth-Century Studies 35.2 (2002): 195-214.
- Todd, Janet M. The Secret Life of Aphra Behn. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1997.
- La Traduction Des Langues Modernes au XVIIIe Ou "La Dernière Chemise de l'Amour". Ed. Annie Rivara. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- Uphaus, Robert W. "The Fear of Fiction". Man, God, and Nature in the Enlightenment. Ed. Donald C. Mell Theodore E.D. Braun and Lucia M. Palmer. East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1988. 183-90.
- Ure, Peter. "The Widow of Ephesus: Some Reflections on an International Comic Theme". The Durham University Journal 18 (n.s.) (1956): 1-9.

- Valincour, Jean Baptiste Henry du Troussel de. Lettres à Madame la Marquise *** sur le Sujet de la Princess de Clèves. Tours [Paris]: Groupe d'étude du XVIIe siècle de l'Université François Rabelais [Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy], 1972.
- Van Den Abbeele, Georges. "Fabula Est Mundus: On the Plurality of Fontenelle's "Worlds"". Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature (1990): 165-80.
- Veevers, Erica. Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Watt, Ian P. The Rise of the Novel Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. Berkeley: U of California P, 1957.
- Weinberg, Bernard. A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- White, Hayden. The Content of the Form. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987.
- Williams, Charles G. S. Valincour: The Limits of Honnêteté. Columbus: Ohio UP, 1992.
- Williamson, George. "The Ephesian Matron Versus the Platonic Lady". Review of English Studies 12 (1936): 445-9.
- Wiseman, Susan. "Gender and Status in Dramatic Discourse: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle". Women, Writing, History 1640-1740. Ed. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992. 159-77.
- Zimbaro, Rose. A Mirror to Nature: Transformations in Drama and Aesthetic 1660-1732. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1986.