

Mingrat: Anatomy of a Restoration *cause célèbre*

Abstract. This article explores the discursive afterlife of the 1822 murder of Marie Gérin by the Abbé Mingrat, who subsequently fled France and was never extradited. The crime, which the Restoration government attempted to conceal, is read here as a *cause célèbre* that acted throughout the Restoration as a watchword of anticlerical and otherwise oppositional opinion. The article examines pamphlets published by Marie's relatives and by Paul-Louis Courier, on the one hand; and on the other, official papers relating to the persecution of Marie's brother for his attempts to publicize the crime. It takes these texts as symptomatic of a broader early nineteenth-century dispute: a cultural and moral disagreement about the meaning of scandal, which might be imagined 'conservatively,' as a pathogenic spectacle that spreads corruption; or, as it was by the pamphleteers, 'progressively,' as a therapeutic revelation that brings that corruption to an end. It also contributes to our understanding of the modes of political participation available to those excluded from the Restoration political process.

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On 8 May 1822, in the Isère town of Saint-Quentin, a grisly crime was committed: the rape and murder of twenty-six year old Marie Charnalet, *née* Gérin, by the parish priest, Antoine Mingrat. Having lured the young woman into the rectory on the pretext of hearing her confession, Mingrat throttled her to death, evidently after sexually assaulting her. Dragging her body some distance through woodland, he then hacked it apart, first with a hunting knife, then with a meat cleaver, before scattering her remains in the river. Marie's absence was noticed almost immediately by her husband Étienne Charnalet, who began searching for her with the help of neighbours; patches of blood-stained grass were discovered hours later, at which point suspicion fell on Mingrat, whom locals believed to be sexually obsessed with the missing Marie. When on 16 May a woman's severed thigh was discovered by fishermen, Mingrat's servant finally revealed that she had heard sounds of struggle coming from the rectory on the night in question. Soon after, Mingrat took flight, escaping over the border to Piedmont, then in the Kingdom of Sardinia. There he was arrested and imprisoned by local authorities. Yet despite his having been convicted *in absentia* of rape and murder, and sentenced to death by the Cour Royale in Grenoble on 9 December 1822, Mingrat's extradition was never offered by the Sardinian government, nor was it ever requested by the French;¹ indeed, it is now clear that Foreign Ministry officials later advised Sardinian diplomats through back-channels that extradition would not be sought in this case, and the prisoner's maintenance costs were to be met by the diocese of Grenoble for the duration of his detention.² Mingrat died in the Fenestrelle Fortress some time after the Restoration.

This article addresses the discursive afterlife of this crime in Restoration politics: its persistence, that is, as an *affaire* or a scandal. It was precisely in avoidance of what was then

known as ‘scandal’ – though the precise meaning of this word will be at issue in what follows – that the government (not to mention the Church) was so eager to see the culprit remain in Piedmont and escape his sentence. The affair nevertheless became a notorious *cause célèbre* and watchword of anticlerical discourse well into the later nineteenth century. The clerical and governmental conspiracy of silence following the crime was matched by a determination to talk about it in anticlerical and more broadly liberal circles: not only in the press, but also in pamphlets published first by Paul-Louis Courier in 1823, then in 1824 by Marie’s own brother Jean-Baptiste Gérin (who suffered considerable police persecution as a result), and finally by her husband, Charnalet, in 1826.

In this article, I employ these texts (among others) to create an ‘anatomy’ of the Mingrat scandal, an investigation of its component parts and of the various discursive contexts – moral, judicial, political, and even aesthetic – within which it made sense. As such, the present study is at least partly intended as a contribution to the ever-growing, historiography of criminality in nineteenth-century France.³ In exploring responses to Mingrat’s crime, I shall follow scholars in that field by considering the precise historical valences of the conceptual categories employed to analyse it: in particular those of monstrosity, publicity, and scandal. The work of Dominique Kalifa has already taught us that discourse relating to crime could express underlying cultural anxieties and serve political and ideological purposes. Michel-Louis Rouquette’s account of the 1817 *affaire Fualdès* (the murder in mysterious circumstances of a former Imperial prosecutor), and Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini’s study of the *affaire Lacenaire* of 1835-36 (the sensational trial of a charismatic multiple murderer and ‘master criminal’), have offered precise examples of how public discourse on major criminal cases disclose the social divisions and consensuses that prevailed at any historical moment. The Fualdès case, Rouquette notes, is an ‘anecdote exemplaire’ which reveals ‘l’image d’un état social’; in the context of early nineteenth-century France,

Demartini suggests, this approach moreover readily reveals *political* divisions and consensuses, since one effect of the governmental restriction of political journalism in this period was the paradoxical hyper-politicization of other, not obviously political areas of social life.⁴ This article will accordingly examine responses to Mingrat's crime in light of the social tensions they reveal and the political work they accomplished. Restoration publics, like those of the later nineteenth century, were fascinated by crime; the following analysis will show how oppositional writers turned that public fascination to political account.

Principally, however, this article is intended as a contribution to the increasingly rich historiography of the Bourbon Restoration, encompassing the reigns of Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and his brother Charles X (1824-1830). I will argue that the Mingrat case was symptomatic of cultural tensions under that particular regime. Building on the social and political histories of Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny (1955) and André Jardin and André-Jean Tudesq (1973), the last twenty years have seen the appearance of a number of important works addressing specific problems in the history of the Restoration.⁵ Most influential among these has been Pierre Rosanvallon's *La Monarchie impossible* (1996), a study of the constitutional frameworks of the two censitary monarchies which developed what we might call the 'impossibility hypothesis': according to Rosanvallon, the constitutional settlement of 1814 was fundamentally inadequate and unstable, creating an ambiguous distribution of authority that made crises such as those of 1829 and 1830 almost inevitable.⁶ Subsequent studies have profitably extended this idea beyond Rosanvallon's original constitutional perspective: Francis Démier's broad 2012 study of cultural and intellectual life in the period, for instance, places the entire Restoration project under the heading of an 'impossible retour du passé', whereby a tiny social elite attempted to impose a cultural and religious restoration that ignored the lasting changes wrought in society at large by the Revolution.⁷ Sheryl Kroen's seminal *Politics and Theater* (2000) emphasizes the social rifts and political

discontent of the era, and the failure of successive governments to conciliate opposing political views, notably after the accession of the more hard-line Charles X in 1824; while still other scholars have explored the prevalence of left- and right-wing political conspiracies, both real and imagined, that kept Restoration authorities in a constant state of anxiety.⁸ To be sure, some recent work, including in historically informed literary studies, has attempted to nuance the ‘impossibility hypothesis’ by pointing to evidence of a certain cultural confidence on the part of the regime and its supporters; Corinne Legoy in particular has noted their ability to generate substantial public enthusiasm for key events in the life of the monarchy, such as the birth of the duc de Bordeaux in 1820, while Jo Burr Margadant’s important work on the duchesse de Berry has made clear her considerable public popularity as a representative of the royal family.⁹ David Skuy, meanwhile, has suggested that it was the policy of ‘royalist reaction’ following the assassination of the duc de Berry in 1820, and not some congenital constitutional flaw, that triggered the irretrievable factionalization of Restoration political life.¹⁰ Yet these studies have not displaced our sense that the Restoration was a period of greater-than-average political and social acrimoniousness.

The Mingrat affair provides a case study in that acrimoniousness, and this article follows Kroen’s work in its focus on the nature and means of expression of oppositional sentiment under the Restoration. The case usefully exposes a number of the political fault-lines of Restoration France, though none more clearly than the post-revolutionary haggling over the status and influence of the Catholic Church, perhaps the most divisive social question in France during this period.¹¹ While I shall locate the Mingrat affair within a variety of discourses and contexts, it is indisputable that the attention paid to Mingrat’s crime owed everything to his priestly vocation. While the murder occurred in 1822, it only really achieved national prominence from 1825 onwards, and reached a peak of public interest around 1827: this chronology maps almost perfectly onto the hardening of political attitudes

after the accession of the avowedly ultraroyalist Charles X, and, more precisely, the increasing anticlericalism that greeted illiberal religious policies such as the law on sacrilege (1825) and the perceived clerical influences on Charles's ministries.¹² In exploring the Mingrat case as a form of oppositional discourse, moreover, this article reflects the recent interest within Restoration historiography in the forms of political participation available to the mass of Restoration subjects who were excluded from parliamentary politics by the franchise system.¹³ The Mingrat case illustrates how not only the press but also private individuals might attempt to make their grievances heard in the public sphere when the state's agents proved unwilling to listen. The archival documents confirm an established picture of paranoid Restoration authorities, counterproductively obsessed with stifling these voices wherever they seemed to express dissent or discontent, however reasonable.

I propose, then, to read the Mingrat case as an *affaire* or *cause célèbre*, and while these terms are original to many of the primary documents, their use here requires some justification. First, the Mingrat case differs in at least one important respect from the influential theorization of the *affaire* or *grande cause* devised by Élisabeth Claverie. In Claverie's conception, an *affaire* is born when judicial roles are reversed, and the public sits in judgement on the flawed legal processes that have led to a miscarriage of justice.¹⁴ The posture of the Mingrat case is rather different. If anything, the rapid conviction and sentencing *in absentia* of the murderer would seem to indicate the relative independence of the local judiciary, and their handling of the matter does not appear to have been complained of.¹⁵ Still, while Mingrat had been convicted, he had not been punished – thanks to the wilful inaction of the government. This impunity can surely be regarded as an 'injustice' of sorts; and in any case, the subsequent persecution of the Gérin family for their role in publicizing the matter was an abuse of power of which at least a segment of the public evidently disapproved, and which might therefore have given rise to the same sort of indignation

associated with miscarriages of justice. Second, however, Dominique Kalifa has suggested that the political landscape of early nineteenth-century France could not really support *affaires* in the strong sense. The censitary monarchies, Kalifa argues, were at once too repressive and too factionalized to generate effective ‘engagements publics’ capable of garnering support beyond the ranks of a single ‘party’.¹⁶ Kalifa notes an absence of the necessary ‘personnalités’, individuals possessing both power and a national platform, and willing to use these to champion the underdog’s cause.¹⁷ This deficiency can, in fact, be witnessed very precisely in the Mingrat case. In May 1825, the Gérin family transmitted a petition favouring Mingrat’s extradition to Casimir Perier, liberal deputy for Paris and a son of Grenoble, and thus in theory an ideal candidate to start an *affaire*. Yet Perier, evidently queasy at the prospect of involvement in this unpleasant case, passed the petition on for treatment by the Chambre des Pairs – whose deliberations were, conveniently, secret.¹⁸

While these objections ought certainly to nuance any use of the word *affaire* in relation to Mingrat, I do not think that they *preclude* such use. If, as Nicolas Offenstadt and Stéphane Van Damme claim, *affaires* involve ‘la saisie d’un espace public pris à témoin de l’injustice’; if they tend towards ‘des montées en généralité’ whereby an individual case becomes symptomatic of a wider social pathology; and if they tend to reveal ‘des intérêts de groupes ou des stratégies politiques’; then there can be little doubt that the Mingrat documents at least *attempted* to produce an affair – for all of these characteristics may be found in the Mingrat case.¹⁹ Even assuming that Kalifa is entirely right, and that no Restoration affair could ever be a true *affaire*, the Mingrat case was at the least a proto-*affaire*, a pseudo-*affaire*, perhaps even an *affaire manquée*. Most importantly, as our writers’ own terminology itself suggests, it was what passed for an *affaire under the Restoration* – and is in this sense curcial to our understanding of public life and discourse under that regime.

It is necessary, finally, to explain this article's focus on the rhetoric of the oppositional texts, as well as their content. While it is debateable whether an analysis of a linguistic document that entirely neglected such questions could ever be fully satisfactory, there are compelling reasons to take these matters into account when considering oppositional discourse under the Bourbon Restoration. In a realm where kneejerk clampdowns in press censorship were a routine occurrence; where local officials, as Alan Spitzer notes, possessed extensive powers to curb behaviour they considered likely to disrupt the *ordre public*;²⁰ and where an extensive state surveillance was constantly on the lookout for signs of sedition, finding a means of expressing dissent without suffering reprisal became a sort of political game.²¹ Kroen's exploration of the oppositional use of Molière's *Le Tartuffe*, to denounce the alleged clericalism and hypocrisy of Charles X's regime, provides a perfect example of 'symbolic resistance': words, images or actions whose subversive potential emerge only through interpretation.²² Part of the work of this article is to suggest how the Mingrat affair came to function in a similar way. Whether they were successful or not, the various rhetorical strategies adopted by commentators on the Mingrat affair in order to avoid censorship or retaliation gave the measure of the failure of Restoration authorities *either* to permit *or* effectively to repress dissent, and are therefore deserving of close scrutiny.

I first consider the meanings attributed to the Mingrat case by various oppositional commentators who depict this murderous priest as at once monstrous, and yet somehow symptomatic of a wider clerical pathology. In the middle sections, I explore the subversive effects of allusions to Mingrat through more precise and detailed historical examples: first through an analysis of documents pertaining to the persecution of Jean-Baptiste Gérin, which reveal the extent to which the authorities were troubled by his determination to draw public attention to the crime; and secondly through close readings of the 1826 Charnalet pamphlet, whose obsession with questions of visibility reveal a self-conscious attempt to exploit the

public curiosity for spectacles of violence and monstrosity. In the final section, I relate this spectacular dimension to a broader ideological dispute about the meaning of the word ‘scandal’, which had previously been understood ‘conservatively,’ as a pathogenic spectacle that spreads corruption; but which was now acquiring a ‘progressive’ definition, as a therapeutic revelation that brings that corruption to an end. The conclusion rearticulates the precise political resonances of the Mingrat pamphlets and considers their relationship to questions of privacy – a central concept in the cultural historiography of nineteenth-century France, but also a politically problematic concept under the Restoration, and one towards which the texts appear deeply ambivalent.²³

The Monster Mingrat

In a jokey gossip column of 17 October 1826, *Le Figaro* informed its readers: ‘On va donner à Montrouge une seconde représentation du *Curé Mingrat*.’²⁴ This allusion may be taken as emblematic of the status of the Mingrat affair not only in the later years of the Restoration, but even well after: in liberal, anticlerical, and otherwise oppositional discourse,²⁵ the word ‘Mingrat’ became an immediately recognizable metonymy connoting not only clerical hypocrisy and sexual misconduct, but also the government’s and the Church’s malevolent attempts to conceal evidence of that misconduct.²⁶ Since the word ‘Mingrat’ allowed these ideas to be evoked more or less implicitly, it became part of the repertoire of allusions whereby the liberal press managed to ‘dire sans dire’,²⁷ and whose meaning was then decoded, as Stendhal noted in 1825, by readers trained by the censor’s scissors to ‘saisir les allusions les plus cachées’.²⁸ The *Figaro* reference exemplifies this practice in two ways. First, it is doubly metonymic, conjoining as it does the loaded signifier ‘Mingrat’ with another, ‘Montrouge’ – this one an allusion to the Jesuits, since during the Restoration Montrouge was widely known to be the location of an unauthorized Jesuit seminary.²⁹

Second, the theatrical language in which it is expressed captures not only the association of the Mingrat case with the theatrically related question of religious hypocrisy,³⁰ but also its intense appeal to the anticlerical imagination as a story with all the sensational elements of a stage melodrama.³¹ Indeed, a melodrama entitled *Mingrat* would eventually be performed: Ferdinand Laloue and Henri Villemot's dramatization of the crime opened on 26 October 1830, taking advantage of both post-July theatrical licence to throw good taste to the devil.³² The play flopped,³³ yet its production so soon after the July Revolution suggests that the signifying power of the Mingrat affair had remained 'live' throughout the 1820s, and that the case had by 1830 become an anti-Restoration, and not only an anticlerical, topos.

Yet even under the Restoration itself, the story's melodramatic power had found some realization in two pamphlets published at the behest of the victim's brother, in 1824, and husband, in 1826.³⁴ Both pamphlets offered highly suspenseful 'reconstructions' of what took place in the rectory of Saint-Quentin, described by the Charnalet pamphlet as 'ce théâtre d'horreur'.³⁵ Both texts adopted a flamboyantly melodramatic vocabulary: Mingrat appears variously as a 'fantôme', a 'vampire', a 'bourreau'; he is guided by a 'génie infernal';³⁶ but above all, he is a 'monstre'. The occurrences of this word and its cognates are too numerous to count, but its apparent banality belies an important ambiguity. A monster, famously, is a kind of sign, from the Latin *monstrum* meaning 'portent' or 'warning'. As such, the monster demands our attention, principally because it is so extraordinary, or – to use a word beloved of the science of teratology – anomalous. Despite the fantastical language they used to describe Mingrat, indeed, and while the authors were probably not directly familiar with the work of Étienne and Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, the pamphlets paralleled the materialism and determinism of the medical sciences in detailing the physical inscriptions of Mingrat's moral monstrosity, and insisting that he had been thus marked from birth. 'Son air était sombre, son œil faux, sa taille haute [...]; sa force était extraordinaire; il soulevait les poids

les plus énormes; ses passions physiques étaient ardentes,’ the Gérin pamphlet noted, while the later Charnalet text similarly remarked that his ‘caractère odieux’ and ‘penchans à la cruauté’ announced themselves in his earliest youth, while confirming that ‘il était d’une force extraordinaire [...], la taille haute, massive et presque colossale’.³⁷

Now the pamphlets’ insistence on Mingrat’s monstrosity and extraordinariness ought perhaps to render problematic our understanding of him as a metonymy, for the monster, traditionally conceived, is by definition unique. Yet one of the aims of teratology was to contest this assumption by ‘normalizing’ the monster. As the elder Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire put it in 1826: ‘L’apparition fréquente de certaines monstruosités [...] sembl[e] reproduire des formes aussi arrêtées que toutes celles de la zoologie normale [...]: c’est un autre ordre de régularités.’³⁸ Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini has shown how press coverage of the Lacenaire affair in 1835-36 was, sure enough, divided between these two ‘models’ of monstrosity: on the one hand, a traditional model wherein the monster was ‘incroyable, exceptionnel’; and on the other, the newer, teratological model concerned with explaining the monster and the factors determining his genesis.³⁹ Despite the greater newness of the science in the 1820s, something akin to this teratological vision of a ‘regular’ monstrosity was at work in the use of the signifier ‘Mingrat’ – a case made most radically by the great pamphleteer Paul-Louis Courier, in his pamphlet of 1823. Mingrat, Courier explained, is:

sujet à l’amour, qui chez les hommes de sa robe, se tourne souvent en fureur. Un grand médecin l’a remarqué : cette maladie, sorte de rage qu’il appelle érotomanie, semble particulière aux prêtres.⁴⁰

Courier alludes here to what Tim Verhoeven has called ‘the satyriasis diagnosis’, that specious nosological category whereby the medical profession stigmatized clerical celibacy as engendering sexual perversion and violence, thus lending scientific legitimacy to a long anticlerical tradition of sexual imputation.⁴¹ For Courier, who accepted this idea, it was not

Mingrat's terrible crime, but rather the combination of the vow of celibacy on the one hand, and constant contact with woman through confession on the other, that appeared 'monstrueuse' – in the erotic pathologies it provoked.⁴² In René Rémond's paraphrase, which borrows once again the language of teratology: 'Une existence en tous points anormale et s'écartant de la nature pouvait-elle engendrer autre chose que de monstrueuses anomalies?'⁴³

The anticlericalism of the Restoration, then, provides the most obvious context in which to interpret the Mingrat affair, and it is doubtless in relation to these notions of priestly pathology that the oppositional signifier 'Mingrat' ought to be understood. The pseudo-medical character of that association points moreover to another mode of signification: symptomaticity, that relationship of signification whereby one visible disorder connotes another, larger one. Mingrat's spectacular crime is a symptom of his disease – erotomania or satyriasis – while Mingrat himself is symptomatic of the prevalence of that disease within the Catholic clergy. In this rhetorical arrangement, the very extraordinariness of the case, far from limiting its significance, grants it on the contrary a special meaningfulness. Mingrat was only the tip of the iceberg, as *Courier* made explicit: 'Combien d'affaires à étouffer, si tout ce qui se passe en secret avait des suites évidentes [...]! Que d'horreurs laissent entrevoir ces faits [...]!'⁴⁴ It was precisely these silent, invisible, and possibly imaginary horrors that the oppositional discourse of the Restoration named whenever it uttered the word 'Mingrat'.

At the Sign of Mingrat

This, then, was the general tone of the Mingrat affair in the final years of the Restoration. Yet our understanding of the oppositional status of the sign 'Mingrat' is enhanced by considering the persecution of Marie Gérin's brother from 1824 onwards. Jean-Baptiste Gérin, sometime Napoleonic infantryman, was a jeweller based in Paris, but peddled his wares widely in northern and western France out of hired stalls in various market towns.⁴⁵ From the summer

of 1824, he began to print and sell alongside his stock-in-trade the *Notice historique sur le crime commis par Mingrat*. The pamphlet soon attracted the disapproval of local authorities (the Police Générale was informed of its existence by the Prefect of the Isère in August),⁴⁶ whereupon Gérin became acquainted with the ‘vast and complex police powers of the prefectorial apparatus’.⁴⁷ The most formal manifestation of this disfavour was a criminal prosecution in Niort in September 1826, ostensibly on the grounds that Gérin did not possess a bookseller’s licence. The underlying reasons for the prosecution may be readily traced in the official papers: the authorities considered the pamphlet likely to provoke anticlerical (and even anti-monarchist) resentment.⁴⁸ As the Catholic newspaper *L’Ami de la religion et du roi* put it: ‘Il se trouve des gens qui colportent de ville en ville des écrits qui ont le double inconvénient de familiariser le peuple avec l’idée du crime, et d’appeler la haine sur toute une classe de citoyens [i.e. priests].’⁴⁹ The prosecution eventually failed, owing to the flimsiness of the indictment and the apparent sympathy of local judges, though Gérin’s wife served fifteen days in jail for insulting the gendarmes who had seized the pamphlet.⁵⁰ The authorities were not content, however; identical prosecutions were brought against Gérin in Nantes and in Rennes, though again without success.⁵¹

Gérin’s *Notice*, then, was an inflammatory document as far as the government was concerned. Intriguingly, however, the principal focus of the official correspondence relating to Gérin’s movements in 1825 and 1826 was not the lurid pamphlet, but an altogether more succinct text. On 13 October 1825, the deputy Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure advised the Minister of the Interior that Gérin had arrived in his jurisdiction and was now displaying a shop sign which read ‘Au frère de la victime du Curé Mingrat’:

Quoique cette enseigne ne produise d’autre sensation que le mépris pour un frère qui semble faire parade d’un malheur dont il devrait éloigner le souvenir, elle ne m’en paraît pas moins inconvenante.⁵²

A hasty reply of 31 October instructed the deputy to ‘faire retirer cette enseigne comme inconvenante et contraire au bon ordre’.⁵³ On 17 November, the Prefect wrote again to advise the Minister that the crafty Gérin, now in Rouen, had placed the sign ‘non pas à l’extérieur mais dans le fond de sa boutique et il prétend qu’on n’a pas le droit de le lui faire supprimer’.⁵⁴ A year later, with Gérin now resident in Poitiers and proudly displaying the offending sign in his shop window once more, the Prefect of the Vienne addressed a similar missive to the Minister; this time, however, the sign had already provoked ‘de pénibles sensations,’ and the Prefect had taken the initiative of forcing Gérin to remove it ‘afin de faire disparaître au yeux du public un sujet de réflexions aussi affligeantes que scandaleuses’.⁵⁵ In the meantime, correspondence between the Ministry and the Prefecture of Police in Paris dwelled anxiously on the problem of the sign, as well as a flyer (*prospectus*) that Gérin was distributing to passers-by which was also headed: ‘Au frère de la victime du curé Mingrat.’⁵⁶ Scribbled memoranda prepared within the Ministry in January 1826 reveal a fervid desire to suppress both flyer and sign; all imaginable authorities, one scribe noted sadly, had been ‘inutilement compulsés’ in search of some legal rationale for doing so, but alas, none had been found.⁵⁷ This did not spare Gérin from serving three days in jail in Caen for public order offences, nor from being refused the hire of commercial premises on trumped-up grounds – all with the Ministry’s blessing.⁵⁸

Gérin’s motivations for displaying the sign were no doubt complex. His determination to find justice for his sister surely accounted for much of his doggedness in doing so; whether he intended his sign as political communication is another question. ‘Il manifeste des opinions révolutionnaires,’ sniffed the Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure, ‘mais ses facultés intellectuelles paraissent fort bornées.’⁵⁹ Yet a work may be more intelligent than its author; and the Gérin sign was, in its way, something of a masterpiece. Its simple text, ‘Au frère de la victime du curé Mingrat,’ was as far removed as could be from the melodramatic *Mingrat* of

1830: where the play was over-realized, unnecessarily explicit, and obvious, the sign was sparse, radically decontextualized, and allusive. Gérin's *enseigne* and the furious official response to it indicate the eloquence of allusion; as an 1827 account of the Mingrat case put it, the *enseigne* 'à elle seule, [...] comprenait la substance d'un volume'.⁶⁰ This incarnation of the signifier 'Mingrat' was disruptive because of the invitation it offered to interpretation, association, and connotation; the less the sign said, the more difficult it became to anticipate and control the responses it might elicit. While the deputy Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure and the Ministry were quick to agree that the sign was 'inconvenante,' moreover, it was oddly difficult to say *why*: it was, after all, neither obscene nor violent. The sign's greatest strength, indeed, was its non-representational character, which made it almost impossible to subject to the conventions that restricted the *content* of representational media such as theatre or fiction. On the face of it, the sign was engaged in the most innocuous form of signification imaginable, nomination: this man is 'the brother of the victim of the curé Mingrat'; this is his shop. In this sense, indeed, the sign did not even 'refer' to Mingrat at all. The very persecution Gérin suffered for displaying it was thus a kind of hollow triumph, for the sign's ambiguity deprived the state of any legal basis for the umbrage it had taken, and obliged it instead to resort to brute force. The sign was symbolic resistance in its purest, most powerful form.

Picturing the Scene

Allusion was not the only tool exploited in the Mingrat affair. In this section, I consider the use of direct representation, be it through text or image, and the question of visibility. In discussing the Lacenaire affair, Demartini notes 'l'affinité particulière du monstre avec le regard'; as moral warning, curious spectacle, or medical exhibit, the monster Lacenaire demanded to be looked at, and texts describing him privileged physical descriptions and

visual metaphors in their attempts to render him comprehensible.⁶¹ The Mingrat texts reflect this association. We shall see in the next section how representations of crime and monstrosity appeared morally problematic in the early nineteenth century, and formed one of the major points of contention in the Mingrat affair; first, however, I want to consider the question of representation *within* the texts themselves. For whatever the allusive genius of Jean-Baptiste Gérin's sign, he appears to have aspired to something more overtly representational. As the Prefect of the Seine-Inférieure warned the ministry in November 1825: 'Cet individu a annoncé en secret l'intention de faire lithographier un dessin représentant l'événement relatif à sa sœur pour l'exposer dans sa boutique.'⁶² The amount of truth in this rumour is unclear. Lithographs relating to the affair certainly existed before 1826, though they represented Mingrat and his victim separately; these images appear in Charnalet's *Précis historique* of 1826. A correspondent named Raynaud (the same surname as the alleged author of Gérin's pamphlet, though this may be a coincidence), writing to *Le Constitutionnel* in July 1825, identified himself as the artist who had 'dessiné et lithographié cet honnête Mingrat' and complained that these images had subsequently been confiscated (at the behest of 'Mont-Rouge'!); since he referred to his work as a 'portrait', these probably included those that appeared in the pamphlet.⁶³ In the trial of *Le Constitutionnel* in November 1825 (to which I shall return in the next section), however, Raynaud was identified as the author of 'd'effroyables lithographies dans lesquelles le peintre a eu soin de placer toujours la scène odieuse en présence du St.-Sacrement ou de la Croix'⁶⁴ – suggesting that more graphic lithographs also existed. That the subversive afterlife of the Mingrat case continued to have a visual as well as a textual dimension is further underscored by *L'Ami de la religion*'s dismayed observation, in 1827, that certain individuals had enlisted 'le secours de l'imprimerie et de la gravure' in their dismal quest to 'faire retentir partout [le] [nom] de Mingrat'.⁶⁵

Such explicit visual representations corresponded much more closely than Gérin's sign to the early nineteenth century's idea of the *inconvenant* – the inappropriate, the indecent, the improper – and their alleged confiscation by the authorities is in this sense no surprise. Even Laloue and Villemot, revelling in the absence of censorship in the first months of the July Monarchy, stopped short of staging Marie's death itself, choosing instead to elide it between Acts II and III – but were castigated for their decision to 'represent' the case at all. *Le Figaro* denounced the 'crudité' of the authors' choice of subject, while the *Journal des Débats* lamented the 'ignoble curiosité' that had drawn out the few patrons present.⁶⁶ Some things were simply not to be seen, the reviewers suggested – and if in this new era, censorship ceased to protect the public from such sights, the hostile public response would do the job instead: 'aussi ce public a-t-il fait les fonctions de la censure,' noted *Le Figaro*. If it is true, moreover, that the strictest taboos of *convenance* fell throughout the nineteenth century on visual (and especially theatrical) representations of violence, it is equally the case that metaphors of visibility were often used in the stigmatization of other media;⁶⁷ hence the various authors of the Gérin papers bemoan his determination to 'faire parade' of his misfortune, and speak of the need to 'faire disparaître aux yeux du public' his scandalous sign. Indeed, the *visibility* of the sign doubtless contributed significantly to the dim view the authorities took of it – its exposure to the public gaze made this instance of the 'Mingrat' signifier particularly promiscuous and therefore particularly dangerous.

These anxieties surrounding the questions of visibility and *inconvenance* explain the 1826 pamphlet's peculiar preoccupation with the visual. As we have seen, the pamphlet opens in the iconographic mode, with lithographs depicting a stereotypically Marian Marie Gérin, eyes turned heavenward, above the legend 'A Dieu'; and a lowering Antoine Mingrat, clutching a Bible symbolically in his left hand, and a cleaver in his right. This visual presentation of the *dramatis personae* was placed here, one supposes, to allow the reader to

form a more vivid mental image of the grisly scenes that followed. Yet the demands of ‘la pudeur publique’ were certainly as stringent, if not more so, in 1826 as in 1830, and had at least to be acknowledged in a text recounting a crime of this nature. In his prefatory letter, Étienne Charnalet alleged accordingly that he would have preferred to spare the public ‘l’affreux tableau de son [Marie’s] martyre’; while in embarking upon her narration, ‘Mme ***’ acknowledges the horror of her task, and longs rhetorically to paint a more conventional *scène d’intérieur*: ‘Au moment de commencer cette tâche pénible, je sens la plume s’échapper de mes mains... Ah ! que n’ai-je à peindre la douce union qui régnait entre ces deux modèles de la tendresse conjugale !’ In this self-justificatory passage, the unwelcome, even suspect depiction of monstrosity is contrasted with the always legitimate depiction of virtue, of which Marie and her husband might in happier circumstances have served as exempla. These apparent anxieties recur when the moment comes to represent Marie’s brutal demise, which the author declares impossible: ‘Ces débas odieux et révoltans brouillent mon imagination épouvantée, et me refusent la liberté de les décrire.....’ God himself cannot bear to watch: ‘Dieu même semble s’être retiré de ce lieu pour ne pas voir le crime.’⁶⁸

Such hyperbolic shows of reluctance are clearly rhetorical strategies. Certainly, when it is not directly engaged in such repudiations, the pamphlet’s narration of the crime is anything but reticent: on the contrary, it luxuriates in the melodramatic language already described, and exploits a highly literary alternation of the present and past tenses to create dramatic immediacy. Similarly, the multiple long ellipses that punctuate the description of Mingrat’s sexual assault upon Marie seem less like evidence of the narrator’s difficulty in relaying the scene, and more like an attempt to mimic in writing the breathless violence of the attack.⁶⁹ Finally, moreover, their appearance alongside such literary techniques makes those very same repudiations function *themselves* as suspense-building devices, interruptions in the narrative that both pique curiosity and manipulate emotion in the reader – as exemplified by

the hammy exclamation: ‘Je frémis d’indignation..... Retournons à ce théâtre d’horreur.’ Yet the intense visuality acknowledged by this phrase is immediately rendered deniable in the following sentence, wherein the scene’s visual dimension is attributed to the pathological gaze of the pervert Mingrat:

Le monstre contemple d’un œil enflammé les beautés que cette déchirante agonie n’a point flétries encore [...] Le besoin de pourvoir à sa sûreté l’arrache à cette contemplation criminelle. Le cadavre cesse enfin d’être souillé par ses impudiques regards....

Here, the nineteenth-century suspicion of the *inconvenant* is superficially indulged, yet fundamentally flouted. The reader’s inevitable interest in Marie’s body – ‘ce corps, chef-d’œuvre de la nature,’ as it is described in a free-floating libidinal moment – is fed by the text, but the impropriety of that interest is safely displaced onto Mingrat himself; we look at him looking, seeing what he sees only within a censorious moral frame.⁷⁰

The purpose of these observations is not to undermine the pamphlet’s integrity, but to demonstrate its awareness that political indignation might be stimulated as effectively by appeals to the (visual) imagination as to reason. The *Précis historique* solicited precisely what *Le Figaro* would call in 1830 the ‘ignoble curiosité’ of the public, in order to channel that basic public prurience about sex crimes towards the resolution of an injustice. Sure enough, the pamphlet presented a number of episodes in which curiosity acted as an instrument of forensic revelation. In both the Gérin and Charnalet pamphlets, a sceptical villager by the name of Vial witnesses – that is, spies upon – a scene of ‘lecture pieuse’ between Mingrat and Marie in which the priest’s seemingly spiritual words are belied by ‘des gestes bien significatifs pour une autre que Marie’. These presumably obscene gestures, which pass the chaste Marie by, are nevertheless interpreted aright by the sharp-eyed Vial, who then eagerly relays them to the rest of the village. In an analogous later episode, the

Charnalet pamphlet quotes the decisive testimony of Mingrat's own servant who, alerted by strange noises within the rectory, took it upon herself to 'grimper sur le portail afin d'essayer de voir ce qui s'y passait dedans'. What she claimed to have seen there was, inevitably enough, 'désordre' – a literal use of what would become nineteenth-century France's most capacious signifier of social pathology. This improbably convenient scene of seeing is a perfect *mise-en-abyme* of the pamphlets' central objective: the creation of Mingrat as an object of irresistible curiosity, a cynosure upon which 'tous les yeux étaient fixés'.⁷¹ The power of the Mingrat case lay, in other words, in its mesmerizing *inconvenance*.

Publicity and Scandal

The sense that the Mingrat case was an unsuitable subject for representation was not, of course, a mere question of taste; or rather, questions of taste themselves were in this period indissociable from moral questions concerning the effects of certain representations on viewers and readers. According to one influential nineteenth-century view, the representation of immorality only bred more immorality, by spreading knowledge of vice among an impressionable public. This idea forms the focus of this section. In November 1825, the editors of *Le Constitutionnel* appeared before the Cour royale de Paris, accused of an offence whose very name reflected this preoccupation with texts' influence on readers: that of damaging the respect due to the State religion (*atteinte au respect dû à la religion de l'état*). During the proceedings, reference was frequently made to the liberal newspaper's treatment of the Mingrat affair. Addressing the Court for the prosecution, solicitor general Jacques-Nicolas de Broé claimed to expose the 'véritable esprit des perpétuelles répétitions du *Constitutionnel* à ce triste sujet' – namely, 'la haine acharnée de la religion'.⁷² Reporting on the trial in that same month, the broadly conservative *Journal des Débats* breathed the monster's name for the first time, though only to denounce, following de Broé, the 'perfidie'

of *Le Constitutionnel*'s allusions to him. The real motive of these repeated references was not, the *Débats* contended, a desire to see justice served, but rather the urge to 'exciter les passions' against the Church.⁷³ A year later, in taking note of the Gérin prosecution, *L'Ami de la religion* articulated perfectly the notion that representations of vice were dangerous:

Tout le monde a gémi de l'horrible affaire du malheureux Mingrat, et si nous n'en avons point entretenu nos lecteurs, ils en ont pénétré le motif. Ils savent que nous ne rendons point compte ordinairement de ces crimes [...]. Et cependant il semble que certaines gens éprouvent quelque plaisir à les raconter et à en répandre la connoissance parmi le peuple.⁷⁴

Yet when accusations of this nature were made by de Broé before the Parisian Court, the liberal lawyer André Dupin, acting for *Le Constitutionnel*, cited a countervailing *duty* to speak, in a rhetorical flourish that apparently stimulated a 'mouvement dans l'auditoire': 'N'est-ce pas surtout en présence du scandale de l'impunité [...] qu'il importe de redire le crime ? [...] Il est du devoir des écrivains de dire toujours et de répéter sans cesse : Mingrat ! Mingrat !'⁷⁵

These opposing positions deserve further scrutiny. To be sure, one remarkable fact of Restoration politics is the eagerness with which all political factions attributed bad faith to their adversaries; another is that they were invariably right to do so. *Le Constitutionnel*'s dogged pursuit of the Mingrat story *was* due, at least in part, to its desire to damage the Church's reputation more broadly; and the conservative press's reticence on the subject stemmed as much from a concern to avoid such damage as from a genuine desire to preserve the public in a state of spiritual innocence. Political hypocrisy alone, however, cannot explain these opposing points of view; for even if we accept that both positions were disingenuous, the very terms in which that disingenuousness found expression nevertheless point to a

significant conceptual ambiguity that made *this* case, at *this* moment, indicatively acrimonious.

Before considering the narrower ‘party-political’ stakes of the Mingrat case in the final section, therefore, it is important to explore the moral dimension of the various responses to it. From the modern point of view, René-Henri de Réalmont is no doubt right to deplore the fact that eminent prelates and influential aristocrats should have persuaded the government that ‘ce qui est grave n’est pas le crime mais le scandale’.⁷⁶ Yet this formulation, in treating its key term ahistorically, fails to appreciate that the proposition ‘scandal is worse than crime’ was at the very least rationally articulable in early nineteenth-century France. The Mingrat affair makes visible a historical fault-line in the notion of ‘scandal,’ one that may be traced in the Académie dictionary of 1835. There, *scandale* is defined as:

Ce qui est occasion de tomber dans l’erreur, dans le péché. [...]

SCANDALE, signifie plus ordinairement, Occasion de chute que l’on donne par quelque mauvaise action, par quelque discours corrupteur. [...]

Il se dit aussi de l’indignation qu’on a des actions et des discours de mauvais exemple.

Il se dit encore de l’éclat que fait une action honteuse.⁷⁷

Of these four senses, only the last two resemble our modern definition of the word. The other two express a now defunct notion of scandal as a mimetic danger, a model of sin offered for imitation by the people. The demoralizing effect of representations of vice upon an impressionable populace is what many nineteenth-century moralists understood by the word *scandale*. This understanding, which we might call the ‘pathogenic model’ of scandal, was evidently widely accredited in Restoration France, and emerges very clearly both in the conservative press, and in official documents relating to the Mingrat case. Gérin’s sign was suppressed ‘afin de faire disparaître au yeux du public un sujet de réflexions [...] scandaleuses,’ while the Prefect of the Isère noted that Mingrat remained in Piedmont ‘au

grand déplaisir de nos jacobins, qui se trouvent privés du scandale qu'aurait procuré cet épouvantable procès'.⁷⁸ While we may find the Prefect's attitude malevolent, it ought more properly to be considered simply alien; for this Restoration conservative, the hypothetical trial of Mingrat may indeed have seemed no less 'épouvantable' than the 'épouvantable événement' – the rape and murder of Marie Gérin – to which he unselfconsciously referred in the very same paragraph.

That this pathogenic definition of scandal was generally understood under the Restoration is evidenced once again in both the Gérin and Charnalet pamphlets' self-justifying prefatory remarks. There, the authors seek to make clear that if they have chosen to exploit a strategy they call, apparently pejoratively, 'publicity,' they do so only as a last resort. As Gérin put it in his preface:

Le moyen que vous voulez bien m'aider à employer aujourd'hui répugnait à mon cœur: c'était le dernier que j'eusse voulu prendre. Il sied mieux à un cœur ulcéré de cacher dans l'ombre ses douleurs que de les produire en public. Mais le choix ne m'était pas donné... il me fallait parler pour dévoiler ses forfaits et les flétrir.⁷⁹

Charnalet, in a similar introductory letter, expresses an identical sentiment: 'Ce moyen de publicité n'est employé ici qu'après avoir épuisé tous ceux que les lois et le trône promettent à tous les hommes.' Yet once again, these strategic statements of reluctance were belied by the more belligerent tone of the rest of the piece. As Charnalet's ghost-writer 'Mme ***' made clear: 'j'ai fait vœu de [...] dire la *vérité*, toute la *vérité*, rien que la *vérité*.' Among her specific aims is the desire to 'dénoncer à l'indignation publique' those churchmen who have protected Mingrat or argued for his innocence – to provoke, that is, a 'scandal' in the Académie's third sense.⁸⁰ The adjective *scandaleux*, on the other hand, is applied in the pamphlets to the monstrous priest and his behaviour: in his former parish, the Gérin pamphlet observes, he was known to have had all manner of 'aventures scandaleuses'; 'son presbytère

devint un lieu de scandale,’ the Charnalet author notes, while in Saint-Quentin, his conduct was equally ‘scandaleuse’.⁸¹ Most explicit on this matter, however, is the treatment of the case found in *Causes criminelles célèbres du XIX^e siècle*, a sensational *canard* of liberal sensibility published between 1827-28. The authors deplore not only Mingrat’s ‘vie scandaleuse,’ but also the ‘prônes scandaleux’ of those clerics who had attempted to exonerate him, and the ‘débats scandaleux’ of the various prosecutions brought against Jean-Baptiste Gérin. In vindicating the Gérin and Charnalet pamphlets against conservative disapproval, moreover, the authors insist that Marie’s loved ones have merely ‘tradui[t] devant l’opinion publique le misérable,’ before asserting boldly: ‘Enfin [...], si des récits d’un fait véritable il résulte du scandale, il vaut mieux laisser naître le scandale que de renoncer à la vérité.’⁸²

The Mingrat texts are thus the culmination of the process traced by Robert Darnton, whereby the carnivalesque *libelles* of the Ancien Régime, which had revealed the vice of the powerful yet ‘reduced power struggles to the play of personalities’, yielded to the humourless, overtly moralizing denunciations of the sins of those in power which characterized the Revolutionary period.⁸³ This was also the process whereby, in Sarah Maza’s apt phrase, ‘the metaphor used to describe the public sphere shifted from that of the theater to that of the courtroom’.⁸⁴ In the 1820s, we might say, this form of ‘correctional’ publicity had begun to co-opt the very term – *scandale* – that had previously been the name of an influential and entirely opposite moral concept. The discourse of the Mingrat pamphlets reflected a newer, ‘liberal’ model of scandal, one that we can recognize as that of our own society: scandal as *therapeutic*. As a pseudo-judicial ‘tribunal of public opinion’ – a metaphor used in *Causes criminelles* and taken by Offenstadt and Van Damme as constitutive of the true political *affaire*⁸⁵ – scandal and publicity were moral forces allowing for the extirpation of disorder from the social body.

The publicity sought by the pamphleteers must be understood both in opposition to official Church morality in general, and more specifically as the antithesis of the moral strategy of secrecy found in the Catholic confessional – a secrecy that the anticlerical writers of the time regarded as inherently immoral, the site of an ideological violation which Mingrat's crime merely literalized. 'Combien d'affaires à étouffer, si tout ce qui se passe en secret avait des suites évidentes [...]!' cried *Courier*. The confessional captured the great pamphleteer's imagination in particular as a space of worrying secrecy; this 'espèce d'armoire, de guérite' in which priests encounter their female parishioners and insinuate themselves 'dans la confiance, l'intimité, le secret de leurs actions cachées' was, *Courier* implied, presumptively immoral.⁸⁶ To the anticlerical mind, the Mingrat case, in which confession in an obscure 'arrière-cabinet' became the opportunity for rape and murder, thus spoke the truth of the confessional in general.⁸⁷ The Charnalet pamphlet's scenes of seeing, in which Vial spots the obscene gestures concealed beneath Mingrat's moral language, and Mingrat's servant spies 'désordre' in his rectory, were thus equally mises-en-abyme of this other ideological objective: to render the spaces of confessional and clerical secrecy – the 'espèce d'armoire,' the 'arrière-cabinet' – penetrable to the anticlerical gaze, and to make publicly visible the disorder that lay at their heart.

Conclusion

It has doubtless become clear that the Mingrat pamphlets were, fundamentally, political documents – in the sense that they were engaged in the very precise political struggles between liberal and reactionary forces in France in the mid-1820s. It was not merely the authorities' hostile response, characterized by an explicit suspicion of 'jacobins' and 'révolutionnaires,' that lent the Mingrat pamphlets political significance;⁸⁸ there is evidence that they understood themselves from the outset as political interventions. The pamphlets set

out to denounce what we might call, only slightly anachronistically, a lack of transparency in Restoration public life. The Charnalet pamphlet recounts that following the discovery of Marie's body, suspicion fell immediately on the *curé*: 'On se promet tout bas de pénétrer bientôt le secret mal gardé de l'infâme pasteur.'⁸⁹ In 1826, this phrase (tellingly rendered in the present tense) already had a knowing double meaning: the resolution expressed here was not only the villagers' to discover Mingrat's secret, but also the author's to reveal the secret of 'Mingrat' – to publicize, that is, the ill-kept secret of the Mingrat 'affair'. To attack the secrecy of the confessional was thus to attack secrecy as the *modus operandi* of the publicity-averse Restoration authorities.⁹⁰ The Fenestrelle Fortress (where Mingrat was eventually held, as the French say, *au secret*) was as repugnant to this worldview as the confessional – merely another secret space that smacked of Old Regime extrajudicial punishment. The official response to the Gérin pamphlet was not merely paranoia, then: despite frequently protesting its apolitical humility and innocuousness, the pamphlet ended with something that sounded very much like a direct threat to these outmoded governmental practices, which could not, the pamphlet alleged, survive in a modern – meaning post-Revolutionary – world:

Aujourd'hui tout finit par avoir de la publicité. Toute autorité, fondée sur le respect, sur des bases mystérieuses, s'écroule. Le meilleur artifice du gouvernement est la justice, et l'égalité, qui n'est autre chose que la justice. Cette égalité des citoyens devant la loi est le premier, le plus important des articles de la Charte.⁹¹

The explicitly political language used here identifies the pamphlet itself as an *example* of oppositional political discourse, and established from the outset the usefulness of the Mingrat affair to the subsequent critique of Restoration government, as its open secret *par excellence*. Let us call this form of secrecy, adapting a favourite Revolutionary watchword, secrecy as 'privilege': meaning on the one hand, the withholding of supposedly sensitive and thus 'privileged' information from the public, and on the other, arbitrary, secretive government

action according to an unwritten ‘private law’ repellent to the 1814 Charter’s guarantee of legal equality.⁹²

Yet this political attack upon public secrecy was to be accomplished, importantly, through a sudden, spectacular deviation from the normal rules of *privacy*, which the pamphlets appear to have understood as another form of the secret. If the author of the Charnalet pamphlet, in promising to proceed ‘le flambeau de la vérité à la main’ and to shine a ‘vive lumière’ on Mingrat’s crime, was undoubtedly aware of the revolutionary connotations of such language, what she claimed to illuminate was nevertheless as much the most intimate aspects of the monster Mingrat as some public injustice:

Les replis de ce cœur où tous les genres de crimes semblent s’être réfugiés, n’auront plus rien de secret, le flambeau de la vérité à la main, je suivrai le coupable. [...] C’est l’homme seul que je veux peindre. Je répandrai une vive lumière sur ses moindres actions ; faible, mais courageuse, je déchirerai le voile dont on a voulu couvrir son horrible attentat.⁹³

This statement of purpose, which associates the intimate with the secret and the criminal, situates both Mingrat’s private person *and* his crime as hitherto hidden objects ripe for unveiling; just as Courier pointedly turned his attention from the Mingrat affair as public secret, towards the private sexual desire of priests: ‘je sais là-dessus leur secret,’ he hissed, intimating that the sexual desire of an entire class of people might be a matter of legitimate public concern.⁹⁴ Put differently, Courier suggested that a frank discussion of certain aspects of sexuality – the most indicatively secret of topics in the early nineteenth century – was required if this social ill was to be treated. More importantly, however, it was not only their adversaries’ private business that the Gérin and Charnalet pamphlets exposed to public scrutiny – but also their own. The sponsors of both pamphlets recorded a certain reluctance to publicize a trauma that it would be better to ‘cacher dans l’ombre,’ or a loss that ought to be

‘pleuré en secret’.⁹⁵ As we have seen, however, it would have suited the authorities only too well for Gérin to have respected the usual limits of privacy and mourned ‘en secret’ what he displayed instead in his shop window – and they were determined to impose such decorum upon him by whatever means were necessary. The pamphlets’ rhetorical reluctance thus acknowledged the power of the notion of privacy to stifle public speech, and thus to protect vested interests and the status quo as much as – indeed more than – the individual.

To these early nineteenth-century oppositional writers, then, ‘liberty’ meant not the celebrated ‘right to be let alone’ of the twentieth century, but rather the right to reveal one’s grievances publicly, and to know of the private sins of others – though the ramifications of this liberal urge to publicity can only be gestured towards here. While, as Sarah Horowitz has shown, the prefectorial apparatus of the Restoration intruded with uncommon alacrity upon the private life of the King’s subjects, the Mingrat pamphlets reveal a different response to such espionage than the flight into intimacy and secrecy adopted by Horowitz’s political elites.⁹⁶ Instead, they staged a sort of counter-intrusion, opening the domain of privacy to public as opposed to merely state scrutiny. As such, they anticipated the ‘règne de l’opinion publique’ whose intrusions into private life even the liberal Stendhal had occasion to regret in the closing lines of *Le Rouge et le noir* (1830) – though he recognized, like the Mingrat pamphleteers, that that reign was also the guarantor of liberty.⁹⁷ Of course, the circumstances of the Mingrat affair were so signally appalling, the injustice of the case so real as to make such an intrusion seem eminently justified, and mask the normative dimension glimpsed by Stendhal. Nevertheless, the Mingrat episode already displayed the hallmarks of a familiar modern arrangement: one in which curiosity and scandal function as the self-righteous instruments of moral enforcement.

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¹ *Causes criminelles célèbres du XIX^e siècle*, 4 vols (Paris, 1827-28), II, 354-58 (henceforth CCC).

² R.-H. de Réalmont, *Un crime dans le presbytère d'une paroisse du Dauphiné (dans la nuit du 8 au 9 mai 1822)...* (Grenoble, 2002), 84-88. Réalmont's research in the diplomatic archives in Turin reveals the determination of ecclesiastical and lay officials to thwart justice in this matter.

³ Beginning, arguably, with L. Chevalier, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1958); but reinvigorated by D. Kalifa, *Crime et culture au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 2005) and *Les Bas-fonds: histoire d'un imaginaire* (Paris, 2013).

⁴ M.-L. Rouquette, *La Rumeur et le meurtre: l'affaire Fualdès* (Paris, 1992), 15; A.-E. Demartini, *L'Affaire Lacenaire* (Paris, 2001), 125 and in general. The approach I adopt here has more in common with Demartini's contextualizing account of the Lacenaire case.

⁵ G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Au soir de la monarchie: histoire de la Restauration*, 3rd edn (Paris, 1974; first published 1955); and A. Jardin and A.-J. Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848*, trans. by E. Forster (Cambridge, 1983).

⁶ P. Rosanvallon, *La Monarchie impossible: les Chartes de 1814 et de 1830* (Paris, 1994).

⁷ F. Démier, *La France de la Restauration: l'impossible retour du passé* (Paris, 2012).

⁸ S. Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830* (Berkeley, 2000). On conspiracies: A.B. Spitzer, *Old Hatreds and Young Hopes: The French Carbonari against the Bourbon Restoration* (Cambridge, MA, 1971); D. Skuy, *Assassination, Politics, and Miracles: France and the Royalist Reaction of 1820* (Montreal and London, 2003), esp. ch. 2; and G. Malandrain, *L'Introuvable Complot: attentat, enquête et rumeur dans la France de la Restauration* (Paris, 2011).

⁹ C. Legoy, *L'Enthousiasme désenchanté: éloge du pouvoir sous la Restauration* (Paris, 2010); J. Burr Margadant, 'The Duchesse de Berry and Royalist Political Culture in Postrevolutionary France', *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), 23-52.

¹⁰ Skuy, *Assassination*, 15-21.

¹¹ The religious dimension of this case makes it a more useful 'case-study' than the Fualdès affair, which never implicated this particularly explosive topic. On Restoration anticlericalism, see G. Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1993), 55-104; and R. Rémond, *L'Anticléricalisme en France de 1815 à nos jours* (Paris, 1976), 70-80.

¹² Bertier de Sauvigny, *Histoire de la Restauration*I, 367-86; Cubitt, *Jesuit Myth*, 66-68.

¹³ Kroen, Legoy and Malandrain exemplify this trend, alongside E. Fureix, *La France des larmes: deuils politiques à l'âge romantique (1814-1840)* (Paris, 2009).

¹⁴ E. Claverie, 'La Naissance d'une forme politique: l'affaire du chevalier de La Barre', in *Critiques et affaires de blasphème à l'époque des Lumières*, ed. by Philippe Roussin (Paris, 1998), 185-260.

¹⁵ In their investigation of the nineteenth-century French magistracy, J.-P. Royer, R. Martinage and P. Lecocq make clear just how vexed the question of judicial independence was in this period, but suggest that life-tenure did create some sense of independence among those on the bench. *Juges et notables au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1982), 249-65 (on political pressure), 294-306 (on relative independence).

¹⁶ D. Kalifa, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une affaire au XIX^e siècle?', in *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes, de Socrate à Pinochet*, ed. by L. Boltanski, E. Claverie, N. Offenstadt and S. Van Damme (Paris, 2007), 197-211 (201).

¹⁷ Kalifa, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une affaire?', 204.

¹⁸ Réalmont, *Un crime...*, 92.

¹⁹ N. Offenstadt and S. Van Damme, 'Introduction: une longue histoire', in *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes*, 7-18 (10-11).

²⁰ A.B. Spitzer, 'The Bureaucrat as Proconsul: The Restoration Prefect and the *police générale*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 7 (1965), 371-92.

²¹ S. Horowitz, 'Policing and the Problem of Privacy in Restoration Era France, 1815-1830', *French History*, 27 (2013), 45-68.

²² Kroen, *Politics and Theater*, 229-84; R. Terdiman, *Discourse / Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 1985).

²³ On privacy, see *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. by P. Ariès and G. Duby, 5 vols (Paris, 1985-87), vol. 4: *De la Révolution à la Grande Guerre*, ed. by M. Perrot. On privacy under the Restoration, see Horowitz, 'Policing'.

²⁴ *Le Figaro*, 17 October 1826, 4.

²⁵ I do not suggest that all liberal discourse was necessarily anticlerical, nor even that all anticlerical discourse was necessarily liberal many liberals shunned even the suspicion of anticlericalism, while moderate *ultracisme* and anti-Jesuitism could occur together. Liberal opposition and anticlericalism were nevertheless commonly yoked together in the Restoration mind, and it is to this constellation of opinion that such phrases refer.

²⁶ In *Le Constitutionnel*: 12 July, 1824, 3-4; 17 July, 1824, 1; 19 June 1825, 1; 2 July 1825, 4; 20 July 1825, 1; 30 September 1826, 3-4; in *L'Écho du Soir*: 19 August 1826, 4; in *Le Figaro*: 5 June 1827, 552; 2 January 1828, 2; 6 January 1828, 2; 7 January 1828, 2; 23 January 1828, 3; 9 August 1828, 2; 9 August 1829, 2; 20 August 1829, 2; 29 January 1830, 3; 22 June 1830, 2; in *La Semaine*: 25 January 1829, 3; 10 September, 1829, 1; and in *Le Grondeur*: 17-18 June 1829, 1. And in pamphlets: J.-P. Pagès, *De la censure, lettre à M. Lourdoueix* (Paris, 1827), 7, 10-11; J. Arago, *Le Fond du sac, ou les rognures de la censure*

(Bordeaux, 1827), iv; J. Desmalis, *Le Cri d'alarme, ou la France aux prises avec l'hydre jesuitique* (Paris, 1828), 3, 10; *Épître à Montlosier, par un séminariste* (Paris, 1829), 47.

²⁷ J. Dürrenmatt, 'Allusion et obscurité: violence et langage dans les chroniques stendhaliennes,' in *Stendhal, journaliste anglais*, ed. by P. Berthier and P.L. Rey (Paris, 2001), 213-26 (214).

²⁸ Stendhal, *Chroniques 1825-1829*, ed. by H. Martineau, 2 vols (Paris, 1983), I, 224.

²⁹ Cubitt, *Jesuit Myth*, 85 (n. 115). Mingrat's name frequently figured in denunciations of the Jesuits, though the man himself had no association with the Society of Jesus.

³⁰ Kroen, *Politics and Theater*, 229-84.

³¹ Theatrical metaphors appear to have been one of the most useful vocabularies to which early nineteenth-century French people resorted when attempting to comprehend shocking current events; such language is widely encountered in accounts of the Fualdès affair (Rouquette, *L'Affaire Fualdès*, 20) and the Lacenaire affair (Demartini, *L'Affaire Lacenaire*, 223).

³² F. Laloue and H. Villemot, *Mingrat, mélodrame en quatre actes* (Paris, 1831).

³³ Horrible notices appeared in the *Journal des Artistes* of 31 October 1830, the *Journal des Comédiens* of 1 November 1830, *Le Figaro* of 27 October 1830, the *Journal des Débats* of 4 April 1831, and the *Revue de Paris*, 20 (1830), 63.

³⁴ The first pamphlet, *Notice historique sur le crime commis par Mingrat, ex-curé de Saint-Quentin ... publié par le frère de la victime* (Paris, 1824), is attributed on its title page to 'M^e Pauline Raynaud,' but was sold by Jean-Baptiste Gérin. The later *Précis historique sur Mingrat, ex-curé de Saint-Quentin (Isère)* (Paris, 1826), is attributed to 'Madame ***' but 'publié par Étienne Dory Charnalet'. These accounts are adapted in CCC, II, 291-358.

³⁵ *Précis historique*, 56 (henceforth PH).

³⁶ PH, 53, 55, 64; *Notice historique*, 98, 2 (henceforth NH).

³⁷ *NH*, 8; *PH*, 31-32, 41, 43.

³⁸ E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, *Considérations sur les monstres, comprenant une théorie de la monstruosité* (Paris, 1826), 14.

³⁹ Demartini, *L’Affaire Lacenaire*, 71-74 (72).

⁴⁰ P.-L. Courier, ‘Réponse aux anonymes qui ont écrit des lettres à Paul-Louis Courier, vigneron, n° 2,’ in *Une écriture du défi: tous les pamphlets*, ed. by M. Crouzet (Paris, 2007), 384-93 (385); see also Rémond, *L’Anticléricalisme*, 73-76.

⁴¹ T. Verhoeven, ‘The Satyriasis Diagnosis: Anti-Clerical Doctors and Celibate Priests in Nineteenth-Century France,’ *French History*, 26 (2012), 504-23. On satyriasis and erotomania, see also A. Corbin, *L’Harmonie des plaisirs: les manières de jouir du siècle des Lumières à l’avènement de la sexologie* (Paris, 2010 [2008]), 149-55.

⁴² Courier, ‘Réponse aux anonymes’, 391.

⁴³ Rémond, *L’Anticléricalisme*, 73.

⁴⁴ Courier, ‘Réponse aux anonymes’, 393.

⁴⁵ See AN F7/9416 (12009 A); dossier under the name ‘Gérin, Jean-Baptiste’.

⁴⁶ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 11.

⁴⁷ Spitzer, ‘The Bureaucrat as Proconsul’, 373.

⁴⁸ The Prefect of the Isère warned the Ministry on 29 May 1824 that the Mingrat case ‘a diminué sensiblement l’influence qu’y exerçaient les curés, et le respect qu’on avait pour la religion,’ and described the galvanizing effect of the pamphlet on the local ‘révolutionnaires’; AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 8, 11.

⁴⁹ *L’Ami de la religion et du roi*, 15 November 1826, 7. The ‘double inconvénient’ referred to concerns the danger of representing vice considered below.

⁵⁰ *Le Constitutionnel*, 30 September 1826, 4.

⁵¹ CCC, II, 386-87. The reluctance of local magistrates to collude in the persecution of Gérin reflects a longstanding tension between the Restoration judiciary and over-bearing Prefects; see Royer, Martinage and Lecocq, 294-96.

⁵² AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 14.

⁵³ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 15.

⁵⁴ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 16.

⁵⁵ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 31; letter of 28 October 1826.

⁵⁶ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 18-22; letters of 26 November 1825, 20 December 1825, and 4 January 1826.

⁵⁷ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 23, 24.

⁵⁸ CCC, II, 387. In November 1825, the Prefect of the Seine-Maritime authorized all mayors in his jurisdiction to arrest Gérin ‘pour s’être rendu coupable d’un délit portant atteinte aux bonnes mœurs et même à la paix publique’ should the sign appear again; AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 16. Spitzer, ‘The Bureaucrat as Proconsul’, 376-78, makes clear just how capaciously the term *ordre public* could be understood.

⁵⁹ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 16.

⁶⁰ CCC, II, 387.

⁶¹ Demartini, *L’Affaire Lacenaire*, 73-74.

⁶² AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 16.

⁶³ *Le Constitutionnel*, 2 July 1825, 4.

⁶⁴ ‘Plaidoyer de M. de Broé,’ in *Procès du ‘Constitutionnel’ et du ‘Courrier,’ accusés de tendance à porter atteinte au respect dû à la religion de l’état* (Paris, 1826), 53.

⁶⁵ *L’Ami de la religion et du roi*, 24 October 1827, 336.

⁶⁶ *Le Figaro*, 27 October 1830, 3; *Journal des Débats*, 4 April 1831, 2-3.

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- ⁶⁷ On these questions, see J.A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, 1981), esp. ch. 10.
- ⁶⁸ *PH*, xiii, 28, 54, 52.
- ⁶⁹ *PH*, 54-56; these pages contain fifteen ellipses of between four and eight dots.
- ⁷⁰ *PH*, 56.
- ⁷¹ *PH*, 49-51; 59; 59; 41, 76.
- ⁷² ‘Réponse de M. de Broé,’ in *Procès du ‘Constitutionnel’ et du ‘Courrier,’* 26. Two of the indicted referred to Mingrat (19 June and 20 July 1825).
- ⁷³ *Journal des Débats*, 20 November 1825, 4.
- ⁷⁴ *L’Ami de la religion et du roi*, 15 November 1826 (vol. 50, n° 1280), 7.
- ⁷⁵ ‘Plaidoyer de M. Dupin aîné dans l’affaire du *Constitutionnel*,’ in *Procès du ‘Constitutionnel*, 103-04.
- ⁷⁶ Réalmont, *Un crime...*, 69.
- ⁷⁷ *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 2 vols (Paris, 1835), s.v. ‘Scandale’.
- ⁷⁸ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 31, 11.
- ⁷⁹ *NH*, 3, 6-7.
- ⁸⁰ *PH*, xiv, viii.
- ⁸¹ *NH*, 8; *PH*, 41, 44.
- ⁸² *CCC*, II, 300, 302 (n. 1), 386; 292, 361.
- ⁸³ R. Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water, or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon* (Philadelphia, 2010), 5.
- ⁸⁴ S. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley, 1993), 17.
- ⁸⁵ Offenstadt and Van Damme, ‘Introduction’, 12-16; cf. *CCC*, II, 292.
- ⁸⁶ *Courier*, ‘Réponse aux anonymes’, 393; 390, 391.

⁸⁷ *PH*, 54.

⁸⁸ AN F7/9416 (12009 A), 11 (letter of 30 August 1824).

⁸⁹ *PH*, 76.

⁹⁰ In this sense, they resembled the *libelles* studied by Darnton, which ‘challenged an earlier form of princely sovereignty based on *arcana imperii*, or secrets of state’; Darnton, *Devil in the Holy Water*, 99.

⁹¹ *NH*, 71-72.

⁹² *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789*, ed. by J. Godechot (Paris, 2006), 219.

⁹³ *PH*, ix-x.

⁹⁴ *Courier*, ‘Réponse aux anonymes’, 391.

⁹⁵ *NH*, 6; *PH*, xiii.

⁹⁶ See Horowitz, ‘Policing’, 58-65.

⁹⁷ Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir* (Paris, 1964), 556.