

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to study critically the works of François-Aimoléon, abbé de Choisy (1644-1724) against their historical background, and to present this study in the context of the author's life. It consists of an introduction followed by seven chapters, the first of which is concerned with biography and bibliography, and the last of which forms a conclusion. In the introduction, I point out that I have chosen four works by Choisy, because of the light that they throw on the writer and his times, for more detailed study, but in so doing have also taken into consideration the rest of his output.

Chapter I (Biography and Published works) tries to establish initially an accurate biography of Choisy from his own writings and from contemporary evidence, making particular reference to his previous biographers, the abbé d'Olivet and Gustave Desnoiresterres. Choisy was born in Paris in 1644, and under the influence of his mother, an interesting and colourful character in her own right, was brought up to be an effeminate youth, given to dressing in women's clothes. His early life, until the age of forty, was spent in gambling and masquerading as a woman, and is recounted in the posthumous Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme. In 1684 he was converted to Christianity under the tutelage of the abbé de Dangeau, and this event is recorded in the Quatre Dialogues of the same year. This commitment was followed by a decision to go to Siam as a missionary, a journey he made in 1685 to 1686, and of which he left an account in the

Journal du voyage de Siam. From the year of his return until his death in 1724 he was occupied with writing a variety of semi-learned historical or pious works, as well as his Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV and Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1687. The last part of Chapter I is concerned with establishing the authorship of certain works attributed to the abbé de Choisy.

In Chapter II, I have discussed the first published work by Choisy, the Quatre Dialogues (1684), which he wrote jointly with the abbé de Dangeau - and I have first of all examined the contribution made by each author to the work. The four parts of the Quatre Dialogues deal in turn with the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, providence, and religion (the Catholic Church). These are presented in a popularizing dialogue form, and the arguments, which I have summarized, are outstanding for their clarity and simplicity. In the first three dialogues these are based on a combination of two philosophical traditions, namely the Cartesian dualistic position, and the teleological argument from the evidence of design in nature, although neither is taken to its logical conclusion. I have examined the points which Choisy and Dangeau have in common with Descartes and his disciples, and also their debt to the teleological tradition. Secondary influences include Pascal and Bossuet, particularly in the last dialogue which includes both the final non-intellectual commitment of the abbé de Choisy and the account of the abbé de Dangeau's conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism. The distinguishing features of the work are its use of

everyday experience as a starting point for abstract discussion, and its partial application of Cartesian methods to Christian conversion. I have concluded the Chapter with an appraisal of the Apologie d'un tour nouveau (1685) of Pierre Jurieu, a work which sets out to attack the Quatre Dialogues and its authors.

Chapter III deals with Choisy's Journal du voyage de Siam, which appeared in 1687. I have first of all summarized the historical and political background to this work, and then gone on to examine it comparatively with other accounts Choisy has left us of his journey, particularly in the posthumous Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV, in which he was able to give considerably more specific information concerning the negotiations. In the section devoted to the content I have considered Choisy's narrative technique (the work is in diary form) and his description both of the journeys and of Siam and the other countries he visited. The work is less complete than some contemporary accounts (particularly that of Guy Tachard) but is written in a familiar conversational style with a good deal of humour. It also tells us a certain amount about the abbé de Choisy himself, showing him as being sociable and tolerant of others, and, by his ordination to the priesthood on the return journey, as confirming in practice the faith he adopted before his departure.

As well as being one of the most important documents emanating from the brief period during which France-Siamese relations flourished in the late seventeenth century, Choisy's Journal provides us with examples of the way in which a seventeenth-century Frenchman saw and understood the East in terms of the west, and in one notable passage shows how this

process can be artificially reversed, so that a Frenchman can arrive at a pseudo-objective examination of what is familiar to him. Although Choisy intended no criticism of the West in this work, its implications are obvious, and I have examined in conclusion three contemporary satirical works which make use of a Siamese framework.

Chapter IV, unlike the two chapters which precede and follow it, is devoted to more than one work, in fact to the bulk of Choisy's semi-learned output, whose production occupied him from 1684 until his death. It is divided into four sections, the first dealing with historical works, the second with translations, the third with editions, and the fourth with popular moralizing works. Choisy's earliest historical works were the vie de David and vie de Salomon, both dedicated to the King. The different parts of the incomplete history of the early Valois kings of France, his most successful historical work, in which he combines scholarship with readability, prepared for his monumental but uneven Histoire de l'Eglise, whose eleven volumes appeared between 1703 and 1723. His translations of the Psalms and the Imitation of Christ are accurate and uncomplicated, and the latter work also presents some bibliographical interest. As an editor Choisy was responsible for a selection of Pensées Chrétiennes, based on the manuscripts of the père Surin, and for a spiritual biography, the vie de Madame de Miramion, which combines clarity and accuracy of presentation with some degree of sympathy for the subject of the work. Finally I have discussed briefly the different editions of the Histoires de piété et de morale, which have, however, little interest for the modern reader.

Chapters v and vI deal with works which were published posthumously - the mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV dating from 1727, and the mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme, whose different parts appeared in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Choisy's mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV is a fragmentary work, whose constituent parts in successive editions I have enumerated at the outset of Chapter v, before going on to study its composition and sources, finding that Choisy's own memory, as much as his informants, dictated the shape of the work. I have devoted the central part of Chapter v to an analysis of the main themes of the mémoires, which I have treated according to the historical figures with whom they deal, and which I have compared with the accounts of some contemporary writers. The most sustained sections of the work concern the last years of Mazarin and the minority of Louis XIV, and of other members of the royal family, as well as of the royal mistresses, Mazarin, Fouquet, Colbert and clerics. In his mémoires, Choisy also reveals much about his own ideas and opinions, particularly in so far as religious and political orthodoxy are concerned, and consistently enlivens the work with his sense of humour and love of anecdotes. A briefer study of the composition and use of portraits in the work leads to the conclusion, in which I have tried to assess Choisy's place in the development of the genre in France.

In Chapter VI, I have dealt with the most curious of all Choisy's works, the Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme in which he describes with great candour his "aventures en travesti". It is clear that his aberration was the result of his upbringing, a fact of which he himself

is partly aware. I have considered his account of his early years, during which time he lived under the adopted names of Madame de Sancy and the Comtesse des Barres, under the headings of "vanité" and "volupté" - that is to what extent his transvestism was an end in itself, and how far a means of attracting young women, since Choisy apparently enjoyed normal sexual relationships. In any case his main aim seems to have been "d'être aimé". Following on from this, I have tried to show how Choisy attempts to create an artificially 'normal' environment, in which values are reversed, and in which he can live without feeling threatened by more traditional social conduct - and to what extent the society of his day showed tolerance towards him in his endeavour. I have gone on to consider Choisy's own moral standpoint, since he wrote this work retrospectively after his conversion, and the possible reasons for which he could have written it. Finally I have examined the influence it had on some later writers (including the author of the problematic Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville) and discussed what place it could have in the development of confessional literature, and the novel, particularly with regard to the creation of illusion.

Before attempting to reach some conclusion as to the abbé de Choisy's place in the period in which he lived, I have considered briefly at the beginning of Chapter VII his activities as a member of the Académie Française, and his contribution to the Académie du Luxembourg, a small and short-lived society, of which he was founder and secretary. From the speeches made at his death by members of the Académie Française, it is clear that Choisy's contemporaries remembered him principally as a historian and academician,

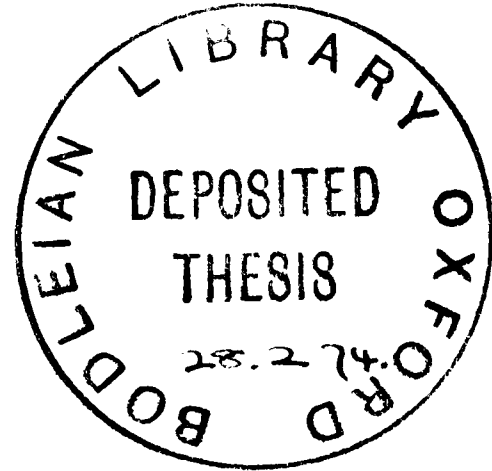
and he did indeed spend the last forty years of his life as a 'professional' popularizing historian. However, we can see in retrospect that this was only one aspect of his life and works, and one that for us has relatively little interest. It is on the four works that I have studied in detail that Choisy must largely be judged, and these are bound together by their relationship to his life. Their constant elements, like their contradictory ones, reflect Choisy's own experience; his good humour and wit characterize every aspect of his writing, as do his enthusiasm and evident sociability - his one bête noire was presumption, a failing he never overlooks. Alongside these constants, however, he presents us with the contradictions of debauchery and piety, indiscipline and orthodoxy, frivolity and learning.

I have concluded by attempting to determine to what extent Choisy in his life and writings can be said to represent the age in which he lived. Of the variant interpretations of his life and works, I have found it impossible to agree that he was either a progressive thinker (despite certain passages in the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV where he criticizes the ancien régime), or a mere clown. He was a popularizing writer, but unlike Fontenelle not one who sought to disseminate unrest, and his religious and political views were largely orthodox and accepting. His eccentricities, which contrast so strikingly with his apparent sobriety later in life, although obviously exceptional, were not unique in the seventeenth century, and the grand siècle was one period when a variety of oddities and misfits seem to have been tolerated to a remarkable degree. Choisy, far from being a precursor of the eighteenth century, as

G. Mongrédien would see him, was a writer who by his life and the record he has left us of it, illustrates vividly the great paradox between obedience and non-conformity that was the grand siècle.

THE ABBE DE CHOISY

(1644-1724)



A HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY

Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy of the University of Oxford
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INTRODUCTION

The reign of Louis XIV is one of the most heavily documented of all the great periods of literary and artistic production, and any researcher into the latter half of the seventeenth century is confronted by a formidable array of mémoires and letters, both official and unofficial, which illustrate in a variety of ways the many facets of this complex society. The court, the Church, and the salons and académies, and within them nobles and ministers, the clergy and men and women of letters all go to make up the milieu into which the great writers of the period were born, and in which they lived. In the seventeenth century we have the opportunity of studying these great writers against a background of manners, events and intellectual activity, but much of this is still submerged in bulky mémoires, provincial archives, or unapproachable theological treatises.

For this thesis I have proposed to study a prolific minor writer, the abbé de Choisy, who, however, tells us within the space of four relatively short and attractive works a great deal about the period in which he lived. Choisy embraced a breadth of experience and interests that would challenge any of his contemporaries, and in the context of his account of his life, spread over three works, and of his Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV we learn about the court and its members, the lower grades of Parisian society, some aspects of intellectual and spiritual thought at the time, and the experience of a traveller and missionary to the Far East, as well as some of the more outrageous aspects of sexual libertinage in the seventeenth century. Choisy is a writer who at his best presents us with an

intriguing picture of the grand siècle, in all its diversity, in a way that is still eminently readable and entertaining, shunning excessive length and obscurity, and writing for the most part with wit and skill. In addition to this he has left us a portrait of himself, which must rank as one of the most unusual literary self-portraits of all time.

It is only fair to point out at this stage that what I have said so far about Choisy is hardly applicable to the bulk of his historical and semi-learned writing, which for its part has little of interest to offer a reader today: we can safely attach relatively little importance to it, while remembering at the same time that it does constitute by far the largest part of his output.

Since in Choisy's case life and works are so intimately connected I have begun this thesis by studying his life from a biographical point of view. In the following chapters I have first of all discussed the two major works (the Quatre Dialogues and the Journal du voyage de Siam) which appeared very early in his career as a writer (Chapters II and III) and then gone on in Chapter IV to deal with the bulk of his historical output. In Chapters V and VI I have considered the other two important works, the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV and the Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme, both of which were published posthumously.

The first event in Choisy's life to be recorded in print by him was his conversion to Christianity in 1684, the account of which is to be found in the Quatre Dialogues of that year. This is a work which the abbé de Choisy wrote jointly with the abbé de Dangeau, his mentor, and is divided into four parts, treating of the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, providence, and religion (the Catholic Church).

Using the dialogue form, the two authors present their arguments, which centre round the Cartesian dualistic position and the teleological proof of the existence of God. The work also contains the account of both Choisy's and Dangeau's conversions, the latter taking the form of an apologia for the Catholic Church. In this work we cannot fail to be aware of the influence of Descartes, and Cartesianism and Christianity come together in a popularizing framework.

The second work which I have studied is the Journal du voyage de Siam (1687), which was written as a result of Choisy's journey to that country in 1685 to 1686. This presents all the interest of a seventeenth-century travel document, with descriptions of the sea voyage, and observations on the Siamese and neighbouring peoples; the fact that the work is in diary form and that events are recorded as they take place gives it, too, some spontaneity of presentation, which is combined with the naive descriptive tone that was to find its satirical counterpart in writers such as Montesquieu.

I should perhaps mention here the historical works which I have studied in Chapter IV, together with the editions and translations for which Choisy was responsible. In all these he aimed at being scholarly but readable, and to a large extent succeeded, although his scholarship is uneven. In the Vie de Madame de Miramion, his most enduring work in this field, he achieves a satisfying combination of clarity and sympathy with the subject of the work.

Of the two works published posthumously, the first to appear was the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV. This is a fragmentary work, yet contains some fine portraits and perceptive studies of Mazarin, Fouquet, and Colbert as well as the King and members of the royal family. The work

ranges chronologically from 1661 to 1692, at least in its outline, but in fact extends beyond these limits in the subjects which it covers. The construction is very loose, presenting a mixture of disjointed anecdotes and more sustained themes, and there is no proportional treatment of events. The tone of the work is conversational throughout, but its scope is wide and varied.

Finally I have studied the incomplete account left to us by Choisy of his early years - the Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme. Brief and disjointed as this is, Choisy tells us enough in it for us to understand his motivation, and for us to be astonished at the audacity of his confession. He writes with frankness and lucidity, and apparently with neither reluctance nor remorse, a work that is as incredible as it is entertaining. The text of the work repays examination, as I hope I have shown, and Choisy holds nothing back from his reader. One revealing point that emanates above all from a discussion of this work is the tolerant view of the society in which he lived towards his aberration; his contemporaries were surprised and amused by him, but not horrified.

This thesis attempts at once to be a critical study of all Choisy's works, but particularly of the four that I have singled out for detailed study, a portrait through them and through other writers of a remarkable, if not always very admirable figure, and a historical appreciation of what Choisy teaches us about the period in which he lived, and of what contribution he made to it. I have argued each chapter independently, not having any preconceived pattern in mind into which the works should fit, and only in Chapter VII have attempted to arrive at some synthetic appreciation of the

light that Choisy, writer and personality, helps to throw on the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

This thesis is not directly about major authors or figures of history, but it is about the circles in which some of them moved. Louis XIV and his ministers and mistresses, as well as other members of the royal family, Bossuet, Bouillon, Saint-Simon, Bussy-Rabutin, Fontenelle, Madame de la Fayette and the Cardinal de Retz were all amongst Choisy's friends and acquaintances, and the world that he talks about, from the visit of the Siamese ambassadors to the transvestite ball, and from intellectual and spiritual quests to political intrigues, was the world in which they lived, and which a minor author such as Choisy, by leaving us in his writings the story of his varied life, makes that much more vivid to twentieth-century readers.

ABBREVIATIONS, EDITIONS, AND SPELLING

Abbreviations

Throughout the thesis I have abbreviated the titles of certain works as follows:

abbé de Choisy, Journal du voyage de Siam as Journal
Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV
 as Mémoires
Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme
 as Mémoires/femme

abbé d'Olivet, Vie de M. l'abbé de Choisy as Vie
 d'Argenson, Loisirs d'un Ministre, ou Essais . . . as Loisirs
 G. Desnoiresterres, Epicuriens et Lettrés as E. et L.

Since each chapter, with the exception of I, IV and VII, deals with one work in detail, I shall give page references to quotations from that work in brackets at the end of the quotation, without further identification of the source. Thus all unidentified page references refer to the work under discussion. In Chapter IV this rule applies to each subsection. In Chapters I and VII, I shall fully identify each quotation.

Editions

As far as possible I have used the first edition of works by the abbé de Choisy. The obvious exceptions are the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV and the Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme for which I have used the most recent edition (see Chapters V and VI respectively). In two other cases, which I have not specified

in the text, I have also used later editions than the first. These are the Histoire de la Vie de David of which I have quoted from the third edition (Paris, 1720, Bodleian shelfmark Montagu 123), and the Histoires de Philippe de Valois et du Roi Jean, for which I have used the second edition (Paris, 1689, Bodleian shelfmark 1338.d.1). Otherwise references may be taken as being to the first edition, unless otherwise specified.

Spelling

Throughout the thesis I have modernized spelling in all quotations. Since I have seen no reason to make any linguistic or philological comments, there seemed no purpose in complicating quotations by irregular spelling. The only exceptions to this rule are in Appendix II and III, since in both cases I am dealing with unpublished pamphlet or manuscript material, and in the case of the letters, with material to which access is limited. The only other case in which I have retained irregular spelling is in quotations which are not in French or English.

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I should like to thank first of all the staff of the Bodleian Library and the Library of the Taylor Institute in Oxford for their help and co-operation over three years. I am also indebted to the staff of the British Museum Reading Room, in London; of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, the Bibliothèque Mazarine, and the Archives Nationales in Paris; and of the Bibliothèque Municipale and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Caen.

Certain individuals, too, have made my research in France much easier and I should like here to acknowledge in particular my debt to Monsieur Gildas Bernard, Archiviste Départemental du Calvados for guiding my research in Normandy; Monsieur and Madame Hubert Bénédic of Balleroy for allowing me access to their family archives; and père Jean Guennou, of the Société des Missions Etrangères, for making parts of that society's archives available to me.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY AND PUBLISHED WORKS

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY AND PUBLISHED WORKS

François-Timoléon de Choisy was born in Paris on 16 August 1644, the youngest son of Jean de Choisy, maître des requêtes and chancelier to the duc d'Orléans, and of Jeanne-Olympe Hurault de l'Hôpital. Although neither Gustave Desnoiresterres¹ nor any other biographer has been able to trace any record of baptism, all the documents in the Cabinet des Titres indicate the correctness of this date, and Choisy's first biographer, the abbé d'Olivet also gives it as being the date of his birth.² He was "tenu sur les fonds baptismaux par M. le Roy, cousin de son père".³ One of a family of seven, he had two brothers⁴ and four sisters:⁵ Jean-Paul de

1. Epicuriens et Lettrés, (henceforth abbreviated to E. et L.) p.21, n.1.
2. Voltaire puts forward an independent theory (Le Siècle de Louis XIV, (London, 1753), II, 309) but gives no evidence to support it.
3. D'Olivet, Vie de l'abbé de Choisy, (Lausanne and Geneva, 1742), p.5. In future the title of this book will be abbreviated to Vie.
4. D'Olivet (Vie, p.12) says that there were three other brothers, but clearly does not realize that the conseiller au parlement de Toulouse and the intendant d'Auvergne are one and the same person. Desnoiresterres corrects this error. See also Choisy, Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme, p.323. (I shall refer to this work throughout the thesis as Mémoires/femme.)
5. The generally accepted opinion that Choisy only had two sisters comes from an ambiguity in a document in the Cabinet des Titres (Pièces originales, 758, Entry 17,229 r.45) which is corrected by Mousnier, Lettres et Mémoires adressés au chancelier Séguier, P.U.F., 1964, II, 1194-1195. See Appendix I.

Choisy, the eldest of the children, was to become conseiller au parlement de Toulouse and conseiller à la Chambre de l'Edit de Castres in 1654, and intendant d'Auvergne in 1662.¹ Pierre de Balleroy, the second son, became an army officer and protégé of Turenne,² and the daughters all entered convents. They pass without mention in Choisy's Mémoires, although he does speak of "ma sœur religieuse" in a letter to Pontchartrain.³

His ancestors on both sides of the family present a certain interest. Choisy himself tells how his grandfather, Jean II de Choisy, seigneur de Balleroy, began his career at court:

"Cela me fait souvenir d'une aventure [...] qui amena mon grand-père à la cour de Henri III. Il n'était pas fort riche, et revenait d'une petite terre qu'il avait en Basse-Normandie, nommé Balleroy. Il arriva à Meulan; le marquis d'O, alors surintendant des finances, arrive en même temps à l'hôtellerie; ils font connaissance, soupent ensemble, jouent aux échecs; mon grand-père, qui n'était brin sot, se laisse donner mat. Le surintendant le trouva fort à son gré, et l'employa depuis dans ses plus grandes affaires, sans que son nom parût jamais dans aucun traité. [...] Les Rois Henri III et Henri IV l'avaient fait conseiller d'Etat, l'aimaient fort, et l'admettaient à leurs jeux et dans leurs divertissements particuliers, à ce que dit M. de Bassompierre."⁴

1. See Fléchier, Mémoires sur les Grands-Jours, (Paris, 1844), pp.268, 302, 394.
2. Mémoires/femme, p.324.
3. British Museum MSS Egerton 18, no.167. Choisy to Pontchartrain 7 May 1700.
4. Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV, p.37. I shall refer to this work throughout the thesis as Mémoires. cf. Bassompierre, Mémoires in Petitot, 2nde série, XIX, 372.

He became sécrétaire général des finances en la généralité de Caen in 1603, and died at an advanced age in 1652.¹

His son, Jean III de Choisy, was born in 1598, and became maître des requêtes in 1622. He married Jeanne-Olympe Hurault in 1628. He was sent to Germany in 1639, became intendant de Languedoc a year later, and then conseiller d'Etat in 1643. On being appointed chancelier de Monsieur in 1644, he took up residence in the Palais du Luxembourg. Lefèvre d'Ormesson reports for 28 March of that year:

"Le lundi 28 mars, je fus, l'après-dînée, me promener au bois de Vincennes avec M. de Breteuil, qui me dit comme le mercredi saint il avait vu sortir du cabinet de Monsieur M. de Choisy, qui venait d'être agréé pour son chancelier, ayant été présenté par la Rivière, moyennant quatre-vingt-dix mille écus."²

He held the post of chancelier until the death of Monsieur in 1660. He died later the same year.³

His wife was a great grand-daughter of Michel de l'Hôpital, chancellor of France and mediator in the Wars of Religion, and daughter of Pierre Hurault de l'Hôpital, seigneur de Belesbat. An interesting and colourful character in her own right, Madame de Choisy was a prominent figure in

1. See Dictionnaire de biographie française, VIII (1959). The coat of arms of the Choisy family is described and reproduced in L. de Glanville, Histoire du Prieuré de Saint-Lô de Rouen, (Rouen, 1890), I, 344 and in several documents in the Cabinet des Titres, Pièces originales (de Choisy).
2. Lefèvre d'Ormesson, Journal, (Paris, 1860-1861), I, 163.
3. Mlle de Montpensier, Mémoires, ed. Chéruel, (Paris, 1858-1859), III, 565. See also d'Olivet, Vie, p.5 ff.

court circles during the reign of Louis XIV, and, from all accounts, a voluminous correspondent, although most of her letters have since been lost. The abbé de Choisy, on whom she was to have a strong and largely harmful influence, says of her in his Mémoires:

"Ma mère, par son esprit plus que par l'état de sa fortune, était fort avant dans les secrets de la cour: la reine Anne d'Autriche l'avait fort aimée, et le Roi [...] la distinguait de toutes les femmes de son âge par ses bienfaits et par des marques de son amitié, jusqu'à lui donner des audiences réglées toutes les semaines. [...]"

A l'âge de dix ans, elle me faisait écrire tous les matins deux ou trois heures au chevet de son lit, et toutes ses lettres parlaient d'affaires ou de nouvelles: elle avait un commerce réglé avec la reine de Pologne, Marie de Gonzague; avec Madame Royale de Savoie, Christine de France; avec la fameuse reine de Suède, et avec plusieurs princesses d'Allemagne, qui toutes l'honoraient d'une amitié particulière."

She certainly enjoyed a close friendship with the Queen of Poland; Tallemant des Réaux, speaking of the latter, refers to Madame de Choisy as "sa bonne amie et correspondante".² Segrais, too, mentions their relationship:

"Elle était intime de la Princesse Louise de Pologne, qui a entretenu un commerce de lettres avec elle pendant vingt ans."³

On one occasion the Queen of Poland reproached the comtesse

1. Mémoires, (Paris, 1966), p.25.

2. Tallemant des Réaux, Historiettes, ed. Mongrézien, (Paris, s.d., (1932-1934)), III, 189.

3. Segrais, Oeuvres diverses, (Amsterdam, 1723), I, 38.

de Maure for not having written to her. The comtesse replied:

"Je puis assurer pourtant Votre Majesté que je ne l'ai [fait] que par la seule crainte de l'importuner, sachant bien que Madame de Choisy lui mande toutes les nouvelles qui peuvent lui conner du divertissement."

Mazarin on one occasion refers to a letter which he has received from her,² and on the death of the Queen of Poland, Louis XIV wrote her a letter of sympathy, which begins:

"Je n'ai pas de peine à comprendre la douleur que vous avez d'une aussi grande perte que celle de la reine de Pologne."³

A tone of familiarity is established in the lines:

"Je marche demain, et si Dieu bénit mes armes comme je le dois espérer de la justice qui les accompagne, vous entendrez parler de nous d'une manière dont j'ai lieu de croire que vous pourrez être contente. J'ai vu la compagnie de votre fils [Pierre de Balleroy] et vous ne serez pas fâchée de savoir que j'en suis fort satisfait."

This ease of manner is reflected in one of the conversations she is supposed to have had with the King.

1. Papiers de Conrart, XIV, 9, comtesse de Maure to Queen of Poland, ?1649 in Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes, Catalogue 3ème série, Vol.V, (Paris, 1854).
2. B.N. MSS, Mélanges de Colbert, t.52a.f.135 vo. "A la reine, Calais, 11 août 1658." In Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin, (Paris, 1872-1890), VIII, 576.
3. and 4. Louis XIV, Oeuvres, (Paris, 1806), V, 409.

Choisy writes:

"Ma mère lui [Louis] disait un jour: 'Sire, voulez-vous devenir honnête homme? Ayez souvent des conversations avec moi.' Il crut son conseil, et lui donnait deux fois par la semaine des audiences réglées, qu'il payait par une pension de huit mille francs."

If she was a prolific and witty correspondent, Segrais assures us that she was also a careless one:

"Il n'y avait point d'orthographe dans ses lettres; mais quand on avait attrapé celle qui lui était naturelle, on y trouvait des traits admirables et une grande vivacité."²

This "vivacité" probably accounted for her popularity as a society figure, as we may gather from Mazarin's remark, early in the Regency of Anne of Austria, to the Maréchale d'Estrées:

"Quoi? Vous vous divertissez céans, et Madame de Choisy n'en est pas! Comment se peut-on divertir sans elle?"³

Her wit was often crude or unkind, however, and there is a wealth of anecdotes relating to her. Tallemant des Réaux reports her remark to M. de Candalle:

"Mais allez au moins faire un tour dans l'antichambre. Croyez-vous qu'on n'ait point envie de pisser?"⁴

1. Mémoires, p.52.

2. Oeuvres diverses, (Amsterdam, 1723), I, 37.

3. Tallemant des Réaux, Historiettes, (Mongrédien), V, 272.

4. *ibid.*, V, 273.

as well as a visit by the elegant Sieur de Gramond:

"Un jour qu'il entra chez Madame de Choisy, avec un beau carosse et des laquais bien vêtus: 'Jésus! dit-elle, un maquereau en si bon équipage! C'est donc un bon métier.'"¹

She must have been capable of greater refinement, however, since she was also closely associated with the précieuses. Somaize, in his Dictionnaire des précieuses (1661) paints her portrait under the name of Célie:

"Célie est une précieuse dont l'esprit a toujours fait grand bruit [...] sa maison était autrefois l'abord général de tout ce qu'il y a de galants et de gens de lettres dans toute la Grèce.

Sa ruelle n'est pas à présent des plus nombreuses, mais bien des plus illustres, soit par la qualité de ceux qui s'y rencontrent, soit par l'agrément des conversations qui s'y font."²

La Forge refers to her as "Charite" in the Cercle des femmes savantes,³ and for Segrais she is the "Incomparable Uralie".⁴

The "esprit" of which all her admirers speak was to be the cause of her dismissal from the court and her period of

1. Tallemant des Réaux, Historiettes, (Mongrédien), VI, 70.

2. Le Dictionnaire des précieuses, (ed. Livet), (Paris, 1856), I, 55.

3. Paris, 1663, p.11.

4. Les Nouvelles Françaises, (Paris, 1722), I, 5-6.
See also the Galerie des peintures, (Paris, 1663), II, 490-498 and her portrait by Mme de Brégy in the Suite des Mémoires de mademoiselle, (Amsterdam, 1736), VIII, 173.
The reference given by Mongrédien in Choisy's Mémoires p.364 to Nicolas Goulas, Mémoires, (Paris, 1879), I, 342 is incorrect, and refers to the sister-in-law of François' mother.

exile in Normandy. She had a shrewd political sense, and a dangerous capacity for intrigue, and was apparently capable of exercising a considerable influence over people; the abbé Arnould testifies to this in his Mémoires:

"A propos de M. le Cardinal de Bonzi, tout le monde a vu avec quelque admiration la grande fortune qu'il a faite en si peu de temps [...] on sera peut-être étonné de savoir qu'il en soit principalement redevable à Madame de Choisy [...] Il suivit son conseil, et l'événement a fait voir qu'il n'en pouvait prendre un meilleur."

She was instrumental too in the promotion of the Cardinal de Bouillon² and it will be seen later that her reasons for dressing her youngest son in women's clothes were also largely political.

One of the richest sources of information about her is the Mémoires of Mlle de Montpensier. Mme de Choisy claimed to be related to the princess, as we see from a Bourrée by Bouillon:

1. Abbé Arnould, Mémoires in Petitot et Monmarqué, 2nde série, XXXIV, 545.

2. See abbé de Choisy, Mémoires, p.232.

Bourrée LXXVIII

"De Mademoiselle à Madame de Choisy, sur ce que cette dame avait dit qu'elle pourrait bien être parente de la Princesse à cause que sa Grand-mère avait été chancelière de Henri le Grand, et qu'elle avait été fort belle.

Que mon Grand-père
Ait convoité
Votre grand-mère
pour sa beauté;
Cela se peut bien croire,
Et je le veux bien
Encore que l'histoire
Ne m'en dise rien.

Je suis contente
De voir en vous
Une parente
Digne de nous:
Les gens du côté gauche
Ont beaucoup d'esprit,
Que sans aucun reproche
Cela vous soit dit."

but there is no further evidence to suggest that this is in fact the case. To judge from the Mémoires of la Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de Choisy sought her friendship eagerly, a feeling that was not altogether mutual:

"Je trouvais Mme de Choisy toujours fort empressée pour moi; je l'étais peu pour elle."²

It was her characteristic indiscretion over a diplomatic affair concerning the Princess Palatine that had displeased la Grande Mademoiselle and she was severe in her punishment:

"Je lui défendais de jamais parler de moi de la manière que je savais qu'elle avait fait, et que je la priais de ne plus venir chez moi aussi souvent qu'elle avait accoutumé."³

She gradually returned to favour, however, and by 1653, their

1. Oeuvres, (Paris, 1664), pp.22-25.

2. Mlle de Montpensier, Mémoires, ed. Chéruel, II, 61.

3. *ibid.*, II, 61.

rather tenuous friendship was restored, for the time being. She had not learnt expediency, though, and as well as trying to arrange various marriages,¹ she was again involved in court intrigue in 1658, during the illness of Louis XIV that occurred in that year:

"Tout le monde était fort alerte à Paris. Je voyais Madame de Choisy tous les jours en me promenant dans le jardin du Luxembourg, qui me disait toutes les nouvelles qu'elle savait. Elle me paraissait assez alerte, et je ne doute pas qu'elle n'espérât avoir beaucoup de part au gouvernement."²

She valued highly the prestige attached to the royal family, and was eager to curry favour with the future king, should Louis XIV die. It was on this account that she sought to please the young Monsieur. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who was particularly irritated by this, as she had hoped to marry him herself, describes her progress:

"Il alla l'après-dînée de mes gens voir Madame de Choisy. Elle leur dit: 'J'ai reçu une lettre longue de Monsieur'. [...] Elle a dit souvent 'Je suis à la veille d'être favorite du Roi', et cela lorsque le Roi était malade."³

This time she had played too dangerously: the King recovered and Madame de Choisy was sent into exile in Normandy:

"Il fallait qu'elle s'en allât [...] en Normandie, en une des maisons de son mari; dont elle eut beaucoup de déplaisir."⁴

1. Mlle de Montpensier, Mémoires, ed. Chéruel, III, 280, and 565-566.

2. *ibid.*, III, 254

3. *ibid.*, III, 261.

4. *ibid.*, III, 265. cf. Guy Patin, Lettres, (Paris, 1846), II, 417 (Letter 334) and also J. Loret, La Muse historique, (Paris, 1857-1878), I, 301-302, Letter XLII, which would suggest that she was also exiled in the autumn of 1652.

From Mazarin's correspondence,¹ we learn that both her husband and the Queen of Poland had written in her favour, but that the disruption she had caused was too serious a threat to the State to be tolerated. Despite this, her period in exile was relatively brief; by the end of 1658 she had obtained permission to leave Normandy (though not to return to Paris), and by 1663, she was again at work, this time trying to marry the Grande Mademoiselle's sister to the King of Denmark.

She died in 1669² and Mademoiselle de Montpensier records her death in the Mémoires without much apparent regret; their interests had differed too frequently, and a clash of loyalties had arisen:

"Madame de Choisy mourut, qui avait eu de grands chagrins contre moi auparavant."³

Her youngest son, François-Timoléon, was born in 1644, when she was at least forty, and something of his intricate character and of their strange relationship is conveyed in the Mémoires and Mémoires/femme. They are somewhat less helpful, though, in trying to establish accurately the dates of his various activities, and it is only by piecing together information from different sources that it is possible to

1. See Lettres du Cardinal Mazarin, publ. d'Arenel, (Paris, Imp. Nat. 1906), IX, 108 and 700.
2. D'Olivet fixes the date of her death as 1666 (Vie, p.15), probably basing himself on the abbé himself, who says he was twenty-two at the time of his mother's death. As he was writing from memory, about thirty years later, we must assume that he was wrong about his age, on the evidence of Louis XIV's letter to Mme de Choisy of 1667 (see p.6, n.3 of this thesis) and of Mlle de Montpensier's record of it in 1669 - see n.3 of this page. See also abbé Aubert, Histoire de Balleroy jusqu'au xixe siècle, (Caen, 1911), p.213.
3. Mlle de Montpensier, Mémoires, IV, 79-80.

account for much of Choisy's life: even then, some mysteries remain unsolved.

For convenience, it can be divided almost exactly into two parts, the turning point coming around the year 1684, the date of his conversion and first published work. Up to this point it contains many uncertainties and several scandals - the most curious of which was his obsession with transvestism.¹ Whatever the psychological reasons behind his continuing desire to dress as a woman into his maturity, it was his mother who first encouraged this practice:

"Ma mère, presque en naissant, m'a accoutumé aux habillements des femmes."²

Her political motivation, at least, for this, is revealed by Choisy when he says:

"On m'habillait en fille toutes les fois que le petit Monsieur venait au logis."³

Mazarin was trying to establish the unchallenged supremacy of Louis XIV, and was not averse to using Machiavellian methods to do so. In order that the King's brother Philippe d'Orléans should not present a threat, he had to be made weak and effeminate, a destiny not entirely contrary to his nature:

"On lui ôtait son justaucorps, pour lui mettre des manteaux de femmes et des jupes; et tout cela se faisait, dit-on, par l'ordre du Cardinal, qui voulait le rendre efféminé, de peur qu'il ne fît⁴ de la peine au Roi, comme Gaston avait fait à Louis XIII."

1. See Chapter VI of this thesis, section Medical history and parallels.

2. Mémoires/femme, p.289.

3. *ibid.*, p.219.

4. *ibid.*, p.219.

Madame de Choisy, immediately aware of the possibilities that this presented, and always eager to curry favour with Mazarin, proffered her son, in a similar guise, to be the playmate of the young duke, so that he might not feel isolated by his exaggerated effeminacy. Choisy recalls their pastimes:

"Quand Monsieur était habillé et paré, on jouait à la petite prime (c'était le jeu à la mode), et sur les sept heures, on apportait la collation."¹

Dressing up was for him as yet an innocent childhood game; it continued, however, with disastrous consequences, into his adolescence and maturity.

He was apparently an intelligent child; as we have seen he spent up to three hours a day reading and writing at his mother's dictation at the age of ten. His father died when François was seventeen, and three years later, on 1 January 1663, he became abbé de Saint-Seine, near Dijon, but took his duties very lightly. At about the same time, he made his "acte de tentative" for the Sorbonne,² presided over by M. de Péréfixe, who had become Archbishop of Paris, and précepteur of the Sorbonne in 1662. Choisy had been fortunate in the advice he had been given by him:

"La veille, il me vint voir au Luxembourg, et me fit ses trois arguments; après quoi il me dit: 'M. l'abbé, vous savez que l'abbé Le Tellier, qui est en licence, fait tout ce qu'il peut pour démonter tous les répondants; [...] Je vous veux faire le plaisir de ne point ouvrir la bouche:

1. Mémoires/femme, p.219.

2. Desnoiresterres, (E. et L., p.27), says that he made his "acte de tentative" before becoming abbé de Saint-Seine, but as M. de Péréfixe addresses him as "M. l'Abbé", he presumably held the latter post already.

défendez-vous comme vous pourrez.' [...] L'abbé le Tellier eut beau crier [...] je criais aussi haut que lui; et soit que j'eusse raison ou non, les vieux docteurs frappèrent sur les écoutes, et lui imposèrent silence."

From the order in which Choisy recounts the different stages of his life, it seems likely that he went to Bordeaux soon after this: "J'ai joué la comédie cinq mois durant sur le théâtre d'une grand ville, comme une fille".² At the beginning of the Mémoires, where he discusses some of the events described in them he says "le voyage de Bordeaux ne cessera pas de divertir", (although in fact he never goes into any detail about it) and later recalls "mon aventure de Bordeaux".³ This journey, probably in fact longer than five months, must have taken place between 1662 and 1666. As we have no other record of his activities during this period, it is impossible to say exactly when he returned to Paris, but it is quite legitimate to assume, without doing him any injustice, that the rest of the time was spent in some sort of dissipation. He quite frankly admits that he vacillated between one vice and another, and that when he was not dressing up as a woman, he was spending more money than he possessed at the gaming tables:

"Le jeu, qui m'a toujours persécuté, m'a guéri de ces bagatelles [i.e. masquerading as a woman] pendant plusieurs années, mais toutes les fois que je me suis ruiné et que j'ai [quitté] le jeu, je suis⁴ retombé dans mes anciennes faiblesses et suis redevenu femme."

1. Mémoires, p.231.

2. Mémoires/femme, p.290.

3. These two references allow us to locate the "grande ville" as Bordeaux. See Mémoires, p.25 and Mémoires/femme, p.324.

4. Mémoires/femme, p.290.

He had quite a substantial income, but of course squandered most of it on gaming. In 1662, he was granted certain benefits dependent on the Archbishop of Auch but in 1664 he had still not obtained the pension (6,000 livres), "à cause de l'état présent des affaires à Rome". Choisy therefore "a très humblement supplié sa Majesté de lui vouloir pourvoir" and the King confirmed that the pension would be paid "du dit jour trentième juin 1662 et jusqu'au jour de l'obtention des bulles et prévisions apostoliques."¹

At the time of his mother's death in 1669, he already had a private income of some importance:

"J'avais dix mille livres de rente de patrimoine, tant du côté de mon père que du côté d'une tante qui m'avait fait son héritier, et quatorze mille livres de rente en bénéfices."²

He inherited his mother's jewellery, furniture and silver, but gave his share of the money to his brothers:

"Nous fûmes tous trois contents. J'étais ravi d'avoir de belles pierreries."³

Although his bénéfices accumulated throughout his life, he never learned to control his spending, and was always in debt.

On his return from Bordeaux, he was in his early twenties, and now begins one of two episodes, during which he lived, or attempted to live, as a transvestite in a 'normal' domestic setting. These together provide much of the material for the Mémoires/femme. He begins as follows:

1. Archives Nationales. E 1725 Côte 15, p.39.

2. Mémoires/femme, p.323.

3. *ibid.*, p.324.

"J'ai acheté [...] une maison au faubourg Saint-Marceau, au milieu de la bourgeoisie et du peuple, afin de m'y pouvoir habiller à ma fantaisie."

This period of his life, during which he adopted the name of Mme de Sancy, and contracted a "mariage de conscience" with a woman who dressed as a man, is described in the first part of the Mémoires/femme. He does not indicate whether this is before or after the death of his mother: it does precede the account of the sharing out of her legacy in the Mémoires/femme, but as they have little claim to chronological accuracy, we cannot be sure of the dating. Desnoiresterres (p.37) assumes that it was after her death, but this leaves a long period up to 1669 for which there is no account, and his state of extreme poverty at the end of this episode would suggest that he had not yet benefited financially from his mother's will. If we assume, then, that he lived in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau before the death of his mother, this would mean that he sold the house in about 1668. He had been warned that several people had enquired after his appartments at the Palais du Luxembourg, and that if he wanted to retain them, he would be well advised to leave his house in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. He took up gambling on a large scale at this stage, and in fact sold the house soon afterwards in order to increase his stakes, but with no better fortune:

"Je vendis ma maison du faubourg Saint-Marceau, je la perdis [...] et m'en allai voyager pour cacher ma misère et ma honte, et tâcher de dissiper mon chagrin."²

1. Mémoires/femme, p.290.

2. *ibid.*, p.319.

He takes this question up again in the next (fragmentary) section of the Mémoires/femme (III) which concerns the actresses Montfleury and Mondory.¹ This episode in the work is obviously incomplete, but probably took place after the sale of the house. To judge from the concluding remarks, he had no money, which would follow logically from his losses at gambling:

"J'amassai donc le plus d'argent que je pus, [...] et partis pour l'Italie avec un justaucorps et une épée.

J'y demeurai dix ans, à Rome ou à Venise."²

He certainly could not have spent ten years in Italy, ten months is more likely, but we have no means of knowing about his activities either there or in England, to which there is only a passing reference:

"Je vous conterai quand vous voudrez mes voyages d'Italie et d'Angleterre."³

Hereafter, for a time at least, it is a little easier to ascertain his whereabouts, since we know he was at Saint-Seine when he heard of the nomination of the Cardinal de Bouillon in 1668.⁴ Then, since he dealt with her legacy, he must have been in Paris soon after the death of his mother,

1. Desnoiresterres suggests that these are one and the same person (p.98, n.1). This is highly probable and in this case the incident to which he refers in the Mémoires/femme IV (p.351) is the one hinted at in this chapter.

2. Mémoires/femme, p.322.

3. *ibid.*, p.322.

4. Mémoires, p.233.

that is to say in 1669. His consequently improved financial situation allowed him to continue his transvestite extravagances, still under the name of Madame de Sancy, and he was further encouraged by the 'approval' of Madame de la Fayette and the duc de la Rochefoucauld, although their suggestion that "je ferais mieux de m'habiller en femme" was probably not meant to be taken literally.¹

In 1669 or 1670, he was invited to the lundi gras ball given in predictably strange taste by Philippe d'Orléans. Choisy's feminism was particularly attractive to the young duke, and so he was treated as an important guest:

"L'assemblée fut fort belle: [...] On me trouva assez bien, je dansais dans la dernière perfection et le bal était fait pour moi."²

During the next two years, Choisy spent his time either in Paris, presumably at his apartments at the Palais du Luxembourg, or in Burgundy at his abbey of Saint-Seine. Some letters he wrote at this time show that he travelled a certain amount within France. In July 1671, he wrote to Bussy-Rabutin from Dijon. In August he was at Villeneuve, and later the same month at Paris.³ Although no mention is made of it in the Mémoires, various references in contemporary correspondence suggest that he was having a passing affair with Mme Bossuet, the sister-in-law of the then Bishop of Condom, who lived at Dijon. Madame de Scudéry wrote to

1. Mémoires/femme, p.324.

2. *ibid.*, p.325.

3. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, ed. Lalanne, (Paris, 1858-1859), 6 vols., I, 436, II, 1 and 8. See also several other letters for 1671.

Bussy-Rabutin in 1671:

"L'abbé de Choisy va encore faire un voyage en votre pays à ce qu'il m'a dit; pour moi j'ai peur qu'il n'aille voir Philis [Mme Bossuet] plutôt que ses fermiers."

She is more precise, writing in 1673:

"Notre ami l'abbé de Choisy a, dit-on, de grands soins d'elle."²

and

"Elle a été [...] en Lorraine, et puis retourné à Paris où elle est, dites-vous, cachée, et l'abbé de Choisy avec elle."³

Madame Bossuet for her part gives no indication in her letters as to the depth of their relationship and refers to Choisy simply as "notre ami". It is not known whether Bossuet came to hear of this; if he did, it in no way prejudiced him against the abbé de Choisy, to judge from their friendship later in life.⁴

At this time too, Choisy began a close and lasting friendship with Bussy-Rabutin, himself in exile near Dijon. One of Bussy's own letters witnesses to their intimacy. In 1671 he wrote to Madame de Scudéry:

1. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, II, 43.

2. *ibid.*, II, 219.

3. *ibid.*, II, 221.

4. See p.37 of this thesis and Eloge de Bossuet in Recueil de l'Académie Française, 1704, p.205.

"Je ne sais comment j'ai pu oublier de vous apprendre, madame, l'amitié que j'avais faite avec l'abbé de Choisy. Il faut que je l'aie trouvé si fort à mon goût, que j'aie cru qu'il était mon ami de tout temps et que mes amis ne l'ignoraient pas."

They maintained a regular correspondence during the years 1671 and 1672, and then again from 1687 to 1692, during which time Choisy kept Bussy informed of life at court.²

In the course of the following year, 1672, Choisy had his first and only experience of war. As he says, "Ma profession me dispensait de faire la guerre", but he nevertheless presented himself as a spectator in 1672 at the "Passage du Rhin", as the guest of the Cardinal de Bouillon. He speaks of this in his Mémoires:

"J'y étais présent, et même j'eus le plaisir de faire ce jour-là une chose fort agréable au Roi: je lui fis entendre la messe."

In fact he only served the King's mass as he had not yet been ordained.

It was on this occasion that he first seems to have been moved by the death of a friend:

"J'étais ami très particulier de M. de Longueville. [...] Nous attendions à tout moment des nouvelles de Pologne, et, selon les apparences, il en devait être bientôt roi; [...] deux heures après je vis, oui je vis de mes propres yeux,

1. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, II, 11-12.

2. See Trolliet, "Bussy-Rabutin et ses correspondants" in Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la langue et de la littérature françaises, (Paris, 1896-1900), V, 609, 620..

3. Mémoires, p.32.

le corps mort de M. de Longueville; [...] je ne crois pas avoir jamais été ni pouvoir jamais être aussi touché que je le fus."¹

This sudden awareness of death is perhaps the very first sign of the conversion that was to follow several years later, but not until he had once again sunk into oblivious dissipation. He makes no reference, however, to the death of his brother which occurred later the same year. We learn from a letter written by Mme de Scudéry to Bussy-Rabutin, that "son frère B*** [Pierre de Balleroy] est mort: il a été tué par des paysans, retournant du quartier de M. de Turenne à son quartier."²

After his experiences on the battlefield, Choisy spent some time travelling with the Cardinal de Bouillon, but had returned to Paris by September 1672. Mme de Scudéry mentions this in a letter to Bussy-Rabutin,³ but neither she nor the abbé himself indicates where his journey had taken him. His friendship with Bouillon was lifelong if stormy; the story of their first meeting is recorded in the Mémoires.⁴ Choisy's last letter to Bussy-Rabutin before a break of fifteen years is dated 13 September 1672, but in it he speaks neither of his activities during that year, nor of his plans for the future.

At this stage a sudden and violent disruption in his life caused him to flee more conventional society, and seek refuge in the country near Bourges. Although Bussy-Rabutin

1. Mémoires, p.33.

2. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, II, 179.

3. *ibid.*, II, 171.

4. Mémoires, p.26.

and his correspondents do not speak of Choisy's dressing as a woman, he had apparently not reformed his behaviour, at least in Parisian circles. An abrupt but not altogether unexpected attack on his dress by the duc de Montausier had a strong psychological effect on him, as is seen from the relevant pages of the Mémoires/femme where he writes, obviously still feeling some resentment:

"Rabatjoie arriva; M. de Montausier venait de ses visites. [...] Il me considéra quelque temps et puis me dit:

—J'avoue, madame, ou mademoiselle (je ne sais pas comment il faut vous appeler), j'avoue que vous êtes belle, mais en vérité n'avez-vous point de honte de porter un pareil habillement et de faire la femme, puisque vous êtes assez heureux pour ne l'être pas?"¹

Choisy's mortification was complete, and his immediate reaction was to give up all hope of ever dressing as a woman again, but his obsession proved too strong to resist, and he took the only course open to him:

"Je pris le parti d'aller demeurer trois ou quatre ans dans une province où je ne serais point connue [sic],² et où je pourrais faire la belle tant qu'il me plairait."

So, probably towards the end of 1672, he began a second attempt at transvestite 'family' life, this time at Crespon,

1. Mémoires/femme, p.326.

2. *ibid.*, p.327.

near Bourges,¹ having assumed the title of "comtesse des Barres". This episode forms the second major section of the Mémoires/femme, and in it he recounts with incredible candour his succession of "aventures en travesti". They in no way diminished his virility, though, and his last conquest, an actress named Rosélie caused him much embarrassment by her pregnancy in 1674. On account of this they returned to Paris the following year, where Choisy married her to an actor named Rosan.²

In 1675, he was appointed Prieur de Saint-Lô de Rouen, but took little interest in his appointment, letting the priory fall into complete disrepair.³ Despite all the trouble it caused him, Choisy persisted in his perversion for at least another year - "l'envie d'être belle me reprit avec fureur" - but in 1676 he again left France for Italy, this time in the company of the Cardinal de Bouillon. During the same year he gave up the bénéfice of his abbey at

1. There is apparently no village of this name in the region, and all the proper names in Choisy's account have been changed. The Archiviste Départemental du Cher has sent me a photocopy of various proceedings concerning the identity of Crespon, taken from the Archives du Cher (2 F 591), and the "Rapport du secrétaire" (1921) in the Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires du Centre, XL (1922), p.xviii. These establish, on the evidence of local historians and tradition, the whereabouts of Crespon as Vouzay, a village near Bourges. As to the name itself, Choisy probably borrowed this from the village of Crespon in Normandy, not far from Balleroy.
2. See Mémoires/femme, p.359.
3. See L. de Glanville, Histoire du Prieuré de Saint-Lô de Rouen, (Rouen, 1890), 2 vols, esp. I, 337 and II under entry "Aclou".

Saint-Seine.¹ The journey to Italy is one of the events of his life most easily verified by some knowledge of the contemporary situation. He writes in his Mémoires:

"M. le Cardinal de Bouillon, après avoir pris congé du Roi pour aller au conclave où fut élu Odescalchi, dit Innocent XI, me demanda en badinant si je voulais venir à Rome être son conclaviste: je lui dis que cela me ferait grand plaisir."²

Choisy started to learn Italian, and they set off for Rome, but on arrival, he found the Cardinal de Bouillon secretive and unwilling to take him into his confidence: "Quand nous fûmes entrés au conclave, je me trouvai fort déconcerté".³ Fortunately the Cardinal de Retz was more forthcoming and made Choisy "conclaviste général des cardinaux français". Upon discovering that Odescalchi had been elected Pope, Choisy made himself rather conspicuous by his premature enthusiasm:

"Je me jetai aux pieds d'Odescalchi, en disant: O! baciato il primo gli piedi di Vostra Santità. Il me répondit 'Non è ancora'. Mais il me⁴ parut qu'il n'était pas indifférent à cette nouvelle."

Thereafter, until 1682, Choisy literally disappeared. No letters can be found, he says nothing in his Mémoires about what he was doing, and his contemporaries make no

1. We have few details of Choisy's abbacy. The Archiviste départemental of the Côte d'Or informs me that all documentation on Saint-Seine was destroyed during the Revolution.

2. Mémoires, p.257.

3. *ibid.*, p.257.

4. *ibid.*, p.258.

mention of him either. It could be concluded from a passing reference by Courtilz de Sandras that he was in Turin¹ and indeed he probably remained in Italy some of the time. None of his later biographers supplies any documented information although we do know that he had returned to France and to court life by 1682, as he says in his Mémoires that he was present at the birth of the duc de Bourgogne that year.²

Desnoiresterres³ says that Choisy was concerned with the petit concile, founded by Bossuet in 1673 to discuss topics of theological interest. This group met regularly under Bossuet's guidance until he became Bishop of Meaux in 1681. Desnoiresterres' evidence is very weak, though, as he apparently bases his argument on the fact that Choisy mentions in his Histoire de l'Eglise⁴ that he knew Bossuet at the time when he was beginning to learn Hebrew, and this would indeed be in the 1670's. However, neither Bossuet himself nor any members of the group refer to Choisy in this context, and in the biographies of Bossuet where the petit concile is mentioned, Choisy's name does not appear on the list of members. He certainly became friendly with Bossuet later, and may have been an occasional visitor to the petit concile, but no more, since if he had been a member, he would almost certainly have mentioned it in the Eloge de Bossuet.⁵

1. G. Courtilz de Sandras, Annales de la Cour et de Paris, (Cologne, 1708), I, 11 - a notoriously unreliable work.

2. Mémoires, p.110.

3. E. et L., p.71.

4. Histoire de l'Eglise, (Paris, 1705), III, 10-11.

5. See p.37 of this thesis.

The years 1683 to 1685 represent the turning point in Choisy's life, and we can trace his evolution during this time in the Mémoires, the Quatre dialogues, and the Journal du voyage de Siam.

The principal stages are as follows:

The death of the queen, Marie-Thérèse in 1683 "m'avait fait faire à peine quelques réflexions, quand tout d'un coup je me sentis accablé par une fièvre violente. Mes forces, au bout de trois jours, furent perdues, mon cœur abattu".¹

Faced, as he thought, with imminent death, the religious conviction which he had been building up intellectually, suddenly took on a new emotional force. "Je me sentis bien ferme dans la résolution de me convertir si je revenais en santé."² The story of the development of his religious consciousness and of his eventual commitment is told in the Quatre dialogues, which appeared in 1684, and of which he was the co-author with the abbé de Langeau, brother of the journaliste.

Sent to the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères to recover from what had indeed been a grave illness, Choisy's thoughts turned to the conversion of others, and this was to lead to what was certainly the most amazing decision in a life full of sudden and strange impulses, namely to go to Siam as a missionary.

He describes how he reached this decision in his Mémoires:

"J'étais tranquille dans le séminaire des Missions Etrangères, lorsque Bergeret [...], mon ancien ami, m'y vint voir. Il me conta dans la conversation [...] qu'on parlait d'envoyer un ambassadeur au Roi de Siam, pour lui proposer de se faire

1. Abbé de Choisy and abbé de Langeau, Quatre dialogues, (Paris, 1684), p.214.

2. *ibid.*, p.221.

chrétien; qu'il y avait beaucoup de disposition et que c'était là un emploi digne d'un ecclésiastique habile et zélé. Il me dit qu'il me conseillait d'y songer. [...] Il n'en fallut pas davantage pour me mettre dans le cœur l'ambition apostolique d'aller au bout du monde convertir un grand royaume."

Filled with this naive enthusiasm, Choisy asked the Cardinal de Bouillon to propose him as a candidate to Seignelay, then secrétaire d'Etat responsible for the Navy. Unfortunately for Choisy, the chevalier de Chaumont had already been appointed as ambassador, but he insisted, and so was appointed "coadjuteur d'ambassade", a post created specially for him. The preparations were made, and l'Oiseau set sail from Brest on 3 March 1685, with the abbé de Choisy on board. Madame de Coligny wrote, full of admiration, to Bussy-Rabutin to tell him the news.² Others took a more cynical view of his zeal. Segrais wrote:

"Choisy, converti par Dangeau,
S'en va prêcher jusqu'en la Chine,
Il part chrétien et fort dévot;
Mais je jugerais à sa mine,
S'il trouve un Dangeau à Siam,
Qu'il en revient mahométan."³

Nevertheless on 24 September 1685, they arrived in Siam, where they stayed for three months, beginning the return journey to France on 22 December. Before leaving, Choisy had been ordained priest by the Bishop of Metellopolis⁴ on

1. Mémoires, pp.142-143.
2. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, V, 418. See also Cabinet des Titres, Nouveau d'Hozier, 97, entry 1949, f.2-3.
3. Oeuvres diverses, (Amsterdam, 1723), I, 38-39.
4. See Ch.III, p.118 of this thesis, and Launay, Mémorial de la Société des Missions Etrangères, (Paris, 1912), II, 356-9.

10 December having been made a deacon the previous day. He said his first mass on board ship on 6 January 1686, and preached his first sermon on 3 March.

L'Oiseau arrived in Brest probably late in May 1686. Choisy and Chaumont both give their date of return as 18 June, but secondary evidence suggests that this was not in fact when they arrived. Souches mentions their presence at court on 2 June¹ and Madame de Scudéry in a letter to Bussy-Rabutin as early as 23 May speaks of the return of Choisy and the Siamese ambassadors. Bussy replies quite specifically to this and another letter on 27 May, mentioning Choisy's return. It is possible that one of these letters could be wrongly dated, but unlikely that they should all be. It is, however, very probable that Choisy and Chaumont had not taken into account the time changes during their journey. This is what we must assume, as otherwise it is impossible to explain the discrepancy.

Whenever they in fact arrived, their reception at Versailles was enthusiastic. Madame de Scudéry writes:

"Dieu sait comme l'on court l'abbé de Choisy, pour le faire conter tout ce qu'il sait."²

and Choisy himself confirms this:

"Il [Chaumont] arriva le premier à la cour, comme de raison: j'y arrivai trois jours après. On nous entourait comme des ours."³

1. Souches, Mémoires, (Paris, 1882-1893), I, 400.

2. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, V, 558.

3. Mémoires, p.150.

Choisy's own return to the court was marred by two unfortunate incidents the first of which concerned the Cardinal de Bouillon, who had incurred Louis' disfavour by his extravagances, his over-familiarity, and his diplomatic blunders. Choisy relates in his Mémoires how he learned on returning to Brest of the exile of Bouillon; unfortunately he had already asked the King of Siam, in all innocence, to send presents to the Cardinal, and Louis was predictably furious on learning this. Choisy had a disastrous audience with him trying to explain that he had acted in good faith:

"Sire, lui répliquai-je, [...], je ne pouvais pas deviner que M. le Cardinal de Bouillon serait assez malheureux pour vous déplaire: Votre Majesté venait de lui donner l'Abbaye de Cluny.

Cela suffit, me dit-il en me tournant le dos; et je sortis du cabinet."

He took this rebuke with remarkable equanimity, and his immediate reaction says much for the sincerity of his conversion:

"Je m'en allai à Paris m'enfermer dans mon séminaire, où une demi-heure d'oraison devant le saint-sacrement me fit bientôt oublier tout ce qui venait de m'arriver."²

It was in his interest, however, to remain in the King's favour, and with the help of the père de la Chaise he made his peace with Louis. Soon afterwards he dedicated his Vie de David to the King, and thereafter continued to grow in

1. Mémoires, p.151.

2. *ibid.*, p.152.

his esteem:

"Six mois après, je présentai au Roi la Vie de David et les Psaumes, qu'il reçut fort agréablement. J'en eus obligation au père de la Chaise, qui lui avait parlé en ma faveur; [...] Sa Majesté avait bien connu que je n'avais pas grand tort; [...] l'année suivante, il me permit d'aller voir le Cardinal, qui était à Tarascon fort malade."

Another trivial incident had followed Choisy's arrival at court, but this time it was Louvois who was apparently at fault. On the occasion of the Siamese ambassadors being presented to the King, the presents were laid out in the "salon au bout de la galerie".

"M. de Louvois, qui n'estimait pas beaucoup les choses où il n'avait point de part, les méprisait extrêmement. 'M. l'abbé, me dit-il en passant, tout ce que vous avez apporté là vaut-il bien quinze cents pistoles?'

'Je n'en sais rien, monsieur, lui répondis-je le plus haut que je pus, afin qu'on m'entendît; mais je sais fort bien qu'il y a pour plus de vingt mille écus d'or pesant, sans compter les façons; et je ne dis rien des cabinets du Japon, des paravents, des porcelaines.'"²

On this occasion, Choisy seems to have won the argument.

From 1686, then, until his death nearly forty years later, Choisy devoted himself to literary activity, and the second part of his life was, by and large, as uneventful as the first had been irregular and frenetic. The whole of his large output appeared during these years, and he was active until the year before his death in 1724.

1. Mémoires, p.152.

2. *ibid.*, p.153.

The Journal du voyage de Siam appeared in 1687.¹ In the same year he was elected a member of the Académie Française, on the death of the duc de Saint-Aignan, and he pronounced a discours de réception on 25 August. Bussy-Rabutin wrote him a letter of congratulation, and so correspondence started between them again:

"Je vous assure que mon estime pour vous n'est pas moindre que mon amitié et que je serai toujours à vous du meilleur de mon cœur."²

and Racine wrote a rather patronising letter to Boileau:

"Il [Choisy] fut reçu sans opposition; [...] Il fera, le jour de saint Louis sa harangue, qu'il m'a montrée. Il y a quelques endroits d'esprit; je lui ai fait ôter quelques fautes de jugement."³

The Interprétation des Psaumes avec la Vie de David and the Vie de Salomon both dedicated to the King, appeared before the end of the year. In 1688 the Pensées chrétiennes, the first 'devotional' work, and the Histoires de Philippe de Valois et du Roi Jean, the first in a series of popularizing historical studies, were published in Paris. Two more historical works, the Vie de Saint Louis and the Histoire de Charles Cinquième, Roi de France appeared in 1689. The same

1. D'Olivet gives 1686 as the date of publication of the work (Vie, p.241) and an MS note in the 1741 edition in the Bodleian supports this (Bod. Vet. B4 f.90). No copies of this edition have come to light, however, and it could merely be that a mistake of d'Olivet has been copied. See Bibliography, p.331.
2. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, VI, 92.
3. Racine, Oeuvres complètes, ed. R. Picard, (Paris, 1950-1952), II, 482.

year the abbé de Choisy became Prior of Saint-Benoît-du-Sault:

"L'abbé de Bélesbat a donné à l'abbé de Choisy, son neveu, le prieuré de Saint-Benoît, sur les frontières du Berry et du Poitou; c'est un bénéfice qui vaut six ou sept mille livres de rente."

but he sold it in 1692 to the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères.² In 1690 the Interprétation des Psaumes was republished as an individual work in Paris. In the same year the members of the Académie Française were received in audience by Louis XIV. Bussy wrote to the comtesse de Toulangeon:

"Nous allâmes dans une chambre, où MM. de l'Académie, avec Saintôt, maître des cérémonies, attendaient qu'on les vînt prendre pour aller à l'audience. Nous marchâmes donc, deux à deux, chacun selon son rang d'ancienneté; [...] le troisième [rang] Pellisson et moi, et le reste parmi lesquels étaient Langeau, l'abbé son frère et l'abbé de Choisy."

Between 1690 and 1692, Choisy and Bussy-Rabutin corresponded regularly and amicably. Although Choisy's letters to him are largely concerned with events at court, and tell us little about their writer, this is the largest single series of correspondence that has been published.⁴ 1692 saw the

1. Langeau, Journal, (Paris, 1854), II, 382.
2. See Fauconneau-Dufresne, "Abbaye ou Prévôté de Saint-Benoît-du-Sault" in Le Bas Berry, (1876). (Archives départementales de l'Indre.)
3. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, VI, 331.
4. I have not been able to trace the manuscripts either of these letters or of the earlier series, cf. this thesis, p.35.

foundation of a small and learned society called the Académie du Luxembourg, of which Choisy was the founder and secretary,¹ and the publication of his new translation of the Imitation of Christ. Bussy-Rabutin died the following year. The next volume in the series on the history of France, the Histoire de Charles VI, roi de France, appeared in 1695, and he probably also began his Mémoires (published posthumously) at about this time.²

By 1696 Choisy was again in debt, and unable to pay the Missions Etrangères what he owed them for the room he had in the rue du Bac (he was still living at the Palais du Luxembourg at the time).³ The following year he was elected forty-fifth grand-doyen of Bayeux, amidst much pomp.⁴ This earned him "quatre ou cinq mille livres de rente" according to Dangeau,⁵ but only on condition of residence, and he renounced the post in 1699. His elder brother Jean-Paul de Choisy died in 1697, and in the same year Choisy produced the first volume of the Histoires de piété et de morale. His financial situation remained unsound, and in 1700 he sold Balleroy to Françoise de Brancas, princesse d'Harcourt, making a profit of 50,000 écus. He wrote to Pontchartrain

1. See also Chapter VII, p.295.

2. Mémoires, p.35.

3. Missions Etrangères, MSS Vol.II, pp.345-346.

4. For a detailed account of his election and the ceremony at the reception, see M. Béziers, Mémoires du diocèse de Bayeux, (Rouen, 1894-1896), I, 373-374.

5. Dangeau, Journal, (Paris, 1854-1860), VI, 109.

about his newly acquired assets:

"Je suis présentement en état de donner cinquante mille écus à qui me plaira. Je vous vois venir, Monseigneur: 'Il ne les donnera pas, il les mangera bien'. J'avoue que la pensée est fort naturelle."¹

A few manuscript letters dating from 1700 to 1704 remain in a private collection;² these deal mostly with financial affairs and transactions in which Choisy was involved around this period, and are largely concerned with Balleroy. The property was never in fact occupied by the princesse d'Harcourt, but returned into the hands of the Caumartin family.³

We have no means of knowing whether Choisy completely reformed his behaviour in later years: d'Argenson who saw him in the last few years of his life suggests that he no longer felt the need to dress as a woman, although presumably his character had been permanently affected by his previous excesses:

"Il se sentait toujours de l'éducation efféminée qu'il avait reçue, et n'étant plus d'âge de s'habiller en femme, il ne s'est jamais trouvé capable de penser en homme."⁴

1. B.M. MSS Egerton 18, No.167 Choisy-Pontchartrain, 7 May 1700. Segrais remarks: "Il faut que Monsieur l'abbé de Choisy ait une grande démangeaison de devenir un Jean sans terre avant que de mourir, d'avoir vendu, comme il vient de faire, la terre de Balleroy, qui vaut au moins présentement vingt-deux mille livres". Oeuvres diverses, (Amsterdam, 1723), I, 233.
2. The letters in question are reproduced in Appendix II. They form part of the personal archives of M. and Mme Hubert Bénédict of Balleroy.
3. See Barthélemy, Les Correspondants de la Marquise de Balleroy, (Paris, 1883), t.I, Introduction, pp.lxx-lx.
4. D'Argenson, Loisirs d'un Ministre ou Essais..., (Liège, 1787), II, 85. I shall refer to this work throughout the thesis as Loisirs.

D'Olivet does not agree with d'Argenson:

"On l'a vu presque dans la¹ vieillesse et même jusqu'à la mort habillé de cette manière."

As d'Olivet seems so vague, however - the two phrases "presque dans la vieillesse" and "même jusqu'à la mort" contradict each other - we are perhaps entitled to believe d'Argenson, who saw him frequently at this stage, and so give Choisy the benefit of the doubt.²

His passion for gambling did not diminish, though, to judge from his debts. As Segrais pointed out, it was a fault that he had inherited from his mother:

"Madame de Choisy, qui jouait, n'osait pas dire à Monsieur l'abbé de Choisy son fils de ne pas jouer, parce qu'elle jouait elle-même; c'est pour cela qu'elle me priait de lui en parler, et de tâcher de le détourner du jeu; elle avait raison, car l'abbé aurait pu lui dire: Et vous, ne jouez-vous pas?"³

In 1703 the first volume of the Histoire de l'Eglise appeared. This monumental work was to occupy him for the rest of his life, the eleventh and last volume appearing in 1723. Choisy was sixty when he undertook this study, and

1. D'Olivet, Vie, p.14.

2. Madame de Maintenon wrote in 1698 to Madame de Fontaney: "J'ai vu l'abbé de Choisy, et l'ai vu si raisonnable, que, comparé à ce qu'il était autrefois, il y a plaisir à le voir". Lettres, ed. Langlois, (Paris, 1933-1939), V, 314. See also n.1259.

3. Oeuvres diverses, (Amsterdam, 1723), I, 178.

showed great tenacity for a man of his age. Some volumes obviously caused him more trouble than others, as we see from the length of time it took him to produce them (six years between Volumes IV and V for example).

In 1704, he pronounced an Eloge de messire Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet at the Académie Française, on the occasion of the reception of the abbé de Polignac; in it, Choisy makes it clear that it was Bossuet who had encouraged him to work on an Histoire de l'Eglise:

"Oserais-je ajouter l'engagement où je me trouve de son aveu, par son conseil, de travailler selon mes forces à l'Histoire de l'Eglise."

In 1706, the Vie de Madame de Miramion, a spiritual biography based on her letters, appeared, although he had in fact composed it ten years earlier.

In 1708, he spent some time at La Ferté-Vidame, with the Cardinal de Bouillon and Saint-Simon. The latter writes, speaking first of Bouillon:

"Il revint donc à la Ferté, où je ne lui envoyai personne pour le recevoir, pour ne pas excéder dans ce qui ne devait être qu'hospitalité à un exilé de sa sorte. Il y montra autant de faiblesse sur sa santé que sur sa fortune [...]. Il y fut visité de quelques gens d'affaires. L'abbé de Choisy [...] était de ses amis de tous les temps. Il passait plusieurs jours à la Ferté, d'où il fit un voyage à Chartres."²

He was a faithful friend to the ageing and infirm Bouillon, who wrote rather pathetically to him in 1709 asking if he would come and live with him so that they might spend together "avec plus de repos et de tranquillité le peu de

1. Eloge de Bossuet, in Recueil de l'Académie Française, (1704), p.205.

2. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, Pléiade, (Paris, 1962), II, 1063-1064.

vie qui nous reste".¹ Choisy declined his invitation, though, and continued to live at the Palais du Luxembourg.²

The collection of Histoires de piété appeared in 1710, and he again spoke at the Académie Française that year, on 25 September. In 1716, he was granted a royal pension of 2,000 écus.³ During his late sixties and seventies he regularly produced volumes of the Histoire de l'Eglise, and from the lack of much other writing, we may judge that it cost him a considerable effort. By 1723, he had finished it, despite age and ill health, and is reported by d'Alembert to have said "J'ai achevé, grâce à Dieu, l'Histoire de l'Eglise; je vais présentement me mettre à l'étudier."⁴

Early that year his great friend the abbé de Dangeau had died; Choisy made his last appearance at the Académie Française in November 1723, to welcome another friend, his future biographer the abbé d'Olivet. His Discours was brief, and followed by a night of fever. He survived another year, however, and died on 2 October 1724 at the age of eighty. The Académie Française reported:

"L'Académie apprend avec douleur la mort de Monsieur l'abbé de Choisy, son doyen, arrivée ce matin. Nous le regrettons d'autant plus qu'il joignait beaucoup de douceur à beaucoup

1. B.M. MSS Egerton, vol. XVII Bouillon-Choisy.

2. Madame de Caylus writes from the Palais du Luxembourg some time after 1714: "Mon habitation est commode et si séparée que je ne crois pas que je puisse jamais m'apercevoir du voisinage, surtout si l'on me laisse l'abbé de Choisy dont le train et la personne ne ressemblent à rien de ce qu'on voit dans ce nouveau monde". (Correspondance, (Paris, 1881), Letter XLIX, p.255) This remark would suggest that Choisy had by this stage begun to reject contemporary behaviour - probably owing to the excesses of the Regency.

3. See Dangeau, Journal, XVI, 297.

4. D'Alembert, Histoire des Membres de l'Académie française, (Paris, 1787), I, 337.

d'esprit naturel et à beaucoup de connaissances acquises dans la lecture et dans les voyages."

He is supposed to have prayed as he lay dying - "Delicta juventutis meae et ignorantias meas ne memineris; Ne vous ressouvenez point des égarements et des erreurs de ma jeunesse."²

Choisy's literary executor was the Marquis d'Argenson. He noted on the manuscripts which are now in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal the following remarks:

"Ces ouvrages de l'abbé de Choisy m'ont été remis après sa mort et sont tirés d'une quantité de papiers inutiles qu'il avait négligés. J'ai rangé en ordre ce qui m'a paru bon ou passable.

Mon dessein était qu'ils ne sortissent point de mon cabinet; mais parmi quelques personnes à qui je n'ai pu refuser d'en donner lecture, il y en a eu qui ont pris sur elles à mon insu de donner au public la plus grande partie de ces mémoires, dont ceci est donc l'original.

L'abbé d'Olivet, son ami croit que l'auteur avait fait ces 'Mémoires pour l'histoire de Louis XIV' et qu'il brûla un an avant que de mourir ce qui en manque ici."³

The first work to be published posthumously was the Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Louis XIV, of which the first edition appeared in 1727; it was revised and reprinted

1. Registres de l'Académie Française, 2 October 1724, in J. Méliat, L'Etrange Existence de l'abbé de Choisy, (Mercure de France, CXL (1920), p.123).
2. D'Alembert, Histoire des Membres de l'Académie Française, (Paris, 1787), I, 316.
3. Arsenal MSS 3186.

later in the eighteenth century, as well as in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹ The first complete edition of the Mémoires/femme did not appear until 1862 (ed. Paul Lacroix), although separate parts had been published earlier (the Histoire de la comtesse des Barres in 1735 (Antwerp)² and Madame de Sancy in the Notice to the Michaud and Poujoulat edition of the Mémoires (1839)). The first edition to include the Mémoires and the Mémoires/femme in one volume is that of Mongrédien, 1966. The only other work to survive into a twentieth-century edition is the Journal du voyage de Siam. This work was reprinted once during the eighteenth century, but forgotten during the nineteenth. Most of the other works ran to one, perhaps two editions, with the notable exception of the Histoire de l'Eglise, of which no less than five editions appeared during the first half of the eighteenth century. There were also some collective editions of works previously published separately, such as the Histoire de France sous les règnes de Saint-Louis, de Philippe de Valois, du Roi Jean, de Charles V et de Charles VI, (Paris, 1750), which merely incorporated all Choisy's historical works into a four-volume set. An isolated edition of the Vie de Madame de Miramion appeared in 1838.

In addition to these works, and those mentioned in the first part of this chapter, there are a number of works of disputed authorship or later attribution. The abbé de Choisy is certainly the author of the Journal de l'Académie Française,

1. For further bibliographical details on the Mémoires and Mémoires/femme see this thesis Chapters V and VI and also Bibliography.
2. This version is incomplete, however, see d'Argenson, Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 124-125.

which appeared in the collection of Opuscles sur la langue française par divers Académiciens in 1754.¹

The work now incorporated in the Mémoires known as the Mémoires pour la vie du Cardinal de Bouillon is Choisy's only biographical work on this figure. The Apologie de Son Eminence le Cardinal de Bouillon is falsely attributed to him, doubtless because of similarity of title, and also because of an erroneous later addition to the Arsenal manuscript which reads: "Imprimé séparément, 1706" - the year in which the Apologie appeared. Choisy speaks of this latter work in the text of the Mémoires, and since his aim is to contradict the author, it seems hardly likely that he wrote it himself. He goes on to say that although he admires the style of the author, "j'y ai remarqué beaucoup de faits ou faux ou altérés". Barbier² reaches the same conclusions and attributes the work to the abbé d'Amfreville. In the edition in the Bibliothèque Nationale there is a manuscript note to this effect.³

It is likely however that Choisy was the author of a now very rare work on the genealogy of the house of Bouillon. Lorient⁴ is of this opinion, and the conclusion reached by Choisy in a discussion of the topic in his Mémoires⁵ - that Bouillon was in fact descended from Géraud de la Tour, and so from the ducs d'Aquitaine - is the same as that given in the

1. See Chapter VII, p.293.

2. Dictionnaire des Anonymes, I, 246.

3. B.N. Ln 27/2635.

4. Lorient, L'Affaire de la Maison d'Auvergne, (Rheims, 1870), p.21, n.1. cf. Lelong, Bibliothèque historique de la France, (1768-1778), III, 32270.

5. Mémoires, p.221.

"Réponse aux remarques faites contre les titres nouvellement recouvrés sur l'origine de la Maison de la Tour d'Auvergne". On the only known copy of the only edition of this work, in pamphlet form in the Bibliothèque Nationale, there is a manuscript addition beneath the title - "par M. l'abbé de Choisy".¹ It is a work of little consequence, however, and is undated, but probably appeared sometime after 1708, the date of the publication of Baluze's Histoire généalogique de la Maison d'Auvergne, which is mentioned in the text.

It is more difficult to ascertain the authorship of two other works attributed to Choisy. Le Prince Kouchimen et Dom Alvar del Sol² appeared together in 1710, and are attributed to Choisy, although secondary evidence in fact suggests that they are not by him. The author of the stories tries in the Avertissement to create some ambiguity over his sex, and this is indeed typical of Choisy. As we read on, however, he reveals more about himself:

"J'ai longtemps servi le Grand Kam en qualité de son principal Ingénieur, et [...] j'ai passé plusieurs années de ma vie avec le Prince Kouchimen. . . ."

"Je ne connais point l'usage des belles paroles et sans vanité je me servirais mieux d'une épée que d'une plume."³

Even allowing for modesty, this is in no way true of Choisy, whose one means of self-defence was verbal - he says in the Journal du voyage de Siam, that he is "aussi aise quand j'ai la plume à la main, que quand M. le Prince y a

1. B.N. MSS Collection Clairambault, 915, f. 131.

2. Le Prince Kouchimen, Histoire Tartare, et Dom Alvar del Sol, Histoire Napolitaine, (Paris, 1710).

3. *ibid.*, Avertissement.

son épée".¹ Barbier suggests that the author was indeed a French engineer, called Lambert, and this hypothesis is supported by Bernoulli, who wrote in 1781:

"So weit war Menschikow in seinem Glücksumständen gekommen, als ein französischer Offizier, Namens Joseph Gaspar Lambert, der sich für ein Ingenieur ausgab, und im Jahre 1706 zu Gencève aus russischen Diensten entlaufen war, sich gelüsten liess, ein Büchelchen voller Unwahrheiten unter dem Titel Histoire du Prince Kouchimen,² der Titel sagt, zu Paris, 1710, 12. in den Druck zu geben."

La Nouvelle Astrée presents similar problems - Contant d'Orville attributed this shortened version of d'Urfé's L'Astrée to Choisy.³ The dedication mentions the author as being a "personne du beau sexe". In the Avertissement he or she concludes:

"L'accueil favorable que vous avez fait à quelques bagatelles qui me sont échappées m'a enhardi à vous faire ce petit présent."⁴

Even taking Choisy's strange mentality into account, this does seem an unlikely opening for someone whose output was already considerable, and who had just written volumes V and VI of the Histoire de l'Église. This evidence is in no way

1. Journal, (Paris, 1687), p.61.
2. Barbier, vol.VI, p.1023. See Bernoulli, Sammlung kurzer Reisenbeschreibungen, (Berlin, 1781), I, 295. Kouchimen is an anagram of Menschikow; the work appeared as the Histoire de l'origine du Prince Menzikow, in Amsterdam, 1728.
3. Contant d'Orville, Mélanges tirés d'une grande Bibliothèque, (Paris, 1779), II, 60.
4. La Nouvelle Astrée, (Paris, 1713), Avertissement.

conclusive, but given his dislike of fairy tales and fantastic literature¹ it would be surprising if he were responsible for this work. I will discuss the much-debated authorship of another semi-fictional work, the Histoire de la Marquise/Marquis de Banneville in the context of the chapter on the Mémoires/femme.

Most of the remainder of Choisy's manuscript material was published by Jean Mélia in 1922, in a collection of "inédits et belles pages".² This contains: the "sottisier ou recueil de chansons" - though not in its entirety - certain of the "chansons" remained unpublished because of their fragmentary nature, or quite simply because Mélia considered them unprintable; the Recueil de Bons Mots, a collection of epigrams (of which three had already been published in the 1828 edition of the Mémoires) - also incomplete for the same reasons; three trivial stories, the Histoire de la Princesse Aimonette, the Histoire turque, and the Abbé de Saze, of which the latter is not by Choisy but by the marquise de Simiane;³ and the Journal de l'Académie du Luxembourg, which again Mélia does not publish in its entirety.

Of the manuscripts only the Recueil de chansons is in Choisy's own hand, the other manuscripts in the Arsenal and the Bibliothèque Nationale being in a variety of different hands. A "Fragment touchant l'état de la cour en décembre 1720" offers little of interest, and is still unpublished.⁴

1. See this thesis, Chapter IV, p. 183.

2. Jean Mélia, Inédits et belles pages de l'abbé de Choisy, (Paris, 1922).

3. See Lelong, Bibliothèque historique, (1768-1778), IV, 11, 464.

4. Arsenal MSS 3187, p. 375.

A so-called "Lettre de Choisy" - in fact not addressed to anyone in particular - in the Archives des Missions Etrangères,¹ written on board l'Oiseau on 1 January 1686, provides an important link between the Mémoires and the Journal du voyage de Siam.² It was published in its entirety in 1920 in Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Siam. The manuscript is in Choisy's own hand.

There is also an unpublished and quite unimportant fragment in the Bibliothèque Nationale, entitled "Mémoire pour M. l'abbé de Choisy allant en Normandie".³ As the collection of which it forms a part is the second volume of the "Collection Dangeau" it is probably in fact by the abbé de Dangeau, and takes the form of a questionnaire obviously intended to be answered on one of Choisy's visits to Normandy. The work is incomplete - and most of the questions unanswered.

Three obviously false attributions in library catalogues should be mentioned in conclusion. The "Remontrance du Parlement de Bretagne"⁴ which is supposed to be "de la main de l'abbé de Choisy" is neither connected with him nor written by him. The handwriting is completely different from his, and no mention is made of him in the text; as he at no stage had any connexions with the Parlement de Bretagne, it is quite clear that this is an erroneous entry. Another obviously false attribution is in the Bodleian catalogue, and concerns a "Mandement portant condamnation ..." published in Caen in 1707.⁵ It is in fact by the then Bishop of Bayeux, who signs

1. Vol.VIII, pp.1-35.

2. See this thesis Chapter III, p.99.

3. B.N. MSS fonds français, 22 613 f.121 ff.

4. B.N. MSS fonds français, 10 207 f.24.

5. Oxford, Bodleian library, shelfmark 3.Δ.494 no.18.

the text as Mgr Moussard. Finally the Histoire des Psaumes, which is attributed to him in the Catalogue des Manuscrits of the Bibliothèque Mazarine (Vol.I MSS 328-329), is almost certainly not by him. Neither he nor his biographers mention it at any point, and the justification for the attribution, merely a similarity of titles, is not backed up by any documentary evidence.

The first work devoted to the abbé de Choisy appeared in 1742, anonymously. It is generally attributed to the abbé d'Olivet, at whose reception into the Académie Française in November 1723 Choisy had pronounced his last discours. As it was d'Olivet who, according to d'Argenson, had had access to the manuscripts at this time, and who had published the Mémoires in 1727, it seems likely that he was in fact the author of this Vie de M. l'abbé de Choisy, de l'Académie Française (Lausanne and Geneva),¹ of which the first part is based entirely on the Mémoires and the Mémoires/femme. The author is occasionally rather embarrassed by the subject of his biography, and much of what he writes consists merely of passages from the Mémoires and Mémoires/femme transcribed into the third person. He does make some critical comments in the last section.

D'Argenson, Choisy's literary executor, devotes a part of his Loisirs to a discussion of him, and of the manuscripts he left,² and d'Alembert, too, includes him in his Histoire des Membres de l'Académie Française.³ He introduces a rather moralizing tone, however, and avoids speaking of Choisy's transvestite exploits except in the most veiled terms. Both these writers make valuable literary judgements. A curious eighteenth century manuscript work, the Moréri des Normands by the abbé Guiot contains a long article on Choisy, mostly drawn from contemporary critical material.⁴

1. It is in one edition of this work, now very rare (Brit. Mus. Cat. No. G 14,583) that there is a "gravure" of the abbé de Choisy, showing him in his youth and old age. See this thesis, Appendix **IV**.

2. Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, p.84 ff.

3. Paris, 1787, Vol.I, pp.309-342.

4. J.-A. Guiot, Moréri des Normands in Caen, Bibliothèque Municipale, 3 tomes MSS.

The most substantial and scholarly contribution in the field of biography was made a century later by Gustave Desnoiresterres. His chapters on Choisy in Epicuriens et Lettrés, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, (Paris, 1879), are well documented, and he writes as coherent an account of Choisy's life as is possible, given the lack of known facts. It is purely biographical, though, unlike Sainte-Beuve who considers the literary figure as well as the psychological curiosity.¹ No-one has so far attempted a detailed literary appraisal, although Mélia early this century wrote a biography which includes a short but systematic study of the literary output;² he precedes the various chapters of the Inédits et belles pages with critical comments. There is also a certain amount of introductory critical writing on the Mémoires by their more recent editors - Monmerqué (1828), Lescure (1888), and Mongrécien (1966). The various articles on the Journal du voyage de Siam tend to be largely historical in content, and this is true too of Maurice Garçon's introduction to the 1930 edition of the work.

Besides these more substantial works, there are many shorter references to Choisy in both seventeenth and eighteenth century journals and reviews.

The Histoire des ouvrages des Savants of 1687 and 1688 mentions two early works, although none of the later ones is included (probably because of conflicting religious biases). The Journal des Savants contains an article on each of Choisy's major works, written soon after publication, and

1. Causeries du Lundi, (Paris, 1858), III, 428-450.
2. L'Etrange Existence de l'abbé de Choisy, (Paris, 1921) and Mercure de France, CXXIX (1920), pp.305-349, 621-625, CXL (1920), pp.82-125.

includes a commentary with extracts from each volume of the Histoire de l'Eglise.¹ Less complete, but still systematic in their treatment are the Bibliothèque universelle and Lelong's Bibliothèque historique de la France. Bayle discusses the Quatre dialogues and the Journal in the Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, and Voltaire, too, mentions Choisy in the Siècle de Louis XIV.² Lenglet Dufresnoy, the Dictionnaire de Moréri and the Mémoires de Trévoux all give some bibliographical details, and in the nineteenth century, Chaudon and Delandine include a substantial article on him in the Nouveau Dictionnaire historique of 1804.

The Acta Eruditorum for 1688, 1689 and 1728 and the Bibliotheca Historica of Struvius (1782-1802) contain articles on the Mémoires and Journal.

The abbé de Choisy is almost totally unknown outside France, and references to him in English works are very few. A History of the Life and Death of David, an exact translation of his Vie de David, appeared in 1741 in London. English writers who were familiar with his Mémoires must have read them in the original: these would include Henry Kett, who in his Flowers of Wit³ recounts the story of Choisy's retort to Louis XIV's questions about the Siamese language, but since he mistranslates Choisy's answer, the whole point of the anecdote is lost. Boswell reports an amusing conversation

1. For these references, and those in other journals and reviews mentioned on this and the preceding page, see Bibliography, p.356.
2. London, 1753, Vol.II, p.309 ff. He also owned a copy of the Comtesse des Barres and was familiar with the Journal. See T. Besterman's edition of his Correspondance, Letters 1110 and 4424.
3. Rev. H. Kett, Flowers of Wit, Ancient and Modern, (1814), I, 65.

between Dr Johnson and Dr Robertson, in which Robertson reproaches Johnson with the fact that he never went to church in Scotland, whereas Robertson, a Scot, went to church in England. Johnson replies:

"'Why, Sir, that is not so extraordinary: the King of Siam sent ambassadors to Louis the Fourteenth; but Louis the Fourteenth sent none to the King of Siam.'

Here my friend discovered for once a want of knowledge or forgetfulness; for Louis the Fourteenth did send an embassy to the King of Siam, and the Abbé de Choisi who was employed in it, published an account of it in two volumes."¹

There is also a reference to Choisy in Walter Savage Landor's Imaginary Conversations.²

Finally, as will be seen from the bibliography, there are several short articles in modern books, periodicals and journals devoted to various aspects of Choisy's life - but these are mostly superficial - some are inaccurate as well - and primarily concerned either with the scandalous episodes in his life, or with the medical background.³

The establishment of these biographical and bibliographical facts enables us to begin a study of Choisy's output. Unless more manuscript evidence comes to light, it will be difficult to discover new facts about the puzzles in his life, but his works, both major and minor, tell us a great deal about their author and it is on these that we must rely to complete the picture.

1. Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Hill and Powell, (Oxford, 1934), III, 336.

2. London, 1826, Vol.III Conversation XII.

3. For a summary of the latter see this thesis, Ch.VI, p.249, n.1.

CHAPTER II

QUATRE DIALOGUES

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QUATRE DIALOGUES

- (i) Sur l'Immortalité de l'Ame
- (ii) Sur l'Existence de Dieu
- (iii) Sur la Providence
- (iv) Sur la Religion

1. Authorship and presentation

The Quatre dialogues were first published in 1684, and although the work appeared anonymously, it was soon attributed to the joint authorship of the abbé de Choisy and the abbé de Dangeau.¹ Louis de Courcillon, abbé de Dangeau, and brother of the journaliste Philippe, was born into a Protestant family of some standing, from the region of Chartres, in 1643. "[Il] professait encore le protestantisme en 1667, lorsqu'il alla en Pologne en qualité d'envoyé extraordinaire",² but seceded to Rome the following year. He became "lecteur du Roi" in 1671, and was elected to the Académie Française in 1682, where his work was principally orientated towards the reform of spelling and syntax, and where he wrote some learned treatises before his death in 1723.³

Different writers have expressed divergent opinions as to the exact contribution of each author to this surprisingly

1. See Journal des Savants, (1684), pp.318-319.

2. Haag, La France Protestante, 2nd ed. Vol.IV, p.802.

3. See Haag, La France Protestante, 2nd ed. Vol.IV, article Dangeau; the introduction to Manne Ekman's edition of Dangeau's Opuscules sur la grammaire, (Uppsala, 1927), esp. pp.vi and xxiii; the section devoted to him in P. Moucheron, Le Clergé à l'Académie, (1908), pp.120-122 and d'Alembert, Histoire des Membres de l'Académie Française, Vol.I, pp.175-207.

homogeneous work,¹ but a manuscript letter in the Bibliothèque Nationale² establishes more or less irrefutably who was responsible for each part. Its writer, the père Petitot, reporting a conversation he has had with the abbé de Choisy, concludes:

"Il m'a dit que le premier dialogue est entièrement de Monsieur l'abbé de Dangeau-Courcillon, que le second est des deux et que le troisième et quatrième est [sic] de lui seul abbé de Choisy, sans que l'abbé de Dangeau y ait mis la main "

and this distribution corresponds to the main thematic development within the work. Its establishment is of little real importance, however, since the work is made up entirely of reported arguments ("quasi mot à mot"), with each speaker identified in turn, and probably represented a true collaboration.

It takes the form of four semi-independent dialogues, which nevertheless complement each other, between the abbé de Choisy (Timoléon) and the abbé de Langeau (Théophile), preceded by a Préface. The form of the dialogue was one which several of their contemporaries had also used - or were to use.³ Hirzel, in his comprehensive work on the genre,⁴

1. Bayle, Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, in Oeuvres diverses, (The Hague, 1725), I, 99; d'Olivet, Vie, p.86; Barbier, Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes, Vol.III, cols 1122 ff; Chardon de la Rochette, Mélanges, (1812), III, 276-278.
2. Fonds français, 24 418, ff.297-299, Correspondance littéraire du Président Bouhier, t.X, père Petitot à M. Leclerc, 16.9.1719.
3. e.g. La Motte le Vayer, Cinq dialogues, (1673); père Bouhours, Entretiens d'Arioste et d'Eugène, (1671); Fontenelle, Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes, (1686).
4. R. Hirzel, Der Dialog, (Leipzig, 1895), 2 vols.

(of which a summary, with particular reference to seventeenth and eighteenth century France, is contained in Cosentini, Fontenelle's Art of Dialogue¹), provides a useful definition of the dialogue as "strictly speaking a discussion in the form of a conversation" - "eine Erörterung in Gesprächsform".² The Quatre dialogues differ most notably from other examples in that there are two authors, and so two reported points of view, as opposed to one author putting forward both sides of an argument. The work also has a clear didactic purpose which Timoléon points out at the beginning of the Préface; since the discussions reported in the first three dialogues led Choisy some of the way towards his conversion, he sees a possible use for them by missionaries - "J'ai espéré qu'ils trouveraient dans ces Dialogues des raisonnements dont ils se pourraient servir pour la conversion de ces peuples barbares et idolâtres qui n'ont presque aucune idée de la Divinité." As a result there are substantial parts of the work in which one character is placed in an educative position towards the other, but this does not prevent it from being a true dialogue, since the argument is developed by both parties, who are co-presenters of their conclusions.

Although this didactic element gives the Quatre dialogues certain points in common with contemporary works of straightforward doctrinal elucidation,³ they are, curiously enough, much closer in style and presentation, if not in spirit, to the works of some early Enlightenment writers, such as Fontenelle's Entretiens. In both cases, the authors aim at

1. J. W. Cosentini, Fontenelle's Art of Dialogue, (New York, 1952)

2. Cosentini, p.13 and Hirzel, Vol.I, p.7.

3. e.g. P. Nicole, Instruction sur le symbole, (1706).

presenting philosophical or scientific arguments within the context of a popular conversational framework, rather than in the unadorned question and answer form of the catechism or instruction manual. In Fontenelle's Entretiens, each soir begins with some introductory conversation of a general or frivolous nature, so that throughout, the specialist content is made more attractive by a non-specialist presentation. Similarly at the beginning of Choisy's third dialogue, we see that he too incorporates conversational passages into the work, the general background remarks framing the core of religious and philosophical discussion in a contemporary setting, and so leads the reader gradually into more serious matters. Admiring the natural environment in which they find themselves, at the beginning of the third dialogue, Timoléon exclaims, "le petit bois est délicieux: mais j'aime surtout le bords de votre rivière, et je conçois un grand plaisir à se promener le soir dans votre prairie" (p.121). It is feelings of gratitude towards an earthly benefactor - the donor of the garden, the abbé de Lionne, - which lead Timoléon to the theme of divine providence - "nous pouvons en rendre grâces à un bienfaiteur plus puissant; à cet être des êtres qui se sert des causes secondes pour exécuter ses volontés" (p.124), and so the main theme of the dialogue is taken up.

In addition to this, the initiative is shared throughout the work, and it is now Théophile, now Timoléon who is the meneur du jeu - although in the latter case, he always submits his conclusions to Théophile for approval and elucidation; since the discussion is as much for the reader as for Timoléon, both sides of the question must be thoroughly examined, and the obvious objections must be raised (e.g. p.134). Difficult points are repeated or clarified from a different angle, and there exists throughout the freedom of discussion and

amiability of tone which no doubt gave rise to A. Monod's remark about the work - "Le fonds est sans valeur, mais la 'présentation' de l'ouvrage est exquise".¹

1. De Pascal à Chateaubriand, (Paris, 1916), p.75.

2. summary of arguments¹

Although clearly much of the content of the Quatre dialogues is unoriginal, it seems rather narrow-minded of Monod to condemn it because of this as being "sans valeur". I will first of all summarize the main points of the themes in the work, before going on to discuss those aspects which they share with their sources, and those on which they differ, and to evaluate their place in the history of ideas in France.

a) The framing argument and Timoléon's conversion experiences

The first theme to appear in the Quatre dialogues in fact provides the framework for the whole book, and is the story of Timoléon's conversion to Christianity. This aspect of the work is largely autobiographical, and allows us to trace step by step the initial stages of Choisy's commitment. However, although they provided the intellectual material for it, Choisy makes it clear in the Préface that the arguments of the Dialogues were not the whole story of his conversion. Rather, "ils ont fait naître [en moi] les premiers désirs de mon salut et la première pensée de demander à Dieu la grâce de ma conversion". He already possesses a vague belief in God, but is prevented from believing fully or systematically by "mille petites choses" (p.7). It soon becomes clear that it is more than "petites choses" which are holding up his commitment, as he states shortly afterwards:

"Si je voyais qu'il y a un Dieu aussi clairement que je vois qu'il est jour; que ce Dieu est infiniment puissant et infiniment bon; que c'est lui qui m'a tiré du néant et qui me conserve dans

1. I include this merely for the sake of convenience, since this work has not been reprinted since the eighteenth century, and is consequently very rare.

tous les moments de ma vie; qu'il m'a donné une âme immortelle; qu'il faudra à la mort lui rendre compte de mes actions, [...] je n'aurais aucune peine à me soumettre à tous les mystères de la religion Chrétienne." (pp.7-8)

Working on this framework, Théophile begins the exposition of the proof of immortality which he has formulated (p.12), which is the first part of the central section. At the beginning of the second dialogue (p.53), we are again reminded of Timoléon's positive attitude towards his conversion - "Soyez sûr, au moins, que je ne viens point ici avec un esprit de contradiction" (p.54). Finally, in the third dialogue, (p.119), Timoléon shows that he has largely accepted Théophile's argument so far, and begins himself to draw further conclusions.

These three initial stages of his conversion are entirely intellectual, however, and at the end of the third dialogue he concludes "La religion est dans mon esprit, mais elle n'est pas encore dans mon cœur. [...] Il faut que Dieu s'en mêle, et je vois qu'une bonne maladie est le seul moyen de me faire rentrer en moi-même." (p.159)

The story of Timoléon's conversion in its final, personal and non-intellectual stages is told in the fourth dialogue, and at the outset the irony of the last remark in the preceding dialogue is brought out; Timoléon has suffered a severe illness (p.158). This dialogue was clearly written some time after the other three - or at least reports events which took place some time after those already considered - and Choisy's illness occurred in the intervening period. He will tell Théophile about this later in the dialogue, and for the time being he limits himself to saying "Mon esprit est convaincu, mon cœur est touché" (p.158). Théophile's reply, given Timoléon's profession of faith, may seem rather contradictory -

"Je vois bien que vous êtes Chrétien par le cœur; mais il faut encore l'être par l'esprit" (p.160) - but what Théophile obviously means is that Timoléon must learn to defend his beliefs intellectually, and most particularly to understand why he is a Catholic Christian, and not a Moslem, a Jew, or a Protestant: this aspect has not been made clear from the preceding arguments. This leads on to Théophile's apologia for the Catholic Church (p.182 ff.), which in turn leads on to the final section describing Timoléon's conversion.

It was indeed during the severe illness which he suffered that he experienced the 'vision' which made him so uncomfortably aware of the reality of death:

"J'envisageai la mort que j'avais cru si éloignée; bientôt après j'en vis tout l'appareil effroyable; je me vis dans un lit entouré de prêtres au milieu des cierges funèbres, mes parents tristes, les médecins étonnés, tous les visages m'annonçant l'instant fatal de mon éternité [...] Je vis donc, ou je crus voir les cieux et les enfers; je vis ce Dieu si redoutable sur un trône de lumière, environné de ses Anges; il me semblait qu'il me demandait compte de toutes les actions de ma vie, des grâces qu'il avait faites, et dont j'avais abusé; et je n'avais rien à lui [...] offrir pour satisfaire à sa justice. Je voyais en même temps les abîmes ouverts prêts à m'engloutir, les démons prêts à me dévorer, les feux éternels destinés à la punition de mes crimes." (pp.215-217)

Timoléon had been made aware of the presence of death by the death of the Queen in the same year, (1684), and this 'vision' - probably no more than a vivid dream - served to accentuate his feelings of repentance and accelerate his conversion. He had obviously begun to feel increasingly guilty about his previous excesses, and his guilt feelings were graphically interpreted in a Christian context in this experience. In his subsequent state of penitence, he received the sacraments, and ~~was~~ then consoled by another vision, this

time of a "galerie toute éclatante de lumière, mais d'une lumière douce, et qui, sans m'éblouir me paraissait plus brillante que toutes les autres lumières" (pp.220-221).¹ His recovery ensued, and his Christianity found its due expression in missionary activity.

b) Central section

We now come to the second and principal group of arguments, contained in the bulk of the first, second, and third dialogues, as well as the beginning of the fourth. In the first, Théophile initially proves the existence of the soul, and then goes on to deduce the nature of its immortality. He defines the soul first of all as the meeting place of the senses. We can compare pleasures which come to us from our different senses, but if we really did smell with our nose, and feel with our hand, then no comparison would be possible, "car l'une de ces parties est un être absolument différent de l'autre" (p.17). He concludes, "Il faut donc que ce soit le même être qui ait eu ces deux plaisirs" (p.17), and this is the soul; then, on this first point he extends his argument to include pain as well as pleasures.

The soul does not depend on the senses for all that it contains, however, since we may distinguish the pleasures which are not the result of the senses from those that are - "la comparaison que vous faites entre le plaisir que donne la plus sublime contemplation, et celui que vous cause

1. William James in his Varieties of Religious Experience, (Fontana paperback, 1960), speaking of conversion experiences, mentions that these can be accompanied by "pseudo-hallucinatory phenomena", known to psychologists as photisms, and usually described by the subject as "seeing a great light" (Lecture X, p.251).

le plus grossier de tous vos sens, vous montre que c'est le même être en vous, qui a non seulement ces plaisirs que l'on croit ordinairement communs avec les bêtes, mais aussi ceux qui font le partage des Anges" (p.22). The soul has intellectual pleasures, then, which are independent of the senses - but comparable with sensory pleasures; the unity of the soul is not thereby called into question. Finally, the soul incorporates the will, which depends on the senses for its effect, and the passions, which "semblent tenir quelque chose de l'âme sensible et[.]de la raisonnable" (p.26).¹ But here too comparison can be made, and so the unity of the soul is established, and "les sensations, les passions, les volontés ou volitions, et les idées ou intellections" (pp.27-28) given their different functions within it.

Timoléon accepts the first part of this proof, and Théophile goes on to consider the soul's immortality. This he argues from the fact that the soul is not comprised of different parts, (or no comparison would be possible within it), but is simple and therefore indestructible, (since any destruction involves breaking into parts), indivisible, and immortal. On this point, Timoléon puts forward as an objection the Cartesian theory of atoms, namely that nothing exists that cannot be divided ad infinitum into smaller parts; this point is answered by Théophile with the statement that the atom argument only applies to the body, which in turn leads Timoléon on to draw the right conclusion concerning the nature of the soul, namely that it is "incorporelle et spirituelle".

Théophile is then called upon by Timoléon to reconcile the two main parts of his proof, which now appear contradictory, since he has argued from sensory premises to the

1. cf. Descartes, Les Passions de l'âme, I, xvii, xxvii.

existence of a spiritual and immaterial being. How does he account, then, for the effect of a physical movement, such as the touch of a warm hand, on a spiritual being and conversely, how does he understand the realization of a spiritual volition in a physical act? Théophile has to reconcile two opposing entities - and to find a link between the body and the soul, whose very detachment from the body is one condition of its immortality.

In order to do this, he abandons his first argument, and resorts to a supernatural explanation, but in so doing provides himself with the first point of the next dialogue. Since body and soul have no natural relationship, but nevertheless obviously interact in some way, "concluons que cette liaison ne peut y avoir été mise que par un être supérieur créateur et conservateur de tous les autres êtres" (p.51). Thus the central matter of the second dialogue is already prepared for in the conclusion to the first - and Timoléon says "Il semblerait, Théophile, que de ce raisonnement vous voudriez conclure l'existence de Dieu" (p.51).

In the second dialogue, Théophile begins by considering the human hand. He argues from its complexity and flexibility to the existence of an almighty designer (p.70), and then goes on to consider the fact that the left hand works in the opposite direction to the right, and finally lists all the different parts of the body with their respective functions, "un hymne incomparable à la louange du créateur" (p.83). The argument offered by Timoléon as an objection serves as proof that the spirit of scientific enquiry is not absent from the work, when he puts forward the basic sceptical argument against the teleological proof - that the hand, and indeed the universe, is simply an "ouvrage du hasard" (p.83). Théophile only answers this by an intensification of his previous point, since this has already been fully developed,

but succeeds in persuading Timoléon that it is against human reason to suppose that such a creation is possible by chance (pp.84-85). From this point he goes on to argue that if the creation of the human being is evidence of the creator's wisdom and power, then the working of the human body is ample proof of his goodness - firstly since the satisfaction of man's needs is a pleasurable experience, and secondly since man is armed with the instinctive means of self-preservation (p.101). From here, Théophile's accumulation of evidence rises to a crescendo, and he uses, in addition to the art of rational persuasion, the force of emotive language. He shows Timoléon in turn the means the creator uses to ensure harmony, the wonders of the animals, earth and air, plants and food, rain and sunshine - "Et tout cela joint ensemble ne vous obligera-t-il point à vous écrier, Mirabilis Deus in operibus suis! Que le Seigneur est admirable dans ses ouvrages" (p.117).

The third dialogue, after some preamble, begins with a recapitulation of the argument so far (pp.124-125), and then Timoléon asks the important question "mais qui nous a dit que ce Dieu, si fort au-dessus de nous, se mêle de nos affaires?" (p.125). The answer to this first point, now given by Timoléon himself, is very much in the spirit of the previous dialogue - the world, designed as it is (day follows night, sunshine follows rain, and so on) needs constant guidance, and its progress can no more be the result of chance than its creation: this argument is presented with very little new material (p.128).

Théophile then enters into the difficult but traditional objection that the world is badly governed and unjust - "Pourquoi voyons-nous prospérer les méchants?" (p.142). Timoléon's reply comes back to man's inadequacy, since he cannot see the greater plan behind the working of the universe.

He nevertheless tries to explain what some of the principles behind the plan might be, dwelling particularly on the ideas of necessary punishment and beneficial suffering (pp.151-153). This argument has rather self-righteous overtones, but is the only tenable one given the concept of reward and punishment inherent in a belief in ultimate divine justice.

The whole dialogue is effectively only an extension of the previous one, since in it the goodness and justice of the creator, as seen in his creation, are further manifested in its progress. The explanation of apparent injustice, and even chaos, is based simply on the inadequacy of man to see the greater plan, although his resentment can be temporarily quelled by the assurance that undeserving people can never enjoy true felicity.

The last section of the work to deal with a general rather than a personal theme is the discussion concerning the superiority of Christianity which occurs in the fourth dialogue. So far the arguments have been concerned with natural religion, (although using Christian terms of reference), but this section deals specifically with Christianity. Timoléon has by now been converted, and naturally enough has joined the Catholic church, but he must be able to account rationally, or at least intellectually for his position.

Here again, he has the major part in the discussion, and begins by marvelling at various aspects of the Christian faith - its universality, its miraculous nature, its prophets, its holiness, and finally the person of Christ himself. The place of this discussion in the work is interesting, however, since Théophile and Timoléon have only introduced a specifically Christian content in the last dialogue, after they have proved certain basic supernatural propositions. There is obviously a hiatus between the third and fourth dialogues,

and Timoléon is now already a committed Christian - his belief in God has found its only possible expression in orthodox Western Christianity - but the step from an assent to the conclusions of the first three dialogues to a belief in a revealed Saviour must be explained for the benefit of the reader, particularly if the reader is a member of the "peuples barbares" for whom Christianity would not be the obvious form of religious commitment. Timoléon's consideration of non-Christian faiths is cursory to say the least - his Biblical presentation of Judaism (p.172) is decidedly anti-Semitic in tone and his dismissal of Mohammedanism largely on the grounds that it was established by force, is relatively uninformed - but he is sufficiently aware of the claims of non-Christian faiths to believe it necessary to put forward an argument, however superficially, against them. The ensuing discussion of the superiority of Catholicism over Protestantism is far more detailed, but springs from the apologia for Christianity; any religious treatise of this nature in the seventeenth century was bound to be sectarian to some extent.

c) The final section

The final section of the fourth dialogue is concerned with Théophile's conversion to Catholicism. He sets out firstly to argue that the Catholic Church was not guilty of the accusations levelled against her by Protestants, and secondly that the teachings of the Protestant Churches lead to error. Théophile's witness is particularly convincing (and to his Protestant critics particularly embarrassing) because of the absolute standpoint from which he begins - "J'étais si persuadé que l'Eglise Romaine enseignait toutes les erreurs qu'on lui attribue ordinairement, que je ne

songeais point du tout à elle" (p.182). He nevertheless arrived at a stage where he questioned his faith, and following the Protestant tradition, sought elucidation from the Bible. His first and strongest disillusionment came when he discovered that various Protestant Churches interpreted the Bible differently one from another - and so made doctrinal certainty inconceivable. After much comparison between divergent interpretations, Théophile concluded that "il fallait ou recevoir ma religion de l'Eglise Catholique, ou la trouver moi-même dans l'Ecriture Sainte" (p.197). Then, before retiring for a period of prayer, he examined the claims and practices of the Catholic Church against Protestant doctors, and arrived eventually at the conclusion that "le principe sur lequel ils [Protestants] bâtissent toute la recherche de la vérité est une source inépuisable d'erreurs" (p.206). . It is, then, on the central question of authority that Théophile opposes Protestant teaching, and turns to Catholicism for certainty.

On the next stage, the passage from disillusionment with Protestantism to a positive acceptance of Catholicism, Théophile was accompanied by Bossuet - who:

"S'appliqua avec soin à ôter à l'Eglise Romaine le masque hideux que lui avait donné les docteurs Protestants. Il sépara la véritable doctrine d'avec les conséquences que l'on lui a faussement attribuées; et en plusieurs conversations il me dit, à propos des objections que je lui faisais, la plupart des choses que vous avez lues dans son livre de l'Exposition de la Doctrine Catholique." (p.211-212)

It was Bossuet who received him into the Catholic Church.

Catholic Christianity is the end point of the whole discussion, and Protestantism the last 'alternative' to be dismissed. Although Théophile's story, the final part of

the argument, is of a personal nature, it is nevertheless an integral part of the work, and completes the instruction requested by Timoléon. Once the soul and God have been accepted, and the world shown to be subject to divine providence, Christianity, finding its strongest expression in the Catholic tradition, is the surest way to salvation.

3. Influences and philosophical traditions

The central part of the Quatre dialogues is based entirely on two fundamental philosophical traditions - the Cartesian dualistic position, and the teleological argument to the evidence of design in nature; these are also to some extent incorporated into each other, although without taking either to its logical conclusion, or indeed respecting all the tenets of any given position.

As J. Marias states in his History of Philosophy,¹ "in the seventeenth century and in the first years of the eighteenth there is in France a series of Catholic thinkers, mostly theologians and even mystics, who are profoundly influenced by Cartesian philosophy". Henri Busson² elaborates on this assertion, showing how, despite some opposition from the Church on the grounds that Cartesianism was harmful to religion, the rational method spread over other disciplines, including theology, culminating in Malebranche's attempts to reconcile it with Christianity (La Recherche de la Vérité, (1673-1674)). The problem of the immortality of the soul was probably that which gave rise to the most debate - "Dans le domaine frontalier de la croyance et de la philosophie, le problème de la destinée humaine continuait de préoccuper les consciences".³ In the wake of Descartes' Discours and Principia, a large number of thinkers and writers adopted a dualistic position, whereby the body and soul are entirely different entities, the soul being "esprit" or "pensée" and the body "matière" or "étendue".⁴ Different apologists

1. J. Marias, History of Philosophy, (Dover Paperback, New York, 1967).

2. La Religion des Classiques, (Paris, 1948), p.227.

3. *ibid.*, p.317.

4. *ibid.*, Ch.XII "Le problème de l'Immortalité" esp. p.324, n.3.

obviously chose to ignore or adapt certain aspects of the Cartesian argument, and here again the most notable and original contribution was made by Malebranche,¹ but on certain basic issues its more widespread influence is unmistakable.

Dangeau's most obvious debt to Descartes is on the central question of the nature of the soul, but although he eventually arrives at the statement that it is "incorporelle et spirituelle" and so distinct from the body, his starting point is not that of Descartes (the realm of the intellect) but rather the realm of the senses. Théophile states at the outset his admiration for Descartes, but he is not convinced that his arguments are universally comprehensible - "Les raisons dont se servent Descartes et ses sectateurs pour prouver l'immortalité de l'âme [...] me paraissent si convaincantes, [...] que si tout le monde s'était accoutumé comme moi à penser un peu philosophiquement, je crois qu'il ne serait pas nécessaire de chercher d'autres raisons" (pp.12-13). This remark makes it obvious that when he speaks of "des raisons [...] tirées de la connaissance de nous-mêmes" as a basis for his argument, requiring and assuming no previous instruction, he is concerned with sensory rather than intellectual knowledge; thus he begins from "des objets corporels" (p.15) and proceeds from the material to the immaterial - "il partira de la matière pour les [readers] mener à l'idée de l'esprit immatériel".²

Two related objections can immediately be levelled against Dangeau's position, the second of which is difficult to refute. Firstly, Dangeau could be accused of coming near to the argument adopted by Gassendi, who also begins his

1. See G. Rodis-Lewis, Descartes et le Rationalisme, (P.U.F. "Que sais-je?"), p.99.

2. Busson, La Religion des Classiques, p.325.

proof on the level of the senses (his opposition to Descartes was cryptically expressed in the dictum "ambulo ergo sum"), and goes on to conclude that "nil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu". If Dangeau stopped at his first (and according to him, conclusive) definition, namely that the soul was the meeting place of the senses, he would be unable to refute this accusation with any degree of conviction, but since he goes on to include "les volontés ou volitions et les idées ou intellections" (p.28) in the same "être", it is clear that he, like Descartes, believed that the soul had certain properties unique to itself, and independent of the senses.¹

The second objection was raised by Bayle, and is particularly pertinent given the initial position adopted by Dangeau. Bayle claims² that Dangeau "prouve l'immortalité de l'âme des bêtes", a question that he does not discuss at all in the work. Although Dangeau goes on to include in man's immortal soul its higher functions, these are, according to him, no condition of its immortality. As human phenomena they have to be accounted for, but the fact that man can compare a smell with a sound, (something an animal may also be capable of doing), is already proof of both the existence and the unity of the soul, as Dangeau himself asserts (p.16). Curiously enough, it is Bayle himself who begins a refutation of his own objection - "Or il n'est pas d'une entière certitude, que les bêtes sentent à la fois le plaisir de l'odeur et celui de la chaleur" - but this is a weak reply,

1. cf. Les Passions de l'âme, I, xxv, xliii.

2. See Bayle, Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, in Oeuvres diverses, (The Hague, 1725), I, 110 art. VI, cf. Bibliothèque française, t.XXXII (i), p.156, note (a) and d'Olivet, Vie, pp.93-94.

and we must assume that Dangeau simply thought this problem irrelevant to the work.

The principal difference between Dangeau's and Descartes' proofs occurs in the starting points. Descartes had to work from intellectual premises, since he believed the senses to be fallible - "à cause que nos sens nous trompent quelque fois, je voulus supposer qu'il n'y avait aucune chose qui ne fût telle qu'ils nous la font imaginer".¹ This leads him on to define its spiritual nature, and so to deduce its immortality.² Dangeau, on the other hand, having proved its immortality from a sensory argument, leading from its simple nature to its indestructibility, can thus assert its spiritual properties. These orders of argument are the only tenable ones given the first principles involved, Dangeau's being sensory, and Descartes' intellectual: Descartes did not deny any interaction between the soul and the senses, but had to arrive at this conclusion from his intellectual argument, rather than taking it as his first premise.

H. Busson also points out the similarity between Dangeau's argument and that of Nicole,³ but does not take into consideration certain fundamental differences. Dangeau describes the soul as the meeting place of the senses; Nicole's proof defines the soul as simple and indivisible merely because it sees the whole of a square and not just four straight lines - the soul for Nicole is the "principe unifiant, [...] dans une sensation unique, des étendues de

1. Discours, ed. Gilson, pp.31-32, and note, p.287 ff.

2. Discours, Part IV.

3. La Religion des Classiques, p.325.

la matière sensible"¹ and he does not bring in the idea of comparison. As far as a statement of dualism is concerned, this was common to all Descartes' disciples, and in Malebranche, too, we read that "ce qui pense et ce qui est étendu sont deux choses toutes différentes".²

The next important point in Dangeau's argument, and indeed one of the principal problems of any dualistic position concerns the interaction between a spiritual and a physical being. If this exists, and we must believe it does, otherwise we should display no reaction to a blow, then how does it come about? Geneviève Rodis-Lewis confirms that, among the writers who followed Descartes, "toute leur problématique est tributaire de la distinction entre l'esprit et le corps".³ Malebranche tries to answer the dualistic paradox by a theory which is termed "occasionalism", whereby "there can be no interaction between mind and body [...] our will is merely the occasional cause of our movements: the real cause is God".⁴ Similarly Nicole, who asserts that "c'est Dieu qui remue le corps quand l'âme le veut remuer; [...] c'est Dieu qui imprime ces sentiments, ces perceptions, et ces pensées dans l'esprit quand le corps est remué".⁵

1. La Religion des Classiques, p.325; see Nicole, Instructions sur le symbole, (Paris, 1706), Vol.I, Section II, ch.ii, p.177 ff. and Essais de Morale, 8e edn, (The Hague, 1700), Vol.II, p.27.
2. Recherche de la Vérité, (Paris, 1674), t.II, livre iv, p.15.
3. Descartes et le Rationalisme, ("Que sais-je?"), p.7.
4. P. J. Yarrow, A Literary History of France: The Seventeenth Century, (1967), p.327.
See Recherche de la Vérité, Vol.I, ch.5.
5. Instructions sur le symbole, (Paris, 1706), Vol.I, Section II, ch.i, p.175.

Descartes himself was clearly embarrassed by this question,¹ and his attempts at claiming that the interaction between the two depended on a third order of activity, "la notion de l'union que chacun éprouve toujours en soi-même sans philosopher, à savoir qu'il est une seule personne",² has little philosophical validity, and does not solve the problem.

Malebranche, Nicole, and Descartes, nevertheless envisage a third concept, whether it is God, or something more vague, as a solution to the problem. Choisy and Dangeau, as well as Fénelon,³ go one stage further, and incorporate their solution into the next stage of their argument. Although to some extent the whole integrity of the first part of the proof is thereby called into question, it is nevertheless God who is the end point of the second Dialogue (and indeed of the whole work), and this miraculous liaison points forward to the teleological argument as a proof of God's very existence, and this is in fact also the liaison between the two parts of the work. At this point Dangeau departs from a pseudo-Cartesian line of argument, and in the second and third Dialogues - on the questions of the existence of God and divine Providence - argues from the evidence of design in nature, and of a beneficent power directing the world.

The work depends on the relationship between these two arguments, then, the weak link in the first proving to be the opening into the second. Dangeau cannot take up Descartes' proof of the existence of God since this requires

1. Les Passions de l'âme, I, xxxi.
2. Lettre à Elizabeth, 28.6.1643, in G. Rodis-Lewis, Descartes et le Rationalisme, p.51.
3. Traité de l'Existence de Dieu, (1718), in Oeuvres complètes, (Versailles, 1820), esp. Vol.I, pp.50, 68, 71.

an intellectually based argument for the immortality of the soul and so he continues to work from the physical to the metaphysical. We can now see that in fact Dangeau's whole proof depends on teleological evidence; the proof of the existence and immortality of the soul in the first Dialogue depends on the evidence of the 'great designer' afforded by a more advanced application of the second, since the means by which the soul receives the senses (the starting point of the whole argument) are the result of a miraculous liaison wrought by God.¹ In this way too both parts of the proof depend on sensory evidence; no intellectual premises are laid down, and this gives the work its coherence: "Les trois premiers objets sont démontrés par les sens et leurs merveilleux usages".²

The teleological argument is among the most ancient and probably the simplest of the 'proofs' of the existence of God; the range of evidence that can be used is inexhaustible, and the divine attributes to which it can be applied are likewise manifold. Bayle, speaking of Dangeau and Choisy's use of it in the Quatre Dialogues quotes St. Paul's words - "invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt, intellectu conspiciuntur. Les choses invisibles de Dieu viennent comme visibles, par les ouvrages qu'il a produits".³ John

1. Two additional points should be made here: firstly that Dangeau and Choisy accept that man has some purely mechanical movements (p.100) which are independent of interaction with the soul and whose aim is self-defence, and secondly that they realize that man's initial sensory reactions are physically and scientifically explicable (p.45) and it is their all-important effect on and relation to the soul that is miraculous.

2. A. Monod, De Pascal à Chateaubriand, p.74.

3. Nouvelles in Oeuvres diverses, I, 111.

Hick¹ traces the history of the position from St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure through to the Englishman William Paley, whose Natural Theology appeared in 1802. Some of Choisy's contemporaries also used this argument; in the same year that the Quatre dialogues were published (1684) the Protestant theologian Abbadie wrote in his Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne: "Pour voir qu'il y a une sagesse souveraine, il ne faut qu'ouvrir les yeux, et les porter sur les merveilles de la nature".² A fuller exposition of the same proof was to appear in France some twenty-four years later in Fénelon's Traité de l'Existence de Dieu (1718). The two apologists proceed here as elsewhere from the concrete to the abstract with each stage adequately and practically illustrated from events and things in everybody's everyday experience. Here the supernatural is the end of the argument and not merely a factor in its development; unlike the first Dialogue the conclusion (the existence and attributes of God) is reached without recourse to considerations alien to the matter in hand and this part of the work possesses considerable academic unity, although little philosophical originality. The simplicity and directness of the argument is impressive, and in character with the rest of the work.

1. The Existence of God, New York, 1964

2 La Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne, Vol. I, section I

4. Secondary influences

(a) Pascal

Although no mention is made of Pascal in the work there are nevertheless some striking resemblances between parts of it and aspects of the Pensées - which may or may not emanate from a knowledge of this work by one or both of the authors. Obviously the spirit of the Quatre dialogues is rational, but throughout the work emphasis is laid on the inadequacy of rational conviction in matters of religious commitment. Clearly neither the esprit nor the cœur must be neglected, since neither is self-sufficient, but the final step is a non-intellectual one: once Timoléon has reached the stage of intellectual conviction he and the reader must part company since each must in the last instance resort to his own conscience, and the seeker must ask for the grace to believe, a grace which he already by definition partly possesses. Timoléon's own attitude towards his conversion is one of receptiveness throughout, and as such thoroughly positive - "en un mot, c'est la plus grande affaire de ma vie, et je veux m'y donner tout entier" (p.55). Théophile replies to this affirmation in Pascalian terms - "vous la [vérité] trouverez, puisque vous la cherchez" (p.55); for Pascal the first and most fundamental barrier to overcome was that of apathy, and once this was dispelled the searcher was much nearer to finding his faith.

Where Dangeau and Choisy (and Descartes) differ from Pascal substantially is in their theocentric rather than Christocentric approach to the problems which confront them. Both Dangeau and Descartes prove the existence of immaterial and supernatural entities independently of any revealed religious tradition; Pascal, on the other hand, depends entirely on the revealed Christ, and on his identification with man's dilemma, for his apologia. The Quatre dialogues

do even so combine with a philosophical treatise a personal Christian apologia, and the latter aspect is more important than its relatively limited treatment would suggest. However, the didactic purpose extends only to the rational content of the Dialogues, and the conclusion, although a satisfactory one as far as Timoléon is concerned, is nevertheless on a different plane from the central part of the work.

(b) Bossuet

The final influence I should like to mention is that of Bossuet, and this is to be seen on two different levels in the work. Dangeau, as we know, was instructed by Bossuet, and it is not surprising that the basic tenets of his arguments against Protestantism are the same as those to be found in Bossuet's Histoire des variations des Eglises Protestantes. On the question of authority and error, Bossuet states in the Préface to his work:

"Si les Protestants savaient à fond comment s'est formée leur religion; avec combien de variations et avec quelle inconstance leurs confessions de foi ont été dressées; comment ils se sont séparés premièrement de nous, et puis entre eux; par combien de subtilités, de détours, d'équivoques ils ont tâché de réparer leurs divisions, et rassembler les membres épars de leur réforme désunie; cette réforme [...] ne leur inspirerait que du mépris." (p.iii)

They both, then, base their argument on the instability of Protestant doctrine, and on the 'fermeté' of Catholic beliefs; the question of authority stems from the need to interpret Scripture by tradition, a tradition that is uniquely enshrined in the Catholic Church, of whose cause both Bossuet and Dangeau are champions.

The second, and less specific influence of Bossuet is to be found in the central part of the Dialogues. Taking into account Dangeau's debt to Bossuet on the question of authority in the Church, it is probably by more than coincidence that certain parts of the Quatre dialogues have aspects in common with Bossuet's posthumous De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même (1741). Bossuet's attitude towards Cartesianism was ambiguous,¹ and although he could not give whole-hearted support to all its implications, he was nevertheless influenced by it to some extent. Bossuet, as Dangeau, groups different functions within the soul - "on peut entendre que toutes les facultés ne font au fond que la même âme, qui reçoit divers noms à cause de ses différentes opérations";² he distinguishes two realms of activity within the soul, the "opérations sensibles" and the "opérations intellectuelles"³ and admits, without fully subscribing to a total divorce between body and soul, to their difference. In addition, it is God who is the unifying factor between them - "Il a plu [...] à Dieu, que des natures si différentes fussent étroitement unies".⁴ Bossuet also draws attention to the intricate construction of the human body as evidence of its creator - "Considérez ensuite l'admirable structure du corps humain; [...] à la vue d'une machine si parfaite, qui n'admira la puissance et la sagesse de celui qui en est l'artisan".⁵

1. See H. Busson, La Religion des Classiques, Ch. XV.

2. J. B. Bossuet, De la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même, (Paris, 1741), p.89.

3. *ibid.*, p.152.

4. *ibid.*, p.152.

5. *ibid.*, Mandement, p.ix.

The aims of the two works are different, however, since whereas Langeau argues step by step from the physical to the spiritual, Bossuet, as the title of the work would suggest, presupposes the existence of both the soul and God, and is more concerned with explaining their attributes and their interaction.

Despite the unevenness of its composition and its self-confessed unoriginality, the Quatre dialogues offers a degree of coherence and readability rare in seventeenth-century apologetics. This can be accounted for by two qualities that the work possesses; firstly its simple organization, and secondly its popular presentation. From the point of organization, Langeau's debt to Descartes is outstanding. Within their own relatively unambitious framework of reference, Choisy and Langeau proceed logically and unambiguously through their arguments; they have none of the thoroughness or originality of either their model or of his more notable disciples, such as Malebranche, but nevertheless offer a Cartesian approach, if not a solution, to the problem of Christian conversion. The use of strictly logical arguments, and of certain of the most basic of Cartesian tenets bring rationalism into the field of apologetics; the biographical content of the work demonstrates its limitations.

The other quality of the work has two facets - firstly the popular dialogue form, and familiar conversational style, more characteristic of works in the libertin or free-thinking tradition than of Christian apologetics; and secondly the 'framework' story of an actual conversion - of what we must believe was a rather dramatic nature - to add human credibility to the work, and to make a personal document out of what could

otherwise have become a dry academic treatise.

For these reasons, the Quatre dialogues remains an attractive work, undeservedly neglected, in which Cartesianism and Christianity both have a place, and in which both are presented with some humour and few pretensions in a popularizing framework.

5. An answer to the Quatre dialogues

Not surprisingly the Quatre dialogues, and particularly the final section, found an opponent in the outspoken Protestant apologist, Pierre Jurieu, who attacked Dangeau in his Apologie d'un tour nouveau pour les Quatre dialogues de M. l'abbé de Dangeau¹ as well as in the Esprit de Monsieur Arnauld.²

Given the general integrity of the Quatre dialogues, the Apologie is a mediocre reply, petty in its criticisms, and lacking in positive argument. It is nevertheless a curious work, since it relies almost entirely on irony and understatement for its effect. Jurieu sets himself up as the defender of the Quatre dialogues, and in this role comments on conversations and criticisms made by a group of people gathered "chez l'illustre Madame D."³

Within this framework, the speakers, who come from different walks of life, criticize in turn various aspects of the Dialogues - a fashionable woman ridicules the fact that "nous ne saurions être immortelles [...] que les potages n'aient leur part à cette immortalité";⁴ a young Huguenot lawyer finds evidence in the dates given that Théophile believed in the Church before he believed in God - "il se

1. Cologne, 1685. This work is generally attributed to Jurieu, see E. Naeppler, "Bibliographie chronologique des œuvres de Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713)" in the Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français, LXXXIV-LXXXV, (1935-1936), pp.391-440.
2. L'Esprit de Monsieur Arnauld, Deventer, 1684, esp. Vol.II, p.273 (pt.XIX).
3. Apologie, p.18.
4. Apologie, p.20. This is a reference to Théophile's mention of a "potage de Talbot" as a pleasurable sensory experience in the first Dialogue, p.19.

fit Catholique, et son cœur se trouva illuminé! [...] il y a de cela douze ou quinze ans. Et cependant il nous avoue dans la préface qu'à proprement parler il ne croit en Dieu que depuis un peu plus d'un an";¹ a "docteur de Sorbonne" does not think that Dangeau was qualified to write a book at all - "Un je ne sais quel courtisan revêtu en auteur, nous viendra [...] faire l'anatomie dans un livre de théologie, et habiller la religion en courtisane",² and so on.

The irony is extremely subtle, since all these critical opinions find their opponents, and in addition some of their exponents are themselves caricatured, but Jurieu is clever enough always to give the most bite to the destructive arguments - and emphasizes especially two points. Firstly, he clearly wishes to cast doubt on the conversions of both Théophile and Timoléon, not accepting them as sincere: one of his cynical commentators is made to say, obviously with reference to Théophile: "Un homme qui a été Athée, et qui n'est converti que depuis un an, pourrait bien en tenir un peu"³ and of Timoléon, "ceux qui ont connu Timoléon depuis qu'il croit en Dieu, n'ont pas trouvé qu'il soit fort différent de ce qu'il était quand il ne croyait rien".⁴ Secondly, he believes that religion (or at least Catholicism) and the monarchy are too closely linked, and that a conversion to Catholicism was quite likely to have a political incentive, a point which he makes most unequivocally in the Esprit de Monsieur Arnauld as follows:

1. Apologie, p.48.

2. *ibid.*, p.59.

3. and 4. *ibid.*, p.10.

"L'abbé de Dangeau [...] après avoir fait le tour de toutes les Religions, a trouvé qu'il était à propos de n'en point avoir à soi, et d'adopter celle du Roi; en dogmatisant en particulier contre tous les mystères les plus sacrés, et en allant pourtant à la messe, toutes les fois que cela est nécessaire pour édifier sa Majesté."

Jurieu is most direct in his attack on Dangeau at the very beginning of the Apologie, before he employs any irony, when he says simply:

"Monsieur

En vérité vous êtes bien importun, permettez-moi de vous le dire, ou ne me permettez pas, il ne m'importe, je vous le dirai pourtant: Et c'est la moindre chose que je puisse faire pour me venger du chagrin que vous me donnez depuis longtemps."²

Preceded by this vitriolic 'dedication', there can be no doubt as to the real purpose of the work, nor as to which opinions genuinely express those of its author. It loses much of its effect though by the personal attack on Dangeau which it contains. Whereas a more direct criticism of the content of the Quatre dialogues could have been made both intellectually more interesting and personally less spiteful, Jurieu's work is both negative and underhand. Bayle, not usually a disciple of Jurieu,³ but not on the other hand a supporter of the claims of the Catholic Church, especially

1. Vol.II, p.273. He also attacks court religion in general, when he says that "aux heures de la messe, Dieu est la chose au monde à quoi on pense le moins". Apologie, p.8.

2. Apologie, p.1.

3. See M. J. Denis, "Bayle et Jurieu" in Mémoires de l'Acad. Nat. de Caen, (1886), pp.54-132.

where authority was concerned, points this out in an article on the Apologie.¹ Of Jurieu's attack, he says:

"Ce qu'il y a de blâmable dans son procédé, c'est qu'il ne se contente pas de la censure du livre, il porte ses traits satiriques sur la personne de l'auteur, qu'il accuse plusieurs fois d'athéisme."

Choisy and Langeau's Dialogues possess at least a certain philosophical respectability if little originality, and in addition contain two sincere personal statements of conversion - they are also positive, well-argued on the whole, and committed without being unduly biased. The Apologie is negative, spiteful, and intellectually weak - the work of a professional polemicist, lacking totally the integrity of the work which it sets out to attack.

1. Bayle, Nouvelles, in Oeuvres diverses, (The Hague), t.I, January 1685, p.216, Art.III.

CHAPTER III

JOURNAL DU VOYAGE DE SIAM

The Voyage de Siam, 1685-1686Principal stages

March 1685	
3	Leave Brest
16	Tropic of Cancer
April	
6-7	Equator
30	Tropic of Capricorn
May	
30	Cape of Good Hope (arrive)
June	
8	" (depart)
August	
16	Bantam (arrive)
18	" (depart)
26	Batavia (arrive)
	" (depart)
September	
25	SIAM
December	
15	Leave Siam
January 1686	
11	Bantam
March	
12	Cape of Good Hope
April	
28	Equator
June	
18	Brest

CHAPTER III

JOURNAL DU VOYAGE DE SIAM

1. Historical and political background

By the time that the abbé de Choisy and his companions set sail in 1685 to convert the King of Siam to Christianity, there had already existed a considerable amount of missionary activity in the Far East.¹

In the fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal had been the countries chiefly involved, and in 1493, Pope Alexander VI had given instructions that all countries to the east of a line drawn from north to south through the Azores were to be under Portuguese jurisdiction, and all those to the west under Spanish: this system, known as Padroado, was however to cause some difficulties later, when non-Portuguese bishops were sent to the Far East. The next important event was the founding of the Society of Jesus by Ignatius Loyola in 1534, and the subsequent mission of St. Francis Xavier to Japan, where he died in 1552. By 1583 another Jesuit, Ricci, had arrived in China, and by 1600 there were perhaps some two thousand Christians there.

In 1622 the Propaganda Fide came into being, with the specific aim of establishing an indigenous clergy in Eastern countries. In 1658 it nominated ~~three~~ French bishops to the Far East - Mgr Pallu became Bishop of Heliopolis (with jurisdiction in Tong-King), and Mgr Lambert de la Motte Bishop of ~~Metellopolis (Siam)~~ ^{Bérythe (Nan-King).} ~~Mgr Cotelendi was consecrated Bishop of~~ Metellopolis (Siam) in 1660, but died on the journey to his new diocese a year later. These men were given the title of

1. There is a large number of books on the subject. The best introductions are probably S. Reill, A History of Christian Missions, Pelican, 1964 (esp. p.180) and on the Missions Etrangères, J. Guennou's book of that title, Paris, 1903.

vicaires apostoliques and so were directly responsible to the Pope, who hoped thereby to avoid offending Spain or Portugal. Lambert de la Motte arrived in 1662, and was joined by Mgr Pallu and several French priests in 1664.

It was Pallu who had been largely responsible for the founding of the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères, a French society based on Paris, whose aim was to train secular clergy for missionary work. It was established in the rue du Bac in 1663, and received the acknowledgement of the Holy See in 1664. Pallu's work of organization in the Far East involved travelling between Rome, Paris, and Tong-King and so it was left to Lambert and a French priest called Laneau, who had arrived with Mgr Pallu, to set about the creation of a seminary in Ayuthia, then the capital of Siam. They worked hard there, welcoming new missionaries and keeping both the Propaganda and Mgr Pallu informed of their various activities; Mgr Lambert also founded a hospital run by the Amantes de la Croix, an order of female religious.

The Seminary, known as the Collège Général, grew in size, received the sanction of the King of Siam in 1665, and in 1668 the first indigenous priests were ordained. In the same year their peace was threatened by the arrival of the père Marini, a Jesuit who had been expelled from Tong-King, and who considered that there had been an invasion of French priests onto Jesuit 'territory'. By 1671 the situation had worsened, and two Jesuit priests were alleged to have poisoned various members of the Missions Etrangères. Their chief objection was having to swear an oath of obedience to the vicaires apostoliques, believing that they were directly responsible to the Pope alone. Their following in Siam was small however; after these incidents some sort of peaceful co-existence was established and the Jesuits submitted to

the authority of the bishops in 1674.

Laneau was consecrated Bishop of Metellopolis and vicaire apostolique of Nanking in 1674, and the following year was succeeded by M. Langlois as director of the Seminary. This was the situation when the abbé de Choisy and the chevalier de Chaumont arrived in 1685. The Seminary was granted land in 1686 by the chief minister to the King of Siam, Constance Phaulkon, and sent its first seminarist to Rome the same year. Despite its financial difficulties, and persecutions during the revolution of 1688, the college survived until the Burmese invasion of 1760; it was re-established in Penang in 1806.

Siam was in the seventeenth century, as now, an independent kingdom ruled by an absolute monarch. The capital was at Ayuthia,¹ where it had been set up in 1350, and where it was to remain until its destruction by the Burmese in 1767. Bangkok was as yet no more than a fortress on the Menam river. The other important town in seventeenth-century Siam was Louvo, present day Lop'buri, situated up-river from Ayuthia, where the king had his winter palace. The government of the country was carried out by the king with a chief minister, the Chakrî, and second minister the P'ra K'lang (French 'barkalon'), together with a number of lesser officials.

Portugal was the first Western country to establish contacts with Siam, and this took place during the sixteenth century. The British East India Company arrived in 1612 to

1. There are several Europeanized spellings, of which this is the most frequent: the capital is often referred to by travellers simply as Siam.

begin trading; this was the first of three unsuccessful attempts to come to a lasting trade agreement with Siam. It failed because of the infrequency of visits of British ships to Siam, and trading was closed in 1622. The Dutch, meanwhile, had arrived in 1608, and signed a treaty with the Siamese in 1617; Portugal, on the other hand, had broken off relations in 1608, and so for some time after 1622, Holland was the only European presence in Siam. She was in so strong a position, though, as to present a threat to the country, since she already controlled Bantam and Malacca, and the King of Siam was anxious to find allies elsewhere.

King Phra Narai came to the throne in 1659, and the East India Company reopened its branches in the country in the same year. The arrival of the French bishops in 1662 and 1664 opened the way for French trading too,¹ and in 1673 Louis XIV gave Mgr Pallu a letter for the King of Siam, so that friendly relations could be established between the two monarchs. In 1663 Colbert opened a trading centre at Surat, and then at Pondicherry, and later extended business to Tenasserim and Bengal. The first French ship to reach Siam was in 1680 - the French bishops having travelled overland. In the same year the British East India Company asked for an agreement by the King of Siam that his country would buy a given quantity of goods annually. He refused, and the English traders again abandoned their posts.

It was also during the reign of Phra Narai that one of the strangest figures in Siamese history came to power. Constantin Phaulkon was a Greek, born in 1647. As a boy he joined the crew of a British ship and found employment with

1. The French Compagnie des Indes Orientales had been granted a charter by Henri IV in 1604, but had never been able to compete with the English and Dutch companies, owing to lack of funds.

the East India Company. It was in the company of one of its agents, Richard Burnaby, that he first arrived in Siam where he was engaged in trading projects until he entered the service of the Barkalon. Phaulkon (known in French as Monsieur Constance) was a shrewd politician, and he quickly rose to a position of authority in Siam. He was granted extensive powers by the king, although he was never in fact made Barkalon, and foreign visitors soon realized that the only way to make any headway in Siam was by currying favour with him. The English alone were slow to realize this, however, to their cost. In addition the King of England had not followed Louis' example of sending a letter of introduction to the King of Siam, an unfortunate omission, and perhaps another reason why the English traders made so little progress.

The French made their first attempt at establishing diplomatic relations with Siam in 1680 to 1681, but this was curtailed when the boat returning to France with the Siamese ambassadors was lost off Mauritius. Siam had shown goodwill to the French, though, whose friendship she desired, partly for her own sake as a powerful ally, and partly as an antidote to the Dutch presence. She sent more ambassadors to France in 1684, accompanied by the père Vachet of the Missions Etrangères, and in reply Louis sent the great embassy of 1685, with the chevalier de Chaumont as ambassador, and the abbé de Choisy as coadjuteur d'ambassade.

In addition to these two, and the captain of the ship Monsieur de Vaudricourt, the members of the embassy were as follows:

Bénigne Vachet, who had accompanied the two Siamese envoys to the court of Louis XIV in 1684, and who was

returning with them to Siam. With him were two other members of the Missions Etrangères, Jean Basset who went on to China in 1689, and Etienne Manuel, both of whom were making the journey for the first time.¹

Six Jesuit mathematicians accompanied Choisy and Chaumont to Siam. The père Verbiest had written a letter from Peking in 1678, addressed to all European members of the society, to appeal for missionaries and especially scientists to go to China² and Colbert had allowed six Frenchmen to go with the Siamese expedition.

Jean le Fontaney, author of some Observations sur le Comète, of 1681, was the leader of the group, and "la douceur même: il [...] aime mieux se taire que de disputer" (p.28). Claude de Visdelou (later to become Bishop of Audiopolis) was also a "fort joli petit homme" (p.27). Louis le Comte stood out as a preacher; Jean Gerbillon, too, "dit de fort belles choses, mais avec un peu trop de véhémence" (pp.121-122). The two other Jesuits were Joachim Douvet, a quiet and retiring young man, mentioned by Vachet, but not by Choisy, and Guy Tachard, later to prove in many ways the most important member of the expedition. Of these six, all except Tachard were to continue their journey to China after having been shipwrecked in 1687.³ They reached Peking in February 1688 where Fontaney, by his scientific knowledge, won the Emperor's favour and helped to cure him of an illness. In gratitude the Emperor gave the society a house in 1693, and some land in 1699. The abbé de Chailà completed the group of

1. See Launay, Mémorial des Missions Etrangères, (Paris, 1912-1916), I, nos 83-84.

2. On the Jesuit missions to China see G. Soulié de Norant, L'Epopée des Jésuites Français en Chine, (Paris, 1928).

3. See J. le Comte, Nouveaux Mémoires, (Amst., 1697), I, 8-10.

missionaries, but his role in the expedition seems to have been negligible.

In addition to the various clerics, there were also several gentilshommes on board, of whom the most important was the chevalier de Forbin, who had a long and varied military career. After his adventures in Siam, where he worked as an engineer in Bangkok, and defended the fortress during the revolt of the Macassars in 1687, he fought alongside Jean Bart in 1689, and was then engaged in a number of sea battles until he retired from service in 1710.

Of this odd collection of people, Choisy was not the only one to leave an account of the journey. Chaumont left a Relation de l'ambassade à la cour du roi de Siam, (Paris, 1686) and Tachard a Voyage de Siam des pères Jésuites, (Paris, 1686), probably the fullest and most coherent account of the expedition.¹ Le Comte's Nouveaux Mémoires sur l'état présent de la Chine, of which the first part, the "Lettre à Mgr Pontchartrain" deals with the journey to Siam and China, appeared in 1697, and Forbin's Mémoires in 1730 (Amsterdam). Other members of the expedition left manuscript accounts, two of which have been published recently: Bénigne Vachet's Mémoires appear in part in Launay's Histoire de la mission de Siam, (Paris, 1920, Vol.I) and Bouvet's Voyage de Siam was published in an edition with critical notes in 1963 (Leiden), in which the editor, J. C. Gatty draws several parallels with Tachard's Voyage. The manuscript of Gerbillon's Relation, for some time in the Jesuit library at Lyon² is now in the Bibliothèque

1. Bourgeois and André ~~make~~ the following judgement: "L'auteur [Tachard] a les qualités sérieuses qui manquent à Choisy: il est loin d'avoir la légèreté d'esprit et de style que possédait son compagnon de voyage". Les Sources de l'histoire, I, 212, no.520.

2. See Sommervogel, II, col. 1347 (7).

Nationale varjiravuch of Bangkok. Michault gives some extracts from it in his mélanges historiques et philologiques.¹

Michault's assertion in this work that Choisy merely copied Gerbillon seems totally unfounded.² All the accounts necessarily bear a certain resemblance to one another, because of the obvious similarity of subject matter. Certain, but not all, of the extracts which Michault gives from Gerbillon correspond to the respective passages in Choisy, but only in so far as their content is concerned, and others deal with material that Choisy does not even mention. Also the fact that Gerbillon went on to China and did not return to France with Choisy automatically invalidates the argument, and it is strange that Michault himself did not realize this. On the other hand, certain passages of Gerbillon's Relation correspond word for word with Tachard.³ The Relation de Siam contained in the Mémoires of Saurches,⁴ too, is no more than Chaumont's account put in the third person, with some minor changes that this involves.

If the blame could be put on any one person, it would be tempting to say that Bénigne Vachet was responsible for giving the false impression that the King of Siam was ripe for conversion to Christianity. It was he who accompanied two Siamese envoys to France in 1684, and who had a private meeting with the père de la Chaise soon after his arrival. He was convinced of the utility of sending an embassy to Siam as soon as possible, and put forward the conversion of the

1. Paris, 1754, I, 400-423.

2. *ibid.*, I, 257-258.

3. cf. for example Michault, I, 259 and Tachard, Relation, p.2.

4. Paris, 1882, I, 400-423.

monarch as a prime reason for this move - the first time a full-scale embassy was sent to an Eastern monarch by the king of France.

The interest of all the parties concerned was obvious. The King of Siam and his minister Constance Phaulkon were frightened by the strength of the Dutch presence in the Far East, and eager to enlist French support. The King was prepared to make some concessions to Christianity with this end in view, but certainly never intended to be converted himself. Louis, on the other hand, was attracted by the trading possibilities that such an expedition would open up, and further encouraged by the thought of converting the Siamese monarch. The père de la Chaise,¹ too, saw an opportunity for the expansion of Jesuit influence in the East, especially since Phaulkon had been converted by a Dutch member of that society.

The embassy clearly worked on two different levels of negotiation. Chaumont was ostensibly the ambassador from the court of Louis to that of the King of Siam. He presented the letter to the King, and pronounced a harangue; he also signed a treaty with Monsieur Constance which gave Christians in Siam certain assurances of freedom of speech and conscience (p.289 ff.), in return for which the French gave promises of offensive and defensive military support. It is clear as to who had made the better bargain.²

In addition to this, however, the père de la Chaise had asked Tachard to negotiate privately with Phaulkon, to gain his confidence and make secret arrangements concerning the

1. See G. Guittou, Le Père de la Chaize, (Paris, 1959), II, 5-25.

2. See L. Launier, Relations de la France et du Siam, (Versailles, 1883).

French presence in Siam. By the agreement that they made, Phaulkon was to give the French military positions in return for soldiers and ships.¹ He seemed genuinely to desire the progress of Christianity in Siam and so promised Tachard that he would encourage its adherents. Phaulkon followed up these negotiations by a letter to the père de la Chaise in November 1686,² in which he again spoke of the need for a strong presence in the country, and pledged himself to help the Christian missionaries to spread the Gospel. These negotiations were strictly secret however and the decisions reached on the level of Constance Phaulkon-Tachard-père de la Chaise were not revealed officially to Chaumont or Choisy. The embassy, far from working as one, was split at times into small groups of individual negotiators, and even Choisy was involved in some private discussions with Constance.

The Journal du voyage de Siam,³ although by far the most important work, does not contain all that Choisy wrote about the expedition - and is particularly weak on details of political negotiations. We find more out about these in the pages devoted to this subject in his Mémoires, and also in the Lettre de Choisy (à bord de l'Oiseau, le 1er janvier, 1686), now in the Archives des Missions Etrangères,⁴ both of which were written for publication after Choisy's death, and which are consequently more outspoken on certain topics.

1. See Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Siam, (Paris, 1920), I, 179-180.

2. Now in the National Library of Japan at Tokyo.

3. In this thesis, the title of this work will be abbreviated to Journal.

4. Vol. VIII, f. 1-35; see also Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Siam, I, 162-168.

The Lettre envoyée à M. l'abbé Marinet, attributed to the abbé de Choisy, is in fact not by him. See Appendix III.

Let us first see, however, what conclusions can be drawn from the Journal itself. Encouraged no doubt by Vachet, Choisy's original hopes were clearly for a mass conversion of the Siamese people in imitation of their King:- "Un Roi se faire chrétien, un million d'âmes suivre son exemple" (p.43) and indeed on his arrival he reports that the King of Siam was enlightened in his treatment of missionaries - (it was in his interest to behave in a way that would be likely to improve relations with France) - and prepared to be tolerant towards his Christian subjects.

However, neither he nor his people showed any signs of being converted en masse:

"La conversion du Roi de Siam n'est pas une affaire prête. Il favorise la religion, il aime les missionnaires, il fait bâtir des églises: mais il est encore bien loin de se faire baptiser." (p.182)

A meeting with the abbé de Lionne confirmed this impression, and held out little hope of success for the missionaries:

"Le Roi de Siam ne s'est point déclaré sur la religion et même depuis dix-huit mois n'a point fait là-dessus de pas considérables." (p.184)

Other remarks too show that Choisy was clutching at straws, and reporting any statement made by the King that could possibly be interpreted in a Christian context.

His joy at being given a part to play in the ceremonial preceding the royal audience made him forget, at least for the time being, the real issues. He was allowed to carry the letter that Louis had sent to the King of Siam, and to show it to the people; we see from this how very insignificant his official role was, but he was obviously delighted at his

moment of glory:

"Il faudra bien honorer celui qui touchera la lettre du plus grand Roi du monde: on me donnera à moi seul un balon du Roi; j'irai à l'audience à côté de M. l'Ambassadeur, et j'y aurai une place réglée et honorable." (p.204)

When he was carried on a chair by eight men, his excitement was even greater:

"Je le [Chaumont] suivais aussi dans une chaise portée par huit hommes. Je ne me suis jamais trouvé à telle fête, et je croyais être devenu Pape." (p.210)

Choisy gives in his Journal the text of the speech delivered to the King of Siam by Chaumont, which insisted strongly on the fact that Louis desired above all things the conversion to Christianity of the King, but which was probably mistranslated by Constance in order not to provoke the monarch on such a delicate question. The letter sent by Louis also made this point,¹ and the King could not help remarking on it, after Constance had read it to him: "'Je vois bien que le Roi de France me veut faire chrétien'" (p.224).

On several occasions in his Journal Choisy mentions discussions that he has had with M. Constance or with Mgr Laneau, but gives no details. Chaumont's account is equally unhelpful in describing any negotiations that might have taken place at these meetings, his preoccupation with elephants obscuring rather more important issues! As we read on in the Journal, however, we see more and more indications of the true situation, and of Choisy's role in it. He realizes eventually that "C'est Monsieur Constance qui

1. The text of this letter is given by Tachard in his Voyage, p.240.

fait tout" and is impressed by the minister's efficiency, but is limited as to what he can reveal.

M. Constance is an enigmatic and complex figure, capable and scheming. Much has been written about him,¹ although there is little agreement about his character. For the time being, Choisy restricts himself to assessing his qualities - but we shall see later that he was also aware of his faults; here again Choisy could not be entirely outspoken at this juncture. There are likewise very few references to Tachard in the Journal, and Choisy passes without comment over the fact that he is returning to France with them, and not going on to China with the rest of the Jesuits, a clear indication of his special role in the proceedings.

By this stage, though, it is quite clear that Choisy's silence is the result of discretion rather than ignorance, as we see by comparing the Journal with the other accounts. There were two things which he could not reveal in a work to which the public and the censors would have access. firstly his increasing awareness of the fact that any hopes of converting the King were totally unrealistic - this was something that the King and the père de la Chaise had been led to believe, and Choisy realized that it might not be wise to disillusion them - and secondly that his own role and that of Chaumont had little more than symbolic significance, and that the practical trading and military arrangements were being made by Tachard.

If we now turn to the Lettre and Mémoires, however, we shall see that Choisy in fact knew far more than he could reveal in his Journal. The Lettre, or as Choisy himself

1. See E. W. Hutchinson, Revolution in Siam, 1688, (Hong Kong, 1968), Bibliography, p.162 ff.

more accurately described it, the "petite relation particulière [...] où je mettrai toute la suite des négociations, qui s'est faite à Siam", is a more detailed account of his own role in the proceedings. Choisy explains that his own official orders were that he should stay with the King of Siam if he showed any signs of being converted to Christianity: clearly this did not prove to be necessary. In this "relation", though, he tells us exactly how they were welcomed in Siam. Mgr Laneau went into Chaumont's rooms on board ship, and Choisy received the abbé de Lionne. His illusions must have been shortlived, and this account shows that the situation was immediately clarified:

"Je lui [abbé de Lionne] dis d'abord que Monsieur l'Ambassadeur venait proposer au Roi de Siam de la part du Roi de se faire Chrétien: Il parut surpris de cette proposition et me dit net que les choses n'étaient point en cet état-là ... [...] le Roi de Siam ne paraissait pas trop attaché à ses idoles, mais [...] il y avait bien loin de là à recevoir le baptême."¹

and this confirms what the abbé de Choisy had said in his Journal.

They were then advised by the Bishop to act through Constance Phaulkon, and Choisy seems at this stage to have been considerably more aware than either Laneau or Chaumont of the real purpose behind the King's concessions to the French, and his generosity to the missionaries. As we have seen it was in Phra Narai's interest to foster rumours about his conversion:

"Plus le Roi de Siam avait peur des Hollandais, plus ses beaux discours m'étaient suspects, et peut-être il allongerait son instruction pour avoir en attendant la protection du Roi."²

1. Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Siam, I, 162.

2. *ibid.*, p.164.

Choisy was received alone on a number of occasions by Monsieur Constance through the intermediary of Paumart, a French missionary and confident of Phaulkon, and it was then that he was told that the King had not in fact been fully informed of the situation, and that he was doing little more than maintaining false hopes in the interest of political security: Constance, therefore, to correct any disadvantageous impressions that might have been created, intended to send letters to Louis "qui donneraient grande espérance de la conversion du Roi de Siam".¹

Choisy then explained the situation to Chaumont, who nevertheless signed soon afterwards a "ligue offensive et défensive entre le Roi de France et le Roi de Siam". This is, as we have seen, in addition to the agreement concerning Bangkok signed by Tachard. Choisy expressed his dissatisfaction with this treaty, and by so doing incurred Constance's displeasure - "il n'a plus eu aucune confiance pour moi". He says little more about Tachard in this "relation" but since it was written before he left Siam, Choisy was probably still exercising a certain amount of discretion.

The part of the Mémoires relating to Siam is relatively brief (pp.142-156), and contains within this short space one digression. It is vital, however, to an understanding of the situation, since it explains certain points that were passed over without elaboration in the Journal. It begins as follows:

"Me voici arrivé à une affaire où l'on me pardonnera bien si je m'étends plus que de coutume: c'est l'affaire de Siam [...] je marquerai beaucoup de petites particularités fort ignorées du public; je tâcherai même de ne rien dire de ce

1. Launay, Histoire de la Mission de Siam, I, 165.

qui est déjà dans mon journal. Je proteste que j'y ai toujours dit vrai, mais que je n'ai pas toujours dit tout ce que je savais. Or, dans ces Mémoires-ci je ne garderai point de mesures, et dirai tout sans déguisement." (p.142)

He talks about his initial outburst of enthusiasm, of the persistence he showed in order to become coadjuteur d'ambassade, and of the imperious way in which Seignelay dealt with him - and he cannot resist telling us about the harangue he would have delivered if Chaumont had died!

The most important section contains Choisy's retrospective judgement on the whole issue, which although brief, brings in all the major considerations that he was unable to discuss openly in his Journal, although he hinted at some of them. The first point he makes is as follows:

"Dès que nous fûmes arrivés à Siam, et que j'eus entretenu l'évêque de Metellopolis et l'abbé de Lionne, je connus clairement qu'on avait un peu grossi les objets, et que le Roi de Siam voulait bien protéger les Chrétiens, mais non pas embrasser leur religion; qu'il avait agi en politique qui veut attirer les étrangers et le commerce dans son pays, et s'assurer une protection contre les Hollandais." (p.149)

He then goes on to show that it was in fact Tachard who took the later negotiations in hand, and who had the necessary authority to make terms with Constance Phaulkon:

"Il [Constance] me proposa de donner au Roi la ville de Banco, à condition qu'on y enverrait des troupes, des ingénieurs, de l'argent et des vaisseaux. Le chevalier de Chaumont et moi ne crûmes pas la chose faisable [...]. La chose en demeura là.

"Il arriva une affaire dont M. Constance voulut parler au chevalier de Chaumont. Il fallait un interprète: il se servit du père Tachard; il lui trouva un esprit doux, souple, rampant et pourtant hardi, pour ne pas dire téméraire; il

lui parla de la pensée qu'il avait eue, pensée que nous avions traitée de chimère. Le père Tachard offrit de s'en charger, de la faire réussir: il dit à M. Constance que nous n'avions aucun crédit à la cour (il n'avait pas grand tort), et que s'il voulait en écrire au père de la Chaise, sa révérence en viendrait bien à bout." (p.149)

This occurred during the period of Choisy's retreat prior to taking holy orders. Paumart came to tell him what had happened, and although Choisy says he did not learn of Tachard's role until after his return to France, he can have been in little doubt as to where the real power lay:

"Je ne voulus pas quitter ma retraite, et je laissai faire le père Tachard, qui par là me souffla un beau crucifix [...] dont le bon père fut régalé avec justice, puisque le chevalier de Chaumont et moi n'étions plus que des personnages de théâtre, et qu'il était le véritable ambassadeur, chargé de la négociation secrète. Je ne sus tout cela qu'après être arrivé en France." (pp.149-150)

He also feels that he can give a fuller portrait of Constance Phaulkon, and while he does not go back on what he has said in the Journal, he is clearly in no doubts as to M. Constance's unscrupulousness. As he says on other occasions in the Mémoires, he is anxious to paint a fair picture of those he portrays in the work, and this appreciation of Constance shows an understanding both of his talents and of the misuse to which he has put them:

"C'était un des hommes du monde que avait le plus d'esprit, libéral, magnifique, intrépide, plein de grandes idées [...]. Il était fier, cruel, impitoyable, d'une ambition démesurée. Il avait soutenu la religion chrétienne, parce qu'elle pouvait le soutenir; et je ne me serais fié à lui que dans les choses où son élévation n'aurait^{pas} trouvé son compte." (p.150)

This, then, is the complicated political situation which

is revealed gradually in Choisy's successive writings. He certainly only fully understood it after his return to France, and this is why the synopsis in his Mémoires is the version which best elucidates the political manœuvres which were going on behind the façade of a Christian mission sent by Louis to bring about the conversion of the "très-haut, très-excellent, et très-magnanime Prince, notre très-cher et bon ami",¹ the King of Siam.

Finally, before returning to the Journal in more detail, it would perhaps be useful to recall briefly what happened in Siam during the two years following Choisy's return to France (1686-1688).

Two members of the expedition, Delamare and Forbin, were left in Siam, at the request of Phaulkon, in order to undertake defensive works at Bangkok and Mergui. Phaulkon had also sent a message to Louis to ask for French money, troops, engineers, and ships. Preparations were made, and in 1687, the Siamese ambassador, together with his interpreter the abbé de Lionne, Tachard, and two French envoys, Céberet and la Loubère, reached Siam. The troops who accompanied them were led by Desfarges.

By this time, however, Phaulkon's position of authority was being undermined. The royal succession was uncertain, since the King had two brothers, his rightful heirs, of whom the eldest was deformed and sickly, and a natural son called Monpi, on whom he lavished a great deal of attention. There was religious discontent too, as the Buddhist monks (talapoins) resented the interest being taken in Christianity, which accompanied the growing resentment both of the French presence

1. Tachard, voyage, p.240.

and of Phaulkon's increasingly tyrannical rule: his authority now depended entirely on remaining in favour with the King, since he had lost all popular support.

Another threat to the monarchy, and so to Phaulkon, was the Opra Pittracha,¹ a powerful mandarin, who claimed that the then king was a usurper, and fostered the feelings of discontent that already existed in the country. Nor could Phaulkon depend on French support, for although French troops were in charge of the fortress at Bangkok, they had been decimated by disease, and their general, Desfarges, had lost faith in Monsieur Constance. Matters were brought to a head in 1688 when the King became seriously ill, leaving Phaulkon to govern alone, but depriving him of the support on which he depended. The Opra Pittracha had by then gained popular acclaim, and Phaulkon found himself divested of all authority. Later that year he was arrested and put to death. The King died shortly afterwards, and the Opra Pittracha, having married his daughter, took over effective rule of the country.

Céberet, Forbin, la Loubère, and Tachard had all left earlier in 1688 or in 1687. The abbé de Lionne and the Jesuits left later that year, leaving the aged bishop of Metellopolis (Mgr Laneau) and some other members of the Missions Etrangères in Siam. These were imprisoned at Louvo, survived the revolution despite ill treatment, and were later released.

Relations with the French deteriorated rapidly. A 'peace' treaty of non-interference was signed between the two countries, and ratified when the Opra Pittracha signed a new treaty with the Dutch soon afterwards. Subsequent

1. There is again a wide diversity of Europeanized spellings, including Phra-Phret-Raxa and Pra P'et Râchâ.

attempts at reconciliation by Tachard in 1693 and 1697 proved unsuccessful, and the Opra's successors seemed equally unwilling to negotiate with France. Internal difficulties caused by the Burmese invasion of 1767 further isolated Siam, and not until 1856 was a new commercial treaty concluded between the two nations.

2. Content

We will now consider the text of the Journal in its own right, firstly as a travel document and then as a work of literature.

It takes the form of a series of daily 'entries' - an unusual feature, since most contemporary accounts are written retrospectively¹ - spanning the period from 3 March 1685 to 18 June 1686. Choisy himself says that he has promised to keep this record for Dangeau, to whom the "petit préambule" is obviously addressed:

"Je vous ai promis un Journal de mon voyage, et je vais me mettre en état de vous tenir parole. J'écrirai tous les soirs ce que j'aurai vu." (p.1)

He keeps his word, and no day is missed, even if nothing has happened.

Choisy writes the entries in his Journal as if he were writing to someone who would receive his news soon afterwards, another unusual feature in travel documents. Thus on 1 January, he sends New Year's greetings to his reader (Dangeau), although there is no possibility of his receiving them on time. All evidence in fact points to the 'letters' never having been sent; the Bishop of Metellopolis had given some letters to Choisy for him to take to Europe, so obviously no boats were expected to reach France before l'Oiseau. Also Choisy clearly still has the Journal of the outward journey in his possession during the return journey, as he mentions having consulted it on one occasion:

"Je m'aperçois qu'en venant je me jettais sur la bagatelle, quand les aventures me manquaient." (p.369)

1. Tachard, Chaumont, Forbin for example. Charadin's Voyage en Perse, (Amsterdam, 1686), is in diary form.

It is clear though that he was writing with Dangeau in mind; he refers to Dangeau's house and friends in an intimate and sometimes enigmatic way that could have no interest for the general reader (e.g. p.51), and also mentions that he wants to re-read his notes with Dangeau in his old age:

"Vous garderez précieusement le Journal; et quand nous serons bien vieux, nous le relirons auprès des tisons." (p.49)

The fact that Choisy does write 'letters' as if they were to be read soon is one of the most attractive features of the work. By doing this he conveys a sense of continuity, and carries on an imaginary dialogue at times, which would have been out of character in a diary, and clumsy in a retrospective work. Also, apart from the one or two references aimed specifically at Dangeau, it is quite possible for the reader to put himself in the place of the recipient of the 'letters', and so share Choisy's experiences as he records them.

Choisy wrote his Journal daily, and sometimes more than once during the day. On 30 May 1685, for example, they wait impatiently to sight land:

"Le Cap ne paraît point encore: [...] il n'y a point de nuages, il faut que nous en soyions encore à plus de vingt lieues "

but he writes later the same day:

"Terre, terre, c'est tout de bon; on voit la terre, on voit le Cap." (p.68)

On such occasions, Choisy writes first early in the day, and

then confirms or adds information later on. This gives a clear indication of how he composed the account, and contributes to the impression of spontaneity we have when reading it. When they are approaching an island, probably Java, he says:

"Ce soir, au coucher du soleil nous vous dirons le nom de la terre que nous voyons."

and then

"C'est assurément l'île de Java. Nous en sommes à trois lieues." (p.126)

This structure is naturally more dramatically effective than Tachard's

"Ce fut un samedi dix-huitième d'août [...] que nous mouillâmes à la rade de Batavia."

Choisy does not return to what he has already written, as we have seen, nor does he ever wait long enough to see the events he is describing in any sort of perspective. In this way the reader makes his discoveries almost at the same time as the author, and the unexpected is never blunted by the sort of prediction that is possible in a retrospective narrative. When Choisy talks about the progress of l'Oiseau, then, he has as little idea of what will delay or speed up its journey as the reader. On the return journey, he writes on 22 February 1686:

"J'ai parié contre M. l'Ambassadeur un bœuf pour l'équipage, que nous serons mouillés au Cap le 10 mars." (p.377)

and on 9 March they believe that they are nearing the Cape because of a good sounding. Choisy here reports the events of a whole day, but in strictly chronological order so that the moment of elation at their discovery:

"Le pilote crie, terre, fonds. Grande joie: [...] On mesure déjà le chemin jusqu'au Cap: il n'y a plus que soixante lieues."

is in no way marred for the reader by the disappointment that is to follow:

"Il faut resonder: on ne trouve plus rien; [...] Nous revoici encore à cent quarante lieues du Cap." (p.381)

In this way, even when describing the events of the day in retrospect, Choisy never tells us what is going to happen, but always maintains an element of surprise,¹ and by recording disasters and storms almost as he experiences them, he adds to the impression of urgency and turmoil at moments of crisis.

By the meticulous regularity of his entries, and the lack of any revision of the text, Choisy, too, conveys the monotony of days when they are becalmed. On the long sea passage from Siam to the Cape in February and March 1686, many uneventful days passed, and they are reflected in the entries for 20 February to 2 March, none of which exceeds

1. D'Alembert says of this "On voyage avec lui, on est présent à tout ce qu'il raconte, et quand la lecture est achevée, on regrette que cette longue route ne l'ait pas été d'avantage". Histoire des membres de l'Académie Française, (Paris, 1787), I, 322.

five lines:

"27. février

Vent assez fort, assez contraire: on va au plus près; et tout ce qu'on peut gagner se perd par la dérive et par la variation.

28. février

Tout de même.

1. mars

Bon vent, qui nous a fait faire trente-deux lieues.

2. mars

Dix-neuf lieues " (p.378)

and so on. Nothing is happening, Choisy has lost interest in telling the reader about the Far East, or about Africa, and we have to wait with him for conditions to improve. Although this sometimes makes for boring reading, it does allow us to follow more closely a long sea voyage in the seventeenth century than an account which omits the uneventful days, and only mentions the exciting incidents.

This basic framework of daily reports forms the underlying structure of the Journal. Over and above this, the work is divided roughly into three parts with the first and longest section describing the outward journey (up to 25 September 1685). The most sustained narrative is in the central section, dealing with Siam itself: the last part, which deals ostensibly with the return journey, and so is potentially rather short of new material, contains two virtually independent sections, dealing with the history of the Kingdoms of Siam, Tong-King, and Cochin China.

The Journal consists largely of first-hand observation. Life on board ship and the events which take place on the outward journey occupy much of the first part of the work. This is interspersed with the author's thoughts on a variety

of subjects, religious or philosophical, with an occasional look at the life he has left behind, and regular reports on the weather or their position. The first break from this pattern comes on 8 June when they leave the Cape of Good Hope:

"Je suis d'avis, pendant que je m'en souviens, de vous dire tout ce que je sais du Cap de Bonne Espérance." (p.77, cf. Tachard, voyage, p.60 ff)

There follows a synopsis of the history of the Cape, and of the native inhabitants, of their laws and customs, and of the Dutch settlement. He then goes on to talk about the animals that are found there, and the food that is eaten by the people. He ends his account characteristically and rather abruptly:

"Je suis las d'écrire du Cap. Si dans la suite je me souviens de quelque autre chose, je le fourrerai où je pourrai. Ce n'est pas ici une relation en forme; ce sont lettres très-familières, où l'on met tout ce qui vient au bout de la plume." (p.81)

In such a letter, Choisy includes both what he has observed himself and what he has been told by others of the history and present state of the country. He has obviously seen, for example "plus de cent maisons à une portée de mousquet de la forteresse, toutes propres et blanches à la hollandaise" (p.77) but his information on the religion and customs of the Hottentots, on the other hand, is unlikely to have been gleaned first hand. He has been told about their way of life, and is simply passing the information on to the reader. Before going ashore at the Bantam coast, their next port of call, Choisy offers the reader some historical details

as an introduction:

"Voici [...] quelque chose de l'histoire de Bantam, en attendant que j'en sache davantage." (p.137)

He describes Batavia from his own observation in the following terms:

"Je suis venu aujourd'hui à terre. Batavie ressemble à toutes les villes de Hollande; les maisons blanches, toutes les rues entre deux canaux, de beaux arbres bien verts, le chemin des honnêtes gens est bien carrelé, le milieu des rues est bien sablé. On voit fourmiller un grand peuple." (p.142)

There follows soon afterwards a long section on the history of the Dutch in the Far East: Choisy's source of information on this was the "Abbé D. de Batavie", with whom he talked for two hours, although it is obvious from the presentation that he took the trouble to organize his facts, and does not simply quote his sources verbatim.

The central section, on Siam, is based almost entirely on Choisy's own observation, with elaborate descriptions of the ceremonies and customs that he witnessed. His days are too full of splendid and interesting events for him even to have time to fill in the background.

"26. novembre. Tous les jours plaisirs nouveaux. Nous avons vu le combat de trois éléphants contre un tigre." (p.282)

The section concludes with a copy of the treaty signed between Chaumont and Monsieur Constance, and with Choisy receiving the order of priesthood (pp.289-303).

Once the return journey has started, Choisy has time to write down all that he has learnt about Siam. From 18 January

to 21 January, he paints a detailed picture of the government, religion, customs, history, and geography of the country:

"Je ne vous dirai rien qu'après avoir consulté [...] au moins deux ou trois personnes d'esprit, témoins oculaires des choses; et quand leurs témoignages se sont rapportés, je les ai mis sur mes tablettes." (p.333)

Soon afterwards, there is an equally long section on Tong-King and Cochin China, which countries Choisy had not even visited; his own remarks serve merely as an introduction, and here we see him more or less in his capacity as editor.¹

As far as the overall construction is concerned, then, there is obviously a great difference between the middle section dealing with Siam and the outer sections concerning the journeys. Leaving aside the longer entries on the Cape, Batavia, and so on, there is still a large bulk of 'routine' entries for both the outward and return journeys. There are of course regular reports on progress; Choisy devotes a certain amount of time each day to telling us about the sea and the weather - the most important factors for the success of their expedition. He also describes life on board ship with its disadvantages and its rewards. A regular feature of their existence was the Sunday or feast-day sermon, which seems to have been delivered in a variety of styles, and from which Choisy occasionally draws a good deal of humour (e.g. pp.46, 108-109), and in addition to this there were

1. See p.354, and cf.

L. Cadière, "Les Européens qui ont vu le vieux Hué" in Bulletin des Amis du vieux Hué, (Hanoi, 1929), pp.101-130; "Mémoire de B. Vachet sur la Cochinchine" in the Bulletin de la Commission Archéologique de l'Indo-Chine, (1913), pp.1-77.

regular "conférences de piété" and catechism lessons given by Machard.

Material problems occupied a substantial part of their time. Food was not always very good, and although they never starved, they naturally lacked fresh fruit and vegetables (p.41). Lent proved too much of a challenge for Choisy and Fontaney, and Chaumont's rigid observance did not inspire the author to a similar zeal:

"Il est impossible de faire le Carême sur la mer: le père de Fontaney a été obligé à faire comme moi: il n'y a que M. le chevalier de Chaumont qui le puisse soutenir; et encore ne mange-t-il le soir qu'un petit morceau de biscuit, plus admirable en cela qu'imitable." (pp.26-27)

Eating on board does not seem to have been an easy process at all, at least for the uninitiated. Choisy describes a meal in graphic terms:

"On mange en volant. Chacun prend sur son assiette trois cuillerées de mortier, car le bouillon est trop casuel; et on se jette cela dans l'estomac [...] Il faut savoir toutes les règles du contrepois pour boire." (p.60)

Under these conditions it is not surprising that there was a good deal of seasickness (Choisy himself was afflicted on the return journey (p.132)), and those who succumbed to more serious illness were disposed of in the only possible way: "Nous avons ce soir jeté un matelot à la mer." (p.15)

The travellers had their distractions, however. The different groups of people on board amused themselves in a variety of ways, and Choisy gives a short account of their activities, which included music and dancing as well as astrology and chess. They occasionally discussed questions of philosophy, too, notably when a much travelled sheep

called Robin was killed because of a broken leg, so that they might eat it before it lost weight. The following extract illustrates graphically the spread of popular Cartesianism:

"Cet accident [Robin's] a mis la discorde dans le vaisseau. Quelqu'un s'est avisé de dire que Robin n'était qu'une machine. Là-dessus grande dispute. Tout le monde a pris parti; [...] les machinistes font une mine dédaigneuse. Les autres se croient fondés sur le bon sens et sur l'antiquité."
(p.109)¹

The Journal also gives us the opportunity of observing Choisy himself from a variety of angles. His activities during the journey are numerous, and he is well aware that he is undertaking too many studies, but he has an insatiable desire for new knowledge, on a superficial level. He is gifted with a facility for learning - both academic disciplines and nautical skills:

"On demande, Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire, Hisse le perroquet de fougue: on le demande une fois, deux fois, et puis on le sait; et ainsi du reste." (p.45)

but he fully realizes that he cannot hope to master all of them ("le Portugais, le Siamois, le sphère, le pilotage, la manœuvre, Euclide,") (p.12), although he justifies himself by saying that it is impossible to concentrate on one thing while at sea. As well as these new disciplines, he reads the Gospels and Nicole's Essais de morale, sings plain-song, studies the maps, and plays chess. He finds Siamese an absorbing study, and the two mandarins on board encourage him further (p.113). His study of Portuguese is rapid and

1. A logical development from Descartes' theory of dualism (q.v. this thesis, Ch.II, p.69) was the theory of the animal-machine, to which Choisy is clearly referring here.

superficial, and leads him to some rather strange linguistic conclusions (p.88); his progress in astronomy, on the other hand, is slow, but he has no illusions about his limitations in this field. He writes a self-effacing description to Dangeau of his efforts to help the Jesuits establish their position:

"Ne me trouvez-vous pas un grand astronome? Je n'y ai pas été tout à fait inutile: pendant que le père le Fontaney était à sa lunette et les autres avaient soin des pendules, je disais quelque fois, une, deux, trois, quatre, pour marquer les secondes." (p.73)

All these activities and interests contribute, however, to his breadth of knowledge and help to account for the variety of his published works. He is the archetype of the enthusiastic amateur - the dilettante - a fact that he himself recognized:

"Pour moi je tâte un peu de tout; et si je ne deviens pas savant [...] j'aurai au moins une légère teinture de beaucoup de choses." (p.54)

He writes to Dangeau on occasions as a child would write to its father, accounting for what it has done, and obviously proud of what it has learnt or achieved. He is free from all presumption however, and although generally tolerant condemns this failing in others. He is usually prepared to overlook the foibles of his fellow travellers (he had little cause for self-righteousness), but cannot forgive those who think too highly of themselves:

"Il y en a dans notre petite république, qui ont en main une raison toujours dominante. On meurt d'envie de se révolter contre eux, et de leur refuser même la justice." (p.40)

The garden of the governor of Batavia, with its pretentious fountains, earns this scathing comment:

"Nous avons aussi été voir le jardin de Monsieur le Général, qui est peu de chose. Ils font grand cas d'un colifichet qui pisse quand la pompe a joué." (p.149)

We are also able to trace from the Journal something of Choisy's spiritual development following his conversion. Clearly the temptations to which he had been subjected on land were less strong at sea, and he is the first to acknowledge this, but his growth of religious commitment during this period constituted more than a negative avoidance of 'sin'. He had plenty of time to think about his faith, and also to realize its consolations in time of danger (p.10). There was every encouragement to piety, too, as we have seen, with frequent exhortations, which apparently touched the crew as well as the missionaries - "Il n'y a pas un homme sur notre vaisseau qui ne veuille aller en Paradis" (p.18). Choisy himself travelled with a clear conscience, and he thought of those who in time of danger could not hope for anything beyond death. The short passage which follows is a particularly fine meditation on the way in which bad weather brings the travellers abruptly face to face with their consciences and with their frailty:

"Il en vient de venir un [coup de vent] si furieux que nous nous sommes tous regardés: et cependant, ô la bonne chose qu'une bonne conscience! nous n'avons point trop peur [...] Rien n'est si fragile que la vie; et je ne comprends pas comment ceux qui ne croient que cette vie [...] veulent aller à la tranchée ou sur la mer. Ils devraient, en suivant leur raisonnement, se tenir toujours dans une boîte [...] en vérité la mer en colère est un prédicateur pathétique; et le père Bourdaloue se tairait devant elle." (pp.102-104)

As the results testify, his missionary zeal was as unrealistic as it was sincere, and his elated hopes on the outward journey show little understanding of the practical problems (pp.43-44 for example). Although he was obviously disappointed by the failure of the mission, Choisy's faith was nevertheless sufficiently well founded for him to consider his own vocation seriously, and from 7 December to 10 December he received the minor orders, the diaconates, and finally the order of priesthood. On the day of his ordination, he declares his faith in what the future will bring, and he looks back to the strength he has received in the past:

"Me voici donc prêtre. Quel terrible poids je me suis mis sur le dos! Il faudra le porter; et je crois que Dieu qui connaît ma faiblesse, m'en diminuera la pesanteur, et me conduira toujours par ce chemin de roses, que j'ai trouvé si heureusement chez vous, au sortir des bras de la mort." (p.303)

He said his first Mass on board ship on 6 January and preached his first sermon on 3 March, exactly a year after leaving Brest. The conversion on which many of his contemporaries had cast scorn¹ had been valid, and reached its fruition in priesthood.

Choisy obviously lost some of the initial enthusiasm which took him to Siam but on the journey there, any periods of depression were compensated for by moments of triumph. After the combined ordeals of Lenten observance and a long sea voyage, Choisy exclaimed on Easter morning 1685:

"22. avril
Que nous avons chanté avec plaisir, 'Alleluia'! Que les poules étaient dodues! Que le mouton était gras!" (p.43)

1. D'Olivet in his Vie says "il est certain qu'il ne fut déterminé à entreprendre ce voyage, que par des considérations humaines, et surtout pressé par ses créanciers" (p.115).

He nevertheless thinks nostalgically of France from time to time, and the noticeable brevity of many of the entries on the return journey show that his first interest was to reach Brest. He has relatively little to say about their second stay at the Cape, and his Easter morning entry for 1686, when compared with that for the preceding year, speaks for itself:

"14. avril

Enfin Pâques est venu: nous étions bien las au Carême." (p.395)

On the whole, though, he took the trials of the journey with remarkable equanimity and resisted the temptation to grumble. His confidence in divine providence, which was to manifest itself again after his return (see Mémoires, p.152) is summed up in the following entry:

"Quand un homme est bien déterminé à recevoir tout ce qui arrive comme venant de la part de Dieu, il est au-dessus de tout: disgrâce, maladie, mort; si c'est la volonté de Dieu, pourquoi nous y opposer? pourquoi nous chagriner?" (pp.309-310)¹

1. cf. Quatre Dialogues, p.5.

3. Literary significance

The group of accounts which resulted from the 1685 expedition were not the first works to be written in French on Siam, but, as we have seen, the contact between the two countries was so shortlived as to make them the most important single contribution. Among the works which had appeared before, and were to appear after Choisy's expedition, Jacques de Bourges had produced a Relation du voyage de M. l'Evêque de Bérythe [Pierre de la Motte-Lambert] jusqu'au royaume de Siam (1666) and Mgr Pallu had published a Relation abrégée des missions et voyages des Evêques français (1668). Later works include the second Voyage of Tachard, (Paris, 1689), Gervaise's Histoire naturelle et politique du royaume de Siam (1688) and Simon de la Loubère's Du Royaume de Siam (1691)¹; the political situation after 1688 brought all intercourse to a close. Martino does not mention the two earlier accounts, but is otherwise accurate in saying that informative writings on Siam had virtually ceased to appear by the beginning of the eighteenth century.² He has also traced all other oriental influences on French literature - Persian, Arabic, Turkish and so on, and suggests that any specifically Siamese influence was limited to a short period at the end of the seventeenth century.³

1. For a comprehensive bibliography see H. Cordier, Bibliotheca Indosinica, (Paris, 1912), esp. Vol.I, cols 714 ff.
2. Martino, L'Orient dans la littérature française, (Paris, 1906), p.101.
3. Martino suggests the dates 1685-1705. I think one should enlarge this period to include the two earlier accounts I have just mentioned. On the other hand, 1700 would be a more accurate terminus ad quem. Voltaire (Essai sur les mœurs, ed. Garnier, Paris, 1963, p.318) makes the following remark: "Je ne vous parlerai pas ici du royaume de Siam, qui n'a été bien connu qu'au temps où Louis XIV en reçut une ambassade, et y envoya des missionnaires et des troupes également inutiles."

In addition to reading travel accounts, the court had also been made conscious of the East by the visits of Eastern ambassadors, including the envoys from Siam, described by Lonneau de Visé in the Voyage des ambassadeurs siamois en France, published in four parts (Paris, 1686-1687).¹ As well as this Galland's translations of the Mille et une nuits began to appear in 1704, the Jesuits' Lettres édifiantes et curieuses came out at various stages throughout the eighteenth century, and the successive editions of d'Herbelot's Bibliothèque orientale appeared in 1697-1698, 1776-1779, and 1781.

One of the most characteristic features of all these travel accounts, and one which Choisy shares with his contemporaries is derived from the methods of observation and description employed. Perhaps the most strikingly novel passage in the Journal occurs when Choisy is criticising the sermon preached by the père Gerbillon, in which the author adopts a standpoint - consciously or unconsciously - that was to play a vital role in much eighteenth century satirical writing - that of false objectivity. We shall consider this again when dealing with details of the section on Siam itself, but this isolated passage is too important to be ignored. This is the extract in full:

"Le père Gerbillon a prêché sur l'enfer, avec beaucoup d'esprit. Il dit de fort belles choses; mais avec un peu trop de véhémence, qu'il saura bien modérer à la Chine. Car on n'y prêche point, on parle de bon sens, on raisonne juste; et quand les Chinois voient un prédicateur tout hors de lui, qui crie au haut de la tête, ils se mettent à rire, et disent: 'A qui en a-t-il? contre qui veut-il se battre? et croit-il me persuader en me montrant qu'il se laisse aller à ses passions, et que la colère le transporte?'" (pp.121-122)

1. See also Langeau, Journal ed. Soulié etc. (Paris, 1854), I, 354.

Choisy is here looking, in a way that for him is quite novel, beyond the familiarity with which a seventeenth century Frenchman would have seen an enthusiastic preacher, and portraying him in the perspective of reason. He is trying to arrive at an objective re-appraisal of a familiar figure, and he uses an Asian point of view to do it; whereas in the West vehemence would be interpreted as religious zeal, in the East it would be seen merely as a lack of self-control. In addition, he turns his preacher into a figure of fun, by making his own audience laugh at him - it is unlikely that Choisy was in fact attacking Gerbillon on this occasion, and he certainly intended no attack on Christianity, but he nevertheless uses the same kind of critical distancing that Montesquieu was later to use to such effect. We are reminded of Rica's remark when he is trying to adjust to the speed of Parisian life:

"Pour moi, qui ne suis point fait à ce train, et qui vais souvent à pied sans, changer d'allure, j'enrage quelquefois comme un Chrétien."¹

Choisy uses a variety of formulas to portray Eastern customs in Western terms. When talking about Java or Siam in terms of France, he is comparing an oriental civilization with a Western one, and because of this, he frequently draws parallels when dealing with social, political and religious questions. The Siamese noblemen the Opras and Oyas, for example, "sont comme les Maréchaux de France, et les Ducs

1. Montesquieu, Lettres persanes, ed. P. Vernière, (Paris, 1960), p.55.

et Pairs." (p.192-193)¹

He reports at some length the day of the audience, and the compromise in national customs that was necessary so that neither monarch should feel humiliated: he describes the ceremonial, the meal that followed, and then goes on to talk about the royal family.

On the way up-river to Louvo, Choisy's party meets the funeral procession of the "Grand Talapoin des Pégous". He is confronted with a rite that he does not understand and he describes it as an "ininitié" - he is the outsider, the Westener, who is witnessing a strange custom. In Choisy's case it is in fact thus, but it is easy to see the connexion between a genuinely objective description such as this, and an artificially constructed distancing, such as used by Montesquieu. Let us first consider Choisy:

"Au milieu s'élevait une représentation fort haute et dorée, avec une pyramide [...] Au bas de la pyramide étaient quarante ou cinquante talapoins marmotant certaines moralités, qu'ils croient soulager l'âme du défunt." (p.260)

This brings to mind Montesquieu's description of Christian practices seen through Moslem eyes. Speaking of the rosary, Rica says:

"Heureux celui qui a toujours prié Dieu avec de petits grains de bois à la main."²

1. cf. Chardin, Voyage en Perse, (Amst., 1686), p.317: "un Mehemander est comme un gentilhomme servant." Choisy's attitude is different when he talks about an 'uncivilized' people such as the Hottentots, who had none of the wealth of tradition of Eastern civilizations, e.g. p.78 of Journal.
2. Lettres persanes, p.66.

A link between these two positions is found in such a passage as the one quoted above from Choisy's Journal (pp.121-2), or in a writer such as Tavernier, who after describing a procession to a pagoda concludes: "Cette coutume ne doit pas nous paraître plus étrange que celle que j'ai vu pratiquer en Saxe et en plusieurs autres endroits d'Allemagne".¹ In these examples the two degrees of objectivity are placed side by side, and so help the reader to follow the development of the pseudo-objective outlook.

Choisy writes the fullest account of Siam on the return journey. He explains the geographical situation and the wars in which she had been involved; he gives the names of the principal towns and rivers as well as mentioning the crops and raw materials; he goes on to speak of the army and government, the legal situation, the penal system, and devotes several pages to a discussion of Siamese religious beliefs, which were based on metempsychosis, or "transmigrations", whereby there is a fixed number of souls, and the supreme state is one of annihilation, or "ni-rupan". In the same way that Choisy and other writers thus examined the social and religious structure of Eastern countries, Frenchmen were to re-examine their own society and beliefs, and the thematic treatment employed in this purely descriptive section was later to be used for satirical purposes in works on France.

The section on religious belief is one of the best examples of Choisy's presentation of oriental customs and values and three descriptive methods stand out. The first, as we have already seen, is that of the outsider, who does not know what is happening, and who cannot equate what he sees with the system of which it is a part (pp.260, 348 for

1. Voyage en Perse, Part II, (Paris, 1681), p.372.

example). The second sort of description that he uses is to employ Christian and more specifically Catholic terms of reference as corresponding approximately to Eastern concepts. The amount of Christian vocabulary in this section is considerable, both on the supernatural level - "paradis, enfer, bonheur éternel, bénédictions", and on the earthly one - "prêtres, sacrifice, confession". He also recalls Biblical concepts, such as when he says that the Siamese are exhorted to "garder les commandements que cet Homme [Ckodom] leur a laissé par écrit" (p.347).

Here again we see that what in Choisy was the obvious way to describe unfamiliar scenes and concepts became in satirical writers a deliberate technique to create the impression of objectivity, and we think on to Montesquieu's Persians, who speak of "dervis" (priests), "leur Alcoran" (the Bible), and "le grand Mufti" (the Pope). In this way he reverses the terms of reference (while using fundamentally the same means of comparison) by supplying Moslem approximations to describe Christian concepts.

Finally Choisy uses direct parallels to describe the role of certain features of Siamese religious life - for example the ancient language used in ritual celebrations:- "Ce Bali est comme le Latin parmi nous" (p.348). In this case there is a direct equivalence between Eastern and Western custom, and so there are no difficulties in explaining the former. Furthermore, since the two languages fulfil a similar function, there is no critical evaluation of the Eastern practice. Direct parallels give little scope for satire, since they imply equality; it was from practices that could be explained in a slightly falsified perspective that satirists

drew their materials.¹

The next section deals with the history and customs of Cochin China and Tong-King. It takes the form of a study of the countries' geography and history, their peoples and government - and again a parallel is drawn with France: thus the statement that the "'Tlammes-toues [...] sont comme les Maréchaux de Cochinchine" (p.363) is followed by a series of comparisons between the respective military ranks. It is quite likely, too, that Choisy simply enjoys using exotic words to add colour to his narrative; a regular feature of French 'Oriental' literature is the inclusion of strange-sounding words to evoke the 'mystery' of the East. If the literary interest of this section is limited, it is historically significant as one of the earliest French accounts of these two kingdoms.²

1. Equivalent examples of a Westerner describing Eastern customs can be found in other travel journals concerned with the Near East and Far East. Tavernier provides the three following in his Voyage de Perse, one of the inspirations behind the Lettres persanes:
 - (a) the unenlightened onlooker on a Persian festival:
 "Ils ont un caillou en chaque main qu'ils frappent l'un contre l'autre, en faisant mille contorsions de corps et de visage, et criant incessamment, Hussein, Hocen." (I, 385)
 - (b) the use of Western Christian terminology as an approximate equivalent:
 "On voit dans les coins des places [...] des chaires dressées pour des Prédicateurs [...] qui préparent le peuple à la dévotion de la fête." (I, 385)
 - (c) exact equivalent:
 "Les Persans ont de ce dernier imam la même opinion que nous avons d'Enoch et d'Elie." (I, 384)
 Obviously, though, on the question of religious beliefs, Choisy unlike some of his contemporaries, has no doubts as to the superiority of Christianity over other faiths, cf. Ch.VII, p.304.

2. See L. Cadière, "Les Européens qui ont vu le vieux Hué: l'abbé de Choisy" in Bulletin des amis du vieux Hué, (Hanoi, 1929), pp.101-130.

Although I have drawn parallels between certain passages of Choisy and Montesquieu, it is almost certainly true to say that Montesquieu had not read the Journal.¹ Desgraves does not list it in the Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de Montesquieu (Geneva, 1954) and there is no point in looking for a direct source of inspiration, since Montesquieu obviously drew first and foremost on Near Eastern travel accounts. Any similarity of theme or treatment comes from the fact that both authors either contributed to or drew inspiration from the general Oriental consciousness that was playing a significant part in French thought at the time.

Martino sees Marana as a leading figure in this movement; his L'Espion du Grand Seigneur (first published in French at Paris, 1684) describes the impressions of a Turk at the court of Louis XIV, and is the first substantial example of Oriental perspective used for satirical purposes, especially in the sphere of religion. Lufresny wrote his Amusements sérieux et comiques in 1699, and this combines a satirical purpose with a 'Siamese' background. To judge from the almost total lack of knowledge of Siamese customs which the author displays, however, it is legitimate to assume that he had not read the accounts of the country which had appeared shortly before. There are very few references to Siam, and those which do exist draw their ideas from a vague exoticism rather than from factual evidence² - there

1. He did, however, possess at least the first volume of Choisy's Histoire de l'Eglise. See L. Desgraves, Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de Montesquieu, (Geneva, 1954), no.189, cf. Montesquieu, Lettres persanes, ed. Garnier, 1960, p.192, n.2.

2. See Jean Vic in his introduction to the 1921 edition of the work, p.30.

is no mention of the sacred bird, for example, of which Dufresny speaks, in contemporary accounts. The most perceptive part of the work is the description of a gaming room by the Siamese in the "Fragment d'une lettre siamoise" (1929 edn pp.135-136), which has the same qualities of wit and observation in a deliberately falsified perspective as Montesquieu's treatment of the same subject (Lettres persanes, p.118). As Dr Shackleton says, however, "it is clearly an exaggeration to attribute to it a determining role in the genesis of the Lettres persanes".¹ The secondary interest of a portrayal of Eastern mœurs that plays an important part in the Lettres persanes is totally lacking in the Dufresny work. Whereas we know that Montesquieu had taken the trouble to document himself on Persia before writing the Lettres persanes, there are very few examples of any similar use being made of Siamese resources available - only later in the eighteenth century do we see any evidence of works relating more specifically to Siam. There is a short section in Montesquieu's De l'Esprit des lois,² for which Miss Dodds cites Forbin and la Loubère as sources.³ Prévost too includes a section on Siam and the Far East in his immense Histoire générale des voyages⁴ which is a compilation from various sources. The two other works which we must now consider are the anonymous

1. R. Shackleton, Montesquieu, (Oxford, 1961), p.31, n.2.

2. Montesquieu, De l'Esprit des lois, ed. Laboulaye, (Paris, 1877), Liv.XIV, Ch.V, Vol.IV, p.154. See also Vol.V, p.185.

3. Muriel Dodds, Les Récits de voyages, sources de l'Esprit des lois, (Paris, 1929), p.88, n.6 and n.7, p.89.

4. Vols V and VI, in particular, contain references to Siam.

novel Minakalis, published in London c.1750¹ and the Lettres siamoises also probably published in London in 1751.²

Minakalis, fragment d'un conte siamois is a chaotic story which includes both satire and exoticism, but does not succeed in combining the two. The plot, which is held together only by a series of gratuitous developments, is self-consciously 'Oriental' in its use of exotic names, such as Zen-zo-Zen, and expressions like "par Brama". The intention of the work is apparently a satire on French mœurs in general, and literary genres in particular, and the attempts at concealing French institutions behind 'Siamese' names are, perhaps deliberately, transparent. The city called Rogram is obviously Paris, and there is no problem in identifying the "Comédie Rogramienne" for example.

The satire, which deals with poets and playwrights and has something in common with Boileau, in that it attacks boring authors above all else, and recommends that they be locked up in a "Maison des Incurables" - the chief character

1. Not c.1732 as Martino says, as the work contains a reference to the Esprit des lois which did not appear until 1748. Barbier gives the date of publication as 1752. The work is attributed (Barbier, Cioranescu, B.N. catalogue) to François-Antoine Chevrier (1721-1762) a satirist. See N. Gillet, Notice sur Chevrier, (Nancy, 1864), esp. pp.100-101.
2. This first edition is very rare, and only appears to exist in one library in Europe, the Bibliothèque Municipale de Nantes (according to Miss Vivienne Mylne's research on the subject). Details of the more common 1761 edition are identical. The work is attributed by Barbier and the B.N. catalogue to Joseph Landon and by Cioranescu to Jean Landon. Miss Mylne has listed him as Jean-Joseph Landon: almost nothing is known of his life though a few biographical details are given in Maubert de Gouvest, Lettres Iroquoises, ed. E. Balmas, (Milan, 1962), (Introduction, p.37, n.2). Much of the information in this footnote was given to me by Miss Mylne, to whom I am indebted for it.

dies of boredom, "maladie que nos Tragédies modernes ont rendu épidémique en France", (p.166) - depends in no way for its effectiveness on the oriental content of the work, however.

The anonymous Lettres siamoises describe the experiences of a Siamese gentleman who spent six years in Europe. This was one of a series of Lettres which appeared in the wake of Montesquieu's work and which imitated the epistolary form. It, too, is self-consciously Oriental, but at least the author seems to have studied some of the existing literature on the subject. The names are generally even more ludicrous than in Minakalis, but some of them do nevertheless correspond to familiar syllables, such as "Pra" (the title of the King of Siam) in the name of the character Neuing-Pra-Vaha-Sarapet. The 'footnotes' supposedly added by a European to explain certain terms to a Western reader, also emphasize the Oriental aspect. In this work though, inferior as it may be in many respects, do we see the satirical influence of Montesquieu alongside thematic borrowing from Siamese travel journals.

The Siamese vocabulary used is generally accurate - we recognize Oyas, Barkalon, Talapoins, Louvo and so on, and such a note as "Le rang des Oyas à Siam est égal à celui de Duc en France" (p.3), could have been taken straight from Choisy's Journal. The author can claim some knowledge too of his subject matter: in his discussions of "transmigrations" for example, he shows at least some understanding of the theory (e.g. pp.2-3, 32, 69, 83). The general outline of the work is reminiscent of the Lettres persanes and at the end of the work the author decides to return to Siam because of the political situation there - a conclusion similar to that of the earlier work. He also shows the fairness of judgement of Montesquieu's letters, by describing the

relative merits of the two civilizations. The Siamese visitor helps us to see more clearly the abuses and absurdities of France, but we are also made aware of the barbarities of some Siamese customs. Although we have no documented record of Talapoins sacrificing children or drinking blood (pp.24-25) the extremely vicious punishments inflicted on criminals in Siam are well authenticated by other accounts (e.g. Chaumont, Relation, p.172). There is also the by now inevitable indictment against French gaming houses¹ and fashions, theatres, eating habits, and so on.

If this work has any original points, it is in its occasionally vivid portrayal of an Oriental scene, or poetic description of ideas connected with metempsychosis, of which the ultimate goal is "une éternelle inaction" - "une vraie impassibilité qui est le degré sublime de bonheur"; the "extrême infélicité [...] est de ne pouvoir s'épurer, et d'avoir toujours des fautes à expier dans la prison du corps" (p.32). This come near to an accurate statement of Siamese beliefs, and is presented coherently. Yet how can we take seriously an Orientalism which gives us such phrases as "Tes entrailles vont tréssaillir, comme les feuilles de nos bananiers, agitées par le vent" (p.92)?

However, the Lettres siamoises, despite its frequent exaggeration and occasional imitation of Montesquieu, remains the most intelligent eighteenth century fictional use made of the Siamese accounts.

Other comments on Siam in the eighteenth century are limited to passing references in journals and critical works. Bayle gives a general history of missions in the Nouvelles de la république des lettres,² which he concludes by

1. cf. Dufresny, Amusements, (Amst., 1700), pp.93-96 and Lettres persanes, p.118.

2. In Bayle, Oeuvres diverses, (The Hague, 1725), I, 644 ff.

mentioning Choisy's account. St-Evremond is apparently bored by the whole question:

"Monsieur l'abbé de Choisy m'ennuie fort avec son Journal de vents et de routes.

"J'ai passé [...] au Livre de Confucius, le plus ennuyeux moral que j'aie jamais lu."

although he enjoys the parts where Choisy speaks about himself. There are generally favourable, though short reviews, in the Journal des savants,² Leclerc's Bibliothèque choisie,³ and Lelong's Bibliothèque de la France,⁴ and in the nineteenth century Sainte-Beuve commented on the fact that Choisy is seen in his Journal at his most sincere and likeable.⁵

Choisy's Journal forms a small part of the Oriental framework that was gradually built up during the latter half of the seventeenth century. It belongs to the history of a country whose period of vogue in France was shorter than most others, but it still captures the spirit of discovery and observation that was such an important element in French Orientalism, and which enabled men to widen their horizons and so enlarge their field of reference. There is no way of

1. In Saint-Evremond, Oeuvres complètes, (London, 1711), V, 57-58.

2. Paris edn 1688, p.301.

3. Amsterdam, 1718, VI, 274 ff.

4. Paris, 1768-1778, III, no.37301.

See also Lenglet du Fresnoy, Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, (Paris, 1772), XIV, 111, and Struvius, Bibliotheca Historica, (Leipzig), II, ii, p.90.

5. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du lundi, (Paris, 1858), III, 437.

knowing what impression Choisy's Journal left on its contemporary readers - it may not have been very great - but it was typical of a particular outlook, whose influence was above all to be seen in the works of Frenchmen who looked afresh at themselves through the eyes of a different civilization, and who, by beginning to challenge accepted values, furthered the spread of relativism in European thought. On the other hand, as I shall attempt to show in the conclusion, it is dangerous to read a more progressive outlook into this work than it in fact contains, and when considering Choisy's own values, it is important to understand that he largely failed to realize the implications of his observations.

CHAPTER IV

POPULARIZING HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS WORKS

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Introduction

Because of the very general nature of the title and the wide scope of the works under discussion in this section, a brief introduction is perhaps necessary.

From the moment of his conversion until the year before his death, that is throughout his active life as a writer, Choisy was engaged in various semi-scholarly pursuits of which the outcome was a series of largely superficial works, which in some ways reflected this learning. The topics which interested him most consistently were historical, and it was in this sphere that he undertook his most ambitious projects, the history of the early Valois kings of France, which he left unfinished, and the Histoire de l'Eglise, which he completed in 1723.

In addition to this he was a competent and often sensitive editor and translator, and I have studied his best effort in this field, the warmly written Vie de Madame de Miramion, somewhat more closely than the other works, in order to emphasize his understanding of the subject. His attempts at translation were accurate and his choice of works standard - the Psalms and the Imitation of Christ. Finally I have included some remarks on some popular moralizing stories, neither very typical of Choisy, nor a very representative example of his capabilities, but which enjoyed a certain popularity early in the eighteenth century.

In historical matters, Choisy was a parasite on the vast corpus of information which had resulted from a renewed interest in the Middle Ages and from the tireless activity

of various scholars in their fields,¹ but although he on different occasions used primary sources and learned editions, he did no critical work of his own, merely extracting from others those points which best served his purpose. In this way, he was consistent in providing intelligent works for the non-specialist reader, although he was incapable of practising the objectivity which he preached. Hazard² points out the way in which historians such as Choisy praised objectivity in the Avertissements to their works, only to give vent in the texts to their prejudices; Choisy was no exception, and was pro-French and pro-Catholic in a quite unambiguous way.

His 'scholarly' works between them enjoyed a certain popularity,³ - the various parts of the history of the Valois kings were reprinted in one set as late as 1750, and the Histoire de l'Eglise, too, appeared in four new editions in the eighteenth century.⁴ In addition they received good if sometimes rather patronizing reviews in learned periodicals, where they were acknowledged for what they were, readable and accurate works on the whole, but not definitive or original.⁵

1. See N. Edelmann, Attitudes of seventeenth century France toward the Middle Ages, (New York, 1946), esp. pp.44-84.
2. La Crise de la conscience européenne, (Idées), I, 51-52, 71-73.
3. See d'Argenson, Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 131 ff.
4. See Bibliography.
5. See Bibliography and Dupin, Bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques du dix-septième siècle, Part V, (Paris, 1708), XXXVIII, 1 ff.

It is ironical that these works, which caused him the most effort, are the ones which are the least interesting today - while those which were not even published during his lifetime, such as the Mémoires and Mémoires/femme are among the most curious and revealing. It is nevertheless important, when considering the whole of his output, to mention at least rapidly this bulk of writing, since it forms a large part of Choisy's corpus of published works, and reflects, in addition, his enquiring mind, his varied talents, and the wide scope of his intellectual activity.

Since each section is virtually independent, I shall not make any general background points here, but include these in the text, wherever it seems necessary.

The works considered in this chapter are as follows:¹

I Historical works

- (a) Vie de David and Vie de Salomon (1687)
- (b) Histoire de France sous les règnes de Saint-Louis, de Philippe de Valois, du Roi Jean, de Charles V et de Charles VI (1688-1695)
- (c) Histoire de l'Eglise (1703-1723)

II Translations

- (a) L'Interprétation des Psaumes (1687)
- (b) Le l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ (1692)

III Editions

- (a) Pensées Chrétiennes (1688)
- (b) Madame de Miramion (1706)

IV Moralizing works

Histoires de piété et de morale (1697, 1710, 1713)

1. The dates in brackets refer to the first editions.

I Historical works

(a) Vie de David and Vie de Salomon

These two works, which can be conveniently studied together, both appeared in Paris in 1687, with the unmistakable political aim on the part of the author of regaining the favour of Louis, which he had lost by an act of mistaken good will shortly after his return from Siam.¹ Both works carry a Dédicace, but it is that of the second, the Vie de Salomon, which most fully articulates Choisy's act of homage, and indicates the way in which he intended Louis' achievements to be reflected in those of David and Solomon.

He begins it with a flourish - "Votre Majesté se reconnaîtra sans peine dans la suite des actions glorieuses de ces deux grands Princes", and then enumerates David's victories and achievements, adding the comment "n'avons-nous pas vu de nos jours renouveler toutes ces merveilles?". Solomon's aims are different, and less grandiose than David's military projects but in these, too, Louis is meant to be identified with the hero.

It is important to realize, however, that it was for the King to see something of himself in the different aspects of David's and Solomon's lives with which he was presented; Choisy in no way adapts or distorts the Biblical stories, nor does he in any sense write a life of Louis XIV under different names - it would have been extremely unwise to suggest that Louis' shortcomings as well as his virtues had had their parallels in the Old Testament. No more than a partial comparison is intended, and the description of the Vie de David as a thinly disguised Vie de Louis XIV is completely

1. See Ch.I, p.30 of this thesis.

erroneous;¹ what is implied is merely that Louis shares the most striking qualities of both David and Solomon, without necessarily sharing their defects.

One further aspect of both the Dédicaces is the mention Choisy makes directly or indirectly of the Orient. He is most explicit in the Vie de David, where he speaks of Louis' missionary activities, whose fruition he firmly believes to be the will of God. In addition, he assures the King that "[les] nouveaux Chrétiens de l'Orient [...] prient sans cesse pour vous, et vous regardent, après Dieu, comme l'auteur de leur salut". In the Vie de Salomon, he again refers, albeit obliquely, to Louis' recent embassies to the East - here in terms of Solomon's achievements:

"Ses vaisseaux traversaient des mers jusqu'alors inconnues et lui allaient chercher les richesses de tout l'univers; les Rois des Indes lui envoyaient des Ambassadeurs, qui, surpris en le voyant, étaient obligés d'avouer que la renommée, toute favorable qu'elle est aux Princes vivants n'avait pourtant rien dit de lui, qui ne fût au-dessous de la vérité"

and we think in this context of the visit of the Siamese ambassadors to the French court. The flattery apparently worked, since Choisy wrote in his Mémoires some time later: "Je présentai au Roi la Vie de David et les Psaumes, qu'il reçut fort agréablement."²

In both works, Choisy stresses particularly the duty of

1. See for example d'Alembert, Histoire des membres de l'Académie Française, I, 330, where the author says "La Vie de David, que l'abbé de Choisy avait présenté à Louis XIV, n'était proprement qu'un panégyrique du Roi de France sous le nom du Roi d'Israël".

2. Mémoires, p.152.

the monarch towards God, and, in the Vie de Salomon especially, underlines the concept of the relationship between people/King and King/God that was prevalent in the seventeenth century - the people were obedient to the King (himself the shadow of God on earth) and the King "tremblait lui-même devant la Majesté du Dieu vivant" (Salomon, Avert., cf. David, pp.83-84). David's piety too is emphasized, second only to his military prowess - he practised penitence, forgiveness, worship, humility, and so on (p.84) - but above all was the chosen one, "l'Oint", whose power and wisdom were drawn from God. Similarly Solomon was predestined to be King - "Dieu même, avant sa naissance, [l']avait destiné à régner" (p.1) and he too received his wisdom from God as a reward for his modesty. The God of both works is very much the familiar figure of the Old Testament, a God of vengeance and justice: early in the Vie de Salomon, we have the example of Joab, who "mourut misérablement par un juste jugement de Dieu, qui tôt ou tard punit les grands crimes" (p.36, cf. David, pp.52-54).

Both works are popularizing synthetic productions, correct without being over-detailed, and above all readable and easily accessible; it is clear from the Avertissement to the Vie de David that Choisy in this case at least set out to write a book that would be read, and not just a work to appease the King.¹ Both are strongly based on Biblical texts (David on I Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, and Salomon on

1. Furthermore, Choisy's was the only available Vie de David in French at the time and the only one quoted by Bayle in the article David in the Dictionnaire (1720).

B. Lesfargues had produced a David: poème héroïque in 1660. The same is true of the Vie de Salomon. The Vie de David appeared in English (The History of David, 1741).

Kings, Wisdom and Deuteronomy), and in the Vie de Salomon Biblical quotations are identified in the margin. The style is straightforward, and as in his later historical works, Choisy prefers clarity to strict chronological accuracy, always avoiding ambiguity or obscurity of argument.

Certain passages in the Vie de Salomon, however, suggest that there had been some evolution in Choisy's aims between the two works. David had contained little in the way of academic discussion, whereas on at least three occasions in the Vie de Salomon, Choisy presents semi-learned arguments and descriptions (in which he explains how he reaches his own conclusions or how scholars have disagreed over certain questions) in the context of a popular work.

The principal examples occur towards the end of the work. In the first of them, Choisy embarks on a learned discussion (pp.125-140) concerning the whereabouts of Tharsis - "chacun des interprètes de l'Ecriture [1'] explique à sa fantaisie; et comme en écrivant la vie de Salomon j'ai été obligé de les lire, j'ai cru entrevoir la vérité sur ce sujet " (p.125) - and the concluding pages of the work deal with the problem "si Salomon a fait pénitence" (p.179) in which the arguments of the Fathers are summarized before any conclusions are drawn. In addition to these two sections, the central part of the work is devoted to an account of the building of the temple, including a long and disproportionately detailed description of the Holy of Holies.

If this work was to commend itself to the uneducated reader, which it clearly was, then these theological and historical quibbles would be distracting and largely meaningless. Choisy had not yet acquired the skill, which is more evident in the histoire des Rois de France, of presenting specialist information in a popular way; here, unfortunately,

the most detailed sections are the least interesting ones, and stand out rather awkwardly from the more superficial presentation of the rest of the work.

Although Salomon is an unsatisfactory work on the whole, it represents because of this new and rather obtrusive material an important stage in Choisy's development as a historical writer - namely the incorporation of simplified erudite material in a popular context, a technique which he was to employ more effectively in the next historical works he attempted.

(b) Histoire de France sous les règnes de Saint-Louis, de Philippe de Valois, du Roi Jean, de Charles V et de Charles VI

This projected series was left incomplete by one volume at a relatively early stage in Choisy's career, presumably because of the pressure of his other commitments. He had envisaged covering the period from 1328 to 1461, the reigns of Philippe de Valois, Jean, Charles V, Charles VI and Charles VII; the first two of these appeared in one volume in 1689, Charles V in the same year, and Charles VI in 1695. Charles VII was never written, but in 1689 the Vie de Saint-Louis was added to the collection although it does not strictly form part of it.¹

The most interesting feature of this homogeneous series of works is the author's use of his sources, in which he shows an academic seriousness of purpose impressive in a group of popularizing histories. Here, as in the later

1. The Vie de Saint-Louis was written to complement, by its biographical and personal bias, the more politically orientated Histoire de Saint-Louis of Filleul de la Chaise, which appeared in 1688. These two authors are responsible for the only writing in the seventeenth century on this period, according to Lenglet du Fresnoy (Méthode pour étudier l'histoire, 2 vols (Paris, 1713), I, 86-87, II, 101-103), and their merits are indeed complementary; Lenglet says of La Chaise "Cette histoire est assez exacte mais elle est peu lue, parce qu'elle est écrite d'une manière ennuyeuse" (II, 102-103) and then of Choisy, "Cette histoire, quoique bien écrite, n'est pas si ample que la précédente" (II, 103). Le Rain de Tillemont also wrote a Vie de Saint-Louis, but it was not published until the mid-nineteenth century. Feller (Dictionnaire historique, (Liège, 1797), III, art. "Filleul de la Chaise") discusses the relative merits of Choisy and Filleul de la Chaise. cf. Contant d'Orville, Mélanges, (Paris, 1779-1788), I, 95.

Histoire de l'Eglise, it is the Avertissements which provide the reader with the most insight into the methods used by the author, and in these works there is additional information provided in the margin notes.

Choisy bases himself largely on primary sources throughout, and his aim is to incorporate these into a non-specialist narrative, so that the reader is not on the one hand baffled by undigested manuscript material, nor on the other insulted by an over-simplified and undocumented presentation. He explains this principle in the Avertissement to Charles V as follows:

"Je l'ai faite [Histoire] avec soin sur les manuscrits que je cite à la marge, en sorte que ceux qui voudront vérifier quelques faits qui leur paraîtront nouveaux, le pourront faire aisément."

Furthermore, he includes the extracts within the text, because "Il est certain que les renvoyer à la fin c'est proprement les replonger dans l'oubli d'où elles viennent de sortir".

These sources are largely given in abbreviated form in the margins together with page references for works already published, or folio numbers for works still in manuscript form. Choisy's most frequently quoted sources of information include the Chronicles of Froissart,¹ and the Registres de la Chambre des Comptes, and he also mentions on several occasions the Chroniques de Saint-Denis and the Charles V of

1. It is impossible to say which edition Choisy consulted, but it was probably the 1518 reading in three volumes, of which the spelling system adopted corresponds to that used by Choisy.

Christine de Pisan among manuscript works, and Chastelet's Histoire de Bertrand du Guesclin (Paris, 1666), Juvenal des Ursins' Histoire de Charles VI (in the edition by the Godefroy brothers, Paris, 1653) and du Tillet's Recueil des Rois de France (Paris, 1602) among later works or editions. He was selective wherever possible in his choice of editions; he indicates for example that for his Vie de Saint-Louis he used du Cange's annotated edition of Joinville, a work of considerable erudition.¹

His academic integrity is also brought out in the Avertissement to Charles VI, where he promises he has taken all his manuscript material from "les manuscrits les plus anciens et les plus authentiques des Bibliothèques de Saint-Victor, de Lamoignon, de Caumartin" and so on, and on controversial questions he prefers the opinion of contemporaries such as Christine de Pisan or Juvenal des Ursins to later readings.

In these smaller scale historical works, Choisy is much more at home with his material than in the vast Histoire de l'Eglise. He uses primary sources skilfully and shows considerable discernment in the choice of passages for quotation. The outlines are clear, and the events analysed methodically, sometimes indeed to the detriment of historical perspective. Choisy achieves little degree of continuity between the works, but this was almost inevitable in a series of which each part was at first published individually. Different points of view are considered, and although Choisy usually favours the French interpretation, he nevertheless does not reject altogether the English account of events. He recapitulates on important points and stresses the main movements in the periods under discussion.

1. See Lenglet du Fresnoy, Méthode, II, 102.

In this venture, a far more manageable one than the one he was later to embark upon, Choisy was successful as well as fulfilling a need that genuinely existed. As we see from Lenglet's Catalogue Choisy was alone in attempting a popular history of this entire period which incorporated the principal primary sources and the extant scholarly commentary on them,¹ and it is a pity that he did not finish what would certainly have been his most satisfactory historical work.²

1. There were of course other seventeenth-century editions of chronicles and memoirs, such as le Laboureur's Histoire de Charles VI (Paris, 1663) and Denis Godefroy's Histoire de Charles VII (Paris, 1661), and also studies of specific events, such as M. Dupuis, De la condamnation des Templiers; de l'histoire du Schisme (Paris, 1654)
2. It did in fact enjoy a certain popularity. D'Argenson says of these histories: "Elles furent très applaudies à la cour: on les fit lire aux enfants de France, comme étant infiniment propres à les instruire." Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 132.

(c) Histoire de l'Eglise

As we have seen from his biography, Choisy spent nearly twenty years of his life, from 1703 until the year before his death in 1724, at work on the Histoire de l'Eglise, whose eleven volumes appeared at irregular intervals during this period.¹

His was not the only work of its kind to appear during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, since both the abbé Fleury² and le Nain de Tillemont³ were engaged in similar academic ventures. Choisy's aims were, however, substantially different from those of his contemporaries, and his history is a popularizing synthetic work rather than an erudite one. He is here less concerned with a fresh analysis of the primary sources than with a bringing together of the extant corpus of scholarly secondary sources in a presentable and readable

1. Vol. I (-306 A.D.) 1703 Vol. II (306- 378) 1704
 Vol. III (378- 565) 1705 Vol. IV (565- 840) 1706
 Vol. V (840-1100) 1712 Vol. VI (1100-1300) 1713
 Vol. VII (1300-1422) 1714 Vol. VIII (1422-1508) 1716
 Vol. IX (1508-1570) 1719 Vol. X (1570-1661) 1721
 Vol. XI (1661-1715) 1723
2. Claude Fleury (1640-1725) published twenty volumes of his Histoire ecclésiastique during his lifetime. It was completed after his death by the père J.-C. Fabre, who produced sixteen volumes. The work was concerned for Gallicanism. See F. Gaquère, La Vie et les œuvres de Claude Fleury, (Paris, 1925), esp. p.415.
3. Louis-Sébastien le Nain de Tillemont (1637-1698) wrote Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire ecclésiastique covering the first six centuries of the church. Only the first four volumes appeared during the author's lifetime. See L. Pichard, "Les écrivains de Port-Royal" in J. Calvet, La Littérature religieuse de P. de Sales à Bénédicte (Paris, 1956), esp. pp.251-253.

fashion - "Je me suis fait l'idée d'une Histoire de l'Eglise [...] qui soit à la portée de tout le monde" (Vol.I Avertissement) and he freely acknowledges his debt to both seventeenth century and earlier Church historians.

Of these, he borrows most heavily from his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, Tillemont, Fleury, Godeau, Huet, Mabillon, Ruinart, le père Alexandre and Lupin (see Vol.I Avertissement) - but he also quotes liberally from the Church Fathers particularly in the earlier volumes, and from St. Thomas Aquinas and later mystical writers, such as Theresa of Avila later in the work; he always quotes in translation where this is necessary, and often includes quite lengthy passages in the text (e.g. Vol.III, pp.157-159). In addition to this, he says "Je [...] me servirai même des Ouvrages des Protestants, qui contiennent quelquefois des vérités fort solides quand ils ne veulent point déclamer contre l'Eglise Catholique" (Vol.I Avertissement), but the only Protestant writer whom he quotes at all extensively is Jacques Lenfant (1661-1728) whose Histoire du Concile de Constance first appeared in 1714 (Amsterdam) and was acclaimed by critics of all traditions as a very fair work.¹

In the first three volumes of his Histoire, covering the period up to A.D. 565, Choisy is principally concerned with two aspects of early Church history, namely the attempts by the councils to arrive at an acceptable definition of Christian orthodoxy, and the quarrels with the Empire and subsequent persecutions. On such questions as the condemnation of heresy, Choisy takes up a strongly orthodox standpoint, speaking of the "Eglise déchirée par ses propres enfants" (Vol.III, p.221) as well as defending the early Fathers against attacks made on them by later Protestant

1. See Haag, La France Protestante, Vol.VI, p.549 ff.

theologians. On the quarrel over Polycarp's letter, for example, he says "Il n'est presque pas croyable, qu'après de pareils témoignages [he has just cited Eusebius, St. Jerome, and Photius] quelques auteurs Protestants en osent disputer la vérité" (Vol.I, p.241) and often, before asserting a 'correct' interpretation, he qualifies it with "quoiqu'en veuillent dire quelques critiques Protestants" (e.g. Vol.II, pp.326, 370).

As a historian he feels bound to put forward any variant interpretations of controversial topics - "Un bon historien doit tout dire, poser les questions controversées, les appuyer par les plus fortes raisons de part et d'autre, rapporter les décisions intervenues, et en demeurer là" (Vol.VIII, Avertissement). He is not always faithful to this principle, however, for although he usually tries to put both sides of the question, he often in fact only provides evidence for one interpretation and invariably concludes on the side of orthodoxy, using as his touchstones "L'autorité des Conciles, [...] les écrits des Saints Pères, ou [...] une tradition constante" (Vol.I, p.112). Where two opposing, but equally orthodox interpretations present themselves, Choisy does usually give both arguments: on the question of the historicity of Luke's gospel, for example, he says "St. Athanase prétend que St. Paul avait dicté l'Evangile qui fut publié par St. Luc: mais St. Irénée assure que quand St. Paul se sert de ces termes selon mon Evangile il veut dire seulement que St. Luc avait mis par écrit ce qu'il prêchait tous les jours" (Vol.I, p.89).

On the other hand, when dealing with ambiguous evidence, such as that surrounding the baptism of Constantine, he first of all gives the theories of various authors and then adds the weight of his own support to one of them, so in fact

going further than the limits he had set himself (Vol.II, pp.195-203 for example), but he does this, he explains, "pour ne pas jeter le lecteur dans l'incertitude" (Vol.III, Avertissement). Again, on the question of pious beliefs, he is inconsistent and passes over some without comment (such as the highly dubious story of St. James' body, Vol.I, p.77) yet questions others which are equally strongly held (for example the question of the historical probability of there having been a "concile des Apôtres", Vol.I, p.73).

On certain more specific problems he abdicates his responsibility altogether, and merely refers the reader to a fuller and more erudite treatment of the question. Having given the outlines of St. Epiphanius' doctrines of the Catholic faith, he goes on "Monsieur l'abbé Fleury [...] fait une énumération très exacte de tous les autres points de discipline, qui nous dispensera d'en rapporter ici davantage" (Vol.III, p.11).

The most frequent and justifiable criticism levelled against the early volumes was that they contained too much historical detail which was only strictly relevant to the secular empire. There is no doubt that the early Church depended substantially on its political environment (Vol.I, p.95), but Choisy does dwell at length on aspects of imperial history which are only of secondary importance in a history of the Church (e.g. Vol.I, pp.378-379), although by Volume III he manages to achieve a more balanced picture.

In the next volumes (IV-V) Choisy is largely concerned with the spread of Christianity, and the geographical scope of the work gradually broadens. The first extended section on France occurs at the end of Volume III (the discussion of the role of Clovis, Vol.III, p.383 ff) and in Volume IV he ranges over Africa, Spain, and Persia, as well as Eastern and Western Europe. He also devotes a substantial part of Volumes V and VI to the Crusades - although he confines

himself to presenting the historical facts rather than discussing the Christian principle behind them - and to the growth of monasticism in Western Christendom.

From Volume VI to the end of the work, the emphasis is increasingly laid on France and the French contribution to Christianity, and by the last two volumes this is to the virtual exclusion of all other material. Nevertheless in Volume IX Choisy traces with some care the course of the Reformation, which he divides into three stages: Luther's opposition to authority, Zwingli's denial of the **real** presence and finally Calvin's refutation of the Church's teaching on Scripture. He adopts a by now predictably orthodox approach, although he does concede that Luther's original stand made against the sale of indulgences was not made without reason. The question of Protestantism in France, too, has an important place in Volumes X and XI with regard firstly to the Wars of Religion, and then to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes - the **last** major politico-religious event which he includes.

Choisy is most successful in his portrayal of certain of the great central figures of the history of the Church, and the accounts of the careers of Charlemagne, Louis IX or Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, are accurate, comprehensive and interesting, including both details of their personal lives and extracts from their writings.

In addition to this, the work does contain a vast amount of albeit rather arbitrarily selected information on hundreds of political and religious figures. In the **early** volumes he leaves no major figure or event unmentioned (probably in fact because he was following comprehensive guides), and if his work on this period is compared with a popular twentieth century one,¹ the material will be seen to be essentially

1. e.g. The Pelican History of the Church, - Vol.I, H. Chadwick, The Early Church.

the same. The difference occurs firstly in the attitude of the author (Choisy is clearly biased in his views) and in the drawing of the grandes lignes, which in Choisy's work are indicated in the Avertissements, but are not otherwise brought out in the text, being generally subordinated to detail. This is one of the major failings of the work; despite the very ample evidence at his disposal, and the non-specialist aims of the Histoire, Choisy does not attempt to draw any broad-based conclusions or to sustain any general theses, except the obvious one of the overall infallibility of the Church. There is no lack of detail, and the material is treated methodically, but far too often his contribution goes no further than this.¹

He has used some of the experience of his previous scholarly writing with success; there are no gratuitous academic sidetracks as in the Vie de Salomon although as the whole work is rather more scholarly in presentation, the erudite content as a whole is less obtrusive. He is selective too, in his choice of texts, both for reference and quotation, and skilful in his integration of primary and secondary sources into his argument. His style is usually lively, and his language non-specialist sometimes to the point of familiarity; this is not to say that it is anything like as racy as in his Mémoires for example, but it nevertheless attracted the attention of some contemporary critics,² and it does contain elements of popular writing. One of the

1. He was also criticized for this failing by his contemporaries, as we see from his answer in the Avertissement to Vol.IV to the rebuke that "les matières ne sont pas assez liées".

2. See for example the Journal des Savants, XXXII (1704), p.617.

most obvious of these is the use of the portrait in the description of historical characters, and the inclusion of physical detail where other historians would omit it. This is particularly striking in such passages as the description of Arcadius, where Choisy says of him: "Arcadius était fort laid, noir, petit, sans force, parlait lentement; l'esprit aussi disgracié que le corps, point de génie, lâche, paresseux" (Vol.III, p.145) and he also includes minor personal details, and peripheral (probably apocryphal) anecdotes surrounding certain figures or movements,¹ again something that would have been left out by a more traditional historian.

Comparing the Histoire de l'Eglise with the works of Choisy's two contemporaries, Fleury and Tillemont, d'Argenson says in his Loisirs:

"M. de Tillemont avait surchargé la sienne [Histoire] d'une érudition qui, d'un côté, la rend très estimable, mais, d'un autre, fait qu'elle n'est nullement propre pour les gens du monde; [...] celle de l'abbé Fleury, [...] quoiqu'elle fût excellente, et de l'auteur le plus sage et le plus méthodique [...] prenait un tour qu'on n'en verrait pas sitôt la fin. [...] l'Histoire de l'Eglise de l'abbé de Choisy est suffisamment bonne, très agréable, et peut-être la meilleure que les femmes puissent lire."²

Tillemont is indeed very heavily annotated, and considerably more scholarly than Choisy, but in fact does only cover the first six centuries. Fleury is by far the most impressive work, in terms of sheer size, amounting in all to some thirty-six volumes, but only twenty of these were completed

1. See for example the stories surrounding the Stylites, Vol.III, p.348 ff.
2. Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 133-135. cf. Contant d'Orville, Mélanges, (Paris, 1779-1788), I, 28.

before his death. There is nevertheless an enormous amount of detail in the work, particularly in so far as analysis of quotations from texts is concerned.

Beside these two, and despite the approval of d'Argenson and d'Olivet,¹ Choisy's history seems an unsatisfactory work - although it is probably more orthodox than they are (Fleury was a Gallican, and Tillemont a Jansenist). Its standards are very variable, and whereas at its best it is comprehensive and readable,² at its worst it is biased and inaccurate. Choisy made a brave attempt at a very ambitious project, and certainly an enormous amount of learned material passed through his hands during the years of its realization, but it is obvious that towards the end his interest was flagging and his powers were failing. The early volumes contain some good résumés of specialist arguments - selecting quotations and avoiding ambiguity or confused thinking. What fails to come out of the work as a whole, though, and so to some extent defeats its purpose, is the general outline of ecclesiastical history - the shaping of movements, the spread of the faith, and the gradual emergence of orthodox doctrine. All these things can perhaps be discovered by examining the text closely and analytically, but such a proviso clearly assumes too much intellectual effort on the part of the non-specialist reader for whom it was intended.

1. e.g. d'Olivet, Vie, p.200 - "Peu de personnes connaissent aussi bien que lui l'art d'abrégé sans rien omettre d'essentiel". There is also a very favourable comment on this work in the Mémoires de Trévoux (Vol.VIII, November 1703, p.1895) and a summary of the content of the various books - see November 1703, January 1705, February/March 1706, June 1707, April 1712, June 1713, January 1715, May 1716, November 1719, April 1721.
2. Montesquieu may have used the Histoire de l'Eglise, vol.I and Vol.II for one of the Lettres persanes; see L. Desgraves, Catalogue de la Bibliothèque de Montesquieu, (Geneva, 1954), no.139, cf. Montesquieu, Lettres persanes, ed. Garnier, (1960), p.192, n.2.

II Translations

(a) L'Interprétation des Psaumes

The Church's discouragement of the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, and the subsequent lack of any authoritative French version acceptable to Catholics created a situation in seventeenth-century France whereby the Vulgate remained the most commonly used text despite the various translations of all or part of the Bible that had already been published in France. Lefèvre d'Etaples' Antwerp Bible,¹ the work of a Catholic humanist, but banned by the Church, had first appeared in its entirety in 1530, and was followed soon after by the important Protestant translation by Olivetan, printed in Neuchâtel in 1535. This was then revised over a number of years by a group of Genevan pastors, (initially with Calvin at their head), and finally re-emerged as the Geneva Bible of 1588. One should perhaps mention here, too, the famous sixteenth-century Protestant translations of the Psalms by Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze (1564).²

The 'official' Catholic counterpart to this activity in the sixteenth century was the so-called Louvain Bible of 1550, which was also thoroughly revised later in the century (1578). There were no further original Catholic translations until the second half of the seventeenth century, when work was begun on the 'Port-Royal' Bible, directed by Le Maître de Sacy. The New Testament was completed in 1666,

1. For a more detailed study of translations of the Bible into French, see R.A. Sayce's articles in the Cambridge History of the Bible, Vol.III, pp.113-122, 347-352.
2. On paraphrases of the Psalms in the sixteenth century, see M. Jeanneret, Poésie et tradition Biblique au seizième siècle, (Paris, 1969).

and published at Mons a year later, but the last part of the Old Testament did not appear until 1696.

Choisy, when writing his Interprétation des Psaumes, published with the Vie de David in 1687 drew to some extent on both the Vulgate and the extant translations, although, as he says in the Avertissement, it was primarily the Vulgate which he followed. We cannot know whether this was an edition of the complete Bible, such as the Biblia Maxima (Tome VI containing the Psalms, Paris, 1660), or an edition of the Psalms alone (for example the Liber Psalmorum, Paris, 1683) - and it does not really matter very much. What is certain is that Choisy consulted and borrowed from learned editions such as these, which contained, in addition to the text, comprehensive annotations and commentaries, since some of the information he gives in his own translation would have required an extensive knowledge of Hebrew which he did not possess.

The Vulgate was not his only source of information, and, as he admits himself, he did not hesitate to "copier mot pour mot quelques versets des nouvelles traductions françaises, quand j'ai cru qu'elles étaient assez intelligibles, et qu'en m'amusant à chercher d'autres paroles, j'y mettrais peut-être de l'obscurité" (Avertissement). Here again we can only guess as to which translations he used: he may have consulted the paraphrase on the Psalms by Conrart (1679) although the author was a Protestant, (since, as he points out to the King in the Légitime both Catholics and Protestants agreed that the Psalms were the "ouvrage du Saint-Esprit") or any of the near-contemporary Catholic translations and paraphrases that would have been available to him, (for example those of A. Godeau (1648) or Dumont (1665)).

As to his own method of translation, it is much freer

here than in the Imitation of Christ, the next work he was to attempt, in which he stays much closer to the Latin text. He here paraphrases the meaning rather than translating word for word in many places, and a simple phrase such as "Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in praelio", translated in the Louvain Bible as "le Seigneur fort et puissant [...] le Seigneur puissant en bataille", or by Dumont as "le Seigneur fort et puissant [...] le Seigneur puissant dans la guerre", is more loosely rendered by Choisy as "[C'est] ce même Seigneur invincible, qui nous a fait vaincre tous nos ennemis". Despite this, he follows the literal sense of the Vulgate text, only departing from it where the words of Christ or the apostles indicate that more symbolic language is necessary.

Choisy entitled his work Interprétation, as he explains in the Avertissement because "cet ouvrage n'étant ni une paraphrase parce qu'il n'est pas assez étendu, ni une traduction parce qu'il l'est trop; je me suis servi du mot d'Interprétation" (Avertissement). On the one hand, as he says earlier, he provides footnotes and variants where necessary, so that the work has at least some (albeit second-hand) scholarly content, but on the other, he does not encumber it with unnecessary erudition - any information he gives being usually relatively concise and often superficial,¹ so that here, as elsewhere, his work manages to be informative and accurate, but not so recondite as to lack popular appeal.

1. See following page.

Psalm XXIII

88

Quis est iste Rex gloriae?

Dominus fortis et potens,

Dominus potens in praelio.

ô portae capita

Attollite portas principes

vestrae attollite inquam

vestras, et elevamini portae

aeternae

aeternales: et introibit Rex gloriae.

Quis est iste Rex gloriae?

exercituum

Dominus virtutum ipse est Rex gloriae.

Text in large italic. Words underlined in Roman script, interligna in small italic.

89

Qui est donc ce Roi de gloire?
C'est ce même Seigneur invincible
dans les combats, qui nous a
fait vaincre tous nos ennemis.
Ouvrez donc vos portes; et ce Roi
de gloire fera son entrée. Qui
est donc ce Roi de gloire? C'est
le grand Dieu des armées qui
est le véritable Roi de gloire.

Saint Jérôme, Saint Jean Chrysostome,
Saint Augustin et quelques autres Pères
de l'Eglise, appliquent ce Psaume à
l'Ascension de Notre Seigneur.

Text in Roman script, note in small italic.

(b) De L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ

One of the most striking manifestations of the popularity as a devotional classic of the De Imitatione Christi in seventeenth century France was the number of translations into the vernacular which appeared at that time, as well as the various Latin editions printed at Paris; Torri¹ in his extensive bibliography mentions no less than sixty-five separate editions which date from seventeenth-century France. Of the seventeenth-century translations, the majority were written in prose, although a few, notably that of Pierre Corneille (1658), were written in verse paraphrase. The version by the abbé de Choisy appeared in 1692, and two reports of the Académie de Luxembourg for that year help us to learn something about its preparation.

The discussions which took place at the meeting of the Académie on 8 January 1692 chiefly concerned the titles of the different constituent parts of the work. The beginning of the report of the session reads as follows (Choisy speaking of himself in the third person):

"Mr l'abbé de Choisy qui fait une traduction nouvelle de l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ a demandé s'il était à propos de changer les vieux titres latins qui sont à la tête de chaque chapitre, parce que₂ souvent ils n'expliquent pas la matière qui y est traitée."²

Opinions varied as to the method that should be adopted, but the majority (including the abbé de Dangeau), thought that no titles should be changed, the duty of the translator being merely to follow "pas à pas son original".

1. A. Torri, Della Imitazione di Gesù Christo, (Florence, 1855), pp.429-484, especially p.452.

2. Arsenal MSS no.3186, p.176 vo.

At the following meeting, on 15 January, the translation was again discussed, this time with reference to summaries in place of the titles in question, an idea put forward by Charles Perrault, but this, too, met with opposition, both on the grounds that on previous occasions, "les choses mises pour l'éclaircissement du texte [...] sont entrées dans le texte et y ont mis de l'obscurité" (d'Herbelot), and also out of respect for the antiquity of the titles themselves (l'abbé Renaudot).

The abbé de Choisy himself put forward the more practical suggestion that the book was extremely difficult to summarize, "n'ayant pas beaucoup de suite et étant plutôt une effusion du cœur qu'une production de l'esprit". The delicate subject of the authorship of the Imitation was also brought up, and the Thomas à Kempis theory discredited by at least one speaker, but the topic was not pursued.

Choisy's translation of 1692 is preceded by a dedication to the King, in which he offers the book as a climax to the series of Biblical or historical works which had borne the same dedication - Vie de David, Vie de Salomon, Histoire des Rois de France, Vie de Saint-Louis - "Après avoir proposé à votre Majesté l'exemple des plus grands Rois et celui des plus grands Saints, il ne me restait qu'à vous mettre devant les yeux Jésus-Christ même."

Certain features of the presentation of the text are interesting though not unusual. All editions of the work contain a frontispiece, and four engravings (one at the beginning of each book) by a member of the Mariette family.¹ Furthermore all Biblical quotations are printed in italics, and references given for the less well-known ones. Choisy,

1. See Brit. Mus. catalogue.

unlike some of his contemporaries, adds no commentaries or devotional extras to the work,¹ but simply presents a clear and succinct translation. The introductory Approbation by "Mr Robert Professeur de Sorbonne" summarizes very well the qualities of the work:

"Elle m'a paru très fidèle, et je puis assurer ceux qui la liront, que comme elle exprime avec exactitude le sens du texte latin, elle ne contient rien qui ne soit parfaitement conforme aux vérités de la Foi, et aux plus pures règles de la morale Chrétienne."

Choisy's translation does indeed combine fidelity with clarity. He keeps very close to the Latin text, both in vocabulary and structure. He reproduces faithfully the imagery used by the author, and also the "rhythmic punctuation"² of the original. The sentences are carefully balanced, and devices such as rhetorical questions are accurately reproduced. In Book II, for example, the Latin original:

"Unde coronabitur patientia tua, si nihil adversitatis occurrerit? Si nihil contrarium vis pati, quomodo eris amicus Christi?"³

is translated by:

1. Such as for example the 1698 translation by Macé, which contains an "Exercice pour la Sainte Messe", and that by P. Corneille, which has a form for Mass and Vespers.
2. See F. R. Cruise, Who was the author of the Imitation of Christ? (London, 1898), p.94.
3. De Imitatione Christi (Paris, 1674), pp.84-85.

"Comment votre patience sera-t-elle couronnée, si vous ne l'exercez jamais? Si vous ne voulez rien souffrir, comment serez-vous ami de Jésus-Christ?"¹

thus retaining exactly the shape of the sentence.

Choisy's language is simple and dignified, and in this too he is true to the original, avoiding paraphrase or rhetoric. The preciseness of his translation can best be illustrated by a short comparison with both the original and some near-contemporary translations. If we take the single Latin phrase - "Curre huc vel illuc, . . .",² (the author is speaking of the search after truth and peace,) we find that Choisy translates it directly as "Courez deçà delà, . . .".³ Moreau (1643) is slightly more clumsy with "Allez ailleurs ou demeurez là, . . ."⁴ - introducing another verb into the sentence. Poiret (1683) gives nothing short of a paraphrase, and divides the first part of the sentence from the second with a colon: "Va, cherche partout où tu voudras: . . ."⁵ - introducing into the French translation the concepts of seeking (chercher) and willing (vouloir), which are both implied but neither stated in the rather more stark and dramatic original. Macé, too, elaborates rather unnecessarily on the Latin text, and also divides the sentence. In addition he comes dangerously near to tautology - "Vous aurez beau changer de lieu, et courir de tous côtés; . . ."⁶ Only the second part of this sentence - "courir de tous côtés", in fact exists in the original, the first part being entirely of the translator's invention.

1. p.74. 2. De Imitatione Christi, (Paris, 1674), p.18.

3. p.17. 4. p.33. 5. p.18. 6. p.16.

From this relatively simple example, we can see how, by using uncomplicated language, and by avoiding 'improvements' on the original, Choisy manages to retain its sometimes rather bare nature, and so to capture something of its directness and spontaneity. As opposed to the more poetic translation required by the nature of the Psalms, Choisy is here content to echo the simplicity of the Latin text.

One peripheral aspect of this work, however, has aroused more interest than any other, and this is the mythical existence of a first edition, dedicated to Madame de Maintenon, and containing a transparently obvious reference to her relationship with the King.

Amelot de la Houssaye was almost certainly the instigator of this legend in his Mémoires historiques et politiques (1722) where he writes:

"L'abbé de Choisy, de l'Académie Française, a dédié sa traduction de L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ à Madame de Maintenon. La première édition est remarquable par deux versets de Psaume 44. qui sont au bas d'une taille douce, où cette dame est représentée à genoux au pied du crucifix. Savoir: "Audi filia, et inclina aurem tuam: et obliviscere domum patris tui. v.2 Et concupiscet Rex decorum tuum. v.12" On les a retranchés dans la seconde édition, à cause de la malignité des gloseurs."

This story must have come, though, from an oral tradition which already existed during the last years of the seventeenth century. It must, too, have caused Choisy a certain amount of annoyance, since in some copies of the second and third editions the figure of Madame de Maintenon has been replaced by a crucifix. In the fourth and subsequent editions, the

1. Amsterdam, 1722, 2 vols, II, 85.

controversial engraving was definitively suppressed, and replaced by a man kneeling at prayer, with the words, "Seigneur, je crierai vers vous, et vous adresserai ma prière".¹

The story was nevertheless taken up by some eighteenth century writers, notably by Voltaire in the Siècle de Louis XIV² and the abbé Voisenon in his Anecdotes littéraires,³ as well as by writers of dictionaries such as Barral⁴ Chaudon⁵ and Feller,⁶ and by Choisy's biographer d'Olivet.⁷

The reasons for the rapid growth of this completely fictitious tale were as follows:

a) There exists an engraving at the beginning of Book II in all editions prior to the fourth (except in those copies where it has been suppressed, as above) of a woman at prayer, very probably supposed to represent Madame de Maintenon. Below it are the words: "Audi, filia - Ecoutez, ma fille", and no more. It only needed a little ingenuity and a little

1. See A. de Backer, Essai bibliographique sur le livre De Imitatione Christi, (Liège, 1864), Article 1692, de Choisy.
2. London, 1753, II, 309-310.
3. t.IV of Oeuvres complètes, (Paris, 1781), p.114.
4. Barral, Dictionnaire portatif.
5. Chaudon et Lelandine, Nouveau Dictionnaire historique, (Lyon, 1804), art. Choisi.
6. Feller, Dictionnaire historique, (Liège, 1797), art. Choisi.
7. Vie, pp.166-167. See also d'Alembert, Histoire des membres de l'Académie Française, (Paris, 1787), I, 335 and Picot, Catalogue des livres de James de Rothschild, (Paris, 1884), I, no.60.

malice, however, to complete the quotation, as Amelot de la Houssaye describes, and then to claim that the work was dedicated to Madame de Maintenon.

b) The first edition was very scarce, and so there was no means of disproving the fictitious inscription and dedication, and thus the legend grew unimpeded.

c) On a previous occasion the entire phrase had been applied to Elizabeth of France, daughter of Henri II, which may have possibly inspired the whole idea.

The legend went unchallenged until between 1806 and 1809, when Barbier in his Dictionnaire des anonymes investigated in great detail and subsequently discredited the whole story, as well as acquiring one of the rare first editions, about which he says: "L'examen que j'en ai fait confirme tous les détails dans lesquels je suis entré".¹

Although there is in fact a small difference between this and subsequent editions, it concerns Louis and not Madame de Maintenon,² and the dedication, as in the other editions, was to the King. Chardon de la Rochette, in his Mélanges de critique et de philologie³ discusses and confirms Barbier's conclusion, as does A. de Backer in his Essai bibliographique.⁴

1. Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes, I, col.899.

2. There is an additional 'vignette' portraying Louis XIV at prayer in the chapel at Versailles. For full details, see Barbier, I, col.899.

3. Paris, 1812, III, 270 ff.

4. Liège, 1864. Article, Choisy.

The very fact of the development of the story, however, shows to what extent people were eager to poke fun at Madame de Maintenon, and whatever Choisy's motives were for portraying her in his translation (and to judge from what he says in his Mémoires, he had nothing but respect for her and her work) - the temptation to complete the quotation which he had started proved too strong to resist.

III Editions

(a) Pensées Chrétiennes sur divers sujets de piété

The "père Surin Jésuite"¹ whom Choisy identifies in the Avertissement as the author of this collection, was born in Bordeaux in 1600. His early reputation as an ascetic and mystic caused his superiors to give him the delicate job of spiritual adviser to the Ursuline community at Loudun, and to its prioress mère Jeanne des Anges, who were supposedly possessed by a devil. In 1635, he himself became possessed and left Loudun, to return, and apparently exorcise the community, in 1637. In 1639, in Bordeaux, Surin lost all his physical faculties, retaining only the use of his reason. He remained in this curious and largely unexplained state for twenty years, during which time he dictated a number of spiritual works, which were published posthumously. He died in 1665, after having regained his faculties for a brief period - mère Jeanne des Anges had died shortly before.

The manuscripts which he left were sent after a short time to the Séminaire des Missions Etrangères in Paris, where they were partly edited by Vincent de Meur, who published in 1667 a selection called Fondements de la vie spirituelle, although Surin had apparently not conceived of a work with

1. Jean-Joseph Surin. For a complete biography, see the article in the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church or the article mentioned in footnote 1, p.168 of this thesis. A good deal of information is also contained in the recent edition of his letters (Correspondance ed. M. de Certeau, (Paris, 1966)), and in H. Bremond, Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France, (Paris, 1916-1933), V. There is an exhaustive bibliography of his works in Sommervogel, Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, VII, (1896), cols 1704-1716.

this title or in this form.¹ After Vincent's death in 1668, the manuscripts were given to du Flessis-Montbard. He died, however, without having completed his projected edition, leaving them to the Compagnie des Missions Etrangères (1672) where various people subsequently worked on them, including Aubéry, Charpy de Sainte-Croix (who was writing a Vie de Surin), and the abbé de Choisy, who published extracts from them in 1688 with the title Pensées Chrétiennes sur divers sujets de piété. They were eventually published in their near-entirety by the père Champion between 1700 and 1709 under the title of Dialogues spirituels.

There are, then, three different versions of the material contained in the Pensées Chrétiennes. Firstly the Surin manuscript, then the selection edited by the abbé de Choisy, and finally the most complete edition by Champion. Certeau has examined these texts very thoroughly in his authoritative articles² and points out various minor differences in numbering and order between Choisy and Champion. He also remarks that Choisy "apparaît souvent plus proche du manuscrit que Champion, au moins pour les définitions, car il s'en éloigne beaucoup dans les développements; lorsqu'il a en vue d'abrégé il introduit ses ronds de phrase et ce 'nouveau tour', grâce auquel il espérait que les Pensées 's'insinueraient plus aisément dans les esprits'."³

1. See M. de Certeau, "Les Oeuvres de Jean-Joseph Surin" in Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, XL (1964) and XLI (1965).

2. See footnote 1.

3. Above-mentioned article, p.76 ff. esp. n.103.

This quotation by Certeau from the Avertissement expresses Choisy's rather questionable aim, (the author himself has a moment of doubt when he says "Peut-être me suis-je trompé et qu'on les eût mieux aimées dans leur simplicité naturelle")¹ but although we now realize that from the point of view of authenticity he was probably mistaken, he nevertheless acted in good faith, and succeeded in presenting what was originally rather cryptic material in a more accessible form, showing himself to be a capable and sensitive editor. The result is a work in which Choisy's gifts of clarity of expression and presentation combine with Surin's spiritual insight to produce a work of coherent and 'raisonnable' spiritual direction.

1. Avertissement.

(b) Vie de Madame de Miramion

Marie Bonneau was born in Paris on 2 November 1629, into a family of rich financiers. An orphan at fifteen, she was married a year later (1645) to Jean-Jacques de Beauharnais, seigneur de Miramion,¹ who died within six months, leaving her pregnant; a daughter was born to her in 1646. The only drama in her life occurred two years later, in 1648, when she was violently abducted by Bussy-Rabutin. She was soon freed, however, and when she had recovered from the ensuing illness, she dedicated the rest of her life to caring for the poor. She opened two houses, one for "femmes et filles d'une vie scandaleuse" (Michaud, Biographie universelle), and the other a retreat house for women. In 1661, she founded the "Congrégation de la Sainte Famille" with the aims of caring for the poor and the sick, and especially instructing and looking after country people, and this was then united with the "Filles de Sainte Geneviève", an order which had been founded in 1636 with the same ends in view. In the retreat house, on the Quai Saint Bernard, was carried on the work of "l'instruction des jeunes filles et le traitement des blessés".² In addition to her other good works, in 1673, she looked after the sick and dying troops at Melun and Senlis, and then in 1694 returned to the Hôtel-Lieu at Paris, to turn her attention to the suffering caused by famine and illness in that city.

1. See Appendix I.

2. See G. Pessard, Nouveau Dictionnaire historique de Paris, (Paris, 1904), Art. Quai de la Tourelle, p.1519.

She enjoyed royal patronage - "le roi l'aidait dans les bonnes œuvres qu'elle faisait et ne lui refusait jamais rien"¹ - and was a friend of Madame de Maintenon, who invited her to Saint-Cyr, to a production of Racine's Esther.² On the other hand many institutions benefited from her generosity - including the Enfants Trouvés, and the Missions Etrangères to whom she gave money to send bishops to the Far East. She died in 1696, after a life of frequent and often prolonged illness, aggravated by her rigid asceticism.

Several of her contemporaries record her death, all of them with sorrow. Madame de Sévigné laments "cette mère de l'Eglise"³ and Langeau feels that it will be "une grande perte pour les pauvres à qui elle faisait beaucoup de bien".⁴ Saint-Simon deplores Bussy-Rabutin's attempted abduction, and praises Madame de Miramion's works of charity:

"C'était une femme d'un grand sens et d'une grande douceur, qui, de sa tête et de sa bourse, eut part à plusieurs établissements très utiles dans Paris."⁵

It was also in the year of her death, 1696, that the abbé de Choisy wrote her 'biography', although it did not appear until ten years later. He gives his reasons for publishing

1. Langeau, Mémoires, (Paris, 1817), I, 348. A slightly less generous impression is given of the King by Choisy in the Recueil de bons mots, Arsenal MSS 3186 f.230.
2. See Madame de Sévigné, Lettres, (ed. de la Pléiade, 1957), III, 336.
3. Ibid., III, 899.
4. Langeau, Mémoires, (Paris, 1817), I, 348.
5. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, (Pléiade, 1957), I, 287.

it then, -

"Ayant appris, par une voie sûre, qu'on imprime actuellement dans les pays étrangers une Vie de Madame de Miramion, sans savoir qui l'a faite; on a cru devoir prévenir ou suivre de près un ouvrage informe, sans approbation, sans autorité, et qui n'aura peut-être pour toute recommandation qu'un nom fort connu parmi les personnes de piété."

Two features characterize Choisy's approach to this work, as we see in the Avertissement and the first part of Chapter I: his attitude towards his subject and the use he makes of the material at his disposal.

Choisy did not always succeed in suppressing a natural tendency to frivolity, but there is no trace of this in the Vie de Madame de Miramion; in writing about her, Choisy is filled with respect and admiration, which is nowhere more apparent than in the introductory éloge (pp.1-6) where he enumerates her virtues in a passage of sustained eloquence:

"Une persévérance dans les bonnes œuvres sans interruption, une uniformité constante dans la diversité de ses occupations, un désintéressement à l'épreuve, une conduite humble et sainte, une mort pleine de tranquillité et de paix."

He concludes:

"pour confondre notre orgueil, Dieu se sert souvent des instruments les plus faibles, pour opérer les plus grandes choses." (p.5)

The other point which Choisy makes in the Avertissement concerns his method of work and sources. He presents himself less as the author of a biography of Madame de Miramion than

1. Avertissement

as the editor of the letters and papers which belonged to her. Her daughter, the Présidente de Némont, had collected together all the papers concerning her mother's spiritual development, many of which had been in the possession of the père Jolly, her confessor from 1677 to the time of her death. These were made available to Choisy (who was a distant relative of Madame de Miramion)¹ and it is around these that he constructs what is certainly an authoritative account of her life - "J'avertis les lecteurs, que j'ai entre les mains toutes les pièces justificatives de ce que j'avance".² He has arranged the material somewhat, in order to facilitate the reader's task, but never lets his own writing obscure that of Madame de Miramion:

"J'avoue que j'ai fort peu de part à cet ouvrage; j'ai seulement rassemblé les matériaux et mis quelques liaisons. Les écrits de Madame de Miramion en feront la principale beauté."³

After the Avertissement and the enthusiastic opening pages, Choisy settles down to a more methodical and chronological treatment of his material, which he divides into five books. He gives a factual account of the upbringing of his heroine, previous to the "aventure" of 1648. He makes relatively little of this event - by far the most exciting of her life - proving that his real interest does indeed lie in her spiritual development. This incident occupies about seven pages in a work of more than 250; the presentation is prosaic, and he goes no further than stating what happened in rather restrained terms. Far from making this the climax

1. See Appendix I.

2. and 3. Avertissement.

of the work, Choisy rather minimizes its dramatic possibilities, and instead uses it to lead up to her mystical experiences and vocation. These are the real climaxes, the true beginning of her spiritual biography.

The event is not without importance, however, since it confirmed her in her decision not to remarry, and so in some way shaped the rest of her life. Choisy recognizes this fact - "L'aventure [...] acheva de détacher Madame de Miramion de toutes les vanités de la terre."¹ There is a full account of her abduction in Gérard-Gailly's Bussy-Rabutin (Paris, 1909), pp.52-62, which also contains an annotated bibliography of works relating to the subject (pp.53-54 and 407). Briefly the stages were as follows: Madame de Miramion, who was staying at Issy in the summer of 1648, left the house early in the morning of 7 August to attend devotions at the Mont-Valérien with her mother-in-law. She was abducted by a group of Bussy's men in the Bois de Boulogne, and driven away despite her violent protestations. Her mother-in-law was deposited in the Forêt de Livry, since she was thought to be the cause of the ensuing commotion,² but to no effect, since Madame de Miramion soon afterwards leapt from the carriage window, only to be chased back in again by her pursuers. The party eventually arrived at the castle of Launay, near Sens, where they were greeted by Bussy's brother. After a while, Madame de Miramion recovered

1. Vie de Madame de Miramion, p.12. cf. Tallemant des Réaux, Historiettes, (ed. Mongrédien), VII, 108.

2. It was suspected that Madame de Miramion's protestations were no more than a charade to create the right impression with her mother-in-law: they turned out to be completely genuine.

sufficiently to renew her protestations, while at the same time her brother Rubelle was preparing to besiege the castle. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, Bussy-Rabutin freed her, and she was reunited with her brother at an inn at Sens. From there, she was taken back to Paris, in a very poor state of health, to rest and recover from her adventure.

One point which arises from the account of this incident in Bussy-Rabutin's Mémoires is the extent of Madame de Miramion's role in the affair - or rather that of her confessor, since it seems likely that she was completely innocent. Bussy claims that a neighbour, Lebocage, who knew that Bussy was being encouraged to re-marry, and claimed that Madame de Miramion was also looking for a second husband, arranged for them to see each other in church, without any introductions being made, and using her confessor, le père Clément, as an intermediary. It is the père Clément who, apparently, led Bussy-Rabutin to believe that Madame de Miramion would not be unmoved by his attentions, and furthermore, says Bussy, "Il me mandait, sous des noms empruntés, que la dame n'avait pas la force de résister à ses parents, qui m'étaient contraires; mais qu'elle serait bien aise que je lui aidasse, par une violence apparente, à dire oui."¹

It is certainly true that there were third parties involved for the abduction to have been so successfully arranged. It is even possible that Madame de Miramion had had Bussy-Rabutin pointed out to her in church, but it is most unlikely that she agreed to be abducted. This is borne out not only by her unrelenting opposition at the time but also by the rest of her life, both before and after the incident, in the context of which a collaboration of this sort would be unthinkable - even as a child her behaviour

1. Bussy-Rabutin, Mémoires, (Paris, 1882), I, 163.

was exemplary to the point of being unnatural (e.g. p.8).

Whether it was in fact the confessor who tricked Bussy, or whether he is just trying to absolve himself from blame, it is impossible to say. Since it is the père Clément who would be most likely to know of Madame de Miramion's devotional activities, and since she soon afterwards appointed a new confessor, it seems probable that he was in some way at fault - and an Historiette by Tallemant des Réaux bears out this interpretation:

"Le moine [le père Clément] cependant demandait tantôt cinquante tantôt cent pistoles, pour gagner celui-ci et celui-là, et enfin il en tire jusqu'à deux mille écus."¹

Bussy on learning that the relatives of Madame de Miramion intended to prosecute him, wrote to Condé to ask for his protection:

"Les parents de la dame me poursuivent sous son nom: un mot de la part de Votre Altesse au sieur Bonneau, son père, arrêtera tout. Je la supplie très humblement de me l'accorder."²

The case was duly abandoned, on the understanding that Bussy would never again see Madame de Miramion, or appear at events where she would be likely to be present. Their only subsequent meeting was thirty-six years later, when Bussy and the Présidente de Némond were involved in a law suit. Using the abbé de Choisy as an intermediary, Bussy asked Madame de Miramion to intercede in his favour, and it was indeed largely owing to her generosity that Bussy won the case.

1. Tallemant des Réaux, Historiettes, VII, 107-108.

2. Bussy-Rabutin, Mémoires, I, 169.

"Quand elle fut guérie, elle songea plus que jamais à s'avancer dans les voies de la perfection" (p.19). It was on Christmas Day 1648 that Madame de Miramion received her vocation "étant à Saint-Nicolas des Champs devant le Saint-Sacrement" (p.21). In a vision she believed she was called by Christ, with the words:

"C'est ton cœur que je veux, et qu'il soit à moi sans partage" (p.23)

and on another occasion,

"Je serai ton Epoux et toi mon Epouse."

In 1649 she took her vows of chastity, and this was the beginning of a life of self-denial which she was to lead from then on, the account of which forms the main part of the 'biography'. She was far from robust, and her relentless activity, even when she was in poor health, considerably weakened her constitution. The daughter, too, was a sickly child, subject to frequent illnesses. If there is a slightly melodramatic tone to parts of the work, it is not because of any exciting adventures, but rather because of the perpetual presence of serious illness, and the somewhat heroic picture Choisy paints of the ailing mother and the languishing daughter.

Thus Madame de Miramion's deeds are made to seem all the more virtuous by the suffering, both natural and self-inflicted, which accompanied them. As a form of mortification she looked after those suffering from particularly repulsive illnesses, and tried to encourage the practice of asceticism amongst her nuns by setting an example of self-discipline for

them to follow, and by always obeying herself the rules which she gave them:

"Quoique sa santé fût fort faible et souvent attaquée, elle ne voulait ~~nulle~~ distinction." (pp.55-56)

During the different stages of Madame de Miramion's life, in her efforts to renounce the world and to aspire to greater austerity, Choisy draws on her letters for inspiration, and particularly on those written to her spiritual advisers.¹

Their correspondence provides him with a constant source of information as to her activities, and a regular indication of her spiritual progress, and he uses it discriminatingly as the basis for his study; he tries to be selective but comprehensive, showing different sides of her character in order to build up a complete spiritual portrait.

In order to examine her conscience more effectively, she noted down her faults, and read them aloud to the community (p.67); she also wrote down certain devotional resolutions, and Choisy uses these "billets", too, which are written in a meditative style, and reflect to some extent her complete abandonment to God - "Mourir comme le grain de froment, pour revivre en vous, mon Dieu." (pp.69-70)

Monsieur Jolly, who became her director of conscience and superior of the community in 1677, also asked her to write her life story, which reluctantly she agreed to do.

1. These were: M. du Festel 1648-1661
 M. Feret 1661-1677
 le p. Jolly 1677-1696

There is a substantial collection of letters written by the père Jolly to Madame de Miramion in the Bibliothèque Mazarine, MSS 1216-1219.

Naturally, her great modesty and humility reduce it to a bare and factual account, in which she attributes all her spiritual and charitable accomplishments to the grace of God (see pp.106-111).

Another valuable source of information for Choisy came in the records of the eight-day retreats, which she made regularly at least once a year, and during which "On lui ordonna d'écrire toutes les grâces qu'elle y recevait" (p.91). They take the form of three "Oraisons" and "Résolutions" each day, often with titles, - "Du bien que nous devons faire chaque jour," - "Des inclinations naturelles" etc. Choisy quotes from these retreats in extenso, as here we can see most fully her spiritual development. As well as the daily meditations, they include also a series of thirty-four reflections on community life, based on the example of Christ and the apostles, and stressing humility, modesty, and obedience, as well as emphasizing the need for the sacraments and the grace of forgiveness (pp.129-139). Choisy's role is here reduced to that of editor, introducing the texts, and placing them in the context of the rest of her life. He says at the end of Book III:

"Il serait inutile de faire des réflexions sur ce qu'on vient de lire, j'affaiblirais peut-être ce que je voudrais relever." (p.137)

He is nevertheless careful to fill in the background where necessary, such as at the beginning of Book IV, where he gives a brief history of the Filles de la Providence, before going on to discuss Madame de Miramion's role as their directrice to which post she was elected in 1678 (pp.145-149).

In Book V his contribution becomes greater, and he adopts once again the tone of admiration and respect that characterizes the opening éloge. The powerful mystical awareness of Madame de Miramion obviously inspired Choisy to write with the solemnity that is evident in passages such as the following:

"Dans cette situation, elle se sentait toute pénétrée, en priant, de la toute-puissance divine et de l'impuissance humaine, et cette vue la jetait heureusement dans un merveilleux abandon à la volonté de celui [...] qui [...] veut, cependant, que nous demandions sa grâce avec humilité [...] pour achever en nous l'ouvrage de notre salut." (p.221)

His description of her last illness and death is both moving and dignified - she loses neither her faith nor her fervour as she makes plans for the use of her money and the future good of the community. The evocation of her serenity at the moment of death serves as a fitting conclusion to the work since it reflects the courage in face of pain and difficulty which she showed during her life. Choisy sums up admirably in the following passage the qualities which are most fully illustrated in her own "oraisons" and letters - the combination of fervent activity and resigned humility, which enabled her to show great courage and understanding of the needs of others, and at the same time to search relentlessly herself after a deepening spirituality:

"Tant de vertus extraordinaires répandues sur toute la vie de Madame de Miramion procédaient d'un fond de vie intérieure que Dieu lui avait donné par sa grâce et qu'elle avait cultivé par l'exercice fidèle d'une oraison très solice qui ayant commencé par la méthode commune s'était perfectionnée comme par degrés et avait élevé peu à peu son âme aux voies les plus spirituelles et les plus sublimes." (p.214)

IV Moralizing WorksHistoires de piété et de morale

Stories appearing in successive editions of Histoires de piété et de morale

	<u>1710(1711)</u>	<u>1729</u>
Tobie	I	XX
Godefroi de Bouillon	II	VI
Elizabeth de Hongrie	III	VIII
Titus	IV	XV
Canut, Roi de Danemark	V	IV
François, duc de Guise	VI	XIII
Coriolan	VII	XVIII
Scipion l'Africain	VIII	XVII
Jule-César	IX	XVI
Alexandre le Grand	X	II
Le Courchibachi	XI	VII
Princesse Amalsonthe	XII	
Belisaire	XIII	
Pulchérie	XIV	
Esther	XV	V
Mahomet	XVI	
Zénobie	XVII	
Placide	XVIII	<u>n.d.(after 1718)</u>
Clotilde	XIX	I
Arsène	XX	II
Alexis	XXI	IV
Princesse Adeline		VI
Amé VI		
Grand Cyrus		
Charlemagne		
Reine Mathésie		
Publicola		
Elizabeth, Reine de Portugal		
Paul		
Placidie		
Joseph		
Pucelle d'Orléans		
Louis XII		
Achille		

* Stories XI and XII in the 1729 edition constitute only a part of story I in the 1718 edition.

The first part of Choisy's Histoires de piété et de morale first appeared in 1697,¹ and then in the 1710 edition, containing twenty-one stories, preceded by an Avertissement; the second part, in two volumes, containing thirteen new stories, appeared in 1718.² Thereafter two further works appeared, with different titles, each of which contains some of the stories told in the first two volumes, and no new material (see Table, previous page); none of the stories appears in both the later editions. These have the titles of Histoires de piété and Recueil d'histoires sacrées et profanes respectively - the Histoires de piété being a small collection of six stories, all with a specifically Christian content. Since these five works contain essentially the same material I shall refer to the stories in the order in which they appear in the two volumes of the Histoires de piété et de morale, (1710 and 1718).

1. I have not been able to find a copy of this first edition, but d'Olivet vouches for its existence. The 1710 edition was reprinted in 1711. Mongrédien gives 1700 as the date for the 1710 edition, but since all other details are identical, this is obviously a misprint.
2. D'Olivet speaks of a first volume dated 1718, but I have been unable to trace this. In fact he has probably muddled it with the first volume of 1710, since it is strange that none of the later selections incorporates any stories from it. Also the 1718 edition that I have used contains itself two volumes. Later bibliographies have copied d'Olivet's information (see his Vie, p.171). From the remark in the Avertissement to Volume I, we see that the whole collection was written at once ("plus de trente histoires") and so may conclude that the Histoires in the various forms are in fact a relatively early work (prior to 1697), manipulated by later editors.

Choisy explains his reasons for writing these stories in the Avertissement to the 1710 edition, a point which is made again in the Avis au lecteur of the posthumous 1729 edition. His aim, he says, is to provide readable stories, suitable for young people, but at the same time uplifting and free from triviality. The project was probably one formulated by a pious gathering of some nature, and Choisy was chosen to write the stories. It is presented in the following way in the Avertissement to the 1710 edition:

"Il y a douze ou quinze ans que les Dames saisirent les Contes de Fées avec tant de fureur, qu'elles ne voulaient plus entendre parler d'autre chose [...] De bonnes âmes crurent devoir s'opposer à un goût bizarre capable de gâter de jeunes esprits, qui reçoivent aisément les premières impressions."

With a will, then, to "exterminer les Fées", the group appointed Choisy to write "de petites histoires véritables, amusantes, courtes, pleines d'événements merveilleux qui attireront la curiosité et fixent l'attention; que la piété y règne, qu'on y trouve la bonne morale, que les plaisirs innocents y soient permis et même approuvés; que cela soit écrit d'un style léger, qui se fasse lire".

1. On the sudden and quite shortlived popularity of contes de fées in France in the seventeenth century, see M.E. Storer, La Mode des Contes de Fées, (Paris, 1928). Probably the most important single event in the development of this genre was the publication of the four volumes of Contes by Mlle d'Aulnoy in 1696 to 1697. Of other writers who opposed the trend, the abbé de Villiers was amongst the most vociferous, and wrote his Entretiens sur les Contes de Fées [...] pour servir de préservatif contre le mauvais goût in 1699 (Paris). D'Olivet in his Vie describes them as "ces fables et dangereuses fictions, dont la France est inondée, et dont le succès déshonore également le goût et la religion" (p.168, n.12). See also Mémoires de Trévoux, XXXI, 964.

The stories have a variety of sources, some better-known than others. Two in the first volume are clearly Biblical in origin (Tobie and Esther) and several others in both volumes are taken from the history of the early Church (I, 14, 18, 20, 21; II, 8, 10). A number come from Classical or Persian literature or tradition (I, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17; II, 3, 6, 9, 13), and the largest group are from later French or European history, often again with a Christian perspective (I, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 19; II, 2, 4, 7, 11, 12) - the exceptions to these groups will be considered later.

Although these two volumes are presented as two parts of the same work, the arrangement of the second is substantially different from the first. This part of the work contains no introductory Avertissement, but rather places all the stories within the context of the first, which culminates in the opening of a story-telling competition by the King, the father of the heroine of the main part of the story. The device is rather clumsy, and certainly not original, but does allow for more variety of narrative style, according to the choice of narrator. Most stories are linked by comments from the assembled company (e.g. II, p.190), and at one point the first story is taken up again (pp.208-220). The stories in which Choisy most obviously affects an artificial style are those told by the "nourrice" (nos 3, 4, 11, 12) which are freer in expression, and deliberately rather childish in tone - "Ha! vraiment, j'ai de belles choses à vous raconter, c'est de la Pucelle d'Orléans, une petite bergère, qui sauva le royaume de France, et qui chassa les Anglais" (p.279). The two "nourrice" stories which appeared in the 1729 edition, however, proved to be an embarrassment to the editor, who did not use the same narrative framework, and so had to invent another pretext for the different style.

This explains the sub-titles "(par sa nourrice)" attached to two stories in this edition, and also the rather clumsy and unconvincing Avis au lecteur, which contains a confused story about Choisy writing for a young princess, and employing a "style simple et naïf" in order to attract her attention. The Adeline story (the framework story of the 1718 edition) is reduced to the independent first part, and there are no linking passages between the other parts of the work.

Two main themes run throughout the two volumes, one Christian, the other 'classical': the Christian stories ("Piété") emphasize the possession of exceptional qualities from an early age, and entire devotion to God at all costs. These virtues are crowned by a holy death, often with canonization and miracles ensuing. As uplifting stories they fall short of their aim somewhat by failing to include any real element of temptation in the lives of the people concerned, and the tone is often excessively pious and insistent on suffering - for example Elizabeth de Hongrie (I, 3) who was a "prodige [...] de vertu et de sainteté" (p.49), and seemed positively to enjoy all the unpleasant things which happened to her.

In the stories centred on the other ~~main~~ theme ("Morale"), Choisy does not employ Christian terms of reference, but rather gives examples of "vertus morales" used in the service of the state and justice. In Jules-César (I,9) or Alexandre le Grand (I, 10) for example, we are presented with the noble non-Christian behaving in the interests of the state and of humanity.

Besides these two major themes, three stories stand out as being in some way differently orientated from the rest, and I will consider these briefly here. In Book I, the story

of the Courchibachi, ou Connétable de Perse (no.11) contains a moral by warning. "Si la vertu connue a toujours été récompensée dans tous les temps, et dans tous les pays du monde, le crime, quand il a été découvert, n'a guère évité la peine qu'il a méritée." (p.248) This story is also taken from more recent history, and includes a certain amount of local colour lent to it by exotic names. Its conclusion is, predictably, the execution of the bad Courchibachi and the triumph of the righteous man.

Also in Book I, we find the story of Mahomet (no.16) which is really totally different from the rest of the book. It contains a certain amount of factual information about Mahomet and Mohammedanism - explaining the beliefs and customs of the faith as well as its development and literature. Apart from a few remarks about the humanity of Mahomet, it lacks entirely the usual moral overtones of the stories, although it does mention the fact that Christian writers were usually tolerant and favourable towards the Moslem faith. It is interesting to note that this was the second time that Choisy had set about explaining an Oriental creed, since he had in 1685 to 1686 written an account of the religious beliefs in Siam.¹ Another curious religious point is the fact that Choisy includes amongst his Christian heroes the duc de Guise, one of the instigators of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew - further proof of his devotion to the cause of religious orthodoxy.

Finally, a passage in the Histoire d'Acelince must be mentioned for its very obvious political content. One of the story-tellers, a sage named Agnaciu delivers a long, impromptu discourse on European politics (Volume II, p.30 ff), in which, needless to say, France figures prominently and

1. See Journal, pp.345-349 and this thesis, Chapter III, p.124.

favourably. Louis is praised in particular (though not by name), and compared in glowing terms to the Emperor:

"L'Empereur comme Empereur n'est pas un des plus considérables, il n'est proprement que le chef des Princes d'Allemagne; le Roi de France lui seul est aussi puissant que tous les autres ensemble, et il y paraît bien par la guerre qu'il soutient depuis plusieurs années" (p.32).

Other European countries are also mentioned, including England, whose King, James II is in exile in France, since "le Prince d'Orange [...] a trouvé le moyen de faire révolter ses peuples, de le chasser de son pays, et de se mettre à sa place" (p.37). The inclusion of this episode in the 1718 edition is made somewhat anachronistic, since it contains such an obvious reference to Louis XIV, who had by then died three years earlier, and since thematically and structurally it is quite gratuitous.

To conclude, it is perhaps worth mentioning that d'Argenson considered these histoires to be among the abbé de Choisy's most charming and successful works. In his Loisirs,¹ he includes them among the "livres de l'abbé de Choisy, dont je conseille la lecture à mes amis, et surtout aux dames de ma connaissance" and praises him for having "transporté le style de Madame de la Fayette et de Madame d'Aulnoy, dans ses histoires édifiantes et morales." He concludes "il est aisé de se les procurer."

1. D'Argenson, Loisirs, (Liège, 1737), II, 131-132.
See also Mémoires de Trévoux, (June 1711), p.964.

CHAPTER V

MEMOIRES POUR SERVIR A L'HISTOIRE DE LOUIS XIV

MEMOIRES POUR SERVIR A L'HISTOIRE DE LOUIS XIV

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CHAPTER V

MEMOIRES POUR SERVIR A L'HISTOIRE DE LOUIS XIV

1. Structure and sources

The fact that the abbé de Choisy's Mémoires have not shared the oblivion which most of his other writing has suffered, but appeared in a new edition as late as 1966 is some indication of their continuing interest and popularity. As will be seen from the Bibliography, however, the number of constituent parts of what have collectively become known as the Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV has varied somewhat since their first appearance in the eighteenth century. The first four editions¹ consisted only of the text of the Arsenal manuscript No.3187 (pp.1-374), divided by the editor into nine books.² The first edition to offer any new material is the Cinquième édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée (Utrecht, 1727),³ which contains two substantial passages (thirteen and fourteen pages long respectively) which appear in none of the extant manuscripts nor in any of

1. The editor of the first edition (Utrecht, 1727) is reputedly the abbé d'Olivet but Barbier quotes a letter by him in which he disclaims ever having published the work. Barbier attributes the 1727 edition to L. F. Camusat. See Barbier, Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes, t.III, col.241. The first edition was reprinted in 1747. cf. Lelong, Bibliothèque historique de la France, (1768-1778), Vol.II, no.24511.
2. The division of the first manuscript into nine books is completely arbitrary, there being no obvious indications as to the author's intentions concerning this.
3. Bodleian library. Catalogue no. 8^oK 80 Art.E.S.

the subsequent editions.¹

If they are by Choisy (and I believe them to be so) then we must conclude that the autograph manuscript, now lost or destroyed, contained these two extra passages which do not appear in the manuscript copies in the Arsenal or the Bibliothèque Nationale. We must also assume that the editor of the cinquième édition either possessed or had access to the autograph manuscripts. There is no sure way of ascertaining whether the editor of the first edition used the autograph manuscript, omitting these passages himself, or merely used the manuscript copies, and so was not even aware of their existence, but at whatever stage they were in fact omitted it was quite likely that it was because they largely **duplicate** other parts of the Mémoires - and indeed sometimes contain a story that has already been told in another context (cf. cinquième édition, I, 191 ff. and Mongrédien edition, pp.240-241). It is improbable, too, that the position of these passages in this edition corresponds to the position in the original manuscript, but since there is so little order in the work as a whole, it is impossible to suggest where they might follow on more logically. Certainly their absence from the Arsenal manuscript does not indicate that they have no place in the work.

Choisy's Mémoires appeared thereafter in the two great nineteenth-century collections, Michaud and Poujoulat, and Petitot and Monmerqué, and in an independent edition by Lescure in 1888. In all nineteenth-century editions as well

1. This fact is explained firstly by the scarcity of the cinquième édition and secondly by the fact that the nineteenth-century editors used manuscripts in preference to previous printed editions. The two passages in question occur between p.191 and p.203 of Vol.I, and p.164 and p.177 of Vol.II.

as in Mongrédien's 1966 edition, the nine books of the eighteenth-century editions become ten (Book IV being divided into two parts), and two further books, XI and XII are added, partly from manuscript sources,¹ to give the Mémoires as we know them today. Apart from these factors, any differences between editions are limited to transitional passages, either added or slightly adapted by editors to give some degree of continuity between the different books, and the insertion or omission of subtitles.²

The overall plan of the work as we have it is as follows: the first seven books, grouped I-IV and V-VII, constitute a more or less coherent whole, and the largest single part of the work. Books I-IV take as their framework the events of the year 1661, but include within this many digressions into the past and the future; Books V-VII deal chiefly with the years 1678 to 1691, and again preserve an overall chronological plan despite their diversity of subject matter. Book VIII stands by itself since the material contained in it all comes from a single source, and this serves as a unifying factor. As the title of the manuscript indicates, it is based on Choisy's meeting with Daniel de Cosnac, Bishop of Valence and then Archbishop of Aix, and it is worked out on an independent time scale from the rest of the work. The same is true of Book X which is concerned with the Cardinal de Bouillon and this, too, stands alone as the more detailed

1. See Bibliography, p.326, n.1.

2. For the sake of convenience I shall follow the book numberings adopted by Monmerqué and subsequent editors, and give page references to the Mongrédien edition of 1966 except when referring to specific earlier editions.

study of a part of one man's career.¹ Books IX and XI contain the account of three incidents in Polish history, which have very little in common with the rest of the work, and the same is true of Book XII, which consists of a further four fragments. The first is a brief study of Madame de Guercheville (a pious woman who lived during the reign of Henri IV), and may well have been intended for the Histoires de piété et de morale, with which it seems to have more in common. The other three are all taken from the Recueil de Bons Mots, and although they are in keeping with the spirit of the Mémoires, were not intended to form part of them.

Now let us study the structure and themes of the early books more closely, starting with Books I-VII; there is in these books, despite their disorganized anecdotal style, an overall chronological cohesion and general thematic unity which enables us to treat them as a group.

The first theme to appear, after a long and muddled preamble in which the author deliberates at length on his motives for writing the Mémoires, takes as its starting point the death of Mazarin in 1661 (p.38). This leads him back in time into a detailed discussion of the Cardinal's career, which he traces through the Fronde and the minority of

1. According to Boislisle, Saint-Simon used Choisy as a source on Bouillon, Turenne, the duchesse de Bourgogne and other members of the court, basing himself either on their meeting at la Ferté-Vidame in 1708 or Choisy's Mémoires of which Saint-Simon possessed a copy. See Boislisle's edition of Saint-Simon's Mémoires, (Paris, 1879-1930), V, 283, n.2, 284, n.2, 285, n.1-2; X, 41, n.5; XII, 82, n.1. The similarities between the extracts given in Volume V are indeed striking, although the evidence given in the other two cases does not seem to me to be conclusive.

Louis XIV before returning again to 1661 (Books I-II). Although there is little proportional treatment, Choisy here sustains a theme over nearly forty pages, and organizes and connects to some extent the fund of anecdotes which are his raw material. There follow four portraits - Fouquet (p.65), le Tellier (p.66), Lionne (p.67) and Colbert (p.68 ff.), the latter leading Choisy on to digress on a number of topics before taking up again the first theme of the Mémoires (p.77), but he is again side-tracked, this time by some ecclesiastical gossip and a digression on court life.

After various passing references to the subject, Choisy comes on to the second of the major themes of his Mémoires - the Fouquet affair (p.91), another important event of 1661, which occupies the rest of Book III. The treatment of the subject is sustained, and for once he resists the temptation to be side-tracked. Book IV is largely devoted to foreign affairs and its brevity is some indication of Choisy's flagging interest in the period. It is unfinished in all editions, and tails off in the middle of a list of the members of the chambre de justice (p.112). In it he discusses the state of affairs in Sweden, Denmark, England and Spain, and then returns briefly to the French court to report the birth of the Dauphin.

At the beginning of Book V he confirms that it was boredom which had prevented him from finishing the earlier part of his Mémoires, and he now turns his attention to "des événements courants" starting in 1678 and concentrating particularly on the years 1685 to 1686. This is another rambling section, with the emphasis on religious affairs, particularly the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in France, and the exile of James II of England. The first part of Book VI is taken up with court affairs, including "trois

mariages", quietism, and the rise of Madame de Maintenon: the latter part of this book is entirely devoted to Siam (see Chapter III of this thesis). The seventh book, which is unfinished in all but one of the editions, is chiefly concerned with the events of the year 1686, and in particular the "grande opération".¹ Again the construction is loose and episodic, (but still with an overall chronological pattern), and the chapter ends with some events of 1691. In the 1727 cinquième édition a section on Madame de Choisy's role in court life follows here, although it has apparently little connexion with what precedes it.

These are the main themes which penetrate Choisy's Mémoires for the years 1661, 1685 to 1686, and 1691. Occasionally he dwells at length on one event or person, such as ⁱⁿ the section on the fall of Fouquet, or the portraits of ministers, but just as often he wanders from one subject to another with only the most tenuous connexions, or ignores altogether some important aspect of a period under discussion. He says early in the work: "Je crois qu'il est assez à propos, avant que d'aller plus loin, d'avertir ceux qui s'amuseront à lire ces Mémoires qu'ils y trouveront une infinité de choses dont ils feront peut-être fort peu de cas" (p.34), and does not set out to write the factual history of a reign, "puisque deux beaux esprits connus et admirés dans le monde [Racine and Boileau] [...] sont chargés d'un si grand travail" (p.22), but is merely "un peu jaseur la plume à la main" (p.38).

As in conversation, one topic leads to another, and one incident recalls another, and it is by following these trains of thought that we see how the Mémoires grow - "Il aime à

1. In 1686, the King was operated for a "fistule au fondement" by his surgeon Félix, a long and painful procedure which he bore with great fortitude.

ouvrir des parenthèses, et quand un nouveau sujet l'intéresse, il interrompt et laisse le précédent".¹ One of the most frequent links is Choisy's own memory - "Cela me fait souvenir de . . ." (e.g. pp.37, 47, 110); one promotion reminds him of another, one birth of another, and so on - or again he groups together events which fall into one category: "Il se fit à la cour trois mariages" (p.127), "Il mourut alors à Paris . . .", "Il était mort quelque temps avant . . ." (pp.125-126).

The first seven books are all based on stories of varying length, more or less relevant to the year or person under discussion, and what makes some parts stand out as containing more sustained writing is rather their continuity of subject matter than any more objective 'factual' approach; they are just as anecdotal as the rest of the work (e.g. pp.95-96 of the section on Pouquet), but the anecdotes contain more obvious links with each other, and Choisy in places fills in the background to the events in question.

Much of the time he finds it difficult not to digress, however, and excuses himself on several occasions to the reader, often laughing at himself as he does so - "Après ce petit écart, qu'on me pardonnera si l'on veut" (p.37) and then bringing himself back to his original subject (e.g. pp.39 and 47). After his comments on Sweden and Denmark in Book IV he remarks "Mais c'est trop discourir des pays étrangers" (p.107), and briefly considers the internal financial situation in France to make up for it - but by the following paragraph he has again turned his attention to foreign affairs, this time to England.

1. Sainte-beuve, Causeries, (Paris, 1858), III, 447.

The following examples will perhaps best illustrate the different degrees of continuity and integration which Choisy achieves. The first comes from Book III, and arises from the death of the duc d'Epéron in 1661 ("le duc d'Epéron mourut en ce temps-là . . ."). This leads Choisy on to think of his father ("Ce Monsieur d'Epéron était fils du fameux duc d'Epéron . . ."), who was one of the favourites at the court of Henri III - and this in turn reminds him of Monsieur de Bellegarde, another favourite at the same court. Thus in the space of three paragraphs he transfers his attention to a completely different set of people; for the time being Louis XIV and 1661 are forgotten and it is the sixteenth century with the courts of Henri III and Henri IV which now make up his subject matter. Quite soon, though, he tires of these stories, and returns without any warning to the next event in 1661 worthy of his attention - "Ce fut un peu après la mort du duc d'Epéron que . . ." (p.90).

The second example comes from Book VII (1686), and in this case we see Choisy drifting even further away from his subject matter, here by using the repetition of one word as his starting-point. The court had moved in October 1686 to Fontainebleau; Choisy remarks on the presence of Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Montespan (p.163) and on the fact that the King was no longer to be seen at the comédies - "on croyait d'abord que c'était affaires; on reconnut que c'était scrupule . . ." (p.163). Then by a clever repetition of the word "scrupule", he moves on to an entirely different subject, though one which also concerned the King at the time, nominations to bishoprics: "Il lui vint un autre scrupule, pour le moins aussi bien fondé, sur la nomination des évêchés" (pp.163-164). This leads him on again to mention the behaviour of Cardinal le Camus who had not waited to

receive his biretta from the King; Ranuzzi, the papal nuncio, on the other hand, followed the customary procedure which Choisy then describes in some detail, noting particularly the honour that Louis had paid him by allowing him to drink his health "debout et découvert" (p.164). This in turn reminds Choisy of some previous occasions on which this privilege had been granted or refused, firstly under Louis XIV and then under Louis XIII - "le feu Roi l'avait fait au Cardinal Richi, et ne l'avait pas fait au Cardinal Spada" (p.165) - and then suddenly without any transitional passage he returns to the court at Fontainebleau. It is only when he takes up his original subject in this way that we realize how far he had digressed from it, and he now continues with a straightforward description of activities at court. It is on tenuous links such as these that the Mémoires are constructed, and it is in this way that the underlying theme of the year in question and its events serves Choisy as a framework for digressions into the past and into the future. They are a mixture of themes and secondary themes, anecdotes and observations, digressions and abrupt returns to a subject previously under discussion - in fact the perfect written account of the conversational reminiscences of a man approaching old age. The reader can share that pleasure of which d'Argenson speaks in his Loisirs:

"Quand on a pris de bonne heure le goût de s'instruire dans la conversation, on est charmé de se trouver vis-à-vis des vieillards qui sont capables de vous raconter ce qu'ils ont vu et su de plus intéressant; [...] Il faut les questionner sur les choses qu'ils peuvent savoir, et l'on peut être très assuré qu'ils les diront avec plaisir [...]: on est sûr de lire dans leur mémoire, comme dans un livre, tout ce qu'elle contient de curieux et d'intéressant. C'est ainsi que j'en ai usé avec mon parent l'abbé de Choisy."

1. D'Argenson, Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 84.

Another factor in the composition of the Mémoires as a whole (excluding Book XII) is the use Choisy makes of his sources, since he often groups together pieces of information and stories told him by the same person; he relies heavily on gossip and second-hand evidence for the parts dealing with events before and during 1661, since he was only seventeen when Louis XIV attained the age of majority. However, he writes first of all "tout ce que je sais par moi-même, et tout ce que ma mère m'a dit" (p.35). Thereafter ministers were one of his chief sources, and he mentions by name Croissy, Pomponne and Pontchartrain (p.29). Of the various other raconteurs,

"Je fais parler M. Roze sur le temps du Cardinal Mazarin; j'entretiens M. de Brienne, qui a été cinq ou six ans secrétaire d'Etat, et qui, malgré dix-huit ans de Saint-Lazare, a encore beaucoup d'esprit et de mémoire. Je fais conter à M. de Pontchartrain; j'en ai usé ainsi avec feu Pellisson. Je laisse jaser la bonne femme du Plessis-Bellièvre, qui ne raconte point. J'ai eu cent conversations avec le vieux maréchal de Villeroy et avec feu M. le premier. Je tire quelquefois une parole du bon homme Bontemps; j'en tire douze de Joyeuse, et vingt de Chamarande, qui est ravi qu'on lui aille tenir compagnie: il n'y a rien qui délie si bien la langue que la goutte aux pieds et aux mains." (p.35)¹

Another more famous sufferer from gout, the Cardinal de Retz, described some of the details of the Fronde to him: "Le coadjuteur m'a conté toutes ces particularités à Rome dans le conclave: il avait la goutte, et je lui tenais compagnie" (p.44).

"Les Servien, qui étaient un peu parents de ma mère" (p.54) provided some stories about the Treaty of the Pyrenees.

1. Mongrédien gives short biographical notes on all the figures mentioned in the Mémoires.

The Archbishop of Rheims, whom Choisy considered "trop grossier pour ne pas être sincère" told two good anecdotes about Colbert's feigned ancestry (p.71) and the marquis d'Ambros, "qui est un vieux répertoire" was the author of some gossip concerning Henri IV and Bellegarde (p.88). The Bishop of Bayeux, as well as le Tellier and Perrault all provided further material for the Mémoires, and Choisy, like his more illustrious acquaintance Saint-Simon also used the Journal of Dangeau as the basis for some of his writing (see p.113 ff.). Choisy implies that he found Dangeau's Journal excessively discreet, and probably rather dull (Saint-Simon found it of "une fadeur à faire vomir"). He uses it as "la source du bien" in parts of his Mémoires, for although

"la grande sagesse et la trop grande circonspection de l'auteur l'ont empêché d'y mettre beaucoup de faits curieux parce qu'ils auraient pu fâcher quelqu'un, et qu'il n'a jamais voulu fâcher personne, je n'aurai pas tant d'égards que lui." (p.113)

The sources of Books VIII and X are independent, and these sections stand to some extent apart from the rest of the work. The subtitle of Book VIII - "Mémoires sur différentes choses que m'a racontées l'archevêque d'Aix dans différents séjours que j'ai faits avec lui" is used only in the Arsenal and Bibliothèque Nationale manuscripts and in the Lescure edition of 1888, but serves to establish its source as Cosnac, and its author as Choisy, and so to dispel the doubts cast on this collaboration by Jules de Cosnac in his edition of

1. Choisy obviously uses Dangeau primarily as a chronological guide (see p.113). Mongrédien points out more specific borrowings on p.126, n.3; p.138, n.1; p.139, n.1.

Cosnac's Mémoires.¹ The author begins with a character sketch of Cosnac and goes on to trace his career, interspersing his récit with court gossip and scandal. The independence of this book is particularly obvious in places where Choisy mentions in a different context events which he has already treated in another part of the work. Thus on p.193 he mentions in passing Mazarin's death, to which he had already devoted a good deal of attention in his Mémoires for 1661. Philippe d'Orléans and Henriette d'Angleterre figure prominently in this section of the work, which Choisy concludes with a portrait of Cosnac as Archbishop of Aix.

In a similar way it is the Cardinal de Bouillon who dominates Book X. Choisy's immediate inspiration for writing it was apparently his meeting with Bouillon at La Ferté-Vidame,² and he sets out to tell the story of the Cardinal's strange life - "pourvu que je sois instruit de toutes les particularités; et je me vante que personne sur la terre ne l'est mieux que moi" (p.217). He tells of his own relationship with Bouillon and talks at some length in this context of his own childhood. When he does embark on a study of the Cardinal, his comments are unfortunately limited to a small part of his career, although he does here fill in the historical background in a more factual way than elsewhere, summarizing political and ecclesiastical events, and more rarely resorting to anecdotes and bons mots. This part of the book consequently lacks some of the wit and spontaneity of other sections of the work.

1. cf. Mongrézien's edition, p.176, n.1, and Jules de Cosnac's edition of Cosnac's Mémoires (S.H.F.), 2 vols, Vol.I, Introduction.

2. cf. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, (Pléiade edition), Vol.II, pp.1064-1065.

Books IX and XI remain to be considered, but they in fact present little interest from a structural point of view. Book IX is a complicated account of the "Circonstances particulières dont l'enchaînement fit que le marquis d'Arquien père de la Reine de Pologne, ne put obtenir d'être fait duc".¹ In fact the whole book is the elaboration of one episode - which is unrelated to the first part of the Mémoires - and the point of which does not appear until the last paragraph. Book XI² is again concerned with one incident in Polish-French relations in 1683, the siege of Vienna. In the first section Choisy describes what is basically a family quarrel, and in the second the struggle for power by the King of Poland. Although this book contains some mention of the French court, it is difficult to say whether Choisy intended it (or Book IX) to be attached to the rest of the Mémoires, since these Polish fragments are unconnected with either the title or the general subject matter.

On the whole, to judge from the frequent appearance of the phrase "Cela me fait souvenir de . . .", it would seem that Choisy did not keep a written record of the conversations he had with most of the people who provided him with his raw material, but rather wrote in his Mémoires what he later remembered to be the most important or curious features of a story: "quand plusieurs s'accordent sans s'être concertés, je crois que c'est là la vérité" (p.35). There is never any evidence of a marked change of style or outlook in any given section, and all the material contained in the central part of the Mémoires, at least, has clearly been assimilated by

1. Arsenal MS 3186 Index.

2. See on the sources of Book XI Bibliography, p.326, n.1.

Choisy, and 'edited' in however confused a way, before being committed to paper, so that we are here concerned with the original work of a widely informed writer, shaped to some extent by his sources, but never dictated by them.

2. Content

"J'entreprends d'écrire des Mémoires sur la plus belles de toutes les vies, la plus remplie d'événements extraordinaires, la plus digne de passer à la postérité: [...] pour tout dire en peu de paroles, j'entreprends d'écrire la Vie de Louis XIV." (p.22)

Despite the clarity of this initial declaration of his intention, Choisy at no point gives any single sustained appreciation of the character and career of Louis XIV, as he does of Mazarin or Bouillon, for example. He rather presents him as a constant factor behind the events of the time - a "basse continue" as he describes it (p.38) - and builds up a picture of him gradually over the whole span of the Mémoires.

He had no reason to be particularly fond of Louis, nor did Louis feel in any way indebted to Choisy, except on account of his parents' services at the court. As Choisy says, "pour moi (je le dis à ma confusion), jamais il ne m'a écouté favorablement; et lorsque je lui ai demandé quelques grâces assez légères, il me les a toutes refusées" (p.29). He of course realizes that his behaviour had not always been exemplary, and that he had deserved the treatment he had received at the hands of the King - "Mais aussi s'il m'a fait justice, je suis en droit de la lui faire à mon tour, et de peser son mérite dans la balance de la vérité" (p.29).

Louis in his childhood, according to Choisy, showed little promise of the man he was to become later in life: "Il avait passé son enfance dans les jeux et dans les plaisirs; [...] il ne savait, à proprement parler, que ce que la nature lui avait appris. L'étude lui faisait de la peine, comme elle en fait à tous les enfants: mais, au lieu de le contraindre comme les autres, on le flattait dans toutes ses inclinations" (p.38). Ezechiel Spanheim, writing of the young

King, endorses this judgement and speaks of his "connaissances [...] fort bornées par le peu de soin qu'on avait pris de les cultiver dans sa jeunesse".¹ In Louis' favour, on the other hand, it must be said that he was not difficult to educate, as even Saint-Simon was prepared to concede: "L'esprit du Roi était au-dessous du médiocre mais très capable de se former".²

His coming of age did not prove to be a significant event in political terms, since Mazarin was still alive and exercising his authority - "la majorité du Roi n'avait rien changé au gouvernement; le Cardinal gouvernait et prenait des mesures pour gouverner toujours" (p.50).³ The critical moment was to come when, in 1661, Mazarin became gravely ill, and was moved to Vincennes.

The numerous contemporary and later accounts of Mazarin's death-bed advice to Louis do not help to clarify what was actually said. Certainly we may assume that he had already undertaken a general political education of the King - "Le Cardinal commença alors tout de bon à vouloir instruire le Roi. Il tenait le conseil presque tous les jours, [...] et ne voulait point qu'on parlât d'affaires que le Roi n'y fût" (p.56).

As far as more specific and more final advice is concerned, there are two conflicting traditions discerned by Chéruel in his work on the subject.⁴ Historically the more

1. E. Spanheim, Relation de la cour, p.3.

2. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ("J'ai lu"), p.39.

3. Madame de la Fayette is also of this opinion, see Henriette d'Angleterre, p.6.

4. Chéruel, Histoire de France sous Mazarin, esp. t. III, Book VI, Chapter 5.

credible argument is based on the document containing the notes dictated to Rose by Louis after Mazarin's death, in which the Cardinal's advice is supposedly accurately reproduced, although incomplete.¹ These notes suggest that the nature of the advice was in fact very general, in itself little more than a collection of political maxims. The historically more dubious argument, based on mémoires and tradition, on the other hand, claims that Mazarin gave Louis detailed and specific instructions on how he was to act following his death, not only in terms of the state, but also with regard to particular individuals - and Choisy fits more or less into this tradition (see p.77 of the Mémoires for example). It is impossible to say which of these traditions is the more accurate, but it is reasonable to suspect that a certain amount of more specific advice was implicit in the more general phrases which have come down to us from Rose. What is quite clear is that Mazarin had advised Louis to rule without a first minister, and that the King saw clearly that responsibility for the state rested from now on with him: "la paix générale, mon mariage, la mort du Cardinal Mazarin m'obligèrent à ne pas différer davantage ce que je souhaitais et que je craignais tout ensemble depuis longtemps".²

The youth and gaiety of the King, however, together with the strong hold which Mazarin had had over the state, made certain people understandably fearful of the outcome of this change in government - "Les plus gens de bien tremblaient pour l'Etat, qu'ils voyaient sans pilote: il ne leur entraît

1. See Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert, t.I, Appendix XVII, p.535.
2. Louis XIV, Mémoires, (1661), II, 375; see also Madame de Motteville, Mémoires, p.506 and du Plessis-Praslin, Mémoires, p.430.

pas seulement dans l'esprit que le Roi fût capable de gouverner, ni même qu'il voulût s'en donner la peine" (p.64). The astonishing happened, and the King, far from being weak and disinterested, took the reins of power with a vengeance, and an amazing personal transformation seemed to take place. According to Choisy, it was when challenged by Brienne that "le Roi prit cet air et ce ton de maître qu'il a toujours eu depuis, et qu'il n'avait point eu jusque là" (p.59). Other writers confirm that he took his ~~min~~isters by storm - it was "tout d'un coup", "avec surprise" that he showed his capacity for governing single-handed. As Madame de Motteville says: "le jour de la mort du Cardinal Mazarin fut véritablement celui de son avènement à la couronne, celui où il commença d'être Roi, et de faire voir qu'il était digne de l'être".¹ Thereafter, he was not slow in asserting his authority, and at the second conseil of his reign "Il leur dit en maître [...] qu'il ne voulait pas qu'aucun d'eux signât la moindre ordonnance, le moindre passeport, sans avoir reçu ses ordres" (p.73). The personal reign of Louis had begun, and his decision to brook no challenge to his leadership was soon to be vividly ratified by the affair of Rouquet's dismissal.

In the rather elaborate opening éloge it is Louis' military prowess which Choisy emphasizes - "villes prises, batailles gagnées, Etats conquis" (p.22). If his tactics on the battlefield were not always well advised, Choisy does not see this as in any way diminishing his ultimate military glory: "Ce sont des ombres, des taches dans le soleil, qui ne l'empêchent pas d'être le grand astre de l'univers" (p.32).

1. Madame de Motteville, Mémoires, p.507; see also Montglat, Mémoires, p.350, comte de Grammont, Mémoires, p.102, and for an unilattering interpretation, Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ("J'ai lu"), p.37.

He criticizes the King for not having crossed the Rhine after the comte de Guiche in 1672, and for not having attacked William of Orange at Valenciennes, but adds that the King himself was also conscious of these tactical errors.

Choisy was aware, though, that military glory was not synonymous with the welfare of the people. These Mémoires were written in the 1690's, at a time when the full force of Louis' extravagant aggressive policies had not yet made itself felt in France - but even then Choisy saw that people were suffering because of them. It is in the most veiled terms that he points this out in the last sentence of the following extract, hiding his criticism beneath the hope of future prosperity:

"J'entreprends d'écrire la Vie de Louis XIV, Roi de France, à qui ses peuples ont donné le surnom de Grand, nom glorieux que ses vertus, que ses actions lui ont acquis avec justice, et que l'équitable avenir lui confirmera, si ses grandes destinées se soutiennent jusqu'à la fin, et qu'après avoir fait la gloire de ses sujets il en puisse faire le bonheur." (p.22)

Choisy thereby places himself amongst those Frenchmen who already saw what was wrong with Louis' external policies, and who recorded their feelings in writing. He was not blinded by military aggrandisement, and remained sensitive to the growing resentment of the people. Spanheim wrote in a way more directly critical of the King in 1690: "la gloire [here meaning military pride] est l'autre passion qui le domine et le possède à l'excès, ce qui aussi a eu le plus de part aux événements fatals de nos jours".¹ Both Choisy and his contemporaries were aware of the disproportion that

1. Spanheim, Relation, p.25.

existed between the standard of living of the French peasants and the extravagances of the French court. La Fare accuses Louis of using his authority to "tirer de ses peuples tout ce qu'il en pouvait tirer pour le dépenser en bâtiments aussi mal conçus que peu utiles au public",¹ and Choisy represents Colbert as little more than a fund-raiser "uniquement attentif à fournir les sommes immenses qu'on lui demandait tous les jours, sans avoir le courage de représenter au maître, qui apparemment n'en savait rien, que le peuple était dans la misère, tandis qu'on ne parlait que de fêtes, de ballets et d'illuminations" (pp.69-70).²

The people nevertheless had some degree of respect and even love for Louis, although this probably emanated largely from a fear of the outcome of a premature change in government. Choisy describes the scene in Paris during the King's illness of 1686 in the following terms: "Les églises se remplirent en un moment, sans qu'il fût besoin que les curés s'en mêlassent: [...] Cet empressement si naturel et si volontaire dura tant qu'on crut le Roi en quelque danger" (p.167). If we read on, however, one phrase stands out in the next passage, which shows that the inhabitants of France, not yet decimated by the War of the Spanish Succession, and the harsh winters of the first years of the eighteenth century, were nevertheless already impatient for peace and prosperity. France had been made glorious and great, and she was now awaiting that well-being that was never to come:

1. La Fare, Mémoires, p.287.

2. cf. La Bruyère, Caractères, (1688) Saint-Simon, Lettre anonyme au Roi, (1712) and Vauban, Projet d'une dîme royale, (1707).

"On demandait à Dieu de prolonger une vie dont les commencements étaient si grands, et dont la fin, suivant toutes les apparences, devait être si avantageuse à son peuple." (p.167)

On the question of the King's piety, Choisy throws a certain amount of light on the respect in which he held the sacraments of the Church, instilled into him from his earliest childhood:

"On lui avait inspiré dès ses premières années les principes solides de la piété: [...] ces premières impressions du bien sont demeurées inébranlablement dans son cœur. Il a toujours conservé du respect pour la religion; et plus d'une fois, au scandale du petit peuple, mais à l'édification des gens sages et éclairés, il a mieux aimé s'éloigner des sacrés mystères, quoique la politique en murmurât, que de s'en approcher indignement." (p.39)

Madame Palatine, too, speaks of the King's attention to his devotions, although from a rather different point of view. Writing in 1695, she says:

"Es ist eine grosse ehre, in der predig ahn des Königs seytte zu sitzen, allein ich mögte gerne die ehre einem andern lassen, denn I. M. wollen mir das schlaffen nicht erlauben; sobaldt ich einschlauff, stöst mich der König mitt dem ellenbogen und macht mich wacker, kan also weder recht einschlauffen noch recht wacker werden, undt das thut einem wehe im kopff."

1. Briefen, ed. Bodemann, 2 vols, (Hanover, 1891), Vol.1, letter 195, p.208. Versailles, 13 February, 1695. Translated and edited in Letters from Liselotte by Maria Kroll, (London, 1970) as follows:

"It may be a great honour to sit next to the king in church, but I would gladly relinquish it because His Majesty won't let me sleep. As soon as I doze off, he nudges me with his elbow and wakes me up again, so that I am neither wholly asleep nor wholly awake. It gives me a headache." (p.69) I have not attempted to standardize or modernize the spelling and grammar of the original.

Saint-Simon, too, paints the court as a den of hypocrisy, devoid of piety outside that required by etiquette.¹ In such a situation, the King's stand for sacramental values would be all the more significant.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 was also seen by Choisy as emanating directly from Louis' religious convictions as to the nature of the Church - "Son zèle pour la religion Catholique augmentait de jour en jour" (p.124). Choisy leaves us in no doubt as to his own opinion of Protestantism, which he sees as a threat to "la véritable religion" (p.119). However, a gradual reduction of religious freedom was in his eyes the ideal method of suppressing it, rather than the more violent means advocated by the King and carried out by Louvois (see p.117) and he gives at some length the arguments for and against the Revocation. Of those who opposed it, some did so because they feared that the Huguenots "sortiront de France, [...] ruineront le commerce, [...] emporteront beaucoup d'argent . . ." (p.118 cf. p.141) and so on: the duc de Noailles, for instance, asks in his Mémoires: "La France devait-elle proscrire tant de Français, aussi utiles dans ses armées que nécessaires dans ses manufactures et dans ses campagnes?".² Others saw it as no more than religious persecution, even fanaticism; Liselotte was one such, although she placed the blame not with the King but

1. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ("J'ai lu"), p.240 ff.

2. Noailles, Mémoires, I, 279.

with Madame de Maintenon and the King's confessor.¹ Those who favoured the move (and we must believe that the majority of the French clergy were behind the King), tended to be somewhat fanatical in their enthusiasm, persuaded that "ainsi le temps était venu de donner le dernier coup à l'hérésie" (p.118). One of their most important spokesmen was Bossuet, who went so far as to call Louis a second Constantine, and quoting from the Fathers, to say:

"Vous avez affermi la foi; vous avez exterminé les hérétiques; c'est le digne ouvrage de votre règne; c'en est le propre caractère. Par vous l'hérésie n'est plus."²

Choisy, together with such writers as Madame de Caylus, takes a slightly more reasonable view. In religious terms, as we have seen, he saw the move as a blow for heresy and a triumph for orthodoxy, but it was for him an ill-advised and reckless act in political terms: "Il [Louis] signa avec un zèle vraiment apostolique; mais par ce petit trait de plume il priva son royaume d'un million d'hommes" (p.119). Madame de Caylus' criticism, by contrast, was more on humane grounds, and was chiefly directed at Louvois, who wanted to "mêler du militaire dans un projet qui ne devait être fondé que sur la

1. Scoville in The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development (1680-1720), (University of California Press, 1960), concludes that the Revocation only really damaged France financially in so far as it benefited other countries. cf. on this question La Fare, Mémoires, pp.286-287, Jurieu's Politique du Clergé de France, (1682) and Spanheim, Relation de la Cour, (passim). See also Choisy's own Mémoires, pp.141-142 and Liselotte's Briefen, ed. Bodemann, Vol.I, Letter 240, p.245
2. Bossuet, Oraison funèbre de Michel le Tellier, in Oraisons funèbres, publ. A. Rébelliau, (Paris, 1931), p.453. cf. Madame de Sévigné, Lettres, (Pléiade), III, 114.

charité et la douceur".¹ A more positive manifestation of Louis' Catholic zeal was the hospitality which he showed to King James II of England, who was fleeing from a situation almost complementary to that existing in France, and this is discussed too by Choisy, who also provides relevant background information on the quarrels between Church and State in England (pp.122-123).

On a more personal level, Choisy recognizes Louis' charms and social graces; he was an excellent dancer, and a patron of music and the arts, as well as possessing amazing physical strength and enormous energy. Choisy notices particularly his mastery of the French language - "Il est véritablement roi de la langue, et peut servir de modèle à l'éloquence française" (p.30). In addition to this, he showed himself on occasions capable of real sympathy and sensibility. When the daughter of his valet Bontemps died, "ce grand prince, aussi sensible qu'un particulier, eut la bonté d'employer quelques moments à le consoler" (p.121, cf. p.30).

At one point or another in the Mémoires, Choisy tells us about the most important women in Louis' life, although he neglects, perhaps significantly, to tell us much about Louis' queen, Marie-Thérèse. He recalls the Marie Mancini incident, which he sees as having had a formative influence on Louis' sense of devotion to the State² at the price of personal feelings - "Il parut à toute la France qu'en cette occasion il s'était sacrifié lui-même au bien de l'Etat" (p.54). Madame de la Fayette says of their relationship - "il avait passionnément aimé Mlle Mancini et [...] elle avait paru

1. Madame de Caylus, Souvenirs, p.478 cf. La Fare, Mémoires, p.260.

2. cf. J. B. Wolf, Louis XIV, ch.ix.

avoir sur lui un plus absolu pouvoir qu'une maîtresse ait jamais eu sur le cœur d'un amant".¹ He could not marry the woman he loved, however, but the woman whose position was equal to his own; his first duty was towards his country, and Marie is alleged to have said as she left him: "Ah! sire, vous êtes roi, et je pars" (p.55).² The marriage with Marie-Thérèse was, then, first and foremost a political move - "la paix fut signée, et le mariage conclu" (p.55) - and as such the ratification of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, and the culmination of Mazarin's diplomatic achievements.

Choisy includes too in his Mémoires a brief but precise portrait of Louise de la Vallière, with whom the King was "fort amoureux [...] et d'autant plus touché, qu'il en faisait encore un mystère presque impénétrable" (p.85). Choisy considers that "la grâce" was Louise's chief gift together with a "regard si tendre et en même temps si modeste, qu'il gagnait le cœur et l'esprit au même moment" (p.85). Her virtue lay in her unswerving devotion to Louis and in her docility; these more than compensated for her lack of intelligence, which Choisy could nevertheless not resist the temptation to point out - "au reste, assez peu d'esprit [...] point d'ambition, point de vues" (p.85). Spanheim is generally rather crushing about her, attributing to her "une naissance et une beauté médiocres et un esprit assez borné".³ It is perhaps not surprising that it is two women writers who emphasize her fidelity - Liselotte, who contrasts her with all the other mistresses and Madame de Caylus, who

1. Henriette d'Angleterre, p.8.

2. cf. Madame de la Fayette, Henriette d'Angleterre, p.19 and n.135, and also Montcalat, Mémoires, p.351.

3. Relation de la Cour, p.12.

says of her: "[elle] aima le Roi et non la royauté".¹ There were some Choisy family connexions with Louise de la Vallière, too, and Choisy recalls their own childhood friendship (p.85). Madame de Choisy and Louise's mother, Madame de Saint-Rhemi, had both lived in the Palais du Luxembourg, and it was Madame de Choisy who first introduced Louise into Madame's household (cinquième édition, II, 166). Choisy confirms here what he had insinuated in the portrait, namely that Louise had devoted herself entirely to the king to the detriment of all her other commitments (p.167 ff.) - "contente d'être ignorée de toute la terre, et de n'avoir ni biens, ni crédit, pourvu que son amant lui fût fidèle" (p.168).

Her successor, Madame de Montespan, "qui avec plus de naissance et de beauté, avait joint un esprit plus brillant, plus vif"² was temperamentally very different. Choisy in fact deals principally with the end of her career, and with the rise in favour of Madame de Maintenon. By 1686, "il y avait déjà cinq ou six ans que le Roi donnait des marques assez publiques de la considération particulière qu'il avait pour Madame de Maintenon" (p.134). There had been private tensions earlier, however, as we see from a letter written by Madame de Maintenon in 1675: "Il se passe ici des choses terribles, entre Madame de Montespan et moi, le Roi en fut hier témoin".³ The process was one of a simultaneous rise and decline - "A mesure que Madame de Montespan s'éloignait de son cœur par ses emportements l'autre s'en approchait par ses complaisances".⁴ Spanheim, too, attributes Madame de

1. Madame de Caylus
1. Souvenirs, p.481.

2. Spanheim, Relation, p.12.

3. Madame de Maintenon, Lettres, ed. Langlois, vol.II, letter 65, cf. letter 233 and Caylus, Souvenirs, p.80.

4. La Fare, Mémoires, p.288.

Montespan's fall to her uncertain and over-possessive temperament¹ - in complete contrast to Madame de Maintenon - "une femme toujours modeste, toujours maîtresse d'elle-même, toujours raisonnable, et qui joignait encore à des qualités si rares les agréments de l'esprit et de la conversation".² Choisy's analysis of their relationship is extremely astute, and he shows an understanding of Madame de Maintenon's temperament not shared by all his contemporaries.³ Her position in the royal household as governess of the Montespan bastards,

"lui avait donné mille occasions de montrer au Roi de quoi elle était capable, son esprit, son jugement, sa droiture, sa piété et toutes ces vertus naturelles qui ne gagnent pas les cœurs aussi vite que la beauté, mais qui établissent leurs conquêtes sur des fondements bien plus solides." (p.135)

Furthermore, after the death of his last real mistress, Mlle de Fontanges (who, according to Choisy was "belle comme un ange et sotte comme un panier" (p.175)), the King turned his attention to his salut and Madame de Maintenon's piety corresponded to this growth of interest in spiritual matters (p.135). Louis was anxious to regularize his relationship with her, and Choisy deals at some length with the question of their marriage (pp.172-175), describing Louvois' opposition to the event, which nevertheless took place some time before 1691. Choisy does not give the exact date, but Spanheim,

1. Relation, p.14.

2. Caylus, Souvenirs, p.487.

3. cf. Liselotte or Saint-Simon, for example, both vitriolic in their condemnation of the King's wife.

writing in 1690, implies that the marriage had by then already taken place.¹

This, then, is Louis XIV for Choisy, writing probably some time in the 1690's - a military hero, a great King, a competent ruler, and a man of strong personal conviction. The great deeds of Louis helped, for Choisy, to justify the misery that undoubtedly existed in France at this time, although they did not blind him to it. It was probably Louis' incarnation of the glory of France that appealed to him, whether he realized it or not: for him the reliving of the events of his reign was part of the pleasure he hoped to find in writing his mémoires:

"J'aurai [...] la consolation de repasser dans ma mémoire les actions héroïques d'un des plus grands rois qui ait jamais été en France; car, quoiqu'il ait des défauts comme les autres hommes, et qu'il ait bien fait des fautes en sa vie, il a en lui tant de grandes qualités, des vertus si solides, et il a fait tant de belles choses, qu'à tout prendre je l'estime autant que Charlemagne ou Philippe-Auguste." (p.35)

Of the other members of the royal family, it is Philippe d'Orléans who is portrayed most fully in the mémoires, and particularly in the section related to Choisy by Cosnac, who for some of his career was his aumônier (Book VIII).² We

1. Relation, p.20 cf. L. Hastier, Louis XIV et Madame de Maintenon, (Paris, 1957), who places it as late as 1697.
2. Cosnac's own Mémoires are divided into two distinct parts; in the first the emphasis is more on court affairs, and in the second on ecclesiastical matters (especially the Assemblée du Clergé). Choisy's writings coincide with Cosnac's mostly on material from the first part. See edition of S.H.F. (Paris, 1852) by Cosnac's descendant Jules de Cosnac, especially Vol.I Notice, pp.xvi-xvii and vol.II Tableau de Concordance.

have already seen how Choisy and Philippe d'Orléans played together as children, since their tastes to some extent coincided, but the transvestite ball mentioned in the Mémoires/femme was one of the last occasions on which they were together, since Choisy's obviously heterosexual make-up did not appeal to Monsieur. At this ball, the latter danced with his favourite, the chevalier de Lorraine, as Choisy describes:

"Il alla s'habiller en femme et revint au bal. [...] Tout le monde le connut, d'abord il ne cherchait pas le mystère et le chevalier de Lorraine lui donnait la main; il dansa le menuet, et alla s'asseoir au milieu de toutes les dames." (pp.325-326)

In his Mémoires, Choisy is a little more discreet in his portrayal, but leaves no room for doubt as to Monsieur's inclinations. His use of antithesis, by comparison to the King, and of judicious understatement is masterly and the effect crushingly ironical:

"Le roi commençait à devenir grand, et monsieur était la plus jolie créature de France." (p.185)

"Le Roi était aimable, jeune, galant, magnifique; le goût de monsieur n'était pas tout-à-fait tourné du côté des femmes." (p.188)

Madame de la Fayette says of Monsieur in her Vie d'Henriette d'Angleterre;

"Ses inclinations étaient aussi conformes aux occupations des femmes que celles du Roi en étaient éloignées: il était beau et bien fait et d'une taille plus convenable à une princesse qu'à un prince. Aussi avait-il plus songé à faire admirer sa beauté de tout le monde qu'à s'en servir pour se faire aimer des femmes."

1. Henriette d'Angleterre, pp.10-11.

His second wife was even more outspoken. Liselotte wrote in 1696:

"Der [Monsieur] hatt nichts in der welt im kopff alss seine junge kerls, umb da gantze nächte mitt zu fressen, zu sauffen, undt gibt ihnen unerhörte summen gelts, nichts kost ihm noch ist zu thewer vor die bursch; unterdessen haben seine kinder undt ich kaum was unss nöthig ist."

Daniel de Cosnac's opinion of Monsieur is unlikely to have been much better, and as we shall see it is from him that Choisy draws his ideas. Cosnac became Monsieur's premier aumônier in 1658, and celebrated the prince's marriage to Henriette d'Angleterre in 1661.² His opposition to the influence of the chevalier de Lorraine³ and the fact that he was "parfaitement attaché aux intérêts de Madame", however, aroused Philippe's displeasure,⁴ and he was sent into exile, having been dismissed from his post. Choisy says, again with heavy irony:

"Monsieur lui fit dire, non comme un ordre, mais comme une sorte d'insinuation qui ressemble à un commandement quand il vient de ceux qui sont infiniment au-dessus de nous, qu'il devait songer à s'en aller à son diocèse." (p.198)

Cosnac left the court disgusted with Monsieur, but with nothing but praise for Louis. Of his last interview with

1. Briefen, ed. Bodemann, Vol.I, Letter 234, p.237, Versailles, 7 March 1696. M. Kroll translates: "He has only one interest: his young men with whom he spends entire nights eating and drinking. He gives them incredible amounts of money, no expense is too great for them. In the meantime the children and I hardly have the bare necessities." (Letters from Liselotte, p.72)

2.-4. cf. Cosnac, Mémoires, I, 287, 361, 362,

the King, he says "Je viens d'entretenir un grand homme qui me dégoûte fort de mon petit maître".¹

Cosnac had, too, conveyed to Choisy his feelings of affection and sympathy towards Henriette d'Angleterre. She was very beautiful, both physically (p.187) and in manner. In fact "toute sa personne était ornée de charmes" (p.188), an opinion endorsed by Madame de la Fayette.² She was apparently very fond of the King, and rather jealous of Louise de la Vallière, whom she could not forgive "d'avoir su si parfaitement se faire aimer du Roi" (p.189).³ She was horrified at the thought that her husband's only feelings were towards the chevalier de Lorraine - who was "plus absolu chez Monsieur qu'il n'est permis de l'être quand on ne veut pas passer pour le maître ou la maîtresse de la maison" (p.188) and his presence caused her great sorrow. Cosnac says of this:

"On le regarda comme un favori déclaré. Monsieur ne parlait jamais à Madame, ni à toute sa cour, que de l'inclination qu'il avait pour lui."⁴

Her ambition to please the King caused gossip and malicious rumours to be circulated (p.191)⁵ and she sought Cosnac's friendship and protection. His departure therefore caused her considerable grief -

1. Cosnac, Mémoires, I, 265.

2.-3. Henriette d'Angleterre, pp.25 and 36.

4. Cosnac, Mémoires, I, 358-359.

5. - as did similar efforts by the duchesse de Bourgogne, cf. Madame de Maintenon, Lettres, ed. Langlois, tome V, Letter 1137.

"très fâchée de se voir privée de l'entretien d'un homme dans lequel elle avait toujours trouvé des ressources de fidélité, de consolation, de service, et d'attachement à ses intérêts." (p.200)

Cosnac wrote movingly from his diocese -

"Je reçus des lettres de Madame, mais si pleines de bonté, si généreuses, si touchantes, que je ne pouvais quelquefois m'empêcher de croire qu'il y avait peu de prospérité plus douce et plus gracieuse que ma disgrâce."

After the King, his mistresses, Monsieur and Madame, it is ministers and clerics who take pride of place in the Mémoires. Choisy's résumé of Mazarin's career is preceded by some remarks on Richelieu, whom he saw as a great but ruthless minister, feared rather than loved by Louis XIII. He was a shrewd politician, single-minded in his devotion to the state and monarchy, which he intended to strengthen at all costs. "Richelieu, né pour commander aux autres hommes, ami généreux, cruel ennemi, avait sur la même table son bréviaire et Machiavel" (p.40).

Mazarin, who 'inherited' France from Richelieu, "ne prit pas sa manière de gouverner [...] il crut se devoir servir de finesse et de dissimulation" (p.42), and Choisy indeed shows him as being resourceful and efficient in a much subtler way than Richelieu. After a brief appraisal of the early stages of his career, he concentrates on two aspects of Mazarin's life - his activities during the Fronde, and the period immediately leading up to the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees and his death.

The way in which Choisy writes about the Fronde is typical of much of the rest of his work. He dwells basically

on two episodes, although he mentions others in passing. These are the quarrel between Retz's party and Condé's party in the Parlement, and the arrest of the Princes - obviously central events which figure in all contemporary accounts.

In the most important of these, however, they are placed in context,¹ whereas Choisy springs them on the reader more or less in isolation. The various causes and effects of the Fronde are not discussed at any length, and we arrive rather unprepared at these incidents, which Choisy then discusses with little reference to their overall political significance. Indeed, he is more concerned about the details of the events themselves, with their dramatic and comic possibilities, than with their importance in the terms of wider seventeenth century problems. It is a characteristic trait of Choisy's Mémoires that, although he relates each scene loosely to its context, it is the picturesque within it that really interests him, and although he is factually accurate on the whole, it is anecdotes which have pride of place.²

The extent to which Mazarin identified himself with the cause of the state is discussed in the context of a possible marriage between his niece, Marie Mancini, and the King. Chéruel³, basing himself on Madame de Motteville claims that Mazarin may have seriously considered making his niece Queen of France, but given the attendant circumstances, realized that this would be extremely foolish. Madame de la Fayette is probably more realistic, if a little cynical, when she

1. For example those of La Rochefoucauld, Madame de Motteville, Dubuisson-Laubenay, Guy Joly, Retz, the Duchesse de Nemours, and the Journal ou Procès du Marquis de la Boulaye.

2. See pp.43 and 48 for example.

3. Histoire de France sous Mazarin, IV, 144.

says that Mazarin "voulut se faire un mérite envers la Reine et l'Etat d'une chose qu'il croyait contraire à ses intérêts".¹ Choisy endorses the opinion that the Cardinal saw the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees and the marriage between Louis XIV and Marie-Thérèse as a far greater personal triumph than a potentially catastrophic 'royal' marriage in his own family - and also as a means of persuading the King, "d'une manière bien sensible, de son attachement inviolable à la gloire de sa personne et au bien de son Etat" (p.56). As the duc de Grammont says of Mazarin's achievements - "il sortait de venir de donner la paix à l'Europe, et de marier le Roi à sa satisfaction".²

Thereafter, Choisy devotes some time to the death of Mazarin, the details of his will, and their consequences for France.³ As he approached death, the Cardinal showed considerable stoicism, and although in great pain, remained cheerful throughout his illness. He seemed to desire the affection of the people in whom he had inspired nothing but hatred - and died "moins chrétien que philosophe, avec une constance admirable, et une tranquillité qui lui venait, à ce qu'il disait lui-même, de l'innocence de sa vie passée" (p.63).⁴ The people had always resented him, though, and did not mourn him - he was for them still an outsider, and they had not benefited materially from the peace which he had eventually

1. Henriette d'Angleterre, p.18.

2. Duc de Grammont, Mémoires, II, 89. See also P. Erlanger, Louis XIV, (Paris, 1965), Pt.I, ch.13.

3. For further details about Mazarin's will, see Brienne, Mémoires, II, 133, n.1 and Louis XIV, Oeuvres, ed. Grimoard, VI, 292 ff.

4. There are many accounts of Mazarin's death, see especially in S.H.F. 1958-1959 La Mort du Cardinal Mazarin.

brought to the country - "On voyait bien les ileurs de la paix, mais on n'en avait point encore goûté les fruits" (p.64).

After Mazarin's death, "il y avait trois hommes sur le théâtre des affaires: Fouquet, le Tellier et Lionne. J'y ajouterai Colbert" (p.64), and of these four men, it is on Fouquet and Colbert that Choisy focuses his attention.

Choisy's portrait of rouquet is somewhat isolated from the rest of his writing on the surintendant and his career (pp.65-66 and 91-103), and although it adds considerably to our understanding of the events, and particularly of the central character involved in them, it is more useful as a conclusion than as an introduction to the episode. It is difficult to establish at what stage rouquet's downfall became inevitable, and here again we encounter the conflicting traditions concerning Mazarin's advice to Louis before his death. Montglat states quite clearly that "le Cardinal Mazarin lui avait dit en mourant, que la principale affaire qu'il eût dans son royaume [...] était le rétablissement des finances, qui étaient en mauvais état; et que rouquet était un trop grand dissipateur, qui [...] les ruinerait encore davantage".¹ Choisy here, too, belongs to the hearsay tradition, when he says:

"On dit que le Cardinal en mourant lui [the King] avait conseillé de se défaire de rouquet, comme d'un homme sujet à ses passions, dissipateur, hautain, qui voudrait prendre ascendant sur lui." (p.77, cf. p.65)

In fact Madame de Motteville is probably more correct when she says: "le ministre en mourant [...] lui laissa pour

1. Montglat, Mémoires, pp.352-353.

principale maxime de faire lui-même ses affaires",¹ which Louis may well have understood in terms of Fouquet's dismissal, since on the day of his arrest, he is reported to have said: "J'ai fait arrêter le surintendant; il est temps que je fasse moi-même mes affaires" (p.100). There is also evidence that Mazarin was becoming increasingly irritated with Fouquet shortly before his death, and he may well have made his feelings clear to the King. Aubéry, on the other hand, makes the point that Mazarin must have retained some degree of trust in the surintendant, since he made him one of the executors of his will, and so concludes "Il avait donc plus de vraisemblance à l'opinion [...] que Monsieur Fouquet aurait été lui-même l'auteur de sa disgrâce".² His interference in the King's personal affairs displeased Louis, and in addition to this, he was unpopular with other ministers: "il se laissa aller à des airs de supériorité sur les autres ministres, qui en furent offensés, et se réunirent contre lui" (p.65).

If there was no plotting before Mazarin's death, there was certainly a good deal of organization, tactical and psychological, after it. Once Louis had made up his mind about Fouquet, there was a certain inevitability about the whole procedure, and both Colbert and Louis were instrumental in its execution. The King clearly wanted to give Fouquet a false sense of security, and to play on his weaknesses by assuring him of his unchanging favour towards him. In this way, he would live in an unreal climate of opinion, and as he became more and more unscrupulous, would prepare his own downfall (see p.92 ff.). Once he had been persuaded to sell

1. Madame de Motteville, Mémoires, p.506.

2. Aubéry, Histoire du Cardinal Mazarin, liv.VIII, Ch.II, p.587. cf. Choisy, Mémoires, p.91. See also Aubéry, idem., pp.587-588, and cf. père Rapin, Mémoires, III, 109 and la Fare, Mémoires, p.259.

the post of procureur général,¹ there was nothing to prevent his dismissal. As he said to Brienne, with some awareness of his precarious situation: "Je ne suis plus procureur général, et ne serai plus longtemps surintendant".² It was becoming clear too that Colbert and Fouquet could not both survive in office - "on voyait assez qu'ils ne pouvaient pas vivre ensemble, et que l'un des deux perdrait bientôt l'autre" (p.95), but the King's deception was such that Fouquet is reported to have said shortly before his arrest "c'est Colbert qui sera arrêté, et non moi".³

There are three main accounts of the events leading up to and following the fête at Vaux, which was the climax both of Fouquet's extravagance and of Louis' annoyance with him - and these are by Brienne (the younger), Gourville, and Choisy. Of these, Brienne's is by far the longest, and based entirely on first-hand information - and Gourville, too, was employed by Fouquet. In general terms, though, Gourville was never quite aware of what was going on, and was as much taken in by the King as Fouquet was. Brienne's account is more complete - and in fact much of Choisy's information comes from him - but excessively detailed. Choisy is more selective, and, unusually for him, more coherent. He keeps to the point most of the time, as well as drawing on a wider variety of sources than Brienne.⁴ It is at this point that the more

1. On Colbert's part in this, see Choisy, Mémoires, p.93.

2. Brienne, Mémoires, p.184.

3. *ibid.*, p.200.

4. e.g. Madame du Plessis-Bellièvre, see Choisy, Mémoires, p.194. He is not always completely accurate, however, as Chéruel points out, see Chéruel, Mémoires de Fouquet, II, 229, n.1.

succinct and cryptic portrait is also valuable, as a synoptic characterization of the central figure in this long and dramatic episode. Choisy paints him as a naïve hedonist, charming and clever, but careless; he had an easy manner, but was too inclined to take acquaintances at face value. Furthermore, "il se chargeait de tout, et prétendait être premier ministre, sans perdre un moment de ses plaisirs" (p.65). Louis wanted a hard-working pragmatist in charge of his finances, not a fanciful and irresponsible pleasure-seeker. His two inexcusable failings in the sight of the King were his lack of foresight - "nulle mesure pour l'avenir" (p.65) and, more especially, his lack of identification with the interests of the State (pp.66, 102). Louis needed a minister who was the antithesis of Fouquet - hard-working, scrupulous, and entirely devoted to the cause of France.

Such a man was Colbert, and in Choisy's portrait of him, we recognize some of the essential qualities lacking in Fouquet.¹ An "esprit solide, mais pesant, né principalement pour les calculs" (p.68), he was an insatiable worker, interested only in his official duties - "nulle passion depuis qu'il avait quitté le vin" (p.68), and one of the few people capable of counteracting the abuses of previous surintendants. Although Choisy praises his reforms of French finances and the French navy, he is nevertheless critical of his trade ventures, which did not live up to their promise, "Toujours magnifique en idées, et presque toujours malheureux dans l'exécution" (p.69).

His most easily ridiculed foible, and one of which Choisy was fully aware, was his inferiority complex on being born bourgeois, and his unremitting efforts to forge his genealogy, -

1. cf. La Fare, Mémoires, p.289.

"Colbert se piquait d'une grande naissance, et avait là-dessus un furieux faible" (p.70). Although initially Choisy does not give the impression of having any opinions on this, it is quite clear from the anecdotes which he relates that he was personally in no doubts as to Colbert's humble origins.

Two ecclesiastics complete the group of men whose careers he studies in some detail: Daniel de Cosnac and the Cardinal de Bouillon.

Cosnac, as we have seen from his relationship with Monsieur and Madame, was an intelligent and dynamic cleric, capable and popular. Choisy delights in telling us anecdotes about his life, which illustrate his biting wit (p.210 for example) as well as his capacity for sympathy, and he sums up these stories in a more general characterization:

"C'est un homme d'une vivacité surprenante [...], d'une conversation charmante, d'une inquiétude qui fait plaisir à ceux qui ne font que l'observer." (p.210)

Choisy had the good fortune to be able to observe him and listen to him, and this is the advantage that his Mémoires have over those of Cosnac himself. As their nineteenth-century editor points out, the abbé de Choisy gives

"un aperçu plus complet de sa vie, l'idée du genre de son esprit et, la facilité immédiate de se former lui-même une opinion."¹

The section devoted to the Cardinal de Bouillon (Book X) is one of the least satisfactory parts of the Mémoires, since it **is** one of the most limited to its period, dealing mostly with details of the childhood of the Cardinal, and of his

1. Cosnac, Mémoires, S.N.F. Notice, p.xvii.

elevation to the Sacred College. Choisy however gives very little idea of this, from other accounts, very colourful personality, merely hinting at the more entertaining and irresponsible side of his nature at the end of the Book -

"Je me garderai bien de vouloir défendre M. le Cardinal de Bouillon sur sa dernière escapade; il n'y a ni rime ni raison." (p.259)

Here it seems again that Choisy had become bored with his subject - probably because of the amount of peripheral detail which he had included earlier (e.g. p.222 ff.).

3. The author as seen through the Mémoires

One further person who pervades the Mémoires, whether consciously or unconsciously, is the abbé de Choisy himself, and certain of the more characteristic features of the work reflect strongly the personality of its author. If we first of all consider those parts of the Mémoires where Choisy sets out to tell the reader something about himself, we can then study the more numerous passages which reveal certain traits of the author's character, because of what he says about other people, and because of how he reacts both to them and to the events in which they were involved.

To judge from his opening remarks, we might indeed expect him to figure prominently in the Mémoires: "j'avertis le lecteur qu'en écrivant la vie au Roi j'écrirai aussi la mienne, à mesure que je me souviendrai de ce qui m'est arrivé" (p.25). In fact, despite repeated 'warnings' in similar vein (pp.34, 38) Choisy says very little directly about himself. Early in the work, he mentions various incidents from his childhood (p.25) and briefly describes his bizarre upbringing (cf. Mémoires/femme) but rapidly passes on to more general topics. He devotes a large part of Book VI to his adventures in Siam, but this is largely unrelated to the rest of the book, and serves more as an appendix to the Journal than as a contribution to the Mémoires. The most informative parts of the work as far as Choisy's activities at court are concerned are Books VIII and II where he describes his relationship with Monsieur and his childhood friendship with the Cardinal de Bouillon respectively, but here again his own role in the events which he is describing is usually secondary.

We find most out about Choisy, then, from what he says about other people and from how he says it. Mémoires do not

aim at the cold objectivity of history (nor indeed of some authors, now called mémorialistes, such as Langeau and Sourches, whose catalogue of events is primarily factual, and who are better termed journalistes) and such writers as Retz and Saint-Simon colour their entire historical vision by their own obsessions and political prejudices. Choisy has a less extreme point of view than either of these writers - he bore few grudges and made few enemies - as well as being considerably less pretentious than they are. He nevertheless indulges in the conversational privilege of giving vent to his own opinions, and displaying the raconteur's gift of a sense of humour to back them up.

Choisy insists on more than one occasion that he is primarily concerned with historical truth, and says that he will not let his own friendships or feelings colour his writing, or prevent him from giving a balanced point of view.¹ In order to do this he promises not to restrict his comments to that which he found favourable - "pour [...] être bien instruit il faut savoir le bien et le mal" (p.114). However, although it is fair to say that Choisy does not deliberately use his Mémoires to exploit any personal vendettas, he is nevertheless far from impartial in his opinions, and sustains certain biases and outlooks throughout the mémoires.

One of his most strongly held beliefs, here as elsewhere, is in religious orthodoxy, and when discussing the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, for example, he makes it quite clear that he fears and deplores Protestantism, although at the

1. of Bouillon for example he says "Je l'aime, mais j'aime encore mieux la vérité" (p.26). It is interesting to compare this with the opening of Madame de Caylus' strongly personal Souvenirs: "ni la prévention que donne l'éducation, ni les mouvements de ma reconnaissance, ne me feront rien dire de contraire à la vérité." Michaud et Poujoulat, III, Vol.VIII, p.475.

same time he opposes extreme methods of 'persuasion'. Consequently when speaking of Huguenots who were converted to Catholicism, he uses such phrases as "rentrer dans le bon chemin" and "ouvrir les yeux à la vérité" (p.122). He opposes all forms of religious heterodoxy, including quietism, which he refers to as "une nouvelle hérésie qui fait beaucoup de bruit et de désordre dans l'Eglise" (p.133). On the other hand, he has quite an advanced sense of Christian social philosophy, which he shows, for example, when he remarks with reference to Colbert's political ideals:

"Il crut que le royaume de France se pourrait suffire à lui-même, oubliant sans doute que le créateur de toutes choses n'a placé les différents biens dans les différentes parties de l'univers qu'afin de lier une société commune, et d'obliger les hommes par leur intérêt à se communiquer réciproquement les trésors qui se trouvent dans chaque pays." (p.69)

Politically, though, he was a moderate, almost apathetic observer, unattached to any major state figure (with the possible exception of Bouillon for a short period) and consequently unaffected by their fortunes or failures. Furthermore, since he was virtually independent of the court, his treatment of its intrigues was usually dispassionate; he was not slow to criticize, but more inclined to direct his disdain at individuals than at what they stood for - and in this very different from Saint-Simon or the Cardinal de Retz. Since he was not aiming at a political career, he did not wish (or need) to make enemies, as he says quite frankly at the beginning of the work: "pour des ennemis, grâces à Dieu je n'en ai point, et n'en eus jamais" (p.34).

His sense of humour, which enlivens the bulk of the Mémoires, and often gives piquancy to his ideas and observations, is never vitriolic, and hatred is a sentiment he

does not foster. He is amused by much that he sees and hears, but by and large he has no quarrel with society, and at his worst could only be accused of superciliousness. Certain people irritate him, and his two bêtes noires which he never fails to point out are presumption and mediocrity - two qualities which were not lacking in the members of the court of Louis XIV. He is therefore understandably fond of the comic effect of 'deflating' remarks, either his own, or those made by other people, and he takes pleasure in reporting accounts of attacks made against conceit or any kind.

Some of the most brilliant passages in the Mémoires fall into this category, such as the description of Guilleragues as an "honnête homme, à cela près que, né gascon, il voulait toujours que l'on fît cas de sa naissance" (p.177). The series of encounters between Cosnac and the duc d'Orléans, too, provide him with a fund of anecdotes and rejoinders.¹ He found esprits supérieurs sympathetic to his own intelligent personality, and clearly admires Cosnac's wit and intellectual finesse, which he contrasts so effectively with Monsieur's mediocrity. The politically explosive incident of Retz crushed in a door is another obvious example of Choisy's own powers of description - and he delights in the loss of 'dignity' (in his eyes a form of presumption) that was involved - an aspect which he heightens by the colloquial language he employs:

"Ainsi le coadjuteur se trouva pris et fort serré dans la porte, sans pouvoir avancer ni reculer. Il y demeura un miserere, entendant de ses oreilles dans la grand-salle un tailleur nommé Pêche, qui le menaçait de lui donner cent coups de poignard." (p.44)

1. See this chapter, p.220 , footnote2 and cf. Mémoires, pp.62, 137.

Choisy was also an ardent collector of bons mots,¹ and verbal irony is one the most frequent forms of humour in the work. Many of the anecdotes are second-hand, but he shares the reader's enjoyment at the spontaneous and often totally apposite rejoinders which he cites (e.g. p.80).

In addition to this, he seems to dislike conscientious plodders, such as Colbert - ("une application infinie [...] lui [tenait] lieu de science", p.68) - or the journaliste Dangeau, in whose portrait he says ironically: "C'est le modèle d'un bon courtisan; uniquement attentif au Roi, qu'il aime personnellement, et au moindre petit ministre, à qui il ne voudrait pas déplaire" (p.114). He was a pertinent observer of court foibles, and occasionally makes a remark which shows his appreciation of the whole system of political façades. During Mazarin's last illness, for example, he comments: "Il faisait toujours bonne mine, suivant la politique de la cour, où, pour bien faire, il ne faut jamais être malade" (p.59). Indeed his sense of the absurd was often much stronger than his sense of the magnificent, a trait which he shares with several of his contemporaries, notably Liselotte the Princess Palatine,² who was always more eager to point out what she found ridiculous than what may have been impressive or even moving.

On the other hand, he shares with Saint-Simon a capacity for recognizing and appreciating exceptional qualities. Both

1. There is a manuscript collection, made by Choisy and called Recueil de bons mots in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (MS 3186, ff.217-247) which contains many anecdotes, some of which Choisy has used elsewhere, and others of which remain in their 'untreated' form. This has been partly published in J. Nélia, Inédits et Belles Pages, p.40 ff. and Mongrédien also publishes three extracts in his edition of the Mémoires, (1966), pp.280-286.

2. See e.g. Mémoires, pp.130-131 and cf. her Briefven, ed. Bodemann, Vol. I, p. 354-355.

authors are ready to suspend judgement on certain people (such as Madame des Ursins in Saint-Simon's Mémoires)¹ simply because they stand out from the normal run of courtiers. In Choisy's case it is the King himself who in many ways transcends the triviality of the French court - and his reaction is similar to that of the ambassadors who visited Louis during his illness, one of admiration almost malgré lui:

"[Il] leur parla avec une présence d'esprit et une gaieté qui les força d'écrire à leurs maîtres qu'ils venaient de voir et d'admirer." (p.167)

or again:

"Le Roi est si grand, qu'on peut dire, sans le flatter, qu'il est grand jusque dans les les plus petites choses." (p.31)

He is modest enough to have few pretensions himself as a writer, and deflates his own bursts of rhetoric with such remarks as "Après ce préambule, dont je me serais peut-être bien passé" (p.22). He nevertheless shows a considerable talent for story-telling - particularly in avoiding giving the impression of omniscience in a retrospective narrative.² An example of this is the account of Cosnac's imprisonment in the Châtelet (pp.203-207) where he sustains over the period of several pages the elements of surprise and risk in his récit. He recounts the events with controlled detail and combines subtle understatement with a sense of the absurd ("un évêque au Châtelet n'est pas une chose bien ordinaire", p.207) - resulting in a prolonged exercise in irony, without ever losing the excitement or the pittoresque of the situation.

1. See Saint-Simon, Mémoires, ("J'ai lu"), p.229.

2. cf. certain passages in the Journal, and see this thesis, Ch.III, p.108.

The abbé de Choisy is present in his Mémoires, then, both through his opinions and ideas, and above all through his humour. In one further feature of this usually careless and disorganized work, however, the author calls attention to himself, and this time it is quite simply by his skill as a writer.

4. Characterization and style; the portraits

Choisy's gifts for characterization are most succinctly displayed in the portraits - of which there are about ten in the work, and which in the style of most mémorialistes are interpolated into the text, rather than standing on their own. The portrait as employed by writers of mémoires differs considerably from the précieux form, which describes the subject only in the most general terms, and from which it would be impossible to recognize the person in question. The portraits of Choisy (and Saint-Simon), on the contrary, are not concerned with the "personnes toutes parfaites" of L'Astrée, for example, but rather emphasize the diversity of appearance and temperament which their subjects present. Choisy indeed begins one of his portraits by contrasting its subject with the 'epitome of perfection' characterized by physical beauty:

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière n'était pas de ces beautés toutes parfaites qu'on admire souvent sans les aimer." (p.85)

This much having been said, the mémorialiste gives himself the harder task of pin-pointing the more subtle charm he finds when beauty is lacking, or is not the prime consideration. In this case it is "grâce" which he wants to portray, and he does it by interpolating comments on her physical attributes with short phrases about the delights of her behaviour - "toute renfermée en elle-même [...] préférant l'honneur à toutes choses [...] l'humeur douce, libérale, timide . . ." (p.85). Choisy, particularly when writing portraits of women, uses short descriptive sentences to great effect, and in one slight but striking example crystallizes all that has come before by mentioning one small but typical

habit:

"Elle [Madame de Bourbon] était très jolie, avec beaucoup d'esprit; plaisante, railleuse, n'épargnant personne, coiffant son genou comme une poupée quand elle n'avait rien de mieux à faire." (p.163)

Two of the principal stylistic traits of Choisy's portraits, and of those of many of his contemporaries, are the use of accumulation and juxtaposition in descriptive passages, listing complementary and contradictory attributes in the attempt to build up a picture of a complex or enigmatic character. Accumulation can obviously be used to portray praiseworthy or contemptible characters - and Saint-Simon comes to mind as a master of the latter form. Choisy uses this technique with considerably more discretion - but to no less effect - than Saint-Simon, and the Mémoires contain some particularly fine examples of this method of characterization. Of an eminently attractive figure, Louise de la Vallière, Choisy says:

"Elle avait le teint beau, les cheveux blonds, le sourire agréable, les yeux bleus, et le regard si tendre et en même temps si modeste, qu'il gagnait le cœur et l'estime au même moment." (p.85)

Here the final phrase of this particularly gentle description serves as a climax and summing up to those which precede it: it is longer and fuller, and also reveals the greatest asset which its subject could boast - and the one which incorporated all her other attributes - her smile. As well as this, the accumulation is made more harmonious by the regular construction in the first part, alternating colour adjectives with generally descriptive ones (cf. the portrait of Madame

de Lowenstein, p.128).

Juxtaposition is another device used a great deal by mémorialistes, and again to particularly good effect by Saint-Simon. If the portrait painter is aiming at a true rather than a flattering picture, then obviously both good and bad must be incorporated into his list of attributes and the author must arrive at a description which brings out both sides of a character. Of le Tellier, Choisy says:

"[Il était] peu propre à tenir les premières places, où il payait souvent de discrétion, mais assez ferme à suivre un plan quand une fois il avait aidé à le former; [...] régulier et civil dans le commerce de la vie, où il ne jetait jamais que des fleurs (c'était aussi tout ce qu'on pouvait espérer de son amitié), mais ennemi dangereux." (p.67, my underlining)

In his unflattering portrait of the prince de Conti (p.177) Choisy shows how a vacillating character can have a potential for good, without the strength of mind to bring it to fruition:

"Le prince de Conti avait une sorte d'esprit indécis, voulant et ne voulant pas, changeant d'avis, alternativement dévot et voluptueux, d'une santé médiocre, d'une taille très contrefaite, et dont le vrai penchant eût été du côté de Dieu si sa légèreté ne l'eût point souvent et dans un même jour fait passer d'une extrémité à l'autre." (p.177)

It is this variety and variability, captured so subtly by the mémorialistes, which go to make up individuality, and which make the courtiers at Versailles so vividly alive even to present-day readers.

An extension of the use of juxtaposition for descriptive effect is the comic application of antithesis - and the most famous and biting example to come to mind in Choisy's Mémoires is his description of Mademoiselle de Fontanges as "belle comme un ange et sotte comme un panier" (p.175), where the

extreme antithesis of "belle" and "sotte" is further emphasized by that of "ange" and "panier".

The most important group of portraits in the Mémoires is that devoted to four men - Fouquet, le Tellier, Lionne and Colbert (pp.65-71). Compared with other writers, Choisy gives scant physical detail in these portraits. Whereas Saint-Simon revels in providing a minute analysis of facial expressions or gait, for example,¹ Choisy limits himself at the most to a few introductory details of appearance, usually leading into a trait of character. Of Colbert, for example, he says at the outset:

"Ses yeux creux, ses sourcils épais et noirs, lui faisaient une mine austère, et lui rendaient le premier abord sauvage et négatif; mais dans la suite, [...] on le trouvait assez facile." (p.68)

and of Fouquet and Lionne, he gives no physical details at all. In these portraits as in the others, Choisy characterizes his subjects by a variety of **stylistic means**. In that of Fouquet he uses the third person in a straightforward accumulation: "Il vivait . . . il se chargeait . . . il faisait . . ." and so on (p.65). In le Tellier's portrait he also makes use of the grouping of nouns and adjectives with no repetition of the main verb: "génie médiocre, vues bornées; peu propre à tenir . . . incapable de . . ." and so on, and in that of Lionne, the present participle is added to these: "ne regardant . . . ne se refusant rien . . ." (p.67). The effect of this is to paint a very **perceptive and comprehensive portrait**, and the controlled and varied use of accumulation adds to the impression of richness and variety. When

1. See for example Saint-Simon, Mémoires ("J'ai lu"), pp.85-87, or p.145.

compared, for example, with Saint-Simon, we find that Choisy was not often capable of the biting tautness of phrase which is a feature of the former's Mémoires,¹ but was nevertheless adept at handling and placing his phrases to maximum advantage, as well as exercising more control over his use of accumulation than his more monumental and vituperative contemporary.² In his beautifully constructed portrait of Lionne he begins by pointing out all his qualities and good points - but leaves the way open for a more critical approach by the use of one phrase, which is double-edged: "Il avait tous les dehors d'un honnête homme . . ." (p.66). He then starts brilliantly to demolish the dedans, by turning from praise to criticism in the course of one sentence: "Il promettait beaucoup, et tenait peu" (p.67). Now that he has turned the corner, Choisy gives his full attention to destructive analysis - and the balance thus achieved in this portrait is particularly successful.

There are not many such portraits in Choisy's Mémoires; although a great many different people form the subject matter of the work, their characterizations are either briefly sketched in, or else (as in the case of the King) gradually built up over the course of the whole work. Or again, as in the chapter on Monsieur, the subject is dealt with in a series of anecdotes, rather than in the more pithy and abrasive style of the portraitiste, although in this case it is none the less effective. As yet, the portrait was **one of** a number of means of characterization for Choisy; for Saint-Simon it was to be the principal way, and one which he was to perfect.

1. There are exceptions, such as his remark on Lionne's death: "Sa mort fut aussi chrétienne et pénitente que sa vie l'avait été peu" (p.68).
2. See Saint-Simon's portrait of the Grand Dauphin, for example, Mémoires, ("J'ai lu"), pp.341-342.

5. Conclusion

Here, then, as in other spheres, Choisy found himself part of a tradition which had not yet reached its peak. His Mémoires are unequal in interest and quality, and they share certain defects with other seventeenth-century writers in the same genre. One of the chief problems for a twentieth-century reader is the frequent mention of characters who are unfamiliar to him, and whose significance in a given context is lost (e.g. the petty court squabble mentioned on p.162). Sometimes, too, perhaps because of his sources, Choisy resorts to compiling a list (for example those who benefited from Mazarin's will, pp.57-58) and on one or two occasions delves into a genealogy (pp.37 or 129-130).

Choisy, however, since he is more erratic than Dangeau or Saint-Simon, is ironically more immediately accessible, since he deals at some length with a few more or less central episodes of seventeenth-century history (Fronde, death of Mazarin and so on) and less with peripheral matters of rank or personal enmities, and it is largely his carelessness and superficiality which make his Mémoires interesting reading. In the section on Bouillon (where, by contrast, he dwells at some length on the process whereby the latter became cardinal) his more methodical and factual approach to a minor event rapidly becomes tedious. On the other hand the more racy and anecdotal account of Fouquet's arrest holds the reader's attention because of its conciseness and human interest. Choisy did not aim at being exhaustive (p.23), but at being amusing, and sometimes even moving (the story of the duc de Longueville (p.33) or the reaction of Fouquet's mother after her son's arrest (p.101) are not without a certain pathos). Occasionally Choisy historien makes an appearance, particularly when he is talking about foreign affairs (e.g. his résumé

of the constitution of Sweden, pp.104-105) - but more often his love of 'story' is stronger than his love of history. His sense of the value of small incidents and personalities which go to make up the turning points in history is one of the most important facets of this work, and the bibliographers Bourgeois and André remark of his Mémoires: "C'est de la petite histoire qui vient au secours de la grande et parfois la complète".¹

If Choisy has a place in the long history of mémoires in France, it is because he followed in the tradition which came from Bassompierre, and before that from the chroniqueurs, and which was to culminate in, but not end with Saint-Simon. The reason that he can be placed alongside such illustrious names is because his writing contains the same basic elements as theirs, although he wrote less, and more spasmodically. He particularly shares with them the gifts of a good narrator: if one can again employ the analogy with the spoken word, one has in such works as Dangeau's Journal the elements of a conversation (the bare facts reported dispassionately) whereas in Choisy these are filled out, embellished and commented upon. Choisy involves his reader in the seventeenth century by relating events which had happened often only a few years before, and are still fresh in his mind. As 'history' written by a contemporary it naturally lacks much of the perspective of hindsight, but this is compensated for by a sense of historical immediacy, emanating from the personal involvement of the author or his sources, and from the accent placed on

1. Les Sources de l'histoire de la France, III, 2 p.138 (entry no.832).

the centrality of the individual in the events portrayed -

"Cet accent particulier de l'homme qui a vu, qui a entendu, qui a vécu ses Mémoires, leur donne une autorité que n'infirmant pas certaines lacunes volontaires ou involontaires, certaines infidélités de mémoire ou erreurs de détail."

1. Lescure in Introduction to 1888 edition of Choisy's Mémoires, pp.xxi-xxii.

CHAPTER VI

MEMOIRES DE L'ABBE DE CHOISY HABILLE EN FEMME

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1. Background

As we have already seen, Choisy scatters information about himself throughout much of his work, and to build up a balanced picture of him we have to draw on the Quatre dialogues and the Journal du voyage de Siam, as well as on the different parts of the Mémoires. In this chapter, I shall limit myself to a consideration of that part of the Mémoires to which Mongrédien gives the title Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme, the part which I think could be most accurately described as an autobiography.

In his recent book, L'Autobiographie en France,¹ Philippe Lejeune lays considerable stress on the "pacte autobiographique" - the agreement made between the writer and the reader, in which the former specifically formulates a self-revelatory intention. In Choisy's Mémoires, we can distinguish two quite separate statements of the author's intention, and documentary evidence confirms the need to study the Mémoires/femme in a category apart from the rest of the work.

The Mémoires as a whole begin:

"Ce n'est point un vain désir de gloire historique qui me met la plume à la main. Je n'attends de mon ouvrage ni honneur ni profit; j'écris pour ma propre satisfaction."²

The work is fragmentary, and the occasional incidents from

1. P. Lejeune, L'Autobiographie en France, (Paris, 1971), p.25 ff.

2. Mémoires, p.21.

his own life which he describes are just one of the elements which go to make up the whole. The framework of the Mémoires/femme is quite different, and here the reader, in this case more specifically Madame de Lambert, the dedicatee of the work, has asked him to write the story of his life, and he is responding with "quelque acte de ma comédie".¹ A. M. Clark, in his work on the subject² makes a similar distinction between autobiography and Mémoires: the author of the latter deals primarily with a period of history, using knowledge he has gained at first or second hand - often involving him, but not essentially about him - whereas the writer of autobiography is concerned first and foremost with portraying himself: he is the centre of the work, and he is writing because "he has done or endured something noteworthy in his opinion as either commendable or notorious or unique".

It is incidents from the early part of Choisy's life which make up the whole of this work, which in addition is almost entirely confined to his adventures of a 'scandalous' nature, and as such is an early example of 'candid' autobiography. The story of his conversion is something apart, and must be taken in the context of the Quatre dialogues. The Journal also tells us a good deal about Choisy, but let us for the time being limit ourselves to those few astonishing pages³ where he chooses to make public his transvestite exploits, and to speak quite openly about his strange perversion.

1. Mémoires/femme, p.289.

2. A. M. Clark, Autobiography: Its Genesis and Phases, (London, 1935), pp.22-23.

3. pp.289-360 in the Mongrédien edition, (Paris, 1966).

Medical background and parallels

If the abbé de Choisy's autobiography has been almost entirely neglected by literary critics, it has nevertheless aroused the interest of some medical historians, as a particularly lucid testimony of a man suffering from an unusual, though not unique psychological and physiological condition. Choisy's case-history has been the subject of several articles in learned medical journals - some of which nevertheless seem conveniently to ignore certain facets of his sexuality.¹

The most complete and accurate treatment of the question is by L. M. J. Vinceneux, whose thesis was devoted to the subject, and who presented his conclusions in a popular form, with the collaboration of J. Lévy-Valensi, in a contemporary medical journal.²

Briefly the conclusions he draws are as follows:

- i) Choisy was in the true sense an 'ambigu', possessing the mentality of a woman and the body of a man.
- ii) His own observations and those of his contemporaries prevent us from concluding that he was sexually inverted.

1. Durodié, "L'Etrange Psychopathie de l'abbé de Choisy" in Bulletins et mémoires de la Société de Médecine de Bordeaux, (1919), pp.185-198.

Same author and title in Journal de médecine de Bordeaux, (December 1919), p.520.

Laignel-Lavastine, "L'Abbé de Choisy" in Le Progrès médical, no.15, p.294.

"Le Féminisme de l'abbé de Choisy" in Paris-Médical, XXXIV, pp.1-2.

I am indebted to the Librarians of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal Society of Medicine for having made these articles available to me.

2. See L. M. J. Vinceneux, "Les Ambigus: l'abbé de Choisy" in Aesculape (1929), pp.257-264; Etude de psycho-pathologie historique: les ambigus: l'abbé de Choisy, (Paris, 1929), (thèse).

He experienced normal sexual inclinations towards women and at least one known pregnancy resulted.

iii) Choisy is therefore an example of 'fetichism'; he is obsessed by the desire to dress as a woman - and derives sexual stimulation from it as an end in itself.

iv) This deviation developed largely through the influence of his mother. He almost certainly associated his first sexual sensations with transvestism, which thereafter played a central role in his sexual development.

Two points need to be stressed. Firstly there is the fact that he was not homosexual. The duc d'Orléans, whose childhood 'games' involved Choisy¹ was later to be surrounded by mignons, much to the disgust of his second wife, Liselotte, the Princess Palatine.² Choisy's disguise, however, served him in his relationships with women (especially young and unsuspecting ones,) but never involved him in homosexual affairs. Secondly, he was not impotent, and therefore not a case of infantilism. He apparently did not have a beard, but we do not know why. He claims that his mother rubbed his face with ointment from his youth, and it is indeed possible that this would have minimised his chances of ever growing one. He must have been naturally rather effeminate to have succeeded so well in his disguise, and it would not have been difficult for his mother to corset him in such a way as to develop a "gorge". But none of this perversion could prevent his masculinity from eventually asserting itself.

1. See p.13 of this thesis.

2. See numerous references in her letters (Briefen, ed. Bodemann, Hanover, 1891, 2 volumes), and this thesis, Ch.V, p.220.

Choisy had parallels both amongst his contemporaries and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although in some cases their medical background was probably different. Saint-Simon paints an amusing portrait of the abbé d'Entragues¹ who, not satisfied with wearing women's clothes, aspired to greater pallor of complexion by being bled frequently, and by sleeping with his hands tied above his head.

A more famous transvestite was the chevalier d'Eon,² who lived during the eighteenth century, and whose habit of dressing as a woman was put to political use by Louis XV, who made him a secret agent at the court of Elizabeth of Russia. It was his notoriety that introduced the term 'eonism' into French and English. At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lived Mlle Savalette de Lange, whose true sex was not discovered until after 'her' death. Although nothing of 'her' upbringing is known, it is assumed that 'she', like Choisy, suffered from a misguided education.³

One interesting feature in the case of Choisy is the tolerance shown by the King towards his perversion. Cabanès, in his book on historical phénomènes,⁴ tells the story of a woman who was imprisoned in Toulouse in 1708 - during the lifetime of Choisy - because she had the misfortune to suffer from a genital malformation, and subsequently dressed as a

1. Saint-Simon, Mémoires, Pléiade, Vol.VI, pp.496-498.

2. Le chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont, 1728-1810. See O.P.Gilbert, Men in Women's Guise, (London, 1926), and Homberg and Jouselin, Un Aventurier au XVIIIe siècle, le chevalier d'Eon, (Paris, 1904).

3. See A. Decaux, "Un Mystère éclairci: Savalette de Lange", in Historia, (November 1971), pp.126-136.

4. Cabanès, Dans les coulisses de l'histoire, (Paris, 1937), esp. pp.119-174.

man. Rank obviously played a part here, and what was accepted in Christine of Sweden, and found amusing in the abbé de Choisy, was considered an offence amongst common people.

Choisy, living in a period well before the invention of the modern terminology of sexual psychology, nevertheless showed a very astute understanding of the development of his condition, although he probably did not see the connexion between transvestism and sexual experience as a central factor in it. What he does understand fully is that his abnormality is largely the result of his mother's upbringing. He feels, rightly, that it is she who is primarily at fault, because it was she who began in him a habit which it was difficult for him to break, at least in his early maturity:

"On rira de me voir habillé en fille jusqu'à l'âge de dix-huit ans; on n'excusera pas ma mère de l'avoir voulu."¹

He apparently does not recognize the more sinister implications of his mother's policy however, or the fact that she had ulterior motives for it:

"Ma mère, par une fausse tendresse, m'a élevé comme une demoiselle."²

His explanation for his continuing transvestism after his separation from his mother, and indeed after her death, is that he was governed by habit. This is to some extent the case though he probably does not understand that the habit is primarily sexual. Modern psychology has emphasized

1. Mémoires, p.25.

2. Mémoires, p.38.

the influence of early childhood on adult life, and Choisy too stresses the continuity between his childhood games and his adult obsession, although he does not suggest how the nature of the habit might have changed:

"C'est une étrange chose qu'une habitude d'enfance, il est impossible de s'en défaire: ma mère, presque en naissant, m'a accoutumé aux habillements¹ des femmes; j'ai continué à m'en servir dans ma jeunesse."

Choisy sees the first cause and the ~~eventual~~ effect, but not the intermediate psychological and physiological development which Vinceneux describes. This is the medical background, then, as Choisy saw it, and as modern psychological research has interpreted it. The effect on his character was considerable, and it is the outcome of this that is portrayed in the mémoires/femme.

1. mémoires/femme, pp.289-390.

2. Content

Let us now consider some details of the personality behind this strange and outrageous work, which although, happily, unique, does have a place in the history of man's discovery of himself. Needless to say, such a work has aroused reactions of indignation in most people who have read it - Lescure calls it "ce testament de vanité et de volupté, un des plus étonnants monuments d'aberration morale et d'idolâtrie de soi-même qui existent au monde".¹

These are indeed the two aspects of Choisy's character which we must explore. "Vanité" corresponds to the extent to which his transvestism was an end in itself - Choisy turning to himself to achieve sexual satisfaction; and "volupté" deals with his use of transvestism as a means to an end - a method of seduction - a turning to other people in his search for the fulfilment of his desires. What is most important is that the aim of the exercise in both cases is Choisy's satisfaction, and in no way does he seek to please anyone else: other people are merely the implements of his egotism. We see this clearly when he first speaks of his affair with Charlotte:

"Je répondais à sa tendresse de toute la mienne; mais quoique je l'aimasse beaucoup, je m'aimais encore davantage." (p.298)

Above all then he was in love with Choisy, and more particularly he was having a love affair with Choisy-femme. He was a narcissist, "un homme infatué de soi-même, épris de sa beauté" (Robert), and in love too with the trappings of

1. In introduction to 1888 edition of Mémoires, pp.xi-xii. The author of the Préface to d'Olivet's Vie says "Depuis Petrone on n'a rien lu de semblable" (p.xi).

transvestism. This is what constitutes the obsessional quality of his condition, which is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the frequent and meticulous descriptions of the details of his finery. His clothes are carefully listed, as we might expect, but also his jewellery and other adornments. Transvestism includes for Choisy a morbid fascination with the details of femininity:

"D'abord j'avais seulement une robe de chambre de drap noir, fermée par-devant avec des boutons noires qui allaient jusques en bas, et une queue d'une demi-aune, qu'un laquais me portait, une petite perruque fort poudrée, des pendants d'oreilles fort simples, et deux grandes mouches de velours au tempes." (p.290)

This is not an isolated example, but one of several passages where the minutiae of his toilette are revealed, and the whole paraphernalia of the ritual is exposed. Vanity, though, goes further than narcissism, and Choisy's cult of himself depends largely on receiving the admiration of other people. We shall see later how he relied on recognition and approval to maintain the illusion of normality which he had created; in the same way his own self-adulation can only exist if nourished by the opinions of others, and this is a central feature of the disorder. In so far as his transvestism was an end in itself, it relied upon being successful to achieve its aim. Choisy derived satisfaction not merely from dressing as a woman, but from being found to be attractive as such. It is because of this that he makes remarks such as "[je] ne songeais qu'à plaire au genre humain" (p.298), not for the benefit of the "genre humain", but so that he might be praised, and find himself the object of such remarks as "Voilà une belle personne" (p.292) - "En vérité, tu es bien jolie" (p.294) and a host of similar compliments.

He sums up his own condition with a good deal of (unconscious) insight at the beginning of the Mémoires/femme, although he does not realize to what extent he limits the sense of the word "aimer", or how dubious is his supposition that men become more attractive by becoming more effeminate. The arrogance of a man who, in discussing himself thus, can start with God and work downwards, is rare:

"Le propre de Dieu est d'être aimé, adoré; l'homme, autant que sa faiblesse le permet, ambitionne la même chose; or, comme c'est la beauté qui fait naître l'amour, et qu'elle est ordinairement le partage des femmes, quand il arrive que les hommes ont ou croient avoir quelques traits de beauté qui peuvent les faire aimer ils tâchent de les augmenter par les ajustements des femmes, qui sont fort avantageux. Ils sentent alors le plaisir inexprimable d'être aimé. J'ai senti plus d'une fois ce que je dis par une douce expérience, et quand je me suis trouvé à des bals ou à des comédies, avec de belles robes de chambre, des diamants et des mouches, et que j'ai entendu dire tout bas auprès de moi: "Voilà une belle personne", j'ai goûté en moi-même un plaisir qui ne peut être comparé à rien tant il est grand. L'ambition, les richesses, l'amour même ne l'égalent pas, parce que nous nous aimons toujours mieux que nous n'aimons les autres." (p.292)

From this important passage, we understand that for him the highest form of love is "d'être aimé" - essentially a passive concept and not primarily a relationship; for him it is almost synonymous with being admired - a nourishing through the admiration of others of one's own love for oneself. A mutual loving relationship is a different concept - "l'amour" of the last sentence of the quotation - and this he equates with ambition and riches. This is in contrast however with his ideal of **self**-love made possible only by the co-operation of others, and this is why his supreme pleasure, the "douce expérience" of which he speaks, consists in the ratification of his own opinion of himself - "Voilà une belle personne".

If a relationship for him, then, is an inferior type of love, how do we interpret the various affairs which he has in the course of the Mémoires/femme, and what do we make of the occasional expressions of devotion? His relationships with women serve two purposes in his life. If we look first at his affair with Charlotte, we find an apparent tenderness in his feelings for her: "Je répondais à sa tendresse de toute la mienne" (p.298), and indeed he speaks of the experience as "amour". What arouses suspicion however, and reveals its true nature as far as he is concerned, is that he tries immediately to make it appear permanent: "Nous eûmes bientôt fait nos conditions; nous nous promîmes un secret et une fidélité inviolables" (p.298), and thus they engage in a "mariage de conscience". It becomes clear that this 'devotion' is just another part of a charade. Charlotte, by becoming a 'man' - Choisy calls her Monsieur de Maulny - plays her part in the inverted normality on which the whole of Choisy's outlook depends. This is the reason for betrothal, fidelity, and all the trappings of a lasting relationship, not as a mark of mutual respect, but a conventional basis for 'family' life. At least two of the women whom Choisy may give the impression of loving, are those who are willing to play the complementary role to his in the intricate transvestite charade. Rosélie is the last manifestation of this phenomenon - who until her pregnancy is called Monsieur Contin.

So much for "vanité", a central concept in the Mémoires/femme: we must now consider what Lescure calls "volupté". The most frequent manifestation of this is Choisy's insidious practice of gaining the confidence of young girls, by masquerading as a woman, in order to take them to bed with him, with the full approval of their unsuspecting mothers, there to reveal his true nature. Mlle de la Grise is his most notable victim, and the story of his callous, calculating

seduction of this girl is one of the most remarkable parts of the work - but has little or nothing to do with a love relationship; it is little more than satisfying the author's sexual appetites - with the added 'challenge' of keeping up a pretence. This is the second reason for his affairs with women, and here for once it is his masculinity that is the driving force.

These, then, are the outlines of "vanité" and "volupté" in the work, and their relationship to love and self-love. Once we have understood this underlying motivation of Choisy's activities, we are nearer to an appreciation of the work as a whole.

The second crucial issue in the Mémoires/femme is one that I have already mentioned, but that must be developed more fully, namely the creation of an illusion of normality. Choisy knew that he was a man, but desperately needed to live the life of a woman. This is the central problem: behaving to all intents and purposes as a woman was not enough; he could not fully achieve his aim in isolation, and although he dressed as a woman, and spoke of himself in the feminine ("j'étais ravie" for example) it was ultimately upon other people that he depended for the illusion to succeed - his immediate surroundings had to comply with his own aberrations. Thus, since the most normal and 'natural' thing for a woman to do is to have a marital relationship with a man, Choisy invents "Monsieur" de Maulny and "Monsieur" Contin. Choisy needed the illusion to be complete - there could be no 'as if'.

When he sleeps for the first time with "Monsieur" de Maulny, we read: "Après que je fus couchée, il parut en robe de chambre" (p.303), and shortly afterwards, "J'envoyai quelquefois le matin chercher des marchands [...] afin qu'ils me vissent dans mon lit avec mon cher mari" (p.303, my underlining).

Choisy had extended his illusion of normality to his partner - but this relationship in turn had to be fostered by society as a whole, and it is largely this experiment that is portrayed in the first two fragments that make up the Mémoires/femme. The people of the "quartier" in which he lived were an essential part of this dream world, and it was vital that he should live "parmi des gens qui ne trouveraient point à redire à tout ce que je ferais" (p.290). Furthermore he wished to extend his activities outside his own home and the natural obligations of a "femme de qualité" included regular attendance at mass, and visiting the "pauvres honteux", both of which he fulfilled. He was careful at first not to overact, and since his role depended to some extent on the co-operation of his neighbours, he was anxious that they should feel no strangeness with him: "Ainsi, peu à peu, j'accoutumai le monde à me voir ajusté" (p.291).

The little domestic scenes which he describes after his 'marriage' to Charlotte show how their reciprocal perversions have in a way transcended abnormality, and acquired an ethos of their own, because of their mutual character - "ainsi tous deux contents, nous avons bien du plaisir" (p.301). At a later stage, just before he is summoned by the cardinal, we again see that he has so come to terms with his condition that he presupposes an acceptance of transvestism and argues from there: "On ne trouva rien que de modeste, car il est bon de remarquer que je ne portais jamais que des rubans noirs" (p.305). From the relative security of such a position, he can tell us without fear of the little song that was obviously aimed at him - "Sancy, au faubourg Saint-Marceau" (pp.306-308).

At the beginning of the second section of the Mémoires/femme Choisy includes a letter, showing some hostility to his behaviour - but strangely enough it is **not** aimed at his

transvestism, but rather critical of his sleeping with a woman to whom he is not officially married. His artificial world is not, then, disrupted by the arrival of this letter, but rather strengthened, since it shows that in the terms of conventional morality his transvestism is accepted. The sycophantic curé (p.304) only serves to underline this impression.

The extreme fragility of this carefully constructed world is seen, though, when he is brutally attacked by the duc de Montausier. The normality which he has gradually built up in his own household and in his immediate social contacts is destroyed by a few words. The brittle security of public approval is shattered by the outright condemnation of one man. Choisy can stand well-intentioned jokes, and attacks on his sleeping with women, but when the ethics of transvestism are questioned, he can no longer escape from the real world, nor can he escape from his own abnormality. His system has collapsed, and he feels humiliated. All he can now do is to start again, carefully severing all links with his former life: "J'écrivis à mes frères que j'allais voyager" - he dismisses the valets and the new servants are indoctrinated - "Mes nouveaux domestiques reconnurent madame la comtesse des Barres pour leur maîtresse." (pp.328-329)

He now takes up residence at Crespon, and the whole business of acceptance starts again, with Choisy carefully testing the ground, as he again surrounds himself with a circle of friends - including noble families and the abbé de Saint-Siphorien, whom he entertains with musical evenings and dramatic productions, at one of which the Archbishop of Bourges is present. He again established the norm of a simple dress by which extravagance and poverty are measured -

he creates a new norm for himself, and makes it easier for others to believe in it by relating certain accepted standards to it. It is at Crespon that he becomes the most daring - and outrageous - in his sexual behaviour; perhaps it is partly because of his audacity that he succeeds in duping so many people since his complete lack of reticence certainly helped to dispel any doubts as to his authenticity.

For an inverted world to work, it must be totally inverted, and any sudden return to the old world of accepted values constitutes a grave threat. This is why Choisy was so delighted on the occasion of a supper party which he gave for Madame d'Usson and some other neighbours, when

"-Désormais, me dit Madame d'Usson, je vous appellerai madame." (p.291)

This is further enhanced by the curé's remark: "Ah! [...] je me rends à une pareille autorité, et j'avoue, madame, que vous êtes fort bien" (p.292).

Such remarks appear to the reader, who is perhaps a more detached witness to Choisy's excesses, as particularly nauseating, but we must assume that he was thus treated, since he does not attempt to conceal from the reader the fierce criticism that he was to receive at a later stage. He has thus achieved his objective:

"Depuis ce temps-là, je [...] ne fis plus de façon d'aller partout en robe de chambre, et tout le monde s'y accoutuma." (p.292) - "Je me croyais véritablement femme." (p.293)

Now that he has the support and security of an albeit artificial environment, life can go on as 'normal', and the reader's astonishment increases as he learns of parties where

the prevailing sentiments were "joie et innocence". Becoming more and more daring, Choisy then has the opportunity to take the offertory at mass, and his outrageous description of this cannot fail to amuse as well as to astonish (p.295). What we now observe is that Choisy has ceased to try to establish an inverted normality; he takes it for granted, expecting the reader to do the same, and tells his stories as if nothing were out of place. The question for him is no longer 'Can I create a world in which I will be accepted?', but 'Having created this world, how can I most enjoy living in it?'. The following remark concerning his dress during the "quête" is an example of his state of mind:

"Je crus qu'en cette occasion il fallait une jupe de velours noir; nous étions au mois d'octobre, le velours était de saison." (p.295)

The question is no longer as to whether he should wear a skirt to go to church - which would be surprising enough in anyone but Choisy - but as to what colour and material it should be in order to be seasonable and in good taste. Whether the humour that is inherent in such an argument was detected by Choisy, it is impossible to say, but his modest avowal that he has indulged in coquetry at evening benediction and therefore not at mass is nothing if not ironic:

"On me fit la guerre quand j'avais été un peu coquette, sur ce qu'en passant sur les chaises je m'arrêtais quelquefois pendant que le bedeau me faisait faire place, et m'amusais à me mirer pour rajuster quelque chose à mes pendants d'oreille ou à ma stinquerque, mais je ne le fis que le soir au salut, et peu de gens s'en aperçurent." (p.296)

We must now consider the physical relationships he had with his various conquêtes, and which show him as being utterly callous. The fact that he talks about himself with complete candour and startling irony does not make them seem any more commendable. His sexual drives, as we have seen, were essentially masculine, but since he was such a convincing woman, he put this to practical purposes in order to lead young women to bed, without arousing their suspicions - or those of their parents. And not satisfied with this, he delights in gloating over his achievements.

Charlotte was probably not Choisy's sexual partner. This is suggested by a remark which she made when her hand was asked in marriage (p.310), and indeed the fidelity he swore to her came not from any real tenderness, but as we have seen, from a desire for conventional security within a perverted world. Mlle Dany seems to have provided little more than sexual titillation for Choisy - and the overt way in which he takes advantage of her innocence and the credulity of their neighbours makes his nonchalant account of their flirtation all the more sordid. His language is straightforward, and he avoids euphemism:

"Je la mis toute entière entre mes jambes, et la caressai fort [...], bientôt elle s'enhardit, et j'étais quelquefois obligé de lui dire de me laisser en repos." (p.313)

In some of the passages of the Mémoires/femme, Choisy makes the most of the tremendous ironical potential of the situations he describes. His use of childish language in the following passage, for example, is in itself proof of the fact that he was laughing at his victim, and this impression is confirmed by the final remark:

"—Ma petite amie, approchez-vous que je vous baise.

Elle fit une profonde révérence, s'approcha et me présenta son petit bec que je baisai trois ou quatre fois.

—Seriez-vous bien aise, lui dis-je, si je voulais bien vous mettre auprès de moi dans mon dodo?

—Ce me serait bien de l'honneur, madame, me répondit-elle;

la pauvre enfant croyait que j'étais une femme." (p.311)

Not satisfied with taunting young girls, though, Choisy as the Comtesse des Barres includes the parents in the 'game'. He quite openly admits that he is scheming to achieve his own ends, and since this involves assuring the tranquillity of the parents, he must take measures to do this. His efforts in this direction in the case of Madame de la Grise are however quite astonishing. The situation leading up to his master-stroke is as follows:

He has been sleeping with the daughter, who is apparently quite unaware of what is happening to her. At one stage it seems impossible to believe that she is not in fact the accomplice of Choisy, but he assures us to the contrary. The following passage is one of the most callous in the whole work, but Choisy seems to have no scruples in these matters:

"Je crevais d'amour et je me mis en devoir de lui donner de véritables plaisirs. Elle me dit d'abord que je lui faisais mal, et puis elle fit un cri qui obligea Madame Bouju de se lever pour voir ce que c'était. Elle nous trouva fort près l'une de l'autre; la petite pleurait, et toutefois elle eut le courage de dire à Bouju: —Madame, c'est une crampe à quoi je suis sujette, qui m'a fait bien du mal." (p.338)

Yet soon afterwards, she again calls Choisy "ma belle dame". The fact that she has obviously just lost her

virginity makes the reader wonder if she is in fact innocent - but again Choisy leaves us in no doubt; he feels almost guilty about taking advantage of her: "L'innocence de cette pauvre enfant me faisait plaisir et un peu de peine, mais je rejetais bien loin une pensée qui eût troublé ma joie" (p.339). He soon feels that he must improve his standing with Madame de la Grise, and there follows one of the most astonishing incidents in the whole work. Choisy is anxious to keep the girl a little longer, and with this in mind, puts the following proposition to the mother:

"—Madame, lui dis-je, demeurez avec nous le reste de la journée, et vous verrez demain comment elle s'y prend; mon lit est grand, nous coucherons ensemble, et la petite couchera avec Bouju.

Elle se fit un peu prier et y consentit, puis j'en fus assez fâchée, c'était une nuit de perdue, mais d'un autre côté, cela établissait merveilleusement la confiance de la mère." (p.339)²

The enormity which he thus perpetrates is further underlined by his conversations with the mother. He can hardly fail to be aware of the irony of the whole affair, and it is only his sense of humour that makes such passages readable. Again we see his callousness, however, accompanied by a sense of intellectual superiority, regardless of feelings or ethics, which is reminiscent of the Liaisons dangereuses.

1. This remark refers to the training of Mlle de la Grise in hairdressing which was the ostensible reason for Mlle de la Grise's stay with Choisy.
2. It was not unusual for women of a similar age to sleep together in the seventeenth century.

The cunning and blatant audacity of the procedure are extraordinary:

"Nous soupâmes et nous nous couchâmes; on avait seulement mis des draps blancs pour Madame de la Grise. Quand nous fûmes couchées, je m'approchai d'elle, je la baisai deux ou trois fois, et puis me mis à ma ruelle, en lui disant:

—Dormons . . C'est ainsi, madame, lui dis-je, que j'en use avec votre enfant, et je vous assure qu'elle dort comme un sabot; elle fait de l'exercice toute la journée, court dans le jardin avec Angélique, il faut bien que cela dorme." (p.339)

On other occasions, too, Choisy profits from the irony of the situation, never to greater effect than when one of his guests jokingly calls him "Monsieur" (p.347).

His last lover, with whom he had perhaps as full a relationship as he was capable of, was the actress Rosélie. She was to him a little more of a person, and less of a victim than La Grise - not because he was particularly concerned about her feelings, but rather because she was sexually more aware, and so more challenging. We may infer this from the vocabulary that he employs: they are equals in combat, and his choice of expression tends to be military:

"Je la pressais de plus en plus, je sentais que sa résistance mollissait, je redoublai mes efforts, et achevai cette sorte de combat où le vainqueur et le vaincu se disputent l'honneur du triomphe." (p.353)

He is here coming to terms with a girl who has been initiated into life, and who knows what is happening to her:

"Une comédienne à seize ans en sait plus qu'une fille de qualité à vingt." (p.353)

His reputation is put in jeopardy when he learns of Mlle de la Grise's betrothal to the comte des Goutes - and he is careful to instruct her as to her behaviour with him, which he does in the most candid terms, since the poor girl is still apparently unaware of the fact that she has already had intercourse. The abbé, with unparalleled impudence, gives her the following advice:

"Souvenez-vous bien de faire par raison, avec votre mari, la première nuit de vos noces, tout ce que vous fîtes avec moi naturellement et sans savoir ce que vous faisiez. Laissez-vous longtemps presser, défendez-vous, pleurez, criez, afin qu'il croie vous apprendre ce que je vous ai appris; de là dépend toute la douceur de votre vie. Je vous ouvre les yeux présentement, parce qu'il le faut absolument; vous ne devez pas être en peine de votre secret, je suis aussi intéressée que vous à le garder." (pp.354-355)

Mlle de la Grise, obviously realizing that something is wrong, bursts into tears, to be comforted by her mother, who on returning to the room is greeted by Choisy:

"—Madame, lui dis-je, elle pleure, il faut louer sa modestie. Sa mère la baisa.

—Ma fille, lui dit-elle, vous avez bien de l'obligation à madame la comtesse; suivez les conseils qu'elle vous donnera, et cachez vos larmes." (p.355)

Choisy makes no remark, but must surely have savoured such an apposite double meaning. His love of bons mots cannot have allowed him to let this one go unnoticed, and he says on another occasion with some glee: "Il est bien doux de tromper les yeux du public" (p.346).

Rosélie's pregnancy puts an end to that affair, because once again the fear of discovery and destruction overtakes him, and again we see how fragile his life can become - "Il

fallait aller à Paris où l'on se cache aisément" (p.357). This is effectively the end of his "aventures en travesti", however, and a year later he sets off for Italy. He does not forget about Madame de Sancy or the Comtesse des Barres, though, and the record that we have of their activities certainly gives a very full picture of Choisy during two most important and bizarre episodes of his life. He is not freed from passions, however, and it is now in gaming that he engages, with ruinous effects. He ends his Mémoires/femme rather sadly when he says:

"La rage du jeu m'a possédé et a troublé ma vie. Heureux si j'avais toujours fait la belle, quand même j'eusse été laide! Le ridicule est préférable à la pauvreté." (p.360)

3. Motives and justification

Choisy says at one point in his Mémoires/femme that his life was dominated by pleasure-seeking, and this is certainly true of the first part of it, these episodes showing him as being entirely self-centred. All relationships must ultimately benefit him, regardless of the other party involved - whether she be merely a mirror in which he can admire himself (a mirror which must always show him how beautiful he is), or whether she be an outlet for his sexual appetites. In no part of the work does Choisy appear to be anything less than despicable, and yet he wrote it himself.

Of the various suggested motivations of autobiographers, some clearly do not apply to Choisy. He is not trying to portray mankind by portraying himself - nor is he trying to justify his actions - on the contrary it is his complacency of attitude that is the most astonishing. He is certainly a most unusual character, and could be forgiven for believing himself to be unique, but this is not the apologia of the 'man-apart' that Rousseau's Confessions were to be.¹ He does perhaps show signs of feeling superior, but this is more because of his wit and cunning than because of any high ideals or moral superiority.

We do know that he was 'ordered' to write his autobiography by Madame de Lambert, but even given this, we are

1. Rousseau's reasons for writing his Confessions were obviously quite different from Choisy's. Brunetière says of Rousseau "Ce n'est pas un aveu qu'il a fait, c'est une précaution qu'il a prise contre la postérité" (Questions de critique, p.227). Choisy did not care what posterity thought of him - indeed he had few reasons to expect it to have remembered him, and the Comtesse des Barres would not improve its opinion. Nor, from the cavalier tone of the work, does Choisy use it as a form of purgation; he shows no signs of remorse for what he has perpetrated.

faced with two questions. Firstly, what was the nature of the 'command' given by Madame de Lambert to Choisy to write about his own life, and why did he then choose the two episodes which concern his transvestite adventures, and secondly how did he judge himself morally in retrospect? The possible answers to these problems combine to make the appearance of such a work in autobiographical form at least seem less improbable.

The answer to the first is given partly by Madame de Lambert herself, in a letter to the abbé de Choisy:¹ the two writers had obviously agreed on an exchange of confidences. Choisy's part of the bargain was the Mémoires/femme, and Madame de Lambert, for her part had sent him the Réflexions sur les femmes. It is difficult to ascertain when this exchange took place. As Lescure points out in his introduction (see note 1), Madame de Lambert was very reluctant to let the general public see her works, none of which was printed with her consent. The fact that the Réflexions sur les femmes first appeared in 1727² gives no clue as to when it could have been written, and we have likewise few indications as to when Choisy wrote his Mémoires/femme. We may, however, be sure that just as Madame de Lambert did not want her Réflexions to appear in print, Choisy could not have his Mémoires published during his lifetime.

1. The best edition of Madame de Lambert's Oeuvres morales is by Lescure, (Paris, 1883), in the collection "Bibliothèque des Dames". It contains the letter to Choisy on pp.xxvi-xxvii of the introduction, and the text of the Réflexions on pp.145-176.
2. Réflexions nouvelles sur les femmes (Paris, 1727). Emile Boulan, Figures du dix-huitième siècle, Fontenelle et Madame de Lambert, (Leyden, 1920), pp.113-114, suggests they were written in c.1700.

When the exchange took place, then, it was by private agreement and the manuscript which each party received was for his eyes alone. Madame de Lambert says quite specifically to Choisy:

"Je demande à votre amitié et à votre fidélité que ce petit écrit ne sorte jamais de vos mains [...]. Vous seule êtes le confident de mes débauches d'esprit."

This seems rather a dramatic description of an apparently harmless work, but Madame de Lambert was a woman of impeccable reputation and behaviour, for whom the composition of this apologia for "femmes lettrées", a delicate subject at the time, would indeed constitute her "débauches d'esprit". The "débauches" which she received in return from Choisy, were, however, much more daring.

This agreement then was the immediate inspiration for the Mémoires/femme, which shows it indeed to be a separately conceived work from the Mémoires/Louis XIV. Given this framework of a reciprocal 'confessional' work, Choisy may have assumed that a work of the nature of the Mémoires/femme was required of him, but we must also look for other reasons to justify the subject matter.

A simple, but realistic explanation is that he had already written about the most exciting events in his life in the Journal du voyage de Siam, and about his spiritual development in the Quatre dialogues, and that all that remained for him to relate was the less uplifting part. Furthermore, he is writing from a considerable distance chronologically, and it seems likely that he views himself almost as a different person - (as Montaigne saw, we are

different people not only from year to year but in the course of the same day, and this was partly true of Choisy). He was also writing from the 'other side' of a conversion and the upheaval in his life that the journey to Siam had been. What adds further to this impression is the remark that he makes when he prefaces his own life story as if it were a work of dramatic fiction:

"J'écirai quelque acte de ma comédie, qui n'aura aucune liaison avec le reste; par exemple, il ne prend envie de vous conter les grandes et mémorables aventures du faubourg Saint-Marceau." (p.289)

Without carrying the analogy too far, it is still possible to conclude that Choisy here sees his own life as a "comédie" divided into acts, but with less cohesion than one would expect in a normal play - hence the remark "qui n'aura aucune liaison avec le reste". The act that he is going to present is thus to some extent an isolated one - a sub-plot in the overall drama of his life - which, he believed, when it had ended, ceased to affect the rest of the 'play'. As we shall see, though, it continued on a subconscious level to influence his thought, and largely accounts for his continuing lack of a full sense of conventional morality.

There is not a developed metaphor here, though, because the pompous title "grandes et mémorables aventures" is more reminiscent of narrative fiction in the grand style than of dramatic action, but this too throws some light on the relationship between the author and his work. Choisy was a good story-teller, and a prolific contributor to the genre,¹ and may possibly have seen the Mémoires/femme as an extension of his activities in this field, for which his own life

1. See p.183 of this thesis.

nevertheless provided the material.

As far as justification is concerned, Choisy does not write to vindicate himself, nor does he try to explain his behaviour away, or make it seem morally acceptable. What it is important to realize is that Choisy had lived with transvestism, with all its scandals and 'delights', throughout the early part of his life, and he talks unashamedly of its beginnings in his education, as well as its implications for him later in life. His remarks on being loved must be seen as the interpretations which he put in retrospect on his actions, and they show that even at that stage he had a slightly warped view of morality. He is mildly amused by his activities but they had been so much a part of his life that he has ceased to be embarrassed by them, and so was probably not fully aware of the effect that they might have on the unsuspecting reader.

Although he had certainly been made morally more aware as a result of his conversion, and the examination of conscience which ensued, he was still relatively complacent about transvestism, and saw it rather as an amusing affliction for which he was not wholly responsible, than as a grave "aberration morale". This is the heritage of his perversion, the liaison between the acts of his comedy, which he is incapable of seeing or understanding.

If he was thus permanently affected in the sphere of moral judgement by his early debaucheries, we must also blame this on the public reaction to them, which was tolerant in the extreme, and must have influenced the way he saw himself not only at the time but in retrospect as well. We know what the duc de Montausier said and thought about Choisy, and there is little point in considering the reactions of those who did not know he was a transvestite (- there is no doubt that many people were completely taken in by him -)

but what is significant is the general approval given to his deviant activities by his friends and indeed by the society in which he mixed as a whole. Some of the remarks are no more than flattery by Choisy's social inferiors, but responsible people, too, some in positions of authority, were amused and we must believe sometimes rather impressed by his behaviour. When he is collecting in church, for example, he overhears:

"—Mais est-il bien vrai que ce soit là un homme? Il a bien raison de vouloir passer pour une femme."

His meetings with the cardinal confirm the impression of tolerance. He moderates his dress, ~~as~~ we have seen, but is still dressed as a woman. The cardinal addressed him in the masculine, so was not under any illusions as to his real sex, yet at the end of the audience:

"Il se mit à rire, et ne laissa pas de louer fort mon habillement.

—Il serait à souhaiter, dit-il tout haut, que toutes les dames fussent habillées aussi modestement." (p.319)

If Choisy thus found approval and admiration in high circles, it is not really surprising that he was not unduly shocked at his own behaviour. He recognizes at the time of his conversion that his life has been far from exemplary, with a combination of transvestism, gambling, and young women - but he never says anything in the Mémoires/femme

1. p.296. D'Alembert endorses this impression of laxity - "On le recevait partout en habit de femme, sans presque y faire attention." Histoire des Membres de l'Académie Française, (Paris, 1787), VI, 308.

which makes us feel that he is aware of their scandalous overtones - he is just a little ashamed, and rather amused.¹

The first paragraph of the work is a masterly introduction, full of understatement. In all the attributes which he applies to himself, - "Joie partout, envie de plaire," and so on, we only recognize one bad one, "défauts dans un homme," and even these are presumably the same as "vertus du beau sexe" (p.289). He does **have** the grace to blush, however, when he says that he can not refuse to obey Madame de Lambert, but once he has dispelled the initial embarrassment, he shows very little moral concern. He laughs occasionally at his own condition, as well as making the ironical remarks we have seen, when he is faced with the credulity of his neighbours, and he recognizes his own vanity: "Les hommes, quand ils croient être beaux, sont une fois plus entêtés de leur beauté que les femmes" (p.326). He describes his "faiblesses" and his "défauts", but sees them as being tempered by "inclinations douces". It is almost certainly Madame de Lambert who is quoted by Choisy in the Mémoires/Louis XIV, and who characterizes him in the following rather glowing terms:

"Une dame qui a tout l'esprit du monde a dit que j'avais vécu trois ou quatre vies différentes, homme, femme, toujours dans les extrémités; abîmé ou dans l'étude ou dans les bagatelles; estimable par un courage qui mène au bout du monde, méprisable par une coquetterie de petite fille; et dans tous ces états différents, toujours gouverné par le plaisir."²

Choisy has revealed to us the truth about one of his "vies différentes". He is far enough away from it to write

1. cf. D'Argenson, Mémoires, (Paris, 1857-1858), I, 74.

2. Mémoires, p.25.

with some degree of detachment, yet he lacks the moral distancing that would be necessary for him fully to appreciate the enormity of his confession. He has left us an astonishing picture of one aspect of the "envers du grand siècle", and we should, as twentieth century readers, perhaps be grateful that he was sufficiently unaware of the picture he was painting of himself for it to be possible for him to continue doing so.

4. Related works and tradition

Before going on to consider whether the Mémoires/femme can be said to have a place in any French literary tradition, it would be convenient here to consider the question of Choisy's influence on three specific works - two from the eighteenth century and one from the nineteenth.¹

a) Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville

The Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville appeared initially in the Mercure Galant of February 1695, and then again in an augmented version in the same periodical in August and September 1696. In the 1928 edition of the work,² the anonymous editor mentions in addition to these an eighteenth century edition (Paris, 1723) and an eighteenth century manuscript of the work in the Bibliothèque Nationale.³ It also appears in the 1928 edition of the Mercure de France⁴ following the article on its composition by Jeanne Roche-Mazon.

Various theories have been put forward concerning the authorship of this curious work, the most important of which are synthesized in Marc Soriano, Les Contes de Perrault, (Paris, 1968), (several references, especially pp.57-67). The two most likely hypotheses, offered by Jeanne Roche-Mazon⁵

1. There exists also an insignificant historical novel by O. P. Gilbert, M. de Choisy, belle dame, (Paris, 1931), which as the author himself admits in the Postlude (pp.315-316) is only very loosely based on the abbé de Choisy.
2. Paris, 1928, Charles Perrault and l'abbé de Choisy, Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville.
3. Fonds français, 15229.
4. Vol.CCI, pp.543-564.
5. In Mercure de France, (1928), CCI, 513-542.

and Paul Delarue¹ put forward "collaboration" as the clue to the problem - Madame Roche-Mazon between Choisy and Charles Perrault, and Delarue between Choisy and Mlle Lhéritier. For the purpose of this discussion, it is easier to ignore the article of E. Henriot² who reaches no documented conclusions as to the authorship of the Banneville.

Madame Roche-Mazon's argument is based firstly on the similarly 'ambiguous' tone of the Banneville and Choisy's Mémoires/femme, and secondly on the fact that both Choisy and Perrault were members of the Académie du Luxembourg, at whose meetings they would have been able to exchange ideas and anecdotes. Furthermore the author of the fairy story La Belle au Bois Dormant is declared in the Mercure Galant of February 1696 (p.74) to be "la même personne qui a écrit l'histoire de la Petite Marquise dont je vous fis part il y a un an". Since the Belle au Bois Dormant is generally attributed to Perrault, it would follow that he was the author of the Banneville, although not necessarily the inventor of the situation described therein. What this position fails particularly to explain, as Soriano points out, is the attribution of the work to a woman in the Mercure Galant of February 1695. It also fails to take into account the (unlikely) possibility that the remark about a "histoire de la Petite Marquise" refers not to the Banneville, but to another work about a "petite marquise" which appeared at about the same time, entitled Salusses et Griseldis - a point in fact made by Henriot.

It is, furthermore, reasonable to assume that Choisy was himself not the author of the work for various reasons.

1. In Revue des arts et traditions populaires, (1954), pp.1-22, 251-274.
2. "De qui sont les 'Contes' de Perrault?" in the Revue des Deux Mondes, (January 1928), pp.424-441.

Firstly, it would be unlikely for him to write two such similar works - one for immediate and the other for post-humous publication. The Comtesse des Barres was clearly written shortly after the Marquis de Banneville, since it contains two references to it¹ - and there would have been little point in Choisy's completing a work which merely duplicated something he had already written. In addition to this, the description of him in 1695 (after his conversion, the composition of the Quatre dialogues, the journey to Siam and the Journal) as "une personne de votre sexe [writing to a woman] qui s'exprime avec beaucoup d'agrément et de finesse" (Mercure Galant, February 1696, pp.12-13) is, to say the least, surprising - and Soriano is inclined to doubt that Donneau de Vizé, the editor of the Mercure Galant, would have referred to Choisy as a woman in this context. Finally, it is obvious from even a superficial reading that the Marquis de Banneville lacks the irony and daring of the Comtesse des Barres, which is much less sucré and more biting, although it tells a very similar story. The author of the Marquis de Banneville tends to take the story rather more seriously, and to use it, with all its perversions, as the basis for a sentimental love story with a happy ending - a far cry from the cynicism of Choisy.

It seems impossible, however, that Choisy did not influence the author of a work which has so much else in common with his own autobiography. Of many parallels, the most obvious are the abnormal education of the principal

1. p. 320. These references in fact constitute an anachronism within the context of this work. Since in fact the period he is describing is that of his residence in Paris (i.e. before he left for Siam, so before 1685) it is incorrect to bring into the discussion a work which first appeared in 1695.

character, the detailed description of his/her attire and jewellery and particularly the "amants" and the inverted marriage - all of which are too close to the incidents described in the Mémoires/femme to be merely the result of a coincidence. Furthermore, the work shows a similarly warped sense of love and beauty, and such quotations as "Soyez belle, vous avez senti cette joie, en est-il une semblable?" (p.54) and "être aimée de tout le monde et n'aimer que soi-même, voilà, ma Fille, le souverain bonheur" (p.55) have a familiar - unhealthy - ring about them.

We come then to the hypothesis of Delarue, endorsed by Soriano, which indeed seems the most probable, since it admits Choisy's contribution while at the same time attributing the authorship to a "dame de qualité", Mlle Lhéritier. Delarue firstly dismisses the likelihood of Charles Perrault being the author since he was not in the habit of passing for someone of the opposite sex. He then goes on to give quite substantial positive reasons for favouring Mlle Lhéritier's authorship of the work. To support his argument, he firstly points out a certain number of parallels between the Marquis de Banneville and Marmoisan, another story by Mlle Lhéritier about a "fille habillée en garçon" which contains certain expressions and ideas also found in the Marquis de Banneville. Secondly and more significantly, he draws attention to a long digression in the second edition of the Marquis de Banneville on the value of "contes merveilleux", a topic dear to Mlle Lhéritier (cf. her Oeuvres mêlées, (Paris, 1696), p.300) but not one which particularly interested Choisy (see p.183 of this thesis). Finally he too mentions the very obvious difference in tone between the two works,¹ Choisy's being cynical and risqué throughout, and Mlle Lhéritier's conforming within its subject matter to decorum

1. On p.262 of his article in Revue des arts et traditions populaires, (1954).

and conventional morality. He nevertheless insists on the "collaboration" of the abbé de Choisy - and we can do no better than to subscribe to this opinion - adding as a post-script Soriano's suggestion that Choisy and Mlle Lhéritier would have been able to meet and exchange anecdotes in a circle of friends which also included Perrault, his son, and Mlle Bernard, the niece of Fontenelle.¹

b) J.-B. Louvet de Couvray, Les Amours du chevalier de Faublas

It is the comte de Lauranguais-Brancas in his Lettres à Madame **** (1802) who first suggests a similarity between the abbé de Choisy and the central figure in Louvet de Couvray's Faublas (1789-1790). Speaking of seventeenth and eighteenth century morality, he says "L'immoral Faublas, par exemple, qu'on pense n'avoir existé que dans l'imagination de Louvet, vivait réellement sous Louis XIV et s'appelait l'abbé de Choisy" (p.170). The point is taken up by subsequent editors, who by misinterpreting Lauranguais suggest that Faublas was modelled on Choisy - whereas all that Lauranguais probably meant was that a character as reprehensible as the fictional Faublas in the eighteenth century really existed in the seventeenth,² and very little comparison is needed to see

1. Les Contes de Perrault, (Paris, 1968), pp.66-67.

2. An example of this is the editor of the two volume edition of Faublas (Paris, n.d., Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés) who overstates Lauranguais' remark thus: "Le marquis de Lauranguais donne aux aventures de Faublas une origine historique. Selon lui, ce personnage vivait sous Louis XIV et s'appelait l'abbé de Choisy" (Vol.I, Notice, p.2) or the editor of the two volume edition of 1869 (Brussels) Notice, p.vii. This mistake was reproduced as recently as 1939 in S. Paul Jones, A List of French Prose Fiction from 1700 to 1750, (New York) (entry CHOISY), basing himself on J. Gay, Bibliographie des ouvrages relatifs à l'amour etc. (1864), p.627 "C'est de ces aventures que Louvet a tiré le sujet du roman de Faublas".

that any further resemblance is coincidental.

Lauranguais is in fact referring specifically to an episode at the beginning of the work, in which Faublas is persuaded to dress as a woman before going to see his beloved Sophie, at a convent, and in this disguise he is allowed to kiss her. However, he also goes to a ball in the same costume, and since he is not recognized ends up sleeping with an unsuspecting Marquise.

Once this similarity has been established, though, one fundamental difference must be pointed out, namely that the moral climate of the work, although decadent, is nonetheless much less unhealthy than that of Choisy's Mémoires/femme. Faublas' prime reason for dressing-up is to disguise himself (practical) and not self-admiration (narcissistic/sexual) - it is a game and not an obsession, and carries no satisfaction of its own. For this reason, he does not try to sustain the illusion when the comte de Rosambert tries to break it (p.42),¹ something that Choisy almost certainly would have done.

On the other hand, there are two, probably incidental, aspects which are shared by both works, and these are the use of irony, and the surprisingly tolerant attitude of the onlookers.

In Faublas, as in Choisy, the author draws a considerable amount of humour from the mistaken identity caused by the disguise - although some of it is rather heavy handed, and the dénouement verges on the farcical. One source of irony - unfortunately sustained to the point of tedium - stems from the comte de Rosambert's unsuccessful efforts to disillusion the Marquise de **** as to the sex of her new-found protégé(e).

1. Page references to Paris edition, n.d., Chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, two volumes.

The artificial nature of the events leading up to the revelation of identity, however, only serve to underline the arbitrary construction of the work, which contains several more or less gratuitous episodes, merely inserted for ironical effect. Indeed the whole transvestite episode itself is inadequately prepared for and too abruptly introduced into the narrative (p.39).

One further point which the episode has in common with the Mémoires/femme is the conciliatory attitude of those who are not actively involved in the disguise - particularly Faublas' father, who finds the likeness he achieves to his sister quite remarkable. This does put a rather more ambiguous tone on the whole event, as does the way in which Faublas describes his reception at the ball - "Je vis que je recevais l'accueil dont on honore dans un cercle nombreux une rivale trop jolie qu'on y voit pour la première fois" (p.41). This is perhaps only a feature, though, of the generally tolerant atmosphere which prevails in the novel, and certainly does not indicate a borrowing by the author from Choisy - a theory which seems to stem from little more than a cursory comparison between the two works, and probably from no more than a misunderstanding.

c) Roger de Beauvoir, L'Abbé de Choisy, (Paris, 1848),
three volumes

Mademoiselle de Choisy, (Paris, 1859),
one volume

There is no doubt at all about the inspiration behind the only nineteenth century writer to base a fictional work on the abbé de Choisy (there is only one work in fact: it was given a different title in later editions) - although the plot is almost entirely of his own invention.

L'Abbé de Choisy is a long novel, combining historical fact and fiction, whose author,¹ by failing to distinguish the two gives to understand that the whole story is historically true. He adds to the already complicated and exotic story of the abbé de Choisy an intricate love story on two different levels, which is itself expanded by innumerable digressions and false dénouements.

Briefly, the abbé de Choisy of the story falls in love with a fictitious character called Diane d'Herfort, but his love affair is frustrated at every step by the presence of the sinister comte d'Hosberg. Although his mother tells him early in Volume I that it is wrong to love Diane, he perseveres, and it is not until the end of Volume III that it is revealed that this is because she is the daughter of Madame de Choisy by the comte d'Hosberg, and so Choisy's half-sister. This conclusion is delayed, however, by endless digressions, involving interminable meetings in chapels at midnight or at dawn, and unidentified characters arriving or riding off in severe thunderstorms. Each chapter brings a new coup de théâtre, and there is a quite farcical scene in Volume III, not unlike parts of Ruy Blas, set at Crespon, when everyone ends up in the wrong bedroom. (III, 50 ff.). Unfortunately by the middle of Volume III, the author's delaying tactics become too obvious to be convincing (Chapter IX for example), and the dénouement proper soon begins. This in fact takes place on a boat going to Siam, (for which country, remarkably,

1. Roger de Beauvoir (E.-A.-Roger de Bully, 1806-1866) is described in the Oxford Companion to French Literature as a "minor writer, a 'dandy' [...] one of the extreme romantics". His output was large, and includes many long novels, of which the Chevalier de Saint-George is the best known. See D. Bernard, "Trois romanciers contemporains: Roger de Beauvoir, etc." in Revue du Monde Catholique, XVI, (1866), pp.691-710.

Diane d'Herfort and the comte d'Hosberg are also heading,) and solves all the enigmas of the whole novel at once. Choisy is told, in the midst of another violent thunderstorm, of his relationship with Diane, by the comte, who is dying because he has taken poison, and receives the news with considerably more astonishment than the reader can muster at this point - "Tout ce que l'âme humaine peut contenir à la fois d'indignation, de terreur et de surprise fermentait au cœur de Choisy" (III, 285).

Although the story is fictitious, several aspects of it have nevertheless been borrowed directly from Choisy's writings, and some passages have even been transcribed word for word. Details about Madame de Choisy and her "commerce réglé avec la Reine de Pologne" (I, 46), the location of the abbé's residence at the Palais du Luxembourg (I, 82), Crespon (II, 63 ff.), and the journey to Siam (III, 321) are all factual, as is the description of Choisy's dress (I, 53) - and Beauvoir also mentions specifically as sources the Comtesse des Barres and the Journal du voyage de Siam.

Several authentic historical figures also appear or are mentioned, such as Monsieur (I, 38) and the chevalier de Lorraine (I, 51) - and also Mazarin and Bouillon. Devices such as these add somewhat to the historical credibility of the work, but do not make up for the weaknesses in structure and overstatement, which are excessive even within the romantic framework.

d) Literary tradition

It is not surprising, given its nature and subject-matter, that Choisy's autobiography is a unique work. It is very difficult to fit it into any literary tradition - or to find any precursors, except perhaps in the twisted Confessions of Jean-Jacques Bouchard (written in the first half of the seventeenth century: first published Paris, 1881), whose erotic revelations nevertheless lack the wit and novelty of Choisy. Any comparison with a work such as L'Astrée is tenuous, too, given the totally different ethical codes behind the two works; here, as in Faublas, 'transvestism' is a practical method of disguise, and little more.

The work does, even so, have some points in common with certain aspects of the eighteenth century novel, particularly in the use and exploration of illusion, and in the anti-sentimental approach to relationships with people of the opposite sex, as well as fitting into the developing stages of the memoir-novel.

One of the most significant fields of literary development taking place at the time when the Mémoires/femme was being composed was that of the memoir-novel, which as P. Stewart points out¹ grew out of the traditional mémoires of the seventeenth century and earlier, and developed eventually into the first person novels of the eighteenth century, (which, although not always called Mémoires had nevertheless been strongly influenced by that genre.²)

One of the principal changes that took place was one of

1. Imitation and Illusion in the eighteenth-century Memoir-novel, (Yale U.P., 1969)
2. On the other hand, the title mémoires was not given to the Comtesse des Barres by Choisy; the different titles that it has borne have all been provided by editors.

emphasis from the narration of historical events in which the writer may or may not have been involved, to the reminiscences about his own life by the narrator, who effectively becomes the 'subject' of the work. The seventeenth-century mémoires tradition was concerned with contemporary events and spanned a whole number of people - the eighteenth-century memoir-novel was centred around one person, whose adventures are related retrospectively.

If we look at the Comtesse des Barres in this light, we see that it has more characteristics in common with the eighteenth-century novel than with the seventeenth-century mémoires. It has a hero, - the narrator - and he is the central character of the work, around whose amorous adventures the other episodes revolve. The beginning of the Comtesse des Barres, "Vous m'ordonnez, Madame, d'écrire l'histoire de ma vie" (p.289), is comparable with the following passage in Marivaux' Vie de Marianne: "Quand je vous ai fait le récit de quelques accidents de ma vie, je n'attendais pas, ma chère amie, que vous me prieriez de vous la donner toute entière".¹ The first point, then, is that Choisy was writing simultaneously Mémoires in the seventeenth-century sense of the term - and a true work that was very close in conception to the eighteenth-century fictional memoir-novel.

The second point concerns the use of illusion - another central feature in the development of the eighteenth-century novel. The writer who principally directed the mémoires from fact to fiction was Gatien Courtilz de Sandras, whose contribution is summarized as follows by P. Stewart:

"Already consecrated by classical tradition, memoirs were widely reaffirmed as a genre in the seventeenth century [...]"

1. Ed. Garnier, p.8.

Courtilz was only riding the current wave when he ground out the fake "memoirs" of Rochefort, d'Artagnan, [etc. ...] and finally of the anonymous heroes, the comte D*** and the marquis D***."¹

Vivienne Mylne expands on this idea² by showing that the novelist was able to use the same techniques and form as the mémorialiste, merely basing his subject-matter on imagination rather than experience. If he then claimed authenticity, and character and story were both credible and little known, then it was difficult to distinguish fact from fiction: the illusion had been successfully created.

From this there is an interesting, though completely coincidental parallel to be drawn. Choisy's whole transvestite experience depended on illusion - and so in one sense of the term was 'romanesque'. Just as his existence depended on the acquiescence of those who surrounded him - and as he depended on them to sustain an illusion, so the novelist depends on the reader to accept at face value the truth as he presents it to him; Choisy achieves in the Comtesse des Barres the same relationship with his companions that the novelist is seeking to establish with the reader.

As well as this Choisy broadens the field of credibility by the subject matter of the Comtesse des Barres. For memoir-novels to be popular they had ideally to contain elements that were unusual or exciting; the 'everyday' was not yet considered interesting. The reader therefore had to believe not only in the characters with which he was presented, but

1. Imitation and Illusion in the eighteenth-century Memoir-novel, p.19.
2. The eighteenth-century Novel: Techniques of Illusion, (M.U.P., 1965), p.22.

also in their not always very credible exploits. Choisy, par contre, in his autobiography describes events which, although vrai, are scarcely vraisemblable - and so helps to blur yet further the distinction between fictional and factual truth. Once the reader had been convinced - perhaps by other accounts such as that of the abbé d'Olivet¹ - of the historical fact behind the Comtesse des Barres, his argument that any other adventure with which he was presented in a novel was 'incredible' would be considerably weakened.

These three points combine, then, to heighten the paradox which a work such as this presents, and show that although it can be discussed in the same terms as the eighteenth-century novel, it nevertheless stands apart from it. Before the tradition of the first person memoir-novel had been fully developed, the Comtesse des Barres had already been composed - a work of facts that are 'stranger than fiction', and yet a work within which the plot is sustained by illusion of an almost fictional kind.

The last point that should be made here is concerned with Choisy's sparse and insensitive description of love-making, which looks forward to such writers as Laclos. Whereas one tendency in the eighteenth century was towards over-sentimentality in matters of love (the tradition of semsibilité carried through Prévost to Rousseau²), Choisy does away with the emotional element, as we have seen, and

1. Vie, (Lausanne and Geneva, 1742). cf. d'Argenson, Loisirs, (Liège, 1787), II, 90 - "on croira cette histoire tout à fait invraisemblable; je puis pourtant bien certifier qu'elle est très véritable".
2. See for example des Grieux' first sight of Manon in Manon Lescaut, (ed. Garnier), p.19, or for the most exuberant example, Saint-Preux' impressions as he awaits Julie in La Nouvelle Héloïse, (ed. Garnier), p.122.

concentrates almost exclusively on the physical. It is not far from Choisy's 'capture' of Mlle de la Grise:

"Elle s'approcha et je la pris entre mes bras, et la fis passer du côté de la grande ruelle; elle était sur le dos, et moi j'étais sur le côté gauche, la main droite sur sa gorge, nos jambes entrelacées l'une dans l'autre; je me penchai tout à fait sur elle pour la baiser."

to the following passage in the Liaisons dangereuses:

"Comme en amour rien ne finit que de très près, et que nous étions alors assez loin l'un de l'autre, il fallait avant tout se rapprocher. Ce fut pour y parvenir que je passai le plus tôt possible à une apparente tranquillité, propre à calmer les effets de cet état violent, sans en affaiblir l'impression."²

although nearly one hundred years separate their composition.

Choisy is therefore a part, too, of the libertin tradition of love-making - considering it as a physical and intellectual exercise, emphasizing the supremacy of the man, and whose callousness and cynicism contrast sharply with the âme sensible of the eighteenth-century hero.

1. p.345.

2. Les Liaisons dangereuses, (Livre de Poche), p.338.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

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1. The Académies

One final aspect of Choisy's career remains to be considered, namely his contribution to the Académie Française and the Académie du Luxembourg, of which he was the founder. As in the case of his historical works, it is probably true to say of this that what for him represented an important activity has for us little interest - and certainly the Académie Française has little by which to remember him.

Choisy took his seat on 25 August, 1687,¹ in the place of the duc de Saint-Aignan, whose career there seems to have been even less remarkable than that of his successor, and whose chief title to glory, according to Choisy, was "un attachement inviolable et tendre à la personne du Roi".² His Discours de Réception³ is a standard rhetorical effort, expressing the speaker's humility and then praising the achievements of his predecessor, of Richelieu, and of the King - the latter principally in his role of defender of the Catholic faith. There is one striking paragraph in which Choisy makes an unmistakable reference to his own missionary activities, not minimizing the setbacks which they had known:

"Son zèle [Louis] traverse les mers, et va chercher aux extrémités de la terre des peuples ensevelis dans les ténèbres de l'idolâtrie; les premières difficultés ne le rebutent point, il suit avec constance un dessein que le ciel lui a inspiré."⁴

1. Bussy-Rabutin wrote him a congratulatory letter soon afterwards, expressing his esteem and friendship in the highest terms of cordiality. See his Correspondance, ed. Lalanne, VI, 92.

2. Recueil de l'Académie Française, 1687, p.7.

3. *ibid.*, 1687, pp.1-15.

4. *ibid.*, 1687, p.13.

but otherwise it contains little of interest.

The one work for which he was responsible as a member of the Académie was, characteristically, not printed during his lifetime. In accordance with Richelieu's wishes, a Grammaire was to follow the Dictionnaire, which had appeared for the first time in 1694. The preliminaries for the latter work are described by Pellisson and d'Olivet:

"On arrêta que, pour ce travail, [...] la Compagnie se partagerait; et qu'à l'un des bureaux M. l'abbé de Choisy tiendrait la plume, à l'autre M. l'abbé Tallemant. D'abord ces deux bureaux travaillèrent avec l'ardeur qu'inspirent les nouvelles entreprises. On y rassembla les trois premiers mois de quoi faire deux petits Recueils, l'un desquels fut imprimé en 1698, sous le titre de Remarques et décisions de l'Académie Française par M. L. T. [l'abbé Tallemant] . . .

Quant au Recueil de M. l'abbé de Choisy, elle [la Compagnie] ne jugea pas à propos d'en permettre l'impression, parce qu'il l'avait écrit de ce style gai, libre, dont il a écrit son Voyage de Siam. Mais bien loin qu'en cela il fût à blâmer, la plupart des lecteurs lui auraient su gré [...] d'avoir corrigé par un peu de badinage la sécheresse des questions grammaticales."

Choisy's Journal de l'Académie Française was published after his death in a volume of Opuscules sur la langue française, par divers Académiciens, (Paris, 1754). The first part of this work consists of Langeau's Essais de Grammaire (pp.5-242) and this is followed by Choisy's Journal (pp.243-340). The volume contains various other articles, including one by d'Olivet entitled Des participes passés.

Among the members of this "second bureau" were Charpentier, Charles Perrault, Cornaille, the abbé de Langeau and the abbé de Choisy, who was, as we have seen, given the task of

1. Histoire de l'Académie Française depuis 1652 jusqu'à 1700, (Paris, 1762), II, 66 ff.

secretary. His role was largely limited to reporting the discussions, which he does informally and without elaboration. The problems which the "bureau" considered were chiefly concerned with syntax and semantics, but also included pronunciation, etymology and orthography. Each question was put to the vote, and variant opinions noted; the conclusions were firmly based on example and usage, and none of the opinants seemed inclined to introduce a more abstract element into the proceedings. The Journal de l'Académie is an interesting and amusing document, but it is quite easy to see why the Académie thought it unsuitable for publication, in the light of such frivolous remarks as the following, on the question of the synonymity of "crainte" and "frayeur": "Tout le monde s'est écrié: voilà, en d'autres termes, l'avis du premier opinant, et nous sommes bien malheureux aujourd'hui de n'avoir pas le plaisir de le contredire" (Journal de l'Académie, p.318). Some time later, the two bureaux worked jointly on some Observations sur les Remarques de Vaugelas, which appeared in 1704.¹

This seems to have been the extent of Choisy's 'learned' contribution to the society - at least no records of any other commitments have come down to us. We hear of him again, though, in 1704, when he was charged with the task of pronouncing an Eloge de Bossuet - but did not excel himself in this, producing a long and mediocre panegyric² of standard sentiments, filled out with quotations.

His next Discours was brief, and took the form of

1. See d'Olivet, Vie, p.156.

2. Recueil de l'Académie Française, (1704), pp.203-229. D'Argenson says of this Eloge: "Le sujet était beau; mais je n'ai rien trouvé dans le discours [...] qui y répondît dignement" (Loisirs, II, 129).

a reply to the Discours de Réception of the Bishop of Metz in 1711¹ - and the final one was briefer still, pronounced in November 1723, less than a year before his death.²

This took the form of a Réponse to the Discours de Réception of his friend and future biographer the abbé d'Olivet. It is more personal, and consequently more moving than his previous efforts, and includes a tribute to his old friend the abbé de Dangeau who had died shortly before - "Le souvenir tendre de Monsieur l'abbé de Dangeau, dont la mémoire nous sera toujours précieuse, qui vous estimait, qui vous aimait, me donne du courage" (pp.15-16). D'Argenson tells us that "le bonhomme était accablé; mais il voulut se charger de cette corvée, parce que l'abbé d'Olivet était son ami".³ He died doyen de l'Académie, and his own Eloge was pronounced in the Discours de Réception of Portail.⁴ Here as in the reply by Valincour⁵ it is his popularizing historical works which are most highly praised - although Valincour does also mention the Journal du voyage de Siam.

In addition to his contribution to the Académie Française, Choisy was responsible for founding a small - and short-lived - academy of his own - the Académie (or Assemblée) du Luxembourg. This group, formed in 1692, was to meet in Choisy's apartments in the Palais du Luxembourg each Tuesday in order to discuss "ce qui ne fait point l'objet du travail des trois

1. Recueil de l'Académie Française, (1711), pp.273-281.
2. In Discours de réception à l'Académie Française, (Paris, 1723), pp.15-17.
3. D'Argenson, Loisirs, II, 129.
4. Discours prononcés . . . (28 December 1724), (Paris, 1725), Discours de Réception (Portail).
5. *ibid.*, Réponse (Valincour).

Académies Royales"¹ - law, politics, jurisprudence, theology and moral philosophy. The members, all Academicians, included the abbé de Langeau, Renaudot, d'Herbelot, Charles Perrault and Fontenelle, and Choisy records in the Journal de l'Assemblée de Luxembourg² discussions which took place concerning the title of the Imitation of Christ, the use of the title Pape, giants, and apostolic succession, as well as a meeting during which Perrault read his poem La Création du monde. From the Journal, as well as from d'Argenson's remarks, however, it is obvious that the group was badly organized and unprofessional, as well as being unsure of its scope, and lasted less than a year - "Il paraît que l'Académie du Luxembourg finit parce qu'on y proposa des questions trop délicates, et que les Académiciens [...] s'aigriront [...] et enfin se séparèrent".³

1. D'Argenson, Loisirs, II, 104.

2. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal MS no.3186. See also d'Argenson, Loisirs, II, 104 ff. and J. Méliat, Inédits et Belles Pages, (Paris, 1922), pp.146-193.

3. D'Argenson, Loisirs, II, 112.

2. Unity and diversity in the life and works of Choisy

Choisy's peers at the Académie Française remembered him primarily as a historian for the simple reason that his historical works at the time of his death far outweighed in sheer bulk the rest of his published output, which for its part was disparate and largely incomplete. Furthermore, from the amount of time and organization he devoted to the Histoire de l'Eglise and the Histoire des Rois de France, we may also judge that he conceived of his task, once he had settled down to a career as a writer, primarily in terms of making historical knowledge more widely available, rather than as a creative artist - to all intents and purposes he was a 'professional' popularizing historian. It seems, too, that this was for him an eminently suitable occupation, since throughout his historical works, and indeed in all his semi-scholarly output, his most consistent contribution to the material he uses is that of organization, and a certain orderliness of composition is evident in even his most amateurish efforts in this field.

In retrospect, however, we see that this is only one side of the abbé de Choisy, and alongside his historical writing, we must now place an unlikely and heterodox combination of works, of which the most important in chronological order of publication are the Quatre dialogues, the Journal du voyage de Siam, the Mémoires and the Mémoires/femme. The first two of these precede, in the date of their composition, the historical works, but the second two were written, probably for relaxation, at the same time as parts of the later historical works, although not intended for publication during his lifetime.

Despite their apparently unconnected themes, these four works are in fact strongly bound together by the close

relationship they all bear to Choisy's own life, and they are consistent or contradictory simply in so far as his own experience was. Through them, in particular, we are able to trace and analyse those aspects of his character which were stable as well as those which changed: just as certain attitudes and outlooks reappear in his writing, so did Choisy retain throughout his life certain characteristic qualities and points of view; on the other hand, just as he presents us with violent inconsistencies and changes of direction, and with tales alternately of perverted debauchery and Christian discipline, so did his own experience reflect this pattern.

As we have seen from the Mémoires/femme, the break in Choisy's life which came in 1684 was traumatic and almost total - it is true to say that to some extent he lived two lives one after the other - and yet certain facets of his personality as seen through his writing were unaffected by the break.

Firstly, Choisy showed evidence in all the conditions of his life of a certain degree of good humour. This is clear from the fact that he saw what was funny not only in other people, and in the situations in which they found themselves, but also in himself. Certainly, as we have seen, he detested presumption, and was never slow to direct his wit against it, but on the other hand he was modest enough to laugh at himself, and to accept his own limitations; it is with a tone of irony in the Journal that he remarks: "[Je] croyais être devenu Pape" (p.210) or asks "ne me trouvez-vous pas un grand astronome?" (p.73). The only occasion on which he was clearly not prepared to laugh at himself was when challenged by the duc de Montausier, but, as we have seen, he felt his whole existence threatened to such an extent that this is not really

surprising; on other occasions he feels more secure, and even goes as far as quoting a whole song which makes fun of his dress and behaviour (Mémoires/femme, pp.306-308). He has few pretensions himself, and says in his Journal that he preferred to remain silent than to show his ignorance, a quality he would obviously like to see in others. "Choisy est modeste, [...], et c'est une des grâces de son esprit de ne jamais prétendre à plus qu'il ne doit."¹

There is further evidence of this good nature in his sociability and his capacity for tolerating (with some obvious exceptions) the foibles of others. He was a faithful, and we may believe sympathetic friend - a quality to which Bussy-Rabutin, among others, bears witness,² and enjoyed the company of such widely different figures as Saint-Simon, Bossuet, Bouillon, Bussy-Rabutin, and Cosnac. His sanity, good humour, and relative happiness on the long sea voyages to and from Siam show that he was willing and able to make the best of a given situation, and testify to his tolerance and patience. The immediate rapport which he establishes with the reader, (whether he is specified or not), reflects an ease of communication and delight in conversation which are enhanced by his familiar literary style, and enlivened by his enthusiasm.

This latter quality is also consistent over the variety of his works. Choisy is above all anxious to share with his reader what he knows - whether it is the court gossip of the Mémoires, or the snippets of previously unpublished documents which he includes in the histories. Stylistically, there is some consistency in the works, most notably in their lack of pomposity, and in their clear and straightforward style.

1. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries du Lundi, (Paris, 1858), III, 441.

2. Bussy-Rabutin, Correspondance, II, 11-12.

Here, however, although their overall fluency reflects the ease with which he wrote, Choisy was careful to adapt his style to the work in question, and so largely avoided impropriety of language or bad taste.

The variables in Choisy's life and works need no elaboration: we have by now had ample evidence of his debauchery, his conversion, his missionary zeal, and his religious orthodoxy, as well as his long career as a historical writer - "homme, femme, toujours dans les extrémités; abîmé ou dans l'étude ou dans les bagatelles; estimable par un courage qui mène au bout du monde, méprisable par une coquetterie de petite fille" (Mémoires, p.25). The constants are less obviously represented in any single work, but rather penetrate his writing as they did his life. "Facile, bienveillant, et foncièrement sociable",¹ he is a personality who lacks neither good humour nor tolerance, except where presumption or affectation are concerned, and whose wit, enthusiasm and spontaneity inform every aspect of his work.

1. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries, (Paris, 1858), III, 442.

3. Conclusion

The concluding question I want to discuss is to what extent Choisy, in all these aspects of his life and works, can in any way be said to be representative of the period in which he lived, and whether his ideas and attitudes, as well as his entire life style, tend to show conservative or progressive features.

Mongrédien begins the introduction to his edition of the Mémoires (1966): "L'abbé de Choisy nous apparaît aujourd'hui comme un homme du dix-huitième siècle égaré dans le dix-septième" (p.9), and mentions as evidence "la plume légère, la vivacité, parfois l'ironie et le goût de la boutade, la clarté, [...] l'amoralité dans sa vie galante, le cynisme dans ses confessions scandaleuses" (p.9). Mongrédien would make of him, then, a man far in advance of his times, possessing the characteristics of an eighteenth-century thinker and writer. Other critics would not agree - Gustave Desnoiresterres, writing in the nineteenth century, says of Choisy: "S'il fut un libertin de mœurs, il ne le fut point d'esprit. Rien de plus orthodoxe que la foi et le zèle de ce voluptueux dépravé",¹ and so makes of him a man whose behaviour did not reflect his ideas. A third critic, Marie-Louise Pailleron, sees him as making a unique but entirely frivolous contribution to the seventeenth century - "Il apporte dans le solennel dix-septième siècle l'attrait de la fantaisie un peu folle, le grain de la cocasserie, qui est le sel d'une époque et son divertissement".²

1. E. et L., Préface, p.iii.

2. M.-L. Pailleron, "L'abbé de Choisy", in Revue Universelle, (IV), 1921, p.436.

Bearing in mind these three quotations, with their different interpretations of Choisy's contribution to his times, I shall consider briefly four aspects of his life and works: firstly his attitude towards knowledge and its dissemination, then his attitude towards religious and political authority, thirdly his eccentricity, and finally some points of his style.

The first two questions are obviously central to any discussion of this kind, since the progress of the Enlightenment depended largely on a more widespread capacity for critical evaluation, and an attendant desire to call into question received ideas and notions of authority. In order for these to be realized, one of the principal barriers to be overcome was that of ignorance, and one feature which a writer such as Choisy shares with those of the early Enlightenment is his work for the cause of the dissemination of knowledge. It is important to distinguish, however, between the straightforward dissemination of knowledge with, if anything, an orthodox bias to the presentation, and the dissemination of a particular point of view, that could be seen by the ancien régime as disruptive, under the cover of 'facts'. Neither is necessarily more objective than the other, but each characterizes a particular, and different outlook on both writing and life in general.

Choisy saw knowledge not as the preserve of the intellectual, but rather as the right of the intelligent layman: the history of the Church was to be understood not only by the bishops, but by all Christian men and women - the "personnes de piété" at whom the Histoire de l'Eglise is directed. Likewise, as the history of France became more widely studied, Choisy simplified aspects of it so that it

would be more easily available to his countrymen - thus far he was forward-looking in his thinking. His overall aims in this sphere, though, have very little in common with those of the popularizing writers of the early Enlightenment. If we compare, for example, Choisy's Vie de David with the article David in Bayle's Dictionnaire, we see that the intentions are completely different. Bayle seeks not only to dispel ignorance of fact, but also to question certain accepted values, and so to influence opinion - as, for example, when he speaks of David sleeping with a young woman in his old age and concludes: "Un homme rempli des idées de la pureté [...], consentira-t-il jamais à ces remèdes? Peut-on y consentir que lorsqu'on préfère les instincts de la nature, et les intérêts de la chaire, à ceux de l'esprit de Dieu?".¹ Choisy has no such subversive intentions; he may introduce newly discovered elements into his works, but their aim and tenor are strictly orthodox. If Choisy jibes at the king and the régime, it is within the context of his posthumous Mémoires (and this, as I shall try to show, to a lesser extent than we might suspect) - and it is balanced here by a degree of admiration not shared by all his contemporaries. Choisy presented his readers with information which was biased on the side of orthodoxy and submission to authority, rather than of dissent and reform.

This point is borne out by the Quatre dialogues, which bring us on to the second question, that of religious obedience. Lanson, in his articles on the "Origines et premières manifestations de l'esprit philosophique"² speaks of the

1. Bayle, Dictionnaire, (Rotterdam, 1720), art. David, II, 905. n. II IV.

2. In Revue des Cours et Conférences, XVI-(I) 1907-8, p. 289

"pénétration du rationalisme dans la pensée catholique", and this is certainly an important aspect of the quatre dialogues. Choisy and Dangeau produced a work of reasoned argument, independent of theological proof, and, unusually, lacking in dogmatic content, based on "des raisons tirées d[e nous-] mêmes, qui ne dépendent d'aucune autorité, qui ne présupposent aucune instruction précédente" (Quatre dialogues, pp.604-605). This apologia, however, although it represents an example of the "esprit philosophique" in so far as it employs the terms of Cartesianism in a Christian context is not faithful to the "esprit des philosophes", in that it, unlike them, concludes on the side of orthodoxy and submission to the Catholic Church. The methods and presentation may reflect those of the early Enlightenment writers, in that they form part of a popularizing tradition whose highest achievements were to be found not in Christian apologetics but in philosophical and scientific treatises, but the content most certainly does not, since its aim and culmination are quite simply conversion to Christianity.

This strict adherence to orthodox teaching is a feature of much of Choisy's writing, and indeed characteristic of a large proportion of the French clergy in the seventeenth century. Although the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes had many critics - and indeed Choisy himself opposed some of the methods of 'conversion' employed - the majority of the French clergy, and particularly the disciples of Bossuet, among whose number the abbé de Choisy could be included, supported the King. Choisy's outlook stems from the fact that he was, later in life, a devout if sometimes intolerant Catholic, with a true love for the Church, as we see from his Mémoires as well as from the Histoire de l'Eglise. Although he never

achieved any deep spirituality himself, or, as far as we know, joined any group or society devoted to prayer, he took his faith seriously, and wrote about such figures as Madame de Miramion and the père Surin with sympathy and understanding. He admired and respected ascetic Christianity and sanctity, while realizing that he could not aspire to them himself. His conversion, on which such doubt was cast, was nevertheless life-long, and he died reconciled with the Church whose authority he had learned to respect.

In this context, it is important, too, to clarify Choisy's point of view as expressed in the Journal. In Chapter III, I have tried to show to what extent this work fitted into the movement towards a growth of awareness amongst Frenchmen both of the existence of other civilizations and beliefs, and of the shortcomings of their own, and Choisy followed the example of many of his contemporaries who either travelled to or read about Eastern or American countries. Here again, however, despite the embryonic signs of this awareness in Choisy, it would be wrong to see more advanced thought in this book than it in fact contains, and certainly here, as elsewhere, it is important to underline the fact that Choisy intended and tolerated no criticism of the fundamentals of Catholic Christianity.

In addition to his religious orthodoxy, Choisy was far less politically radical than parts of his Mémoires would suggest. His political criticisms, where they occur, are astute and certainly justified - the methods of 'conversion' employed after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the manipulation of State finances, the existence of great social injustice, and so on - but these are balanced, and indeed weighed down by an overall respect for authority, and in

Choisy's case at least, by an attendant degree of political apathy. He was untypical of his age, in that he lived largely independently of the court, but he respected and admired the King, without loving him, and was careful to keep any dissenting ideas to himself; he was a pragmatist (and perhaps a coward), who found it more convenient to maintain silence on delicate questions than to risk incurring the King's disfavour, and he went to considerable lengths to appease the King after his return from Siam. Although he was clearly aware of some of the absurdities inherent in such a system as Versailles, and was not blind to the suffering that was so prevalent, he probably believed in absolute monarchy in so far as he believed in any political system, but lacked the insight or concern to suggest all but the most obvious reforms. Madame de Caylus' remark, which I have already quoted (p. 38, n.2) suggests that by his later years, he had become almost a recluse, absorbed in his work and in his Mémoires, probably finding his relaxation in gambling, but otherwise living the life of a literary gentleman and leaving politics to the politicians.

Against this record of religious and political orthodoxy, and a far from disruptive outlook on life on the whole, must obviously be weighed the "amoralité dans sa vie galante", but perhaps the seventeenth century was one period when these two aspects of a personality could exist side by side. Each century has its envers, and the seventeenth, more than most, provides us with a host of scandals and surprises. No less than the century which followed it, the grand siècle contained many figures such as Choisy, outrageous in different ways, but nevertheless illustrative of the paradox between conformity and individualism which epitomizes the era. Obviously

not everybody in the seventeenth century behaved like Choisy, but a cursory reading of any contemporary mémoires will reveal a gallery of eccentrics, misfits, and oddities, nearly all of whom seem to have been tolerated with a remarkable degree of equanimity. The society abbé flourished in the seventeenth century as well as in the eighteenth, and Choisy was far from being untypical of his age by his mœurs; he lived in an age when bénéfices were seen "non comme une charge, mais comme un asile à la pauvreté et à la disgrâce"¹ and where his behaviour was applauded more often than it was condemned.

Finally, on the question of style, Choisy wrote with the frankness that was such a central feature of many seventeenth century mémorialistes, but, in the Mémoires/femme in particular, without any of the attendant crudeness. His style, even in such works as this, reflects the clarity of mind which informs his historical writing, but it is a clarity and equilibrium that draw on the classical tradition, and it must be remembered that Voltaire's style, too, was firmly based on classical models; "la vivacité" and "la clarté" were not restricted to the confines of the eighteenth century.

Choisy's love of anecdotes and his sense of humour are equally timeless; he has an eye for the ridiculous that he shares with many other seventeenth-century writers, notably the Princess Palatine, but he has also the gift of a sharper, more ironical turn of phrase, found often in Saint-Simon or La dame de la Fayette, and used also, perhaps more self-consciously, by such writers as La Bruyère. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shared much in terms of style, and with such a fund of parallels in the seventeenth century,

1. Fromentières, Discours pour une assemblée ecclésiastique, quoted in Gaiffe, L'Envers du Grand Siècle, p.66.

there seems to be little point in divorcing Choisy from his period on stylistic grounds. The coming together of libertinage, wit, and clarity in the Mémoires/femme may indeed be unusual for the seventeenth century, but this stems simply from the fact that in this work we find the combination of three elements that in themselves were common enough. The undoubted cynicism of the work, too, is rare, but derives from the stand-point of reduced moral awareness from which it was written; in short, it is unwise to base any overall appreciation of Choisy's life and values on a work of this nature taken in isolation.

Choisy, living as he did, when he did, unless he was a complete reactionary could not fail to be influenced by the spread of Cartesian thought, by his impressions of the East, by the increased availability of historical and philosophical works, and by the generally tolerant yet unjust society in which he lived: this much is obvious. But a precursor of the Enlightenment, let alone an "homme du dix-huitième siècle" saw far beyond Choisy's relatively limited and uncritical vision. In order to illustrate this, one need look no further than Fontenelle (1657-1757), who was a **very near** contemporary of Choisy, and his successor as doyen of the Académie Française.

Fontenelle, like Choisy, was anxious to ~~make~~ knowledge more widely available, and used popularizing methods to do so; but whereas Fontenelle aims at upsetting the traditional view of the universe, Choisy upholds it. He is concerned with the Mediæval kings of France, with the Popes, and the Church Fathers, and he advocates submission to the Catholic Church. Fontenelle, by contrast, embarks on questions such

as the inhabitants of the moon, the heliocentricity of the universe, or the passage of comets, and sets about demolishing rather than restoring a sense of the supernatural. "Il a été des premiers à commencer la réaction contre le dix-septième siècle, ses habitudes, ses traditions, et son esprit."¹

Choisy was a dillettante, with a passing knowledge of many subjects; potentially an original writer, he was incapable of applying himself to the thought involved. He accepted his faith and his government by and large, and contented himself with transmitting knowledge rather than interpreting it. His travels awoke in him some degree of critical observation, but did not spark off any lifelong dedication to analytical thought, nor did he really pursue the philosophical and religious questions with which he concerned himself in the Quatre dialogues: "son faible [...] est de ne pas réfléchir beaucoup et de ne pas assez mûrir ses connaissances".²

He was not, on the other hand, just a harmless clown, as Marie-Louise Pailleron would suggest - to say this is to do him the injustice of looking only at his most irresponsible actions. Lescure, in the introduction to the 1888 edition of the Mémoires makes the extraordinary remark that there were few originaux at the court of Louis XIV. Choisy was one such, among many, and one who has left us a better record of himself than most. Through a study of this man we are given yet another insight, more vivid than most, into the contradictions that went to make up the grand siècle. Choisy embodies debauchery and piety, frivolity and learning,

1. L. Maigron, Fontenelle, l'homme, l'œuvre, l'influence, Slatkine reprints, (Geneva, 1970), p.375.

2. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries, III, 440.

conservatism and social awareness, obedience and individuality, and their presence in one person makes our picture of the central paradox of the grand siècle, that of authority and non-conformity, all the more striking. It is difficult to imagine a figure such as Choisy, taking all his ideas and activities into account, living at any other time; he was both a product and a reflection of his times, and, "quelque peu estimable qu'il soit à beaucoup d'égards, par le seul récit de sa vie nous introduit dans le vif de ce monde à deux faces, [...] ces détails infinis, ces mille futilités dans lesquelles il se complaît et se noie, viendront apporter [...] un tableau consciencieux et curieux [...] de la seconde moitié du règne du grand roi".¹

1. Desnoiresterres, E. et L., Préface, p.ii.

APPENDICES

Michel de Bazanier,
Procureur au Châtelet

15. vi.
1555
Jehan I de Choisy = Opportune Bazanier
marchant de vin
suivant la Cener

Jehan II de Choisy
Seigneur de Balleroy etc.
receveur général des finances
en la Généralité de Caen
(1603) f 1652

Madeline le
= Charon d'Ormelles

Michel de l'Hôpital (c. 1505-1573)
chancelier de France 1560-1568

Pierre Hurault de
l'Hôpital, Seigneur de
Balesbat = Claire de Gessey
(or Gessey)

L'abbé Paul Hurault
de l'Hôpital, prieur
de Saint-Benoît-au-
Sault, dit l'abbé
Balesbat

Jehan Hurault de
l'Hôpital,
chevalier de
Male

Henri de Balesbat

13. ix.
1618

Marguerite de Choisy =

Madeline de Choisy =
Louis le
Fèvre de
Caumartin,
maître des requêtes,
intendant en
Champagne

Aignan de
Beaulharnais,
seigneur de
Mivaudion,
Conseiller au
Parlement
f 1652

Audré de Choisy,
avocat au Parlement
contrôleur des traités
foraines de Normandie

Jehan III de Choisy, seigneur
de Beaumont et de Ball-
eroy, Conseiller au Parle-
ment 1627, maître des
requêtes, 1633, intendant
de Languedoc, 1640, con-
seiller d'Etat, 1643,
chancelier du duc d'Or-
léans (1598-1660)

1628 =
Jeanne Olimpe
Hurault de
l'Hôpital (c. 1604
- 1669)

Jehan Jacques 1645 Marie
de Beaulharnais = Bonneau
de Mivaudion de Rubelle

Balleroy line

Guillaume de 1660 Marie Marguerite
Nesmond, =
président au
Parlement de
Paris de Mivaudion

Jehan-Paul de Choisy,
seigneur de Balleroy etc.,
conseiller au Parlement de
Toulouse, à la clause
de l'édit de Castes, 1654,
intendant d'Auvergne,
1662, et de Lorraine,
1663. (1632-1693) f
intendant postholy

Pierre de Ballery
killed in
1672

Jehan, Marguerite,
Olympe & Louise,
religieuses

François-Timoléon
abbé de Choisy
(1644 - 1724)

Appendix I
Genealogical table of the Choisy-
Hurault de l'Hôpital families.

APPENDIX IIUnpublished letters of the abbé de Choisy

From the personal Archives of Monsieur Hubert BENEDEC.

1. To Monsieur de Belfontaine de Meherent. Bayeux.¹

Paris ce 29 déc. 1700

Ma belle sœur m'a dit qu'elle avoit envoyé une procuration a Mr Galimard pour accomoder l'affaire des Gouyes. Je vous faits [sic] le maitre de ce qui me regarde et Mr Hallé aussi et j'approuve et ratifie par avance tout ce que vous ferés la dessus. Je vous manderai quand Mr Gallot partira et le jour qu'il arrivera a Caën.

(Not signed - probably not finished.)

2. To Monsieur de Belfontaine de Meherent. Bayeux.

Fontainebleau ce 1er oct. (no year)

Je retourne a Paris dans trois jours, mandés moi je vous prie en quel etat est l'affaire des Gouyes et combien Mr Hallé en peut esperer.

Mais il faut que je vous dise tout. J'ai consulte les plus habiles avocats. Ils croient ma cause mauvaise, celle de Mr Hallé est bonne. Il faudroit tacher d'obliger Mr de Choisy a consentir que Mr Hallé touchast les cinq mille frans qui lui sont dus et elle toucheroit le reste, mais pour cela il faudroit savoir a quoi le tout montera. Mr Galimard m'avoit propose que Me de Choisy et Mr Hallé touchassent egaleement; voyés un peu avec lui et pendant que je m'en vais bien faire le mechant tache d'accomoder l'affaire.

(Not signed, probably not finished.)

1. The sieur de Belfontaine (or Bellefontaine) was employed to administer the estates of Balleroy. See abbé Aubert, Histoire de Balleroy jusqu'au xixe siècle, (Caen, 1911), Ch.VI, pp.223-227.

3. To Monsieur de Belfontaine de Meherent. Bayeux.
ce lundi matin.

En verité, Monsieur, vous poussés l'amitié trop loin; vous moqués vous des gens de vouloir vendre vos rentes, que feriés vous donc pour me tirer du Chatelet. Je vois bien qu'on est trop difficile a Caen, nous tacherons de trouver de l'argent ici, on m'en a deja promis au denier vint et j'ai eu l'audace d'en demander au denier 22, cela est fier, vous serés instruit de tout. Je vous ai mandé que Mr. l'ab. Benier ne sera a Rouen que le lundi de quasi modo.

(Unfinished)

4. To Madame de la Cour.
ce jeudi matin (1702)

Malgré tant d'orages, je ne saurois m'empêcher, Madame, de vous dire qu'on me mande de Caën, que Me. la Marechale de la Ferté ne vous promet pas poires molles, ce sont les termes, dont on se sert et qu'elle part pour Paris avec tout ce qui lui est necessaire pour vous mettre a la raison; on ne m'en dit pas davantage, qu'est ce donc que cela; Je vous souhaite assurément toutes sortes de prosperités, moi dehors, et si je n'ai pas fait tout ce que vous avés souhaitté c'est parce que cela m'etoit impossible, et qu'une bouche de cinquante huit ans ne souffle pas le froid et le chaud. Contentés ma curiosité, si vous le jugés a propos et me croyés avec respect
Madame votre tres humble et tres obeissant serviteur

L'abbé de Choisy.

5. 10: aout 1703

Promesse de Mr. L'abbé de Choisy a Mr. de la Cour de luy
ceder son logement du Luxembourg sitost que celui aura mis
entre les mains des decharges de ses creanciers en la
succession de feu Mr. de Choisy.

Je promets a Monsieur de la Cour de lui ceder mon logement
de Luxembourg, aussitost qu'il m'aura mis entre les mains
les decharges de tous les creanciers de la succession de mon
frere, tant pour les principaux que pour les arrerages et je
luidonne pour cela jusqu'a la fin de l'année prochaine, après
quoi je disposerai de mon logement, s'il ne m'a pas donné
lesdites decharges. Fait a Paris ce 10 aoust mil sept cent
trois

L'abbé de Choisy

6. To Monsieur de Belfontaine de Meherent. Bayeux.

Paris ce 18 fev. 1704

J'ai ecrit a Mr. de la Cour ce que je vous ai dit a vous même
et ce qui est marqué dans notre compte, savoir que ne sachant
precisement comment je suis avec Mr. de la Cour et combien il
me doit, je vous faisois la delegation pour en etre paye par
lui en cas qu'il me doive ladite somme après le compte final
fait entre nous. Je sai [sic] fort bien au moins que je ne
lui dois rien et en cas qu'il ne me la doive toute entiere,
je vous payerai le surplus d'ailleurs. Vous devés etre per-
suadé, Monsieur, que je ne dis et n'ecris jamais que la meme
chose. Je crois avoir fait mes preuves la dessus; vous aurés
au premier jour la procuration, dont vous m'avés envoyé la
copie et vous me croirés toujours votre tres humble et tres
obeissant serviteur

L'abbé de Choisy

7. To Monsieur de Belfontaine de Meherent. Bayeux.

ce 8 mars 1704

Je reviens de la Campagne ou j'ai été huit jours; j'avois laissé ordre d'expédier votre procuration, les notaires sont paresseux, quand on n'est pas à leurs trousses, elle est faite et vous l'aurez assurément au premier jour. Quant au billet, je vous ai mandé bien franchement ce que je pouvois faire. Je finirai mon compte cette année avec Mr. de la Cour, et s'il ne me doit pas assez pour vous payer, je vous ferai un transport sur Rouen et en attendant, l'intérêt; puis-je mieux dire?

Madame de la Cour prend feu aisément mais elle se calmera. J'avoue que si je devois cent mille ecus, elle seroit embarrassée, mais j'ai toujours dit vrai, et défie, qu'on puisse attaquer ma bonne foi. Votre dernière lettre m'a fait plaisir, je serois bien fâché que vous ne fussiez pas content de moi, je l'ai toujours été de vous; il faut que cela soit réciproque et nous sommes trop vieux pour changer.

Tout à vous

L'abbé de Choisy

8. (17 janvier 1704)

Ledit sieur Abbé de Choisy doit au dit sieur de Belfontaine la somme de deux mille huit cens livres, qu'il consent lui estre payée par Monsieur de la Cour sur le prix de Balleroy et en cas que par le compte qui sera fait entre Monsieur de la Cour et le dit sieur Abbé de Choisy, le dit sieur de la Cour ne se trouvast pas redevables de si grandes sommes, le dit sr. Abbé de Choisy promet payer au dit sr. de Belfontaine ce qui s'en depandra, et consent que ledit sr. de Belfontaine conserve ses hipoteques. Et a ce plus le dit sieur Abbé de Choisy abandonne au profit dudit sieur de Belfontaine ce qui lui revient de la rente de vint huit rentes; dix sont dûë par la succession de Jaque d'Argouget, Ecuyer; le fonds baillé, la ferme a Michel du Bourg dans la paroisse de la Basoque au prix de vint livres par bail du 30 Nov. 1698, et la rente de dix livres dûë par Gilles le Roux, bourgeois de Caën pour heritage a lui, fieffé par contract du 30 avril 1697 et ce qui lui pourra revenir sur le lieu Basnage du principal et arrerages qui lui reste dûë de la rente des Gouyes. Fait double entre les parties ce dix sept janvier mil sept cens quatre,

de Choisy

Bien entendu que les arrerages desdites rentes appartiennent audit de Meherent

de Choisy

de Meherent.

Nous sousignés Francois Timoleon de Choisy; prieur de St. Lô de Rouen et Philippe de Meherent ecuyer sieur de Belfontaine avons compté ce jourd'hui de tout le passe jusqu'a ce jour tant pour ce qui a été receu et depensé de part et d'autre et notamment de la rente 390 ll. due par les Gouyes et de ce

qui en a été payé a Madame de Choisy et généralement de toute autre chose, en sorte que tous les papiers obligations, billets de part et d'autre demeureront nuis et nous avons trouvé que

(unfinished)

APPENDIX III

Authorship of the "LÉTRE / ENVOYÉE / A MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ MARINET, / de Sanjaco, en l'Isle de Madagascar, par Monsieur l'Abbé de Choisy, / contenant les raretés qu'il a vûës dans son voyage, avec Monsieur le Chevalier / de Chaumont Ambassadeur vers le Roi de Siam; et qui a esté adressée à / Monsieur l'Abbé de Saint-Martin, Escuier, Seigneur de la Mare du De- / sert, Prestre, Docteur en Theologie en l'Université de Rome, et Proto- / notaire du S. Siege, pour la faire voir au Public."

The very specifically worded title of this letter, and the fact that it is signed 'L'Abbé de Choisy' is perhaps the reason for its authenticity never having been put into question. Even the most cursory comparison between the letter and the text of the Journal will show, however, that they could not possibly have been written by the same person, although the writer of the letter must have had some knowledge of the facts involved. Let us consider the evidence:

1. The letter is written from Madagascar. There is no reference in the Journal to Madagascar, simply because the expedition did not call there. Choisy in his daily account would not have omitted to mention any occasion on which he went ashore, and he notes on 19 June 1685 "Nous croyons être présentement par le travers de Madagascar" (Journal, p.89). All the other accounts confirm this fact.
2. The letter is dated "De Sanjaco, en l'Isle de Madagascar, le 2. octobre, 1685". The expedition was already in Siam by 25 September 1685 - and there is apparently no town in Madagascar that is or has been called Sanjaco.

The letter is therefore unlikely to be by Choisy. It is nevertheless accurate in some details, such as in the mention made of the "Cérémonie de la ligne"; though these could have been established by reading accounts of earlier voyages to the Cape.

Apart from the apocryphal author, the most prominent figure in the letter is the abbé de Saint-Martin, and it is to him that we must attribute its authorship. The elaborate titles which he gives himself at the outset, and the excessively laudatory conclusion (in his favour) to the letter would both indicate that he wrote it first and foremost to flatter himself.

The biographical sketch of Saint-Martin in Michaud's Biographie universelle (Volume XXXVII, col. 359-361) will suffice to show why he should have taken the trouble. Michel de Saint-Martin (1614-1687) was an eccentric and absurd figure, obsessed by his own importance, and by an excessive fear of the cold, which he allayed by wearing seven layers of clothes and sleeping on a bed with a stove beneath it. He acquired such a reputation that he was allowed to 'receive' the Siamese envoys sent to France in 1684, as Michaud explains.

For further details, see F. Dugérand, "Liste des ouvrages de l'abbé de Saint-Martin et de ceux imprimés par ses soins" in Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie, tome XX, (Caen 1898), pp.100-160 and particularly pp.142-143.

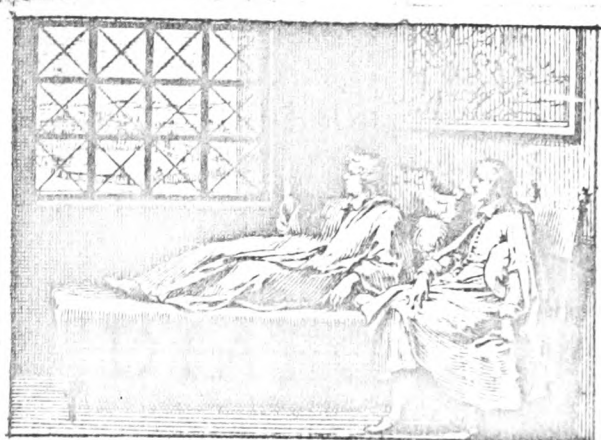
There are two known copies of the letter, as far as I have been able to discover: one is in the Bibliothèque nationale (Ln, 37, 5062) and the other in the Collection Mancel at Caen (Musée des Beaux-Arts), folio 252.

APPENDIX IV

Engravings of the abbé de Choisy

(1) From Quatre Dialogues, p.53 - the abbé de Choisy lying on the couch,
the abbé de Dangeau seated.

UE.
n'est
ante
iens
Ti-
de-
qu'il
ous
tre



DIALOGUE
SUR
L'EXISTENCE
DE DIEU.
TIMOLEON, THEOPHILE.
TIMOLEON.
VOUS avez bien com-
mencé, mon cher
Theophile: il faut achever.
C iij

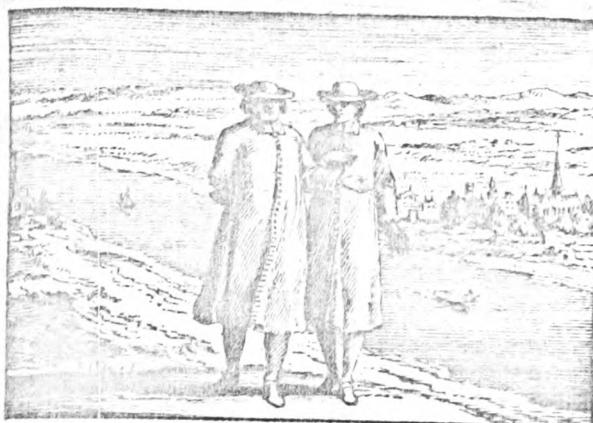
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Folio/Page
p 53

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4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2 3 4

(2) From Quatre Dialogues, p.119. - Choisy on the right, Dangeau on the left.



DIALOGUE

SUR

LA PROVIDENCE.

TIMOLEON, THEOPHILE.

TIMOLEON.

QUE je suis aise,
Theophile, de vous
voir dans votre maison
de campagne, & que vous

BRITISH

MUSEUM

2

3

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Folio/Page

P119

Order No.

730188

(3) From Quatre Dialogues, p.157 - Choisy on the left, Dangeau on the right



DIALOGUE

SUR

LA RELIGION.

THEOPHILE, TIMOLEON.

THEOPHILE.

VOUS me l'aviez bien dit, Timoleon, qu'il vous falloit une maladie pour vous convertir. Hé

1133 628

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p157

Folio/Page

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4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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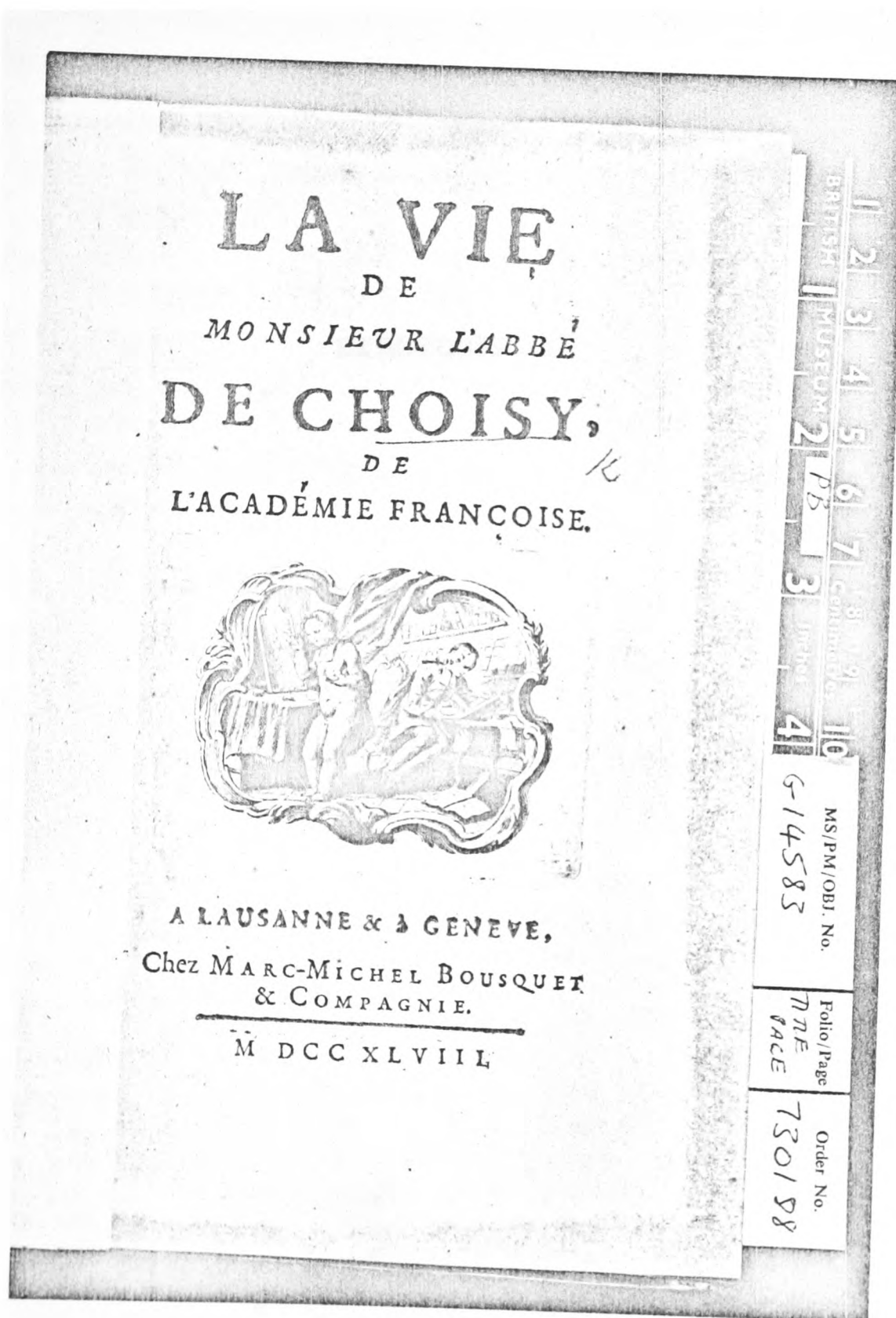
3

inches

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inches

(4) Title page of La Vie le Monsieur l'Abbé de Choisy, attributed to the abbé d'Olivet. B.M. Shelfmark G 14583. The engraving is said to show the abbé de Choisy on the left in his youth before a mirror, and on the right in old age working at his desk.



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- 11 433 "Fragment de mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy . . ." ¹
- 15 229 f.41-55 vo. "Histoire de la marquise-marquis de Banneville."
- 20 623 "Factum en la cause pendante au Châtelet . . . contre le sieur abbé de Choisy."
- 22 613 "Mémoire pour M. l'abbé de Choisy allant en Normandie."
- 24 418 "Correspondance littéraire au Président Bouhier" t.X.
Lettre du P. Petitot à M. Leclerc. 16.9.1719
- 32 785 "Histoire des maîtres des requêtes." esp. f. 464-467
(de Choisy).

Collection Clairambault

915, f.131 "La Maison de Bouillon."

Nouvelles Acquisitions

9763, f.137 "Factum etc." cf. f.20 623 - this copy in printed form.

1. This does not contain, as Mongrédien claims, (Mémoires, p.405), Books X-XII of the Mémoires; it only contains Book X, and a part of Book XII, but none of Book XI. I have traced no manuscript evidence for Book XI, but since it has much in common in style and subject matter with Book IX, which appears both in the Arsenal manuscripts (3186, ff.169-174) and in the earliest editions, I have little doubt as to its authenticity, although this cannot be proved. The remainder of Book XII is found in the Arsenal manuscripts (3186, ff.217-247).

Cabinet des TitresPièces originales 758 Entry no. 17 229Dossiers bleus 187 Entry no. 4844Carrés d'Hosier 187 f.82-86Nouveau d'Hosier 97 Entry no.1949, f.2-3Chérin 55 Entry no. 1154PARIS: ARCHIVES NATIONALES

Y 8984 "Les Religieuses supérieures . . . de N. D. de la
Charité de Caen - Monsieur François Timoléon de
Choisy." 5 December 1709

Y 8785 "Mr. François Timoléon de Choisy demande récompense
aux Supérieurs des Missions Etrangères." 14 Jan. 1710

E 699 B/316 p.334
"Sur la requête présentée au Roi . . . par François
Timoléon de Choisy." 29 June 1700

E 1725 Côte 15, p.39
"Minutes d'arrêt du conseil d'Etat . . ." 22 Feb. 1664

MM 859 Extracts from Mémoires by Choisy.

PARIS: BIBLIOTHEQUE DE L'ARSENAL

- 2935 "Sottisier, ou recueil de chansons, poésies et autres pièces satiriques. - 1er volume." Recueil autographe de l'abbé de Choisy.
f.1-16, 18, 219.
- 3186 "Ouvrages de Mr. l'abbé de Choisy, qui n'ont pas été imprimés." Tome 1er.
- f. 1 "Mémoires pour la vie du cardinal de Bouillon."
 - f. 80 "Mémoires sur différentes choses que m'a racontées l'archevêque d'Aix . . ."
 - f.138 "Histoire de la Princesse Aimonette."
 - f.146 "Histoire turque."
 - f.154 "L'Abbé de Saze."
 - f.165 "Madame de Guercheville."
 - f.169 "Circonstances particulières dont l'enchaînement fit que le marquis d'Arquien [...] ne put obtenir d'être fait duc."
 - f.175 "Journal de l'Assemblée de Luxembourg." 1692
 - f.217 "Recueil de bons mots."
1. This collection, alone among the manuscripts in the Arsenal, is largely autograph. However, the handwriting on f.17 and f.20 to the end is not that of the abbé de Choisy, and it is unlikely, despite the acceptance by J. S. Spink, (French Free Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire, (London, 1960), p.158) of the attribution, that the long poem, Les Philosophes (f.20 et seq.) is even by him. The "scrupule" which H. Busson has as to its authorship (La Religion des Classiques, p.222, n.2) seems to me to be entirely justified, and I certainly think it is unwise to assume, with no other evidence, that it indicates a belief in Epicureanism on the part of the abbé de Choisy. Its tone and content are out of character with the other chansons by Choisy in the collection, and it was probably inserted arbitrarily by the compiler of the manuscripts. I have also been unable to trace the reference Busson makes to a manuscript of this collection in the Bibliothèque Mazarine. The shelfmark he gives (MS 2935) on p.222, n.2, is that of a "Collection d'extraits du registre du Parlement de Paris" for 1564-1566, or (if the old numbering system is consulted) of a late eighteenth-century manuscript entitled "Précis alphabétique des traités de paix." The only reference to Choisy in the Index of the Catalogue des Manuscrits of the Bibliothèque Mazarine is a false attribution, see this thesis, Ch.I, p.46; I can only assume that Busson has given an inaccurate reference, and that the manuscript he in fact consulted was that of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, which corresponds to his description.

- 3187 "Suite du précédent. Tome II."
 f. 1 "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV."
 f.375 "Fragment d'une conversation touchant l'état
 de la cour . . ."
- 3188 "Suite des précédents. Tome III."
 "Cinq fragments des aventures de cet ecclésiastique
 habillé en femme."

PARIS: ARCHIVES DE LA SOCIETE DES MISSIONS ETRANGERES

- Vol.8 f.1-35 "Lettre de Choisy au bord de l'Oiseau le
 1er janvier 1686."
 9 f.475 and 522 Letters from Fermanel to Pallu,
 concerning the abbé de Choisy,
 3 January and 14 February 1685.
 10 f.75 ff. "Extrait de la vie de M. Vachet."
 15 1.207 "Procuration de l'abbé de Choisy relative au
 prieuré de St-Benoit du Sault" 4 August 1693
 16 f.860, 866, 870, 884, 890, 898 "Procurations de l'abbé
 de Choisy."
 95 "Registre des Missions Etrangères."
 113 "Mémoires de Vachet" Vol.IV.
 854 f.429 Letter from Vachet to Directors of Seminary
 concerning the abbé de Choisy.
 859 f.383 "Lettre de M. Basset" 10 December 1685.
 881 "Mémoire du Séminaire St-Joseph à Siam."

PARIS: BIBLIOTHEQUE MAZARINE

- MSS 1216-1219 JOLLY, général de l'ordre de la Mission.
 "Collection de lettres autographes à
 Madame de Miramion."
 2467 (17) "Copie d'une lettre non signée ni datée
 sur les écoles de Madame de Miramion."
 2489 "Mémoire pour servir à la vie de Madame de
 Miramion."

CAEN: BIBLIOTHEQUE MUNICIPALE

In fol.57 Abbé J. A. GUIOT, Le Moréri des Normands 3 tomes,
18e siècle.

CAEN: ARCHIVES DEPARTEMENTALES DU CALVADOS

F.7176 "Notes sur l'abbé de Choisy" (Don le Paulmier).

CHATEAU DE BALLEROY

See this thesis, Appendix II.

MONTIVILLIERS: BIBLIOTHEQUE MUNICIPALE

MS 13 "Journal du Voyage de Siam." 18e siècle. (Not autograph).

LONDON: BRITISH MUSEUM

MSS Egerton 17 and 18 no.167

WORKS OF THE ABBÉ DE CHOISY

I have compiled the bibliography of Choisy's works from what I have been able to consult in a number of important libraries, most notably the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Bibliothèque Nationale. I have used with discretion d'Olivet's Catalogue (Vie, pp.241-248) and the bibliography in Mongrédien's edition of the Mémoires (1966), since both writers are inaccurate in some details, and mentioned in brackets editions mentioned by d'Olivet that I have been unable to trace. There could well exist other copies of Choisy's works in French provincial libraries, but to judge from information given us by contemporaries, I should be surprised to discover any hitherto unknown works of any importance. I have arranged it, as nearly as possible, in the order in which I have discussed the works in the text of the thesis, and included works, (with their titles in brackets) with cross references, whose authenticity I have questioned. I have given more specific information concerning earlier editions of the Mémoires.

François-Timoléon de Choisy and Louis de Courcillon, abbé de Dangeau, Quatre Dialogues, sur l'Immortalité de l'Ame, l'Existence de Dieu, la Providence, la Religion, Paris, 1684; 1768. (D'Olivet mentions a Dutch edition of this work).

Journal du voyage de Siam fait en 1685 et 1686, Paris, 1687 (2 editions); 1690; Amsterdam, 1687; Trévoux, 1741 (with table des matières).

Journal, ou suite du voyage de Siam (same work as above), Amsterdam, 1688.

Journal du Voyage de Siam fait en 1685 et 1686, précédé d'une étude de M. Garçon, Paris, s.d. [1930].

(Lettre envoyée à M. l'abbé Marinet de San-Jaco, en l'île de Madagascar), s.l.n.d. [2 October 1685]. See this thesis Appendix 3.

Histoire de la vie de David,¹ Amsterdam, 1692; Paris, n.d.
[?1720] (troisième édition).

The History of the life and death of David, translated from
the French, [by M. Prior], London, 1741.

La Vie de Salomon, Paris, 1687.

Histoires de Philippe de Valois et du Roi Jean, Paris, 1688;
~~Amsterdam~~ [Paris], 1688; Paris, 1689; 1690.

Histoire de Charles V, roi de France, Paris, 1689.

Histoire de Charles VI, roi de France, Paris, 1695.

La Vie de Saint-Louis, Paris, 1689; 1690.

Histoire de France sous les règnes de Saint-Louis, de Philippe
de Valois, du Roi Jean, de Charles V et de Charles VI, Paris,
1750, 4 volumes.

Histoire de l'Eglise, Paris, 1703-1723, (for details, see
this thesis, Ch.IV, p.148); 1721-1740; 1723-1743; 1727; 1740
(all editions in 11 volumes).

Interprétation des Psaumes avec la vie de David, Paris, 1687;
1690.

De l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ, Paris, 1692; 1696 (sixième
édition). (D'Olivet says "Cette traduction a été réimprimée
plusieurs autres fois" and gives an edition as late as 1699).

Pensées chrétiennes sur divers sujets de piété, Paris, 1688;
(and 1690 according to d'Olivet).

La Vie de Madame de Miramion, Paris, 1706; Orange, 1838.

1. This date, suggested by the B.M. catalogue, is more
probable than the 1690 suggested by the Bodleian catalogue,
since there is no evidence for a separate edition of the
Vie de David before 1692.

Histoires de piété et de morale, tome I: Paris, n.d. [1697]; 1710; 1711; tome II: Paris, 1718.

Histoires de piété, s.l.n.d., (1 volume in 12°, 156 pages).

Recueil d'histoires sacrées et prophanes, Paris, 1729.

Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Louis XIV,¹ Utrecht, 1727, 1 volume, 515 pages, title in red and black; Utrecht, 1727, 2 volumes, xii-236 and 276 pages (printed, according to d'Olivet, at Rouen); Amsterdam, 1727, 3 volumes, xiv-191, 166 and 200 pages; Utrecht, 1727, (cinquième édition), 3 volumes, xiv-199, 177 and 199 pages; Utrecht, 1747, 1 volume, reprint of first edition; publ. Petitot et Monmerqué, II, 63, pp.121-527, Paris, 1828; publ. Michaud et Poujoulat, III, 6, pp.521-679, Paris, 1839; publ. M. de Lescure, Paris, 1888, 2 volumes; ed. G. Mongrédien, Paris, 1966.

Forbin, C. comte de, voyage du comte de Forbin à Siam, suivi de quelques détails extraits des mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy (1685-1688), Paris, 1853.

Histoire de madame la comtesse des Barres, Antwerp, 1735; brussels, 1736; (d'Olivet also mentions Amsterdam, 1737 and 1752); Paris, 1807.

Histoire de la comtesse des barres, Paris, 1945.

Histoire de Madame de Sancy, in Notice to Choisy Mémoires, publ. Michaud et Poujoulat, III, 6, pp.526-548, Paris, 1839; Paris, 1946.

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1. For a discussion of differences between editions, see this thesis, Ch. V, section 1.

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In addition to the clearly false attributions which I have noted in this thesis, Ch.I, p.45 three unfinished and, as far as I can discover, otherwise unknown works are mentioned by d'Olivet in his Catalogue, (Vie, pp.241-248). Even he shows great uncertainty in vouching for their existence, and it is clear from what he says that they were either lost before publication (in the cases of the translations of the Histoire portugaise de l'Ethiopie Orientale (no.xxvi in d'Olivet's Catalogue), and of the Industriae ad curandos animae morbos ad fermandos superiores (xxvii)) or simply result from a copied erroneous attribution (Relation de ce qui est arrivé à la Princesse de Savoie . . ., (xxv)).

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