Cyrano de Bergerac: Battling with Narrative Burlesque



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Table of Contents

Note on References and Abbreviations v

Abstract vi

Introduction 1

i. A Writer and a Fighter 1

ii. The Making of a Libertine: Cyrano Then and Now 6

iii. Cyrano, *philosophe*? 13

iv. Cyrano, burlesque? 18

v. Texts, Method & Outline 22

Chapter I, Cyrano's Letters: The Rise of Errant Voices 28

i. A Fighter or a Writer? 30

ii. Parody: A Double-Edged Sword 33

A. Une folie? Une caprice? 36

i. A Real or Fictive Project? 38

ii. 'Un procédé si étrange' or, a Lesson in Reading? 45

B. Playing with multiple 'énonciations' 48

i. The Addressee 49

ii. The Authorial Voice and Ambiguous Signatures 61

iii. Comedy or Risk? 72

Chapter II, The Peripheral Voices and Their Powers of Persuasion 75

i. 'Un mort hors du commun' 75

ii. Voices in Combat 77

A. Unsung heroines: fact or farce? 79

i. Battle of the Sexes? 81

ii. Retaliation 87

iii. A Paradoxical Eulogy? 90

B. More Trouble on the Horizon: Paying heed to fools 95

i. Who is Fooling Whom? 100

ii. A Question of Perspective 104

C. A United front? 106

D. …or Burlesque Excess? 115

Chapter III, Cyrano, The Novel and Burlesque **118**
A. The Novel 119
i. The History of a Free Form 119
ii. Recognition and Recompense 124
iii. A Contested Genre 128
B. Burlesque 133
C. Cyrano and the Burlesque 139
i. *L'Autre Monde*: Cyrano's Risk? 140

Chapter IV, Narrative Voice in the *Histoire comique* **146**
A. Forms and Norms 148
i. In Defence of One's Name? Théophile's *Première journée* (1623) 154
ii. Delegating in Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623, 1626, 1633) 160
iii. A Commentary on the Novel: Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant* (1627-28) and *L'Anti-Roman* (1633) 167
iv. Objectification in L'Hermite's *Le page disgracié* (1643) 173
v. Telling Tales in Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651) 178
B. Imposters in Cyrano's L'Autre Monde 183
i. 'Le récit est un piège' 187

Chapter V, Battling with Burlesque **191**
A. The Front Line 193
i. From Who's Who to Who's What 193
B. Behind the Front Line 202
i. Looking Elsewhere 203
ii. Slippery pronouns 206
iii. Quasi, but of What? 209
iv. …and Where? 212
v. Places of Conflict: Toulouse 214
vi. Burlesque Names 217
vii. New Hierarchies 222
C. Comedy or Affront? 228

Conclusion: A Burlesque Libertine? **232**
i. A Comic Writer? 236
ii. A Burlesque Libertine 239

Appendix **241**
Table of Letters 241

Bibliography **246**

Note on References and Abbreviations

All transcriptions of early modern sources are in keeping with the original, unless otherwise stated.

Abstract

This thesis considers the literary forms in the narrative work of the seventeenth-century writer, Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-55), and asks what kind of writer he might be. It provides a new approach to Cyrano's œuvre by emphasizing the importance of the burlesque – a popular mode of comic writing – in the author's work. It therefore challenges existing scholarship that focuses on the libertine content of Cyrano's writing. While accepting that philosophical and scientific ideas are important in his œuvre, this thesis argues that the burlesque is also one of its defining characteristics.

This project looks closely at burlesque forms in Cyrano's epistolary collection and his novel, *L'Autre Monde*. It reveals that the author uses burlesque excessively and that this makes it difficult for the reader to uncover a clear philosophical agenda in his work. This project shows how the burlesque, if used too liberally, can become a destructive force in a text. It therefore raises questions about the effects produced by burlesque writing. It also suggests, more widely, that other writing practices need to be taken into account when looking at so-called libertine texts.

Libertinism itself is a problematic and limiting lens through which to consider a text because it supposes that there was a community of libertine writers sharing similar strategies and goals at the time Cyrano was writing, and it is therefore tempting to want to read into his work a message that is not there. Of course, scholars are well aware of the problems of this category, and that the term libertine first came about at the

beginning of the century as one of accusation; so-called libertine writers at this time did not envisage themselves as part of a philosophical movement with a shared libertine agenda. Similarities can indeed be seen in the works of these writers: notably attacks on the Church and a promotion of the philosophical doctrine of Materialism. Recent research on the dissimulative methods of libertine writers by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé in particular has revealed the extent to which writers had to conceal controversial ideas and elude censorship; writers such as Cyrano were well aware of the trials of Théophile de Viau and Vanini that had taken place at the beginning of the century, when they were executed for their ideas: there could be serious, possibly life-threatening consequences.

To what extent can one read between the lines of a libertine text, however? Cyrano's œuvre poses particular difficulties because it deals with a diverse range of subject matter and genres: although Jean-Pierre Cavaillé and Isabelle Moreau argue that a 'liberté de pensée' is crucial when reading libertine texts and that multiple interpretations are possible, trying to pin down Cyrano's agenda is remarkably difficult and at times he can be seen to support different and conflicting philosophical positions. Recent studies on Cyrano by Jean-Charles Darmon and Alexandra Torero-Ibad insist that the philosophical doctrine, Materialism, is key to understanding the purpose of Cyrano's novel. Fiction, then, serves a secondary role – even if it is crucial – when it comes to the wider goal of promoting a serious doctrine.

This thesis suggests burlesque forms override any philosophical or scientific message in Cyrano's work. It does not seek to deny the Materialist thread, and it is not attempting simply to provide an alternative, 'literary' reading of Cyrano's work which opposes these ideas. Rather, this project demonstrates that there is another more dominant

presence in the text – the burlesque – which acts destructively. It asks what Cyrano's literary gesture might be: his burlesque forms invade *L'Autre Monde*, and it seems as though Cyrano creates a battle space of a different kind.

Picking up from Claudine Nédélec's valuable study of the burlesque in seventeenth-century France, and her playful title – *Les États et Empires du burlesque* – a play on the title of Cyrano's novel, this thesis considers Cyrano's burlesque in greater depth and asks what it might mean for a writer to invade using burlesque forms; to conquer with the burlesque. Can there be burlesque empires? Instead of trying to define or explain Cyrano's philosophical agenda, which can only be hesitantly hinted at, this thesis looks at what appears certain about Cyrano's work: the comic pact that the author clearly establishes with his reader in both the letters and novel. Taking this as a starting point, it looks at how Cyrano's comedy works and the effects it produces.

A central part of this thesis therefore considers the literary context in which Cyrano was writing: what literary works and which writers could have influenced his writing practices? This thesis takes into account the epistolary traditions at the beginning of the seventeenth century and the genre of the novel, in particular the *histoire comique* – a comic subgenre of the novel which emerged at the beginning of the century. Cyrano's *L'Autre Monde* is compared to other *histoire comiques*: Théophile de Viau's *Première journée*, Charles Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion* and *Le Berger extravagant*, Tristan L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié* and Paul Scarron's *Roman comique*. How does Cyrano's project fit alongside these models?

While it can be helpful to decode all of the references in Cyrano's writing, including those that are biographical, it is also important to take into account their wider literary purpose. Influenced by Patrick Dandrey's approaches to literature, this project emphasizes the importance of close textual readings and the need to look at the complex points of confrontation between the content, form and order of arguments. Using this approach, this thesis has uncovered other ways to read Cyrano's work by looking at voices in the text. What a literary character is for Cyrano is not obvious, and considering voices – what is said when and how – is much more revealing of his writing practices. By looking at voices, this thesis reveals new 'characters' in Cyrano's work previously been ignored by scholarship: the female voices of *L'Autre Monde*.

The thesis begins with Cyrano's letters, and shows how he profits from the multiple *énonciations* that the format of a letter provides between the addressee and letter-writer, and in a published collection, with the reader. By using these multiple voices in the letters to new comic and playful ends, Cyrano produces a provocative collection of letters that challenges the models of his time. This project therefore begins by revealing how Cyrano's epistolary project parodies the terms laid out in the *querelle des Lettres* through the playful games of the collection as a whole; the collection is an opportunity for the author to show off his *jeu d'esprit*.

In the novel, Cyrano's voices multiply, they become more polemical and layers of narrative are obscured. It becomes clear that voices are used by Cyrano to create burlesque effects; voices compete aggressively to outdo one another and it is difficult for the reader to see who is arguing what. Scholarship has suggested that by proliferating points of view, Cyrano's arguments can appear ambiguous – and, of

course, a denial of univocality is one of the burlesque's defining characteristics – but the final chapters of thesis demonstrate that Cyrano's incessant use of burlesque forms creates violent and destructive side-effects; burlesque forms can be self-defeating.

In light of the destructive nature of Cyrano's burlesque, this thesis asks whether we can consider Cyrano as a comic writer at all. In conclusion, it emphasizes the importance of reading Cyrano's work with some irony, given that he is an author who ridicules all and everything, including the idea of a dissimulative text. Libertinism is one of the many masks adopted in Cyrano's work; but it is no more than another disguise amongst others. This thesis concludes that through excessive use of burlesque forms, Cyrano even burlesques the idea of libertinism. Is it a method of concealment? Or is Cyrano a *burlesque libertin*?

Introduction

i. A Writer and a Fighter

There is a well-known story about Cyrano de Bergerac. One evening in 1641, outside the Porte de Nesle in Paris, Cyrano fought no less than one hundred men in single combat following an injury to a friend's honour. Two men were killed, seven were fatally wounded and the rest fled in fear. Years later, a friend recalls his legendary fighting skills: he was known to all as 'le démon de la bravoure'.[1]

The hero of the tale and the focus of this thesis is the French seventeenth-century writer, Hercule Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-55), author of two important narrative works: a published collection of letters (1652) and a two-part fictional voyage to the moon and the sun, known as *L'Autre Monde* (1657).[2]

As unbelievable as the story at Nesle seems, there is likely some truth to it: there are eyewitness accounts, though these are clearly exaggerated; moreover, Cyrano had made a career out of fighting and was a trained swordsman and musketeer. Before turning to a literary career, he had served as a cadet in the prestigious 'régiment des Gardes [du roi]'

[1] Henri Le Bret, 'Préface' to 'La Lune' in *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, ed. by Madeleine Alcover (Paris: Champion, 2004), p. 484.

[2] For *L'Autre Monde*, I refer to Madeleine Alcover's edition, Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil and* for the letters, Cyrano de Bergerac, *Œuvres complètes, Vol. II, Lettres, Entretiens pointus, Mazarinades*, ed. by Luciano Erba and Hubert Carrier (Paris: Champion, 2001). This thesis only considers Cyrano's narrative work. For more detail on the editions used, see the section in this chapter on 'Texts, Method and Outline'.

and fought at the sieges of Mouzon in 1639 and Arras in 1640, during both of which he was severely injured.[3] His lifelong friend and eventual editor, Henri Le Bret, writes that it was around this time that Cyrano put aside his weapons and turned to literature, first through further study and then by pursuing a career as a writer: '[il] quitta Mars pour se donner à Minerve'.[4]

Le Bret would have the reader believe that Cyrano's career transition was clear-cut. His literature suggests the opposite: even though far removed from the context of the battlefield, Cyrano's writing reveals a fighting spirit. Whether he is violently threatening or slandering an opponent, one-on-one, in his letters, or challenging authority – political and religious but also literary – in his novel, *L'Autre Monde*, Cyrano shows as many battle skills wielding his pen as his sword.

When we read Cyrano's work, like spectators to a real battle, we are encouraged to ask what is at stake: who is fighting whom or what, and for what purpose? Scholars of Cyrano often begin with the premise that Cyrano is a libertine – a religious freethinker – and that his criticism of established beliefs and traditions is part of a wider libertine cause: to challenge Church doctrine whilst promoting an alternative system of beliefs. Some argue that Cyrano promotes Materialism, a scientific and philosophical doctrine that was popular amongst seventeenth-century libertines, disciples of Pierre Gassendi

[3] This was an elite regiment formed of thirty troops of three hundred soldiers, armed with a sword and either a pike or musket.

[4] Cyrano grew up in the countryside in the Chevreuse valley, thirty kilometres from Paris. His family were bourgeois (Cyrano's father was a financial administrator, working for 'la trésorerie de la piété du roi') and resided, with Cyrano, at the Château de Mauvières. It is likely, though not certain, that Cyrano was later educated in Paris either at the Collège de Beauvais or the Jesuit Collège de Clermont. He then joined the 'régiment des Gardes' as a cadet. When he returned to Paris in 1641, he studied rhetoric, residing at the Collège de Lisieux, a college of the University of Paris. There is no evidence that he completed his studies. Instead, he took dancing and fencing lessons.

(1592-1655), and which controversially maintains that the Universe is only made of matter in movement.[5] If Cyrano is brandishing his sword, it is to topple the Christian status quo and replace it with an alternative and 'modern' scientific model.

Libertinism, however, is a problematic category to begin with because recently it has come to imply a philosophical programme when, in fact, no such programme existed at the time Cyrano was writing. René Pintard's famous label 'les libertins érudits' was first used in the 1940s to distinguish seventeenth-century writers influenced by the major philosophical movements of the time from those simply interested in living a life of debauchery, the 'libertins des mœurs' of the eighteenth century.[6] Pintard's definition has since become synonymous with the word 'libertine' in seventeenth-century studies, even though the word actually came about as a term of abuse, first used by the Jesuit Père Garasse to refer to heretics and atheists.[7] Originally, then, the term libertine existed in a strictly religious context; libertinism was certainly not a philosophical movement; there was no libertine community with a unified agenda.

Jean-Pierre Cavaillé and Isabelle Moreau have highlighted the limitations of this misconstrued category.[8] They have emphasized the importance of not reading into

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[5] Pierre Gassendi was a French philosopher and scientist who worked on the ideas of Epicurus. He had a following of libertine writers including Chapelle (Claude-Emmanuel Lhuillier), whom Cyrano knew. See also footnote 10. On Gassendi, see in particular the work of Olivier Bloch, *La Philosophie de Gassendi* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

[6] René Pintard, *Le Libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris/Geneva: Slatkine, 1983 [first edn. 1943]). Pintard observes in particular three seventeenth-century libertine attempts at a philosophical 'system': that of Naudé, Gassendi and La Mothe Le Vayer. These thinkers, and their entourages, all had one thing in common: 'c'est surtout de l'épicurisme que, parmi les systèmes des Anciens, ils se réclament', p. 437.

[7] See François Garasse, *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps* (1623).

[8] Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, Isabelle Moreau and Louise Godard de Donville all highlight the difficulties of the term libertine. See Cavaillé, 'Les Libertins: l'envers du Grand siècle', in *Libertinage et philosophie au*

libertine texts a philosophical programme *a priori* and the need to consider other aspects of a writer's work. With Cavaillé and Moreau's work in mind, this thesis challenges current research on Cyrano by asking other questions. Is Cyrano's attack on the Church in the name of something other than an alternative philosophical programme? Is he even fighting for anything at all? What kind of a writer is he?

This thesis looks beyond libertinism to consider the literary significance of Cyrano's work within its wider literary context – an important aspect given that the literary field was undergoing significant change and that Cyrano's choices of genre directly engage with some of the major disputes of the time:[9] the *querelle des Lettres* and the rise of the new novelistic form, the *histoire comique*.[10] With these contexts in mind, what underpins Cyrano's offensive? How does he attack? By considering the wider literary framework and influences in Cyrano's writing, and through close textual readings, this project shows how Cyrano destroys all established systems – religious, political, philosophical and literary – by means of the burlesque, an early-modern form of comedy that ridicules, caricatures or parodies serious subject matter.

XVII^e siècle, 7 (2003). For works on libertinism in addition to Pintard's, see Joan DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1981); Godard de Donville, *Le Libertin des origines à 1665: un produit des apologètes* (Paris: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1989); Moreau, *'Guérir du sot': Les stratégies d'écriture des libertins à l'âge classique* (Paris: Champion, 2007).

[9] On the emergence of national literary institutions at the beginning of the century that sought to legitimize and regulate literary practices see Alain Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1985).

[10] The published letters of Guez de Balzac (1624-30) and Vincent Voiture (1648-50), which could be seen to challenge epistolary conventions, sparked the *querelle des lettres*. The *histoire comique* emerged as a sub-category to the new genre of the novel, which was becoming increasingly popular in the seventeenth century. The narrative forms of both the novel and letters were the subjects of much debate at the time Cyrano was writing because they were considered uncertain genres. The literary authorities were increasingly keen to regulate French art and abolish problematic subgenres like the *histoire comique* which they argued were inferior. I consider the epistolary context in Chapter I of this thesis and the genre of the novel in Chapter III.

The burlesque can be defined by the unusual way in which it provokes laughter: it mixes vulgar language and subject matter with the most elevated, thus creating a contrast and, ultimately, a discord between the triviality of the language and thought used and the serious content. Claudine Nédélec's major work on the burlesque, in which she traces the definition and use of this comic mode in seventeenth-century French literature, will be an important point of reference in this thesis. She offers the example of a cardinal who may become a burlesque figure if his speech is a mixture of vulgarisms and elevated Latin.[11] The burlesque does not stem from the cardinal's sudden vulgarity but from his dual persona, being both vulgar and elevated at once; he is both 'invraisemblable' and 'vrai'.[12] For the burlesque to function, therefore, one must be able to see clearly both contrasting sides. It is the discord created from this strange coupling that should produce comic effects.

This thesis demonstrates that in literary combat, the burlesque is Cyrano's weapon of choice. What, then, should the reader expect from a burlesque battle? How can the burlesque, which is a comic mode, *fight*? Cyrano uses standard burlesque techniques to stage his attacks as debates to which there is no obvious victor. By fracturing, fragmenting and dividing voices in his texts, Cyrano refuses to create a hierarchy of arguments: a multitude of voices, each defending a different position, obscures order and right from wrong. Cyrano is an antagonist, a provocateur, who teases us with the possibility of multiple paths of philosophical inquiry, none of which, I argue, are to be trusted. Cyrano's burlesque methods go even further, however. Through an excessive disorientation of voices, I demonstrate that Cyrano's burlesque becomes a destructive

[11] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*
[12] Claudine Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque* (Paris: Champion, 2004), p. 37.

force. As though he were waging a real battle, Cyrano invades everything with the burlesque, destroying all things along the way. Thus the burlesque becomes a polemical form of provocation.

In answer to the question, then, 'Is Cyrano fighting for a philosophical cause?', this thesis concludes that when Cyrano wields the sword, it is for the trouble it causes. Far from arguing that scholars should dispense with the libertine category altogether (it is always useful to compare methods between authors), this thesis sets out to demonstrate that other approaches to libertine writers are necessary. In putting theory into practice, this thesis reveals a very different type of writer: one who does not use the burlesque simply to mask controversial ideas but rather brandishes it as a weapon.

ii. The Making of a Libertine: Cyrano Then and Now

For the seventeenth century, Cyrano's work deals with obviously controversial material: it ridicules the Church, parodying scripture, and challenges accepted doctrines favoured by the Church, such as Aristotelianism, by debating modern theories, such as Materialism. Cyrano also experiments with uncertain literary forms: the epistolary genre and the *histoire comique*. It is easy to see why scholars might then call Cyrano a libertine, applying a label which first emerged in a strictly religious context to refer to those who challenged Christian doctrine and which later in the century expanded to include those who disobeyed all forms of authority.

Despite the controversial nature of the Cyranian corpus, in both content and form, it must, however, be made clear that Cyrano never labelled himself a libertine. One of the earliest commentaries on the controversial nature of Cyrano's work comes from Le Bret in the preface to the posthumous first edition of *Les États et Empires de la Lune* (1657). Le Bret insists that Cyrano 'n'a eu pour but que le plaisant' and, in defending him, thus paradoxically highlights the troublesome areas of his work.[13] Yet there is no mention of a specifically libertine agenda in Cyrano's texts and certainly no indication that the author was part of a community with a shared philosophical message to impart. What is certain, however, is that Cyrano seemed keen to fashion a career for himself as a polygraph – he wrote plays, letters, satirical pamphlets, poetry and a novel – and if his work does deal with controversial philosophical ideas, scholars should consider no less his literary career.

In Cyrano's own lifetime, his work, for all its scandalous content, in fact attracted very little attention. His plays and collection of letters were criticized for their scandalous passages – *La Mort d'Agrippine* was banned from performance. And yet this was not enough to bring him notoriety, as it had other writers. His most celebrated work today, *L'Autre Monde*, although it violently attacks the Church, suffered a similar fate, perhaps in part because it was published posthumously and, even then, in a censored version.[14]

There was little discussion of Cyrano in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but there were some re-editions of his work, which suggests that there was an interested

[13] Le Bret, 'Préface' to 'La Lune' in *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 479.
[14] The first published edition of *La Lune* in 1657 is clearly an expurgated version of the original. It varies significantly from the three manuscripts and it is possible to see that the most scandalous passages have been cut.

readership, no matter how small.[15] In 1897, Cyrano's popularity suddenly increased, however, with the production of Edmond Rostand's highly acclaimed play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*.[16] Rostand loosely based the hero of his play on the seventeenth-century Cyrano, clearly inspired by stories of his sword fighting skills, which are central to his dramatized version. Interest followed in who the real Cyrano might have been. Frédéric Lachèvre, one of the earliest researchers on Cyrano, sought to reveal the seventeenth-century writer, who he argued was quite the opposite of Rostand's character:

> si on avait connu ses démêlés avec son père, ses lettres venimeuses, on ne lui aurait pas prêté une âme poétique et des qualités morales dont il était dépourvu.[17]

Lachèvre intended to make the dichotomy clear: on the one hand was Rostand's harmless romantic and on the other was 'le vrai Cyrano, le libertin Cyrano'. Lachèvre sought to reveal Cyrano's libertine identity, one that was defined by a controversial agenda: to destroy religious authority and promote an early 'esprit philosophique'. Cyrano was part of a wider libertine heritage: a lineage beginning in the late sixteenth century leading up to the Encyclopédistes of the Enlightenment.[18] His new role was thus as a key philosophical player in the history of Libertinism.

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[15] Cyrano did have one notable nineteenth-century biographer, Pierre Antonin-Brun who published *Savinien de Cyrano Bergerac. Sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: A. Colin., 1893). Alcover points out that there was an increase in archival research on Cyrano between 1894 and 1911 in her 'Introduction' to *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. xv.

[16] Rostand's play centres on Cyrano's insecurities about his appearance and secret love for his cousin Roxane, to whom he pens love letters under the name of his handsome but brainless counterpart, Christian de Neuvillette. The themes of fighting and defending one's honour, however, are central to the play. After all, the dramatic, action-packed opening imagines the vituperative kind of scene that may have led to the brawl at Nesle.

[17] Frederic Lachèvre, 'Préface', *Les Œuvres libertines de Cyrano de Bergerac* (Paris: Champion), p. xv.

[18] Lachèvre's chronological account of Cyrano's predecessors and successors establishes a linear history of libertinism, in which Cyrano is a key player.

In one of the most well known studies on libertinism, *Le Libertinage érudit* (1943), in which René Pintard highlights the philosophical inclinations of libertine writers, Cyrano is actually only mentioned briefly – as an acquaintance of Chapelle.[19] Nevertheless, during the renewed interest in Cyrano of the 1970s, led by Jacques Prévot and Madeleine Alcover, the focus was on Cyrano as a libertine philosopher: according to both writers, Cyrano was indeed 'érudit'; as well as attacking the Church, he had a serious, intellectual agenda; there was without doubt an alternative system of beliefs in his work.

Alcover and Prévot take a systematic approach to Cyrano's work, with the aim of seeking out a coherent philosophy: one through science, the other literature. Alcover isolates Cyrano's novel from his other works, selecting individual themes, without considering the wider context and relevance for the Cyranian corpus as a whole. Although she asserts that there is no Cyranian system in his novel *per se* and that Cyrano obviously destroys traditional beliefs, she emphasizes the prevalence of philosophical discussion in the text and maintains that this is key to understanding the very purpose of the novel: 'Il [Cyrano] a fait table rase et ainsi son livre devient-il une sorte de quête de la Vérité et de la Science'.[20] Overall there is a unity to his work, she argues. If there are some apparent contradictions, these can be explained by the subtle evolution of Cyrano's ideas as the novel progresses.[21] Unlike Alcover, Prévot considers

[19] Pintard, *Le Libertinage érudit*, p. 331. His passing remark that 'Gassendi est celui des penseurs qu'il [Cyrano] vénère le plus' has stuck with Cyrano and scholars have insisted on including him in the libertine club.

[20] Madeleine Alcover, *La Pensée philosophique et scientifique de Cyrano de Bergerac* (Paris/Geneva: Droz, 1970), p. 39.

[21] Alcover, *La Pensée philosophique*, pp. 88-89: 'Ce qui manque aux Estats de la Lune, comme aux Estats du Soleil, c'est une mise au point des systèmes. Cyrano nous les présente les uns après les autres, il ne dit jamais lequel il préfère, mieux encore il ne les critique même pas, ce qui eût été une mise au point nécessaire […] Par contre, à qui essaie de trouver dans *l'Autre Monde* une pensée qui, sans doute, n'est

the importance of Cyrano's choice of different literary genres.[22] He refutes Alcover's narrow focus on Cyrano's Materialism, emphasizing the importance of the literary techniques in Cyrano's work such as irony and parody: 'que l'on n'oublie jamais que l'on se trouve devant un roman'.[23] Prévot asserts that all philosophical systems are left in suspense, 'la science chemine, hésite'.[24] Yet, like Alcover, he too envisages the novel as part of a wider, more important project. While Prévot argues that it forms a 'projet sceptique', it is nevertheless a quest for the truth and, as such, there is a lesson to be learned.[25] Today, Alcover and Prévot continue to disagree, a battle that has not been helped by Alcover's latest thesis, which asserts that Cyrano's novel can be understood as an apology for homosexuality.[26]

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pas claire, mais qui se cherche et évolue, cette œuvre apparaît comme une synthèse timide, mais une synthèse tout de même'.

[22] Jacques Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac, romancier* (Paris: Belin, 1977); *Cyrano de Bergerac, poète et dramaturge* (Paris: Belin, 1978)

[23] Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac, romancier*, p. 10. With Alcover in mind, whom he directly cites, Prévot explains: 'Cela nécessite un "luxe de précautions", un surcroît d'efforts pour replacer l'œuvre dans la philosophie et la science de son temps, de la sensibilité à l'ironie de l'auteur, à son goût de la parodie comme à son esprit de sérieux et à son sens critique. Cela implique que l'on n'oublie jamais que l'on se trouve devant un roman, et un roman de voyage donc d'éducation, non devant l'exposé dogmatique et tout à trac de convictions personnelles'.

[24] Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac, romancier*, p. 100.

[25] Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac, romancier*. Prévot focuses on the pedagogical goal of Cyrano's work: 'La grande leçon de *L'Autre Monde* n'est-elle pas celle de notre indignité, de notre impuissance, de notre contingence, du peu de place que nous occupons dans un univers qui n'a que faire de nous et où nous passons pour des hôtes indésirables? Le voyageur de l'espace n'apprend-il pas à ses dépens la terrible vérité de la condition humaine?', p. 89. Prévot thus concludes that, 'la leçon de *L'Autre Monde* en est une de scepticisme', p. 148.

[26] See Madeleine Alcover, 'Un gay trio: Cyrano, Chapelle, Dassoucy', Biblio 17 (117), Tübingen (1999), pp. 265-75. This is a thesis that Alcover maintains in the introductory commentary to Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*. Alcover highlights the on-going dispute between herself and Prévot over Cyrano's biography in 'Le Cyrano de Bergerac de Jacques Prévot', Les Dossiers du Grihl (online text), 2012.

In the last decade French scholarship has returned to Cyrano:[27] there have been a series of monographs dedicated to the author and conferences in his name.[28] Cyrano even had the honour of being included on the syllabus for the French Agrégation (2004-05). Significantly, in 2004 the journal *Littératures classiques* dedicated an issue to Cyrano in which research was split into roughly two camps: libertinism (the polemical and scientific aspects) and literary methods. The first half of the volume is clearly united by its focus on Cyrano's Materialism, yet while the more disparate second half includes a valuable article by Claudine Nédélec on Cyrano's burlesque methods, the editor of the volume, Jean-Charles Darmon – a renowned Cyrano scholar – makes it clear in the introduction that Cyrano is important as a *libertine* case study; that his work may help with answering problematic *libertine* questions: 'Un des partis pris liminaires de la présente enquête collective a été de considérer qu'en sa marginalité même, l'œuvre de Cyrano pouvait constituer un prisme particulièrement éclairant où se diffractent certains de ses questionnements majeurs'.[29]

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[27] There are two other studies on Cyrano from this time which are worth noting: Erica Harth's, *Cyrano de Bergerac and the Polemics of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) and Jeanne Goldin's, *Cyrano de Bergerac et l'art de la pointe* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1973). Harth sees coherency in Cyrano's ideas, which she argues engage above all with the debates of the Ancients and Moderns: 'The adventuresome spirit of the interplanetary traveller whose wanderings lead him also into new intellectual realms, his relentless assault on tradition and authority, his delight in novel gadgets designed for man's edification – these traits of the author of the *Autre Monde* mark him as one of the earliest crusading Moderns', p. 5. Goldin's important study is one of the few to consider Cyrano's letters in detail (alongside Prévot's). In considering the rhetorical significance of the letters, and situating them in context, her study isolates Cyrano's early work, focusing on the collection's literary value.

[28] See the special edition dedicated to Cyrano of *Littératures classiques*, 53 (2004), under the direction of Jean-Charles Darmon; a collection of articles in *Lectures de Cyrano de Bergerac. Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, ed. by Bérengère Parmentier (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004); and the published research from the conference dedicated to Cyrano, *Cyrano de Bergerac, Cyrano de Sannois: actes du colloque international de Sannois* (3 et 17 décembre, 2005), ed. by Hervé Bargy and Alain Mothu (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

[29] Jean-Charles Darmon, 'Le Démon du paradoxe: énigmes et défis d'un grand jeu libertin', in *Littératures classiques*, 53 (2004), p. 5.

Elsewhere, Darmon has highlighted the dual nature of Cyrano's work and the very problem of having to choose between the importance of the scientific or the literary content; the history of ideas or the history of form: a divide that Darmon defines as, the 'côté feu' and the 'côté jeu'. In his study on Cyrano and Epicureanism, he looks at Cyrano's philosophical ideas alongside Gassendi's, and thus perpetuates the image of Cyrano as a serious thinker with libertine ties. According to Darmon, although the reader can never be absolutely certain of a Cyranian system, Cyrano's literary methods can be seen to work in conjunction with his philosophical ideas; they promote them. Even today, then, Cyrano's work is understood to represent a philosophical programme. Alexandra Torero-Ibad goes further, insisting absolutely on the existence of a coherent and unified Cyranian system. Like earlier Cyrano researchers, Torero-Ibad believes that there is a sincere philosophical agenda in Cyrano's work:

> En prenant au sérieux la dimension philosophique de l'œuvre de Cyrano, je me propose de participer au mouvement de réévaluation du contenu philosophique du libertinage. En particulier, je souhaite montrer que Cyrano élabore une position irréligieuse radicale et qui se veut philosophiquement fondée.[30]

Torero-Ibad begins with the premise that Cyrano's work puts forward an intellectual argument. We can see this in her line of questioning: 'A quelles thèses Cyrano s'oppose-t-il? De quelles positions se rapproche-t-il? Quels systèmes philosophiques transforme-t-il pour les mettre au service de ses propres thèses?'[31]

As I argued at the start of this thesis, Cyrano's work does indeed encourage the reader to ask what he might be attacking or defending. Can he only be understood as a

[30] Alexandra Torero-Ibad, *Libertinage, science et philosophie dans le matérialisme de Cyrano de Bergerac* (Paris: Champion, 2009), p. 19.
[31] Torero-Ibad, *Libertinage, science et philosophie*, p. 22.

philosopher, however? Or are there other ways to approach his work? The second half of the 2004 *Littératures classiques* volume opens up the debate about whether other avenues of inquiry are necessary, yet, until now, no comprehensive study dedicated to the importance of Cyrano's burlesque as a polemical tool has emerged. Claudine Nédélec's valuable research on burlesque practices highlighted that the burlesque was important to Cyrano's work and therefore this study very much takes up from her research, asking new questions about the author's role in, and contribution to, the literary field:[32] never mind whether Cyrano is a libertine, what does he accomplish as a writer?

iii. Cyrano, *philosophe*?

Science, philosophy and religion – subjects that are inextricably connected in the early modern period – are often the focus in Cyrano's novel: there are direct references to influential thinkers, ancient and modern, and the principal characters spend much of their time debating these controversial topics, challenging theories, old and new. The breadth of discussion is vast. The theorists named include Pythagoras, Epicurus, Democritus, Copernicus, Kepler, Cardin, Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe, Gassendi, Saint Augustine, Agrippa, Campanella, La Mothe Le Vayer, Aristotle, Descartes and Socrates.[33] Should the reader therefore expect to find a scientific or philosophical treatise in Cyrano's work?

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[32] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*

[33] Jean-Charles Darmon in particular looks closely at these references in Cyrano's work and tries to decode their presence in the text. He admits that the references are often ambiguous but nevertheless

Cyrano's novel addresses many, often rival philosophical systems such as Gassendi's atomist Materialism and Cartesianism, and therefore scholars have argued over whether it is possible to find one prevailing structure: Torero-Ibad emphasizes Materialism, Nicole Gengoux, Cartesianism, and Alcover argues that Cyrano supports both.[34] It goes without saying that if there was an obvious Cyranian system, scholars would not have to try and keep proving it through different and new theories of their own. A philosophical and scientific framework is clearly being used: Cyrano's novel stages controversial debates about traditional, but also modern, philosophical and scientific theories. I argue that Cyrano's novel does not constitute a philosophical treatise in itself; a philosophical programme is not the *raison d'être* of Cyrano's work or its defining characteristic. That being said, it is worth noting that there is clearly an Epicurean thread running through Cyrano's work, which recent research, by Darmon and Torero-Ibad, has highlighted.[35]

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important. See Darmon, *Philosophie épicurienne et littérature au XVII^e siècle en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

[34] While Pierre Gassendi and René Descartes in fact both elaborate new systems of natural philosophy based on materialism, and which can thus be seen as versions of the mechanical philosophy in which it was assumed that all bodies were made up of matter in movement, their systems differ significantly: Gassendi defines atoms as indivisible, and endowed with an internal principle of motion that keeps them moving; whereas Descartes defines matter in terms of extension, thus denying the existence of a vaccum, and that atoms are infinitely divisible. See John Henry, *The Scientific Revolution and the Origins of Modern Science* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 68-84.

[35] Olivier Bloch, who has primarily written on Epicureanism and Gassendi in the seventeenth century, has dedicated several articles to Cyrano: 'Cyrano de Bergerac et la philosophie', in *XVII^e siècle*, XXXVIII, 149 (1985), pp. 337-48; 'Cyrano, Molière et l'écriture libertine', in *La Lettre Clandestine*, 5 (1996), pp. 241-50; 'Cyrano philosophant: dualités et pluralismes', in *Lectures de Cyrano de Bergerac: Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp. 25-36. More recently, articles by Nicole Gengoux have focused on Cyrano's philosophy, 'De la Lune au Soleil: "un pot-pourri de contes ridicules", ou la progression d'une thèse clandestine', in *Lectures de Cyrano de Bergerac: Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), pp. 101-19, and 'Cyrano de Bergerac, un voyageur dans Le Monde de Descartes' in *Libertinage et philosophie*, 9 (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005), pp. 105-26. See also Alcover, *La Pensée philosophique et scientifique de Cyrano de Bergerac*. The most recent and comprehensive studies on Cyrano and Epicureanism include Darmon, *Philosophie épicurienne et littérature au XVII^e siècle* and *Le Songe libertin: Cyrano de Bergerac d'un monde à l'autre* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2004); Torero-Ibad, *Libertinage, science et philosophie dans le matérialisme de Cyrano de*

Epicureanism is itself a vast topic and it is not the purpose of this study to go into detail about its different early modern interpretations and the extent to which it influenced Cyrano. It is necessary, however, to note the most important facts. In the seventeenth century, there was a renewed interest in Epicureanism, largely led by Pierre Gassendi, whom it is likely Cyrano met.[36] It seems Cyrano also read Lucretius's *De rerum natura* ('On the Nature of the Universe', *c.* 54 BC), a didactic poem about the world and the universe, explained through atomic physics, one of the main texts dedicated to Epicureanism.[37] Lucretius (99-55 BC), a Latin poet, was a disciple of Epicurus (341-270 BC), the Ancient Greek philosopher who originally founded the school of thought known as Epicureanism.[38] Given that there are very few surviving texts by Epicurus himself, Lucretius's work is often considered an important outline of this system.[39]

Bergerac. Torero-Ibad argues that, if Cyrano's work puts forward multiple models, they all share the same Materialist identity: 'Il n'y a pas d'autre option recevable que l'option matérialiste, mais plusieurs hypothèses matérialistes sont possibles', p. 33.

[36] Largely in opposition to Cartesian rationalism, Gassendi dedicated several works to Epicureanism in which he defended his anti-Cartesian empiricism: *De vita et moribus Epicuri libri septem* (1647); *De vita et moribus et placitis Epicuri* (1649) and *Syntagma philosophiae Epicuri* (1649). Note that in 'La Lune', in addition to espousing materialist doctrine, the protagonist directly names Epicurus early on (p. 7) and then writes that he has read Gassendi (p. 19), in *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*.

[37] Also translated as 'On the Nature of Things'. Le Bret argues that Cyrano read Lucretius. See Le Bret, 'Préface' to 'La Lune' in *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 492. For Cyrano's Lucretian influences see in particular, Jean-Charles Darmon, 'Entre le monde de *La Mort d'Agrippine* et *L'Autre Monde* des oiseaux-juges: variations lucrétiennes sur la mort et critique politique selon Cyrano de Bergerac, in *Littératures Classiques*, 55 (2004), pp. 187-224.

[38] Epicurus was an Athenian teacher and philosopher who was well known in his time and had many followers. He wrote on physics and ethics. Meetings, when community members discussed philosophy, took place in the famous 'garden'. Little is known about the life of Lucretius and his only known work is *De rerum natura* but his work had a significant influence on later philosophers, particularly after the rediscovery of his work in the Renaissance, and on the development of Gassendi's atomism.

[39] Epicurus's most important work was *On Nature*, a text of which only fragments remain, but clearly Lucretius took from his title. A few complete works remain but these are only summaries of the philosophy. They have been preserved in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers.* A collection of maxims also exists known as the *Vatican Sayings*.

In brief, Epicureans sought peace and happiness in life, which they argued could be attained by avoiding false opinions, the source of man's unhappiness. In order to see the world for what it really was, it was necessary to understand the principles of the universe through scientific reasoning. Epicurus emphasized the importance of deducing evidence through the senses: this would assure reality. He elaborated a system of physics based on the argument that the universe is infinite and formed only of atoms and of void; that everything happens as a result of atoms in movement, colliding with one another haphazardly.[40] Nothing is the result of providence. At the time Cyrano was writing, State and Church authorities considered Materialism to be a heretical philosophy. Cyrano's novel, which raises questions about the nature of the universe, its vastness, the plurality of worlds, matter, atoms and the void, and which attacks the Church, mocking the absurdity of Christian belief, is clearly inspired by Epicurean thought. It is no surprise that his novel was heavily edited, and that the most controversial passages were cut from the first edition.

The Epicurean emphasis on the importance of the body and of pursuing the pleasures of the senses (through food, drink and sex), what today's reader would associate with a hedonistic lifestyle, shocked many and it is possible to see how Epicureanism in the seventeenth century could be associated, for the wrong reasons, with libertine free-thinkers, keen to rebel against all forms of authority. For Epicurus, however, the importance of the body was essential in the nobler quest to avoid falsehood.

In Cyrano's work there are certainly instances of this need to question false doctrine. Does his work expose a coherent, philosophical system, however? Even Darmon argues

[40] For the theory of atoms see Laertius's Letter X.

that, despite the predominantly Epicurean influences in Cyrano's work, the latter presents multiple points of view which serve to obscure rather than reveal a clear agenda: there is a kaleidoscope of arguments, 'les figurations épicuriennes oscillant au fil du récit entre les unes et les autres'.[41]

Scholars have emphasized the dissimulative techniques used by libertine writers to mask their controversial ideas. But to what extent is it possible to read between the lines? Cyrano is an example of an author whose work appears to hide not one agenda, but multiple agendas. It is therefore particularly difficult to find a solid double interpretation to his work. Even Cavaillé concludes that, at the end of the day, 'On ne peut pas faire dire aux libertins ce qu'ils ne professent pas directement!'[42]

More interesting than trying to justify the existence of a philosophical programme in Cyrano's work are the wider effects produced by a plurality of positions. If Epicureanism seeks to rescue us above all from falsity and confusion, what should the reader make of an author who deliberately plays on erroneous avenues of inquiry and therefore seeks to mislead the reader? When the effects produced by burlesque methods are taken into consideration, it seems that Cyrano's work is quite the opposite of a quest to avoid falsehood.

Furthermore, would readers during Cyrano's time have been able to decode the obscure philosophical programme in his work? What about the playful and humorous aspects to

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[41] Darmon, *Philosophie épicurienne et littérature au XVII^e siècle en France*, p. 262.
[42] Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation, Quelques éléments de réflexion' in *Libertinage et philosophie au XVII^e siècle*, 5 (2001), p. 86.

Cyrano's literature? In underplaying or even ignoring the burlesque, current research removes any pleasure to be had from Cyrano's work. The purpose of the burlesque is to make the reader laugh; at something, at someone, it is not always clear what or whom; but they must enjoy it. Deprived of laughter, it is no longer burlesque. While Cyrano does not make a philosophical agenda clear in his letters and novel, on the contrary, he makes an obvious pact with his reader that is comic.[43] I propose to investigate this pact more carefully – what is it? how does it function? – rather than read between the lines a system that is not manifest.

iv. Cyrano, *burlesque*?

The burlesque was a type of comic writing that was popular in France throughout the seventeenth century.[44] French burlesque can be traced back to the *Satyre Menippée* (1594) but comic practices of parody and pastiche have a long history in literature going back to antiquity.[45] From the sixteenth century Rabelais influenced Cyrano, but there are later, more direct models: the poet Saint-Amant (1594-1661) uses burlesque in his first published collection (1623) and in *Le Passage de Gibraltar* (1640). There were also comic novels that used burlesque, such as Charles Sorel's *Histoire comique de*

[43] This is an argument that Claudine Nédélec also puts forward. See Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace": *Littératures Classiques*, 53 (2004): 'Qu'il soit question de rire et de faire rire, et qu'ainsi le texte propose un pacte de lecture plaisante, c'est évident', p. 257.

[44] See Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*. Nédélec emphasizes that the burlesque was not a genre or a style because it sought precisely to mix up styles and genres. She defines it as a comical mode of writing: 'Le burlesque, pour conclure, appartient au registre du comique, parce qu'il cherche à produire le rire', p. 304.

[45] See Paul Aron, *Histoire du pastiche* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).

Francion (1623, 1626, 1633).[46] The burlesque became particularly popular following Paul Scarron's *Recueil de quelques vers burlesques* (1643) and *Virgile travesti en vers burlesques* (1648-53).[47] By the time Cyrano was writing in the early to mid 1640s, burlesque verse was well established and a fashionable topic of discussion in literary circles.[48] Cyrano also contributed himself to an overtly burlesque work: *Le Jugement de Pâris en vers burlesques de Mr Dassoucy* (1648), for which he wrote the opening 'Avis au lecteur'.

In her seminal study, Nédélec considers the wide-ranging theoretical texts on the burlesque, which sought to define and categorize this new type of writing. Given that Cyrano was writing in the early 1640s up until the mid 1650s, it will be useful to synthesize some of the main attributes of the burlesque as perceived by literary critics at this time.[49] The following criteria can be established: the burlesque mocks and ridicules, parodies or satirizes, and in doing so it must be comic and aim to make the reader laugh; it creates discord by mixing up styles and genres (the elevated with the base) as well as confounding serious and comic subject matter (all hierarchies are overturned); it is ambiguous because in ridiculing all and everything, it is difficult to tell what is serious or comic (it blurs its intentions); it transgresses established 'norms' and rules (social or literary).[50]

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[46] See Chapter Four of this thesis for more on Charles Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion*.
[47] I consider Paul Scarron's novel, the *Roman comique* (1651) in Chapter Four of the thesis.
[48] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 153.
[49] In her book, Nédélec demonstrates the many different nuances to the definition of the word burlesque throughout the seventeenth century. In an article specifically dedicated to Cyrano, she emphasizes that his burlesque should be understood in the context of the word *before* the Fronde revolutions (from January 1649), which marked a new type of political burlesque; one that was heavily criticized. See also, Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace"'.
[50] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*: see the section 'Le Burlesque jugé', pp. 165-202. Nédélec writes that after 1649 there was an abundance of literature on the burlesque and, thus, 'peu à peu se fixe

Guez de Balzac (1597-1654), less favourable to the burlesque than Gabriel Naudé (1600-53), his fellow critic, emphasized its possible dangers: it challenged the socio-political order and thus might encourage people to revolt against the legitimate hierarchy. Other critics went further, condemning it entirely because it was seen to encourage and promote vice. From a literary perspective it was equally bad because it deliberately mixed up styles and genres and thus directly challenged the literary authorities that had tried so hard to fix and establish the rules of art.[51] To its dissenters, the burlesque was an affront to all forms of authority, social, political and literary, especially the Church and State.

The idea that the burlesque operates through deceptive appearances (that it is ambiguous in its intentions and confounds the serious and the comic) was a source of deep concern. Nédélec emphasizes that because the burlesque blurs the comic and serious, it is 'foncièrement polyphonique' and thus threatens the possibility of any one authority: 'l'autorité et la légitimité d'une voix et d'une seule, en une langue, un roi, une loi, une foi.'[52] In the most dangerous of cases the burlesque could be seen to mask, through comedy, a more sinister critique. Libertine writers used the burlesque precisely

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un doxa'. She suggests that the two most influential texts in establishing the rules of the burlesque were Gabriel Naudé's *Jugement de tout ce qui a esté imprimé contre le cardinal Mazarin depuis le sixiesme Janvier jusques à la declaration du premier Avril 1649* (1649) and Guez de Balzac's *Entretien sur le stile burlesque* (1651). She also considers texts, however, by the Père Vavasseur, Furetière, Boileau and Perrault. It is also worth noting the differences between the burlesque and satire because obviously they share many traits. Nédélec points out that while burlesque works can use satire, and vice versa, there are subtle differences between the two. Generally, satire criticizes with a legitimate system of values and order in mind. The burlesque highlights the faults (disorder) in society through an illusion of legitimacy, with humorous intentions. Comedy is absolutely central to the burlesque whereas satire is often characterized by a tone of indignation. See pp. 245-46.

[51] The Académie française was founded in 1635 in order to regulate and perfect the French language.

[52] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 416.

because its duplicitous nature served them well: under the guise of comedy and ambiguity, they could promote their controversial ideas and elude censorship.

Nédélec concludes that Cyrano uses the burlesque 'non seulement comme moyen d'écriture, mais aussi comme façon de penser qui trouve à s'exercer dans toutes sortes de polémiques savantes'.[53] This 'way of thinking' is defined by ambiguity:

> Cyrano écrit authentiquement 'en burlesque' une philosophie qui a pour principe de faire cohabiter les 'créances burlesques' et les 'raisonnements sérieux'. Et souvent on ne sait plus trop où sont l'un et l'autre.[54]

While other philosophical writers use a plurality of positions to teach the reader to be sceptical of belief systems – 'il faut d'abord refuser de s'en laisser croire' – in the case of Cyrano, it is never clear what is serious or comic and therefore we run the risk of reading into his work a message that is false, thus ourselves becoming the subject of ridicule…[55] If the burlesque by nature refuses univocality, then, 'Il nous faut donc […] persister à trouver du ridicule dans le sérieux, et du sérieux dans le ridicule, et opposer à tous ceux qui veulent imposer un mode, une voix'.[56] Nédélec emphasizes that it is up to the reader to make the final call. And, yet, what a difficult call to make!

In many ways, this thesis picks up from Nédélec's research by returning to Cyrano as a case study and looking in more detail at his use of multiple voices – an essential aspect of the burlesque. This thesis demonstrates the polemical nature of Cyrano's burlesque

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[53] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 419. In her article dedicated to Cyrano's burlesque Nédélec gives many examples from the novel to demonstrate that Cyrano is without doubt a burlesque writer. See Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace "'.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace "', p. 270.

through his aggressive and disorienting proliferation of voices, showing the ways in which his use of the burlesque therefore differs to that of other novelists of the time; and how, ultimately, his burlesque is so destructive that it refuses a libertine agenda.

v. Texts, Method & Outline

Cyrano's narrative fiction is the focus of this thesis. I will not therefore study the *Entretiens pointus* or his plays: the tragedy, *La Mort d'Agrippine* (1654) and comedy, *Le Pédant joué* (1654).[57] The complexities of the theatrical genre at this time were a contributing factor in my decision. Some scholars also credit Cyrano with the authorship of several satirical pieces, collectively known as the *Mazarinades*, and a scientific treatise, the *Fragment de physique*, but I do not consider these texts either, not least because the provenance of both is uncertain. This thesis focuses on Cyrano's two main narrative works: his collection of published letters and novel, *L'Autre Monde*.

The first and largest collection of Cyrano's letters, forty-seven in total, was published in 1654 under the title *Les Œuvres diverses de M. de Cyrano Bergerac*. A second collection of letters, ten in total, was then included in the posthumous publication *Les Nouvelles Œuvres* in 1662. There also exists a manuscript (Fonds Français, Bibliothèque Nationale de France: nouv. acq. fr. no 4557) only discovered much later, which includes what seem to be early versions of some of the letters, although not all,

[57] See the edition by André Blanc of the *Œuvres completes, Vol. III, Théâtre* (Paris: Champion, 2001). As Blanc notes, although *La Mort d'Agrippine* was quickly banned for its controversial content and *Le Pédant joué* never performed, Cyrano's plays were in fact popular enough in the seventeenth century to warrant several re-editions.

from both *Les Œuvres diverses* and *Les Nouvelles Œuvres*. The manuscript contains forty-one letters, only thirty-four appearing in *Les Œuvres diverses* and five in *Les Nouvelles Œuvres*. Two letters therefore remained entirely unpublished. In this thesis, I refer to the only fully inclusive edition in modern print, *Cyrano de Bergerac, Œuvres complètes, Vol. II, Lettres, Entretiens pointus, Mazarinades*, ed. by Luciano Erba and Hubert Carrier (Paris: Champion, 2001). I have chosen to use Erba's edition precisely because this is the most comprehensive edition to date given that it includes all of Cyrano's known letters, whether published or unpublished, and also the variants from the manuscript.

Cyrano's two-part novel, formed of *Les États et Empires de la Lune* and *Les États et Empires du Soleil*, were first published separately, both posthumously, *La Lune* in 1657, *Le Soleil* in 1662. They were only published together long after Cyrano's death in 1676. They are often together called *L'Autre Monde,* given the general acceptance that these works were intended to form part of the same project. In this thesis I will specifically mention either *La Lune* or *Le Soleil* when referencing from the first or second part of the novel but when I am talking about his novel as a whole (both parts) I will refer to *L'Autre Monde*. There are no known original manuscripts for either *La Lune* or *Le Soleil*. There are three manuscript copies of *La Lune* but there is only the first printed edition of *Le Soleil*, and this reveals that the second work was unfinished. In this thesis I refer to Madeleine Alcover's 2004 edition, which uses the Paris manuscript of *La Lune* and the first edition of *Le Soleil*. Her edition is the most thorough to date and helpfully includes a section of 'Variantes et Corrections', where the differences between the three manuscript copies and also the first edition of *La Lune* are noted line by line to facilitate comparison.

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My thesis begins with Cyrano's collection of letters, his first published work, before going on to look at the novel, which is the main focus of the thesis. To date, scholars have either ignored Cyrano's earlier work, his letters, entirely, or they have gone backwards in chronological order, beginning with *L'Autre Monde* and then turning to his letters, in order to seek out retrospectively a philosophical message in the earlier work.[58] This approach overlooks the literary significance of Cyrano's work as a whole, specifically the unusual way in which Cyrano uses burlesque: his collection of letters has a much less obvious philosophical leaning and this is important because it means that Cyrano was writing the letters with other intentions in mind. Instead, it is the collection's literary qualities – the burlesque proliferation of voices and use of different personas – that are most obvious.

I study Cyrano's letters in detail in the first chapter, placing the collection in its complex epistolary context. I consider the difficulties of the epistolary genre at the beginning of the seventeenth century and the *querelle des lettres* sparked by the publication of Balzac and Voiture's letters. How do Cyrano's letters engage with these controversial debates? I consider the literary qualities of Cyrano's letters, emphasizing

[58] Torero-Ibad compares the philosophical traits of all of Cyrano's work but nevertheless emphasizes, above all, the themes found in the novel: 'cette étude donne une place centrale au travail philosophique accompli dans les romans, tout en les mettant en relation avec celui qui s'accomplit à travers les autres œuvres', *Libertinage, science et philosophie dans le matérialisme de Cyrano de Bergerac*, p. 22. She suggests that Cyrano's earlier works, in showing glimpses of Cyrano's philosophical programme, are an early incarnation of what is to come later.

the capricious nature of the collection as a whole, while looking at how Cyrano uses the framework of the letter and its multiple *énonciations* to playful effect.

Chapter II moves onto Cyrano's novel, *L'Autre Monde*, looking at some unusual textual phenomena. The first two chapters form a first part to the thesis in that they are both close readings of Cyrano's work. While the first chapter emphasizes the playful nature of the multiple *énonciations* set up by the epistolary structure, the second chapter is a case study of some of the unusual voices in *L'Autre Monde.* I shall show how the novel provides a very different structure to the letter – one that is no longer based on the clear format of addressee and sender – and that who is arguing what, when and how are no longer easy questions to answer. This chapter will demonstrate that the voices in *L'Autre Monde* proliferate significantly; there is often a cacophony of interlocutors. While scholarship to date has only focused on the main voices of the novel (the protagonist and his direct interlocutors), here I am interested in the voices at the margins; those that disrupt the dialogue in the text; voices that could be said to lie at the peripheries. These include female voices and the voices of madmen and fools.

This initial case study completed, the thesis then steps back significantly to consider the wider literary context of Cyrano's novel. The second part of the thesis is concerned solely with Cyrano's novel: first its context and, second, how it operates. In Chapter III, I situate the novel within its early-seventeenth-century context. This chapter charts the rise of the genre of the novel; the controversy surrounding this genre and problematic subcategories like the *histoire comique*; and considers the wider implications of Cyrano's decision to turn to this genre. With this wider context in mind, Chapter IV is a comparative study that looks in detail at the *histoires comiques* written before Cyrano's

novel: Théophile de Viau's, *Première journée* (1623); Charles Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623, 1626, 1633), *Le Berger extravagant* (1627-28) and *L'Anti-Roman* (1633); Tristan L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié* (1643); Paul Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651). Drawing on my findings in Chapter I and Chapter II on the different voices in Cyrano's work, I now move on to look at one of the central voices in any literary text: the voice of the narrator. I therefore focus on how the narratorial voice functions in these different texts. This all leads to my last chapter, which considers the narratorial voice in Cyrano's novel. As such, this final chapter forms the last part of my thesis: an amalgamation of my findings in the first and second parts. By comparing the narratorial voice in *L'Autre Monde* to others of its time, and through very close textual readings, I look at how Cyrano's model defies other literary models and traditions. By means of an excessive burlesque, Cyrano's narrator operates through fragmented and divided voices, which destabilize any order or hierarchy in the text. The result is a chaotic confusion of voices that not only produces ambiguity, but also disorients the reader. No longer is the reader faced with the problem of the comic versus the serious – which the burlesque by nature sets up – he or she is now confronted by a general, all-encompassing satire, in which the burlesque destroys all and everything. In this last chapter it becomes clear that Cyrano's burlesque can be a destructive force.

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As a final note, and as a reminder to my own reader: it is important not to forget the comic nature of Cyrano's work, which, as I have previously argued, is absolutely central to the burlesque. Close textual readings and an analysis of the complex literary context within which Cyrano was writing are crucial to the thesis and yet, within the

confines of this academic study, it is important not to lose sight of Cyrano's pact with his reader. In destroying all and everything, you may be wondering, is there laughter to be had? Can a burlesque, which is destructive also be pleasurable? In order to find out, it is necessary to go back to the beginning: Cyrano's first published work, his collection of letters.

Chapter I

Cyrano's Letters and the Rise of Errant Voices

The year 1654 was a profitable one in Cyrano's career as a writer. At thirty-five years old – by now thirteen years out of the army and well connected in the literary circles of Paris – Cyrano finally published his first work: a tragedy, *La Mort d'Agrippine*. In the same year, a second publication appeared, *Les Œuvres diverses de Mr de Cyrano Bergerac,* which contained an epistolary collection, totalling forty-seven letters, and a comedy, *Le Pédant joué*. While it was not uncommon for writers at this time to work within different genres, Cyrano's decision to publish a tragedy, a comedy and an epistolary collection all in the same year encourages us to question his motivations for turning to one genre over another. What kind of writer is Cyrano at this point in his career? Is he committed to succeeding as a dramatist and correspondent? Or do his varied choices reflect other interests?

It is the letters in the collection that most attract attention. They contrast sharply with Cyrano's achievements in his theatrical work. Regardless of the few blasphemous passages in *La Mort d'Agrippine* which critics argued promoted a libertine philosophy, and the explosive verbosity in prose of *Le Pédant joué*, the plays remain within a recognizable frame of reference: the dramatic genre. Thus, in reception, the plays were criticised in reference to established models: *La Mort d'Agrippine* could be seen to stray too far from the classical model (Corneille and Rotrou) and *Le Pédant joué* was too

farcical (in the vein of the commedia dell'arte).[59] The letters, on the other hand, deal with an unstable, relatively new model: the epistolary genre. Cyrano's letters parody epistolary forms, old and new, and thus his decision to turn to this genre reveals a different writing strategy to those in evidence in his plays. His project is ambitious and not without risk: his œuvre assumes the appearance of a sincere and authentic published collection of letters, whilst in fact operating as a comic subversion of recently established conventions.

In this chapter I shall look at Cyrano's collection of letters in more detail. They are an important part of Cyrano's corpus given that they are his first published prose work. The letters reveal the author's literary forms in a different genre to that of his novel, *L'Autre Monde* – the main focus of this thesis – and, as this chapter will demonstrate, the collection is in many ways a forum for experimentation with the playful potential of multiple voices central to his later work. It is also possible to see direct influences between the letters and novel given that the subject matter has, on occasion, evidently been transposed from the former to the latter.[60] This chapter will therefore consider the makings of a comic narrative writer. How does Cyrano's early parody operate?[61]

[59] See both introductions to the plays in Blanc's edition, *Œuvres complètes*, *vol. III*. Blanc writes about the negative reception of *La Mort d'Agrippine* in relation to *Le Pédant joué* that 'On accepte mieux une comédie atypique qu'une tragédie de même sorte', p. 226.
[60] See, for example, the letters 'Autre, d'une maison de campagne' and 'Messire Jean'.
[61] See the article I have published on one of the issues considered in this chapter, Cyrano's name games: '"Caprices" and Naming Cyrano's Letters',*Romance Studies*, 31 (2013), pp. 179-88.

i. A Fighter or a Writer?

So far, academic discussion of the letters has ignored Cyrano's parodic intentions. Some scholars have insisted that Cyrano is a polemical writer and that his letters are real and attack real-life opponents; thus, Cyrano uses the epistolary format as a platform from which to attack. Others have focused on the literary talents of his writing, arguing that many of the letters are exercises in style and demonstrate Cyrano's abilities as a skilled poet.[62] A debate that divides scholarship centres around the naming of real-life characters from Cyrano's milieu, including d'Assoucy, La Mothe Le Vayer (le fils), Chapelle, Montfleury and Scarron.[63] On the one hand, scholars argue that the naming of real-life writers points to the biographical significance of the letters: the most polemical letters attack Cyrano's opponents and therefore carry force in the real world; his 'plume' is his sword. On the other, scholars argue that the polemical focus of the letters and the references to Cyrano's contemporaries are inconsequential.

One of the first Cyrano scholars, Frédéric Lachèvre, for example, starts by conceding that there is a unifying theme within these letters: accusations of plagiarism. But Lachèvre goes on to argue that these accusations are 'absurde[s], imaginaire[s]', and that Cyrano's letters 'ne répondent à aucune réalité, les noms mêmes des personnes

[62] The principal works referencing Cyrano's letters are Jean-Charles Darmon, *Le Songe libertin* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2004); Jeanne Goldin, *Cyrano de Bergerac et l'art de la pointe* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1973) and Jacques Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac, poète et dramaturge* (Paris: Belin, 1978). See also the introduction to, and edition of, Cyrano's letters by Darmon: *Cyrano de Bergerac, Lettres satiriques et amoureuses précédées de Lettres diverses*, ed. by Jean-Charles Darmon and Alain Mothu (Paris: Desjonquères, 1999).

[63] Charles Coypeau d'Assoucy (1605-77) was a writer and Cyrano's friend and lover, turned enemy. His pen name was Dassoucy. See footnote (5) in the Introduction on Chapelle. La Mothe Le Vayer (le fils) (1588-1672) was a writer and philosopher. Montfleury was the stage name of the actor and playwright, Zacharie Jacob (1600-67). Paul Scarron (*c*. 1610-60) was a fellow burlesque writer and I consider his novel, the *Roman comique* in Chapter IV.

auxquelles il les a adressées […] ne sont là que pour leur donner plus de piquant'.[64] For Lachèvre, the letters are 'de simples exercices de rhétorique'.[65] In support of his argument, he maintains that Cyrano's accusations, '[ont] toujours été ignoré[s] des intéressés'.[66] Furthermore, the letters were never real letters in that they were never sent: 'Jamais les intéressés ne les ont reçues'.[67]

More recently, Jacques Prévot has continued with this line of argument by focusing on the poetic attributes of Cyrano's collection.[68] Prévot goes so far as to ignore any biographical references in Cyrano's work and this has sparked a strong reaction from Madeleine Alcover, who has been keen to emphasize the letters' genuine, and non-fictional, importance. For Alcover, Cyrano's letters are concerned with real people and real events. It is absolutely crucial to consider his work as part of a chain of ideas, in its historical and literary context.

Alcover's research on the feud between Cyrano and d'Assoucy contextualizes the letters and helps clarify the sender's line of argument.[69] She deciphers otherwise cryptic references for the modern reader: for instance, she identifies 'Soucidas' as the seventeenth-century author, Charles Coypeau d'Assoucy, and provides a context for

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[64] 'Préface', p. xii and footnote (2), in *Les Œuvres libertines de Cyrano de Bergerac, précédées d'une notice biographique*, t. I, ed. by Frédéric Lachèvre (Paris: Champion, 1921).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] It is possible to see an attempt at systematization in Prévot's work on Cyrano 'l'épistolier' in *Cyrano de Bergerac, poète et dramaturge*: 'peut-on discerner un contenu explicite des *Lettres*? peut-on, à partir des *Lettres*, reconstituer un système idéologique de Cyrano? La tâche n'est pas simple […] mais il est indispensable de l'entreprendre' (p. 50).
[69] Madeleine Alcover, *La Pensée philosophique et scientifique de Cyrano de Bergerac* (Geneva: Droz, 1970) and *Cyrano relu et corrigé* (Geneva: Droz, 1990). He is well known for his burlesque poetry: Cyrano wrote the opening epistle 'Au sot lecteur et non au sage' to his *Jugement de Paris* (1648) and an octane 'Pour Monsieur Dassoucy sur sa Métamorphose des dieux' in his *L'Ovide en belle humeur* (1650).

references to d'Assoucy's work, *L'Ovide en belle humeur* (1650), which is no longer widely read. Luciano Erba's valuable edition of Cyrano's letters continues in this same vein, clarifying the majority of the text's ambiguous references.

Alcover's research is very useful but there are still important questions that recent criticism has failed to address. This is perhaps in part because modern commentaries – articles or book chapters on Cyrano's letters; there has yet to be a recent study devoted to his epistolary collection – have emerged in reaction to the narrow literary focus of earlier studies. Pierre Ronzeaud and Jean-Pierre Dens, for example, focus on the libertine dimension to Cyrano's letters and therefore overlook other important aspects to his work.[70] Jean-Charles Darmon gives a more detailed analysis of the letters in relation to Cyrano's other works but, again, the focus is on libertinism.[71]

This chapter contributes to scholarship by approaching the letters from a different angle: it considers the inner workings of Cyrano's letters – the author's literary forms – and the wider comic effects these produce. A biographical study of Cyrano is not, therefore,

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[70] See Pierre Ronzeaud, 'Un *proême* programmatique: les *Lettres* de Cyrano de Bergerac sur les saisons', in *Dissidents, excentriques et marginaux de l'Âge classique: autour de Cyrano de Bergerac; bouquet offert à Madeleine Alcover* (Paris: Champion, 2006), p. 247: 'Je voudrais pourtant suggérer l'existence, derrière ou à côté de cette dimension ludique et poétique reconnue, de jeux plus polémiques et plus philosophiques: stratégie libertine'; Jean-Pierre Dens, 'Écriture et libertinage dans les *Lettres* de Cyrano de Bergerac', in *Cahiers du dix-septième*, 2 (1988) p. 65: 'L'objet de cette recherche est de présenter une étude détaillée des *Lettres* de Cyrano de Bergerac cristallisant ses tendances libertines afin de montrer les rapports entre un certain type d'écriture et la pensée idéologique de l'auteur'. See also the work of Alain Cantillon who raises questions concerning the problems of references in modern editions and whether these help or hinder the modern reader, in particular, 'Qu'importe qui parle, de qui, et à qui dans *Les Provinciales*', *Littératures Classiques*, 54 (2005).

[71] Darmon, *Le Songe libertin*, in particular Chapter II, 'Écriture polémique et libertinages de la pointe: Des *Lettres diverses, satiriques et amoureuses* à *L'Autre Monde*'. Darmon sets out his methodology as follows, 'On voudrait essayer ici de rendre le concept de libertinage opératoire […] pour caractériser des *expériences de pensée*' (p. 15) and continues that Cyrano's collection is 'très représentative d'une certaine parole libertine' (p. 79).

the focal point of this chapter. Instead, by means of close textual readings, I am interested in showing how Cyrano's decision to play with real and fictive characters in the letters affects the functioning of the collection as a whole. What are the effects of referencing real-life authors in a collection that appears at once fictional and real; one that is also, according to its title, 'satirique'?

ii. Parody: a Double-edged Sword

Mathilde Bombart has described the epistolary genre at the time Cyrano was writing as marked by 'une absence de règles' and suggested that the sphere of letter writing provided writers with a certain freedom, characterized 'par la capacité à dépasser les codes pour traiter librement de multiples matières'.[72] The epistolary genre, therefore, provided an opportunity for experimentation and we can see how Cyrano uses it as a platform from which to challenge literary models.

Literary critics and writers of the time quarrelled over the genre. When Cyrano was writing in the 1640s, he could not have been ignorant of the controversies or uncertainty surrounding it following the *querelle des Lettres* – a significant literary dispute that was sparked by the published letters of Guez de Balzac (1624-30) and Voiture (1648-50).[73] The violent reaction set off by the publication of Balzac's letters in 1624 continued well

[72] Mathilde Bombart, *Guez de Balzac et la querelle des 'Lettres'* (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 32.
[73] For Cyrano and polemical writing see in particular the chapter, 'Polémiques et libertinages de la pointe' in Darmon, *Le Songe libertin*. For more on polemical writing in the seventeenth century, see the special edition of *Littératures classiques*, 'La Polémique au XVII^{e} siècle', 59 (2006), in particular the articles by Gérard Ferreyrolles, 'Le XVII^{e} siècle et le statut de la polémique' and Mathilde Bombart, 'Des écritures en polémique: autour de la querelle des *Lettres* de Guez de Balzac (1624-1630)'.

into the 1640s, at which point there were a total of thirty treatises dealing with the dispute, and even into the second half of the century.

Balzac had dared to challenge epistolary conventions and upset the literary authorities keen to regulate the French language and literary genres.[74] In particular, he was reproached for publishing his private letters at such a young age. Epistles were conventionally associated with a distinguished life: one would only publish one's personal letters in later life, and only after the author in question had lived a life deemed worthy of commentary and attained social or political recognition. With this in mind, Cyrano's own insistence on his 'jeunesse' in the opening to the letters, as we shall see later, takes on a new significance. I argue that these references to youth are deliberate and irreverent allusions to the *querelle des Lettres* relating to Balzac some twenty years earlier.[75]

Marie-Madeleine Fragonard emphasizes that all published epistolary collections create tension with regard to the extent to which the collection has been reworked for publication: to what extent are the letters a 'document historique' or 'une œuvre littéraire composée'?[76] In the seventeenth century, the literary authorities sought to reduce this ambiguity. Doubt about the authenticity of Balzac's letters, for example, and the extent to which his letters had been edited for publication – what Bombart calls a 'science de la publication' – had created a future framework for published letters,

[74] For more on literary genres of the seventeenth century see, Alain Génetiot, *Poétique du loisir mondain, de Voiture à La Fontaine* (Paris: Champion, 1997).
[75] Cyrano*, Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.
[76] Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, 'Éditer une correspondance. Sur l'exemple des lettres d'Agrippa d'Aubigné', in C. Magnine, *L'Épistolaire au XVI^e siècle, Cahiers V. L. Saulnier*, 18 (2001).

requiring that the extent of the authenticity of any collection be made clear.[77] As this chapter will show, Cyrano ignores this framework entirely. His references to real-life writers are one of the ways in which he challenges the terms laid out in the *querelle des Lettres*. Essentially, Cyrano makes it as difficult as possible for the reader to conclude whether his letters are real or fictional.

So, how does he achieve this? Letters can of course present multiple *énonciations*: not only is there a *dédicataire*, Cyrano's patron, to whom the collection of printed letters is dedicated, there are also the various addressees of the letters themselves, who present multiple voices in interaction with the sender, and Cyrano's wider reader, who has bought his printed collection. As I shall show, the letter itself becomes a useful device for challenging epistolary forms because it can introduce many different interlocutors, all of whom claim a special relationship with the 'author' of the collection. In the hands of a writer seeking to parody, the potential for the entertaining abuse of this relationship is appealing. A brief glance at the variety of names of the addressees of Cyrano's letters in the Table (see Appendix) already hints at the inauthentic nature of the collection.

It is not important whether these letters were ever sent, whether the addressees ever responded, whether they carried 'real' force in Cyrano's seventeenth-century context, or whether Cyrano's work makes him a poet, and his letters solely a rhetorical exercise. The questions that need asking concern the wider comic effects produced by Cyrano's literary forms. How does Cyrano play with the fictional and real elements of his letters? In what ways do the multiple *énonciations* afforded by the epistolary framework allow

[77] Bombart, *Guez de Balzac*, p. 27. An important distinction is made between the 'œuvre épistolaire', a constructed, planned compilation, and the reproduction of a 'correspondance' that the author did not edit.

Cyrano to play with different voices in the text, such as the addressee and the signatory? What are the results?

A. Une folie? Une caprice?

A Monseigneur le Duc d'Arpajon.

Monseigneur,

> Ce livre ne contient presque qu'un ramas confus des premiers caprices, ou, pour mieux dire, des premières folies de ma jeunesse; j'avoue même que j'ai quelque honte de l'avouer dans un âge plus avancé: et cependant, Monseigneur, je ne laisse pas de Vous le dédier avec tous ses défauts, et de Vous supplier de trouver bon qu'il voie le monde sous votre glorieuse protection. Que direz-vous, Monseigneur, d'un procédé si étrange?[78]

It is important to take into account the opening lines of Cyrano's collection. They encourage an initial question: what exactly are Cyrano's letters? In trying to characterize them, the author himself hesitates over a suitable word. Is Cyrano suggesting that 'folie' is a better, more appropriate word to use than 'caprice'? And what is the significance of describing the collection thus?

Turning to Furetière's *Dictionnaire*, their meanings may be examined more closely:

[78] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.

> CAPRICE. s. m. Derèglement d'esprit. On le dit, quand au lieu de se conduire par la raison, on se laisse emporter à l'humeur dominante où on se trouve. Il lui faut laisser passer son caprice, sa fantaisie, sa mauvaise humeur. Je n'ai que faire d'essuyer tous ses caprices, ses fougues, ses boutades. Le mot de caprice était nouveau du temps d'Henry Estienne, et il lui semblait fort étrange.
>
> CAPRICE, se dit aussi des pièces de Poësie, de Musique, et de Peinture, qui reussissent plûtot par la force du genie, que par l'observation des règles de l'art, et qui n'ont aucun nom certain. St Amant a intitulé quelques pieces, *Caprice*.
>
> FOLIE. subst. fem. Alienation d'esprit ou manque de raison. La vraie folie excuse les crimes. Cet homme a un grain de folie dans la tête. Il lui prend quelquefois des accés de folie.
>
> FOLIE, signifie quelquefois, Imprudence, temerité…
>
> FOLIE, signifie quelquefois, une action folâtre. On fait bien des folies en sa jeunesse…
>
> FOLIE, est aussi une passion dominante. Un tel aime les tableaux avec trop d'excès, c'est la folie…
>
> On dit aussi, La folie du siècle, la folie du monde, pour dire, la passion, le gout extravagant du monde, du siècle.[79]

A 'caprice' is described as a 'derèglement' – an 'action ou mouvement qui se fait contre les loix' – and therefore it opposes or subverts an established set of rules.[80] Furetière defines 'folie' as an 'alienation', and therefore suggests that it involves a lack of rules altogether. Here, the letters go beyond a 'caprice', entering a domain where rules do not apply.[81] It is not too clear, however, what exactly a 'caprice' or a 'folie' is in relation to

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[79] Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts* (The Hague; Rotterdam: 1690; Geneva: Slatkine, 1970).

[80] See, again, Furetière. Compare also Richelet's definition of 'derèglement' which seems to support Furetière by focusing on disorder through the use of the word 'corruption': 'Dérèglement, s.m. Désordre de choses qui ne sont pas réglées, et qui le doivent être. Corruption de choses qui étaient réglées, et ne le sont plus. Corruption de doctrine, confusion'.

[81] The complex definitions of 'folie' and 'caprice' are further compounded if we turn to consider other dictionaries of the time. Note in particular Richelet's definition of 'Caprice' that supports the connection

Cyrano's letters. From these opening lines the reader might expect his œuvre to be merely the whimsical collection of a youthful and inexperienced writer, as he claims.

Furetière, however, makes another important reference that should be taken into account: 'St Amant a intitulé quelques pièces, *Caprice*'. If the poet Saint-Amant, a contemporary of Cyrano's, had called his work 'des caprices', what were the wider implications of Cyrano using this term? According to Peureux, a caprice is the name given to a literary piece that has no one clear style.[82] Furetière confirms this: '[des caprices] n'ont aucun nom certain'. Saint-Amant was well known for refusing to favour one literary genre over another and not all critics considered his work favourably.[83] What are the consequences of this for Cyrano? As he hesitates between 'caprice' and 'folie' he doubly plays on the fact that neither word offers a clear definition anyway. The message for the reader is, paradoxically, clear: there is no certainty as to what form Cyrano's collection of letters will take.

i. A Real or Fictive Project?

For whom is Cyrano's message intended? The opening takes the form of a dedication addressed to his patron, the duc d'Arpajon, and therefore establishes an initial relationship between writer (the signatory of the dedication) and patron, the *dédicataire*.

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between the two words as their association seems inescapable: 'CAPRICE, s.m. fantaisie bourrue, sorte de folie'.

[82] Guillaume Peureux, *'Le Rendez-vous des enfans sans soucy'. La Poétique de Saint-Amant* (Paris: Champion, 2002), p. 455: '[la] démarche capricieuse' is '[une] tendance à mêler des styles et des registres divergents, sans égard pour les conventions esthétiques'.

[83] Peureux, *Le Rendez-vous*, p. 419.

Yet, Cyrano also has another reader in mind: the reader who has bought his published collection. It is therefore necessary to consider another relationship: that between the signatory and the public reader. This double *énonciation*, as I shall now show, provides an early indication of the games to come as Cyrano blurs the boundary between the 'real' and 'fictive' aspects of his epistolary creation – a gesture that is reminiscent of the writing practices in Rabelais's prologues and, even earlier, satirical works from classical antiquity.[84]

The manoeuvrings between 'caprice' and 'folie' open up multiple scenarios: is the author praising his own work, or is he denouncing it? Is the author a person of repute, or is his status as a writer more questionable? In these opening lines the authorial voice invites scrutiny. This is a continual problem that the reader faces in the dedication. Through the manipulation of the chronology, the tone of the authorial voice gives the illusion that the author is writing in the here and now, spontaneously addressing the duc in the present. This is, of course, false.

Cyrano includes other inaccurate claims. He situates his 'folies' in the past, for example, arguing that they are from his 'jeunesse'.[85] What does Cyrano mean by the 'âge plus avancé' from which he now claims to be speaking? The letters were published in 1654, the 'privilège' dated 30 December 1653 making Cyrano thirty-five years of

[84] I consider the writer François Rabelais (*c.* 1483-1553) and his influence on Cyrano's novel in more detail in chapter III. Although they were writing in different contexts, Cyrano's amusing dedication to his patron is strikingly reminiscent of Rabelais's writing and there is little doubt that Cyrano was more than familiar with his work. On Rabelais's prologues see, in particular, Dorothy Gabe Coleman, *Rabelais: A Critical Study in Prose Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

[85] This is reminiscent of François Villon and the trope of the 'folie de jeunesse'. Théophile de Viau, too, refers to this in the 'Préface' to the second part of his *Œuvres diverses* (1623): 'considérant les folies de ma jeunesse', p. 13. Similarities with Cyrano's dedication emerge elsewhere in Théophile's preface, see for examle, 'ce petit ramas de mes dernières fantaisies', pp. 11-12 and footnote 36.

age; however, many of the letters can be dated to 1650 and even later, indicating a difference of merely three years between his so-called youth and older years. Cyrano makes this clear to his reader by referring to events in the letters that a contemporary could loosely have dated.[86]

Cyrano's subversion of time encourages the reader to question the authenticity of his project. Similar effects are produced by a dubious authorial voice. At first, Cyrano draws the reader in, establishing a false sense of trust. In a passage where the author doubts the merit of his work, Cyrano establishes an intimacy with the reader by setting up the dilemma with a confession: 'j'avoue'. After all, the dedication is addressed to the duc, 'A Monseigneur le Duc d'Arpajon', not the wider reader. The reader is therefore invited to look at what might be a private epistle. Cyrano explains that, while he has published these letters in his name and dedicated them to his patron, he is ashamed to have written them at all:

> j'avoue même que j'ai quelque honte de l'avouer dans un âge plus avancé: et cependant, Monseigneur, je ne laisse pas de Vous le dédier avec tous ses défauts, et de Vous supplier de trouver bon qu'il voie le monde sous votre glorieuse protection. Que direz-Vous, Monseigneur, d'un procédé si étrange? Vous croirez, peut-être, que c'est manquer de respect pour Vous, que de Vous offrir une chose que je méprise moi-même, et de mettre votre nom illustre à la tête d'un ouvrage où j'ai bien de la répugnance de voir le mien.[87]

An interesting section of this passage concerns naming. The author refers to the act of naming both himself and his patron: 'de mettre votre nom illustre à la tête d'un ouvrage

[86] For example, it is not unlikely that readers will have known about the disputes between d'Assoucy and Cyrano and that these letters must be recent in date. The same goes for the letter to Scarron.
[87] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.

où j'ai bien de la répugnance de voir le mien'. Here, the reader establishes a connection between the name 'Cyrano' on the title page of the collection and this authorial voice. For the moment there seems to be nothing fictional about the dedication: the author is stepping back from his work to observe from afar his published collection. The reader might feel trusting of this voice, given that it is the author's, and attach authority to it.

Of course, in a published correspondence this intimacy is an illusion. The author is fully aware that the reader will have access to this 'personal' dedication. That Cyrano plays with this confidence, by encouraging the reader to reach false conclusions, is testimony to his subversive writing. Moreover, it is equally interesting that the reader is made aware of his tactics. In fact, there is much about the dedication that arouses the reader's suspicions. That Cyrano is ashamed of the errors of his work is obviously disingenuous. After all, he is publishing the collection and therefore making it available to the entire reading public. Other subversive qualities are linguistic. A good example is the forceful pronoun 'je' of the authorial voice. Cyrano's 'je' pushes itself to the foreground, demanding to be heard, and we cannot help but be reminded of the accusations against his predecessors, Théophile, but also Balzac, that they favoured such a personal rhetoric, which was seen to challenge the authority of antiquity and established models.[88]

Elsewhere, there are other unsettling literary practices. For the seventeenth-century reader there is nothing unusual about an author dismissing his work – a common

[88] Bombart, *Guez de Balzac*, p. 153. See, for example, Balzac's arrogant 'moi' in Letter II: 'Je sçay bien qu'on vous dira auiourd'huy que vous estes fait Prince d'vn Estat qui n'est borné n'y par les mers n'y par les montaignes, & que l'estenduë de vostre iurisdiction sera telle, que s'il en dependroient aussi bien que celuy cy; Mais moy qui ne me laisse esblouyr les yeux à d'autre eclate que ce luy de la vertu', pp. 12-13, in *Lettres dv sievr de Balzac* (Paris: Toussaint Du Bray, 1624).

practice in prefaces at the time Cyrano was writing – but here the author's loathing of his work is excessive: 'j'ai […] honte', 'je méprise', 'j'ai bien de la répugnance'. Cyrano pushes the common trope of the modest author further than was usual, going on to describe his letters as being full of 'défauts'.[89] Furthermore, the author's position changes suddenly in the text. If at one moment he is attacking his work, the next he adopts a humble position, begging his patron to find something positive in it. It is not clear who is the authority: the author or the patron.

The dedication also challenges other epistolary traditions. Cyrano makes no attempt to associate the faults in his work with his choice of the epistolary genre, and this would have surprised the seventeenth-century reader given the contested position of letter-writing at the time. Yet, Cyrano ignores this thorny issue. His insistence on the flaws in his work, rather than his aesthetic choices, marks a turning point away from dedicatory conventions of the time. Cyrano neither situates his work, nor defends his choice of genre. By refusing to acknowledge this important debate, Cyrano both provokes and insults the literary elite.

Skirting around this controversial topic, Cyrano finds other justifications for his work, although, as we shall see, these arguments serve only to mock literary conventions still further. The author begins by recalling that he has only been under the patronage of the duc for a year, yet he aggrandizes his 'glorieux' patronage, informing us that he considers his entire life before then to have been lost:

[89] This also contrasts sharply with the multiple prefatory pieces in obvious praise of Balzac's letters that open his collection.

> Il y a près d'un an que je me donnai à Vous; et depuis cet heureux moment, tenant pour perdu tout le temps de ma vie que j'ai passé ailleurs qu'à votre service, et ne me contentant pas de vous avoir dévoué tout ce qui me reste, j'ai tâché de réparer cette perte en vous en consacrant encore les commencements; et parce que le passé ne se peut rappeler pour vous être offert, vous présenter au moins tout ce qui m'en demeure, et faire en sorte par ce moyen que n'ayant pas eu l'honneur d'être à Vous toute ma vie, toute ma vie ne laisse pas en quelque façon d'avoir été pour Vous.[90]

It is not enough, Cyrano argues, to devote the rest of his life to the duc; he must 'réparer cette perte' by devoting even 'les commencements' to his patron. It is through this 'moyen', he claims, 'que n'ayant pas eu l'honneur d'être à Vous toute ma vie, toute ma vie ne laisse pas en quelque façon d'avoir été pour Vous'. The author again plays with temporalities, here quite remarkably suggesting a retroactive patronage. Curiously enough, however, the author finds this justification inadequate. He continues to expand his reasoning, this time with the introduction of a key word: 'D'ailleurs'. A sudden change of tone and setting appears:

> D'ailleurs, Monseigneur, vous savez que de toutes les offrandes qui se présentaient à Dieu dans l'ancienne loi, il n'(y) en avait point de si agréables que celles qui se faisaient des premiers fruits, quoiqu'ils ne soient pas ordinairement les meilleurs…[91]

The author somersaults from one line of reasoning to another, undermining the solidity of his argument. As the dedication nears its end, he places himself, provocatively, within a religious context. Likening himself to a good Christian offering his first

[90] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.
[91] Ibid.

harvests, in this case his early writings, to the Lord, Cyrano suggests that by publishing his letters he is doing what any good Christian would and should do.[92]

It is important to take into consideration the author's further justification:

> et s'il est permis d'ajouter une chose profane en suite d'une si sainte, vous n'ignorez pas non plus que les Athéniens ne pensaient pas pouvoir faire de présent plus agréable à Apollon qu'en envoyant leur première chevelure à son temple de Delphes, et lui présentant ces premières productions de leur cerveau.[93]

Here, he juxtaposes his first reasoning that he argues is 'si sainte' alongside what he now confesses will be 'profane'. Cyrano subverts the Christian subtext of the dedication by comparing it with the 'profane' material to come.[94] With a brief apology, 's'il est permis', we move swiftly to images of pagan religion, Greek civilisation, and the Athenians' sacrifice to their god Apollo.

In the climax of the dedication, with pagan sacrifice in mind, Cyrano reasons that his early work, like the hair that the ancients sacrificed to their gods, is strong, yet the reader is left wondering whether to take the author's words in earnest. This is not a particularly unusual topos; moreover, Cyrano takes it from one ancient context and places it in another and his choice of reference to hair as a point of reference appears unpoetic. On the contrary, the author's comparison of the production of his writing to hair growth is comical. His conclusion confirms this:

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[92] See the references to the harvest festivals in the Bible, Exodus 23.16; Leviticus 23.9-22.
[93] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.
[94] Again, reminiscent of Théophile's irony in the 'Préface' to the *Œuvres diverses* (1623) : 'Si Dieu me faisait jamais la grâce de traitter des matières Sainctes, comme mon emploi serait plus digne, mon travail serait plus soigneux', p. 12.

> C'est *ce* qui me fait espérer, Monseigneur, que Vous ne refuserez pas l'offrande que je Vous fais de ces ouvrages, et que Vous ne trouverez pas mauvais que je me dise, aussi bien qu'au commencement de ces lettres, qu'au commencement de l'Agrippine, Monseigneur,
>
> Votre très humble, très obéissant,
> et très obligé serviteur,
> De Cyrano Bergerac.[95]

Based on the alliance between his hair (and thus his mind) and the value of his work, it is 'ce' that Cyrano hopes will finally persuade his patron of the merits of his letters. Cyrano's comedic insistence on the organic value of both his writing and the growth of his hair, like the 'premiers fruits' above, marks a distinct departure from the literary traditions of *imitatio* and the need to pay homage to the ancients. This mockery constitutes a rejection of the classical model. If one considers the dedication in its entirety and the distinct lack of reference to any established aesthetic or moral code of authority, Cyrano clearly detaches his work from such models in an attempt to carve out his own unique and subversive epistolary model.

ii. *Un procédé si étrange*, or A Lesson in Reading?

According to the dedicatory opening, the author's decision to publish his letters at all is difficult to explain. In between the need to devalue his work, but also, conversely, to persuade his patron of its value, the reader is provided with no clear reasoning. The ambiguous motivations behind Cyrano's project are unconventional relative to other

[95] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 54 (my italics).

published collections of the time and the authorial voice fluctuates between arguments. Indeed, his readers might wonder what it is that they are dealing with here.

They should not be surprised that the author himself confesses to the production and collection of these letters as 'un procédé si étrange'.[96] Cyrano begins by questioning the dilemma: 'Que direz-Vous, Monseigneur, d'un procédé si étrange? Vous croirez, peut-être, que c'est manquer de respect pour Vous'. An important turning point then follows: 'J'espère, néanmoins, Monseigneur, que mon respect et mon zèle vous seront trop connus pour attribuer la liberté que je prends'. Cyrano alludes to his own writing practices when he mentions 'liberté' and it is clear from the literary forms in the dedication that his freedom involves the subversion and defiance of certain literary traditions. No wonder then that Cyrano refers to his approach as 'étrange' if we consider the etymological significance of this word to mean 'outside of'. In the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) it is defined as: 'esloigné, de lointain, de dehors' and '[ce] qui n'est pas dans l'ordre et dans l'usage commun'. This echoes the initial difficulty of defining the words 'caprices' and 'folies'. The author hints to the reader that his letters will deliberately defy traditional categorisation: this is Cyrano's 'procédé'.

His willingness to profess this transgressive approach distinguishes him from other epistolary writers of the time but is reminiscent of Rabelais's prologues, useful as a point of comparison for my study on Cyrano. Coleman emphasizes the 'persona' that Rabelais creates in his prologues and that this is 'essential in a book where irony and parody play a large role' because it 'prepares the reader for the multiplicity of

[96] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 53.

dimensions in Rabelais's handling of reality and fiction in the books themselves'.[97] For Cyrano, the dedication (as for Rabelais, the prologue) is an exercise in reading that prepares the reader for the later liberties to come. By playing with the framework of the double *énonciation* in the dedication and setting up false levels of interpretation for the reader, and by deliberately obscuring the extent of the authenticity of his project and the authority of the authorial voice, Cyrano hints at the *jeu d'esprit* that will define his collection and, at the same time, defy literary conventions.[98] By subverting what it is that is genuine and false about his collection, Cyrano creates an authority of another kind.

Before I turn to look in more detail at the rest of Cyrano's collection of letters, it is important to place the dedication alongside the letters to come. The format of this opening begins 'Monseigneur', is thirty-three lines long and concludes with the familiar epistolary ending:

> Votre très humble, très obéissant,
> et très obligé serviteur,
> De Cyrano Bergerac.[99]

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[97] Coleman, *Rabelais*, p. 44.

[98] I refer to Alain Cantillon's use of the term *énonciation*. See in particular, *Le Pari-de-Pascal: étude littéraire d'une série d'énonciations* (Paris: Vrin/EHESS, 2014). An *énonciation* can be understood as an act of communication; the way in which something is spoken. By considering the *énonciations* in a text, one can trace the argumentative and persuasive strategies used by an author. In the case of letters, in particular, through the *énonciations*, the focus can be as much on the addressee of the letter as the letter-writer. This facilitiates a move away from the restrictive and not very helpful question of who is writing, which in the case of Pascal, according to Cantillon – and also Cyrano, I add – does not aid with our understanding of their work. Instead, we can look more closely at how an author uses language; how multiple layers of narrative are established; at the author's writing practices; whilst also taking into account the context of production.

[99] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 54.

It may seem obvious to state that this dedication takes the form of a letter itself. And indeed there is little disparity between the dedication and the letters that follow. In fact, as I have shown, the temporal uncertainty and retroactive patronage of the introduction takes away any claim to historical accuracy, placing the authorial voice in a constructed, fictional setting. The need to situate the dedication in relation to the letters seems increasingly important. What is the nature of the authorial voice in the different (or not so different) setting of the letters themselves? What happens when the double *énonciation* becomes a triple *énonciation*?

B. Playing with multiple 'énonciations'

The Table (see Appendix) shows how Cyrano's letters take on many generic forms. There are satirical letters, love letters, letters as prose poems, political letters, even letters that appear to follow the humanist tradition of *Pro* and *Contra*.[100] Some of the letters bear a title while others directly name an addressee. As I shall now demonstrate in more detail, fictional and real headings, as well as ambiguous signatures, coexist.

The opening dedication established the relationship between writer and patron and, through the published collection, sets up a double *énonciation* between writer and reader in the letters that follow. How does the introduction of a new addressee function as we move more clearly into the realm of letter writing? If the letter itself presupposes

[100] See Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, for more on the multitude of sources and models that could have influenced Cyrano. See also, Alain Génetiot, *Les Genres lyriques mondains (1630-1660). Étude des poésies de Voiture, Vion d'Alibray, Sarasin et Scarron* (Geneva: Droz, 1990).

a further exchange as the *énonciations* multiply, how does the authorial voice now interact with these 'new' voices as it moves within this web of different structures and identities?

i. The Addressee

A letter obviously entails two interlocutors: it is one half of a dialogue; between letter-writer and receiver. In Cyrano's letters, who is the addressee? Is Cyrano writing to real-life acquaintances? Are these real letters? Or are the names of the addressees and the letters themselves in fact entirely fictional?

Cyrano's letter headings make these difficult questions to answer: some do indeed look like they might be addressed to real people while with others it is not clear. Some letters refuse the notion of an addressee altogether, for example, and take the form of prose poems, such as 'Sur l'ombre que faisaient des Arbres dans l'Eau', 'D'un cyprès', 'D'une Tempête'. Other titles omit the subject of the letter, such as the ambiguous 'Sur le même sujet' and 'Autre'. Some letters have an addressee but are addressed to groups or classes of things rather than to individuals: 'les Sorciers', 'les Médecins'. Another subset does not name the addressee but refers to him or her by some quality indicative of the subject: 'le Duelliste', 'un pilleur de pensée', 'un liseur de Romans'. In some circumstances the collective noun is distinguished by the addition of an adjective, as in the case of 'un gros homme', yet this is no more revealing of a particular individual.

The indefinite article only serves to emphasize this impersonal naming and the qualities appear detached from any one individual.

Of course, some letters do name individuals, such as those 'Contre Scarron' and to 'Messire Jean'. There are no footnotes to assure his readers of the addressee's identity, however: they might think that the former letter is addressed to the writer, Paul Scarron, although they cannot be certain; and who is Messire Jean? The majority of the letters mask the identity of the addressee. There are letters that conceal this identity by appearing to use 'insider' references, only intended to be understood by the addressee, such as 'A mes amis les buveurs d'eau' and 'Consolation pour un de ses amis, sur l'éternité de son beau-père'. Many of the letters hide the identities of their addressee by using ellipses: 'A Mademoiselle *****', 'A Monsieur de V*****', 'A madame *****', 'A monsieur *****', 'Sur une Enigme que l'auteur envoyait à Monsieur de *****'. The letters also use pseudonyms or abbreviated initials. Are these supposed to be any clearer in revealing the addressee's identity? The letter 'Contre les Frondeurs', for example, is headed 'A Monsieur DLMLVLF', which is thought to refer to De La Mothe Le Vayer Le Fils. Then there are the two letters 'Pour' and 'Contre' Soucidas, an anagram of Cyrano's friend turned enemy, d'Assoucy. Again, there are no footnotes explaining these references – something they might expect, given that the letters are in a published collection – and all the reader can do is guess at a name.[101]

Should the reader feel defeated? The process of decoding all the names in Cyrano's letters is an unnecessary venture. It is also an impossible task because the names, real or

[101] Cyrano's lack of notes to his references contrasts to the methods of d'Aubignac, a contemporary of Cyrano's, who includes copious onomastic explanations.

fictional, only exist so as to tease Cyrano's readers. If they try to decode the identity of the addressee, they miss the collection's defining characteristic: its playfulness. This defining trait only becomes obvious when one considers the collection as a whole – an approach that scholars, to date, have neglected. When one considers the variety of letter headings, however, one can see the extent of Cyrano's literary techniques. The question of *who* the addressees are becomes less important. Instead it is more interesting to consider the effects of Cyrano's writing: how do these names operate in the collection of letters? What is achieved through a freedom of forms?

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Cyrano's use of ellipses in the letters, for example in 'A Mademoiselle ***', provides a good case study with which to begin. These headings stand out by their titles alone, indicating a person, but they also differentiate themselves from the rest of the collection by virtue of their mystery. While these letters do not reveal the identity of the addressee, the ellipses imply that these letters are addressed to particular individuals whom the letter-sender knows but wishes to conceal from the wider reading public. The typography blatantly announces that concealment is at play and this technique therefore elicits a response from the reader. It is a call for engagement because, not only is the reader encouraged to imagine who the addressee might be, but invited to consider what controversy could have called for the name to be hidden in the first place. The ellipses create the illusion that different levels and hierarchies of readership exist: that there might be readers 'in the know' in the letter-writer's circle of friends, who are in no doubt about the identity of the addressee.

With today's modern edition of Cyrano's collection of letters and the copious footnotes guiding the reader as to these hidden names, everyone can be 'in the know'. Unfortunately, however, this makes it all too easy to overlook the ways in which Cyrano writes. In the first printed edition of the collection there are no explanations. The simplicity of the titles 'A Mademoiselle ***' and 'A Monsieur de V***' provide no helpful clues for Cyrano's readers and yet their imagination is stirred: the author must know these to be real people, otherwise why would he conceal his or her name?

It is necessary to scrutinize the content of the letters for further evidence. What other clues are there? In 'A Monsieur de V***', the reader learns that he was once a friend of the letter-writer's but is no longer, and the reader wonders why exactly they have fallen out. The text offers only a few clues, and some of these imply that the addressee might be a nobleman and that it is his social networking that has offended the letter-writer. The writer accuses his old friend of only being interested in expanding the nobility, specifically 'la multiplication de la Noblesse', and of exaggerating his noble connections: 'qui fait passer les moindres dont il est visité sous le titre de Comtes et de Marquis'.[102] Using sarcasm, the letter-sender draws a parallel between the nobleman's inflated 'talent' and that of a novelist's fictional – that is to say false – fabrications: 'Les auteurs romanesque[s] que vous connaissez donnent bien des empires à tel qui souvent n'avait pas possédé deux arpents de terre; mais votre talent est si égal au leur qu'il vous met en droit d'user des mêmes privilèges'.[103] In short, the nobleman is talentless and must steal his ideas from other literary writers: 'vous parlez tout comme eux, et qu'à

[102] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 148.
[103] Ibid.

chaque moment vous vomissez et *Cassandre* et *Polexandre* si crus qu'on pense voir dans votre bouche le papier dessous les paroles'.[104]

Using the letter to demonstrate his own wit, the letter-writer fixates on his enemy's remarkable height, thus playing on the pun of 'un grand homme': not only is he a nobleman, and therefore high-ranking, he is literally large, like a very tall tree, 'un cèdre ou un sapin'.[105] The writer takes his insults further when he stages his snide remarks in an aristocratic setting, a seventeenth-century tennis court, and therefore controversially undermines the social and political status symbols of Ancien Régime France: 'Comment! Vous êtes capable par votre ombre seule de noircir un jeu de paume tout entier'.[106] The writer's emphasis on his 'grandeur' comically parodies his opponent's exaggeration of his noble roots. The truth, however, is that the nobleman's greatness is excessive, 'démesuré', and that in reality '[il n'est] qu'une bûche'.[107] He thus, metaphorically speaking, chops his opponent down to size. The wider implication is more damaging, however: as he loses his height, he also loses his rank and, with that, his power.

It is unclear precisely how and in what way the letter-writer himself is involved in his adversary's scheming aggrandizement and the reader wonders why he feels the need to mock his opponent so bitterly, although part of the pleasure also lies in the letter's display of wit. The writer hints at plagiarism, but it is not clear whether the nobleman

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[104] Ibid. *Cassandre* (1642) is a novel by Gautier de Coste de La Caprenède and was well known at the time Cyrano was writing. *Polexandre* (1632) is a novel by Marin Le Roy de Gomberville and it, too, was fairly successful.
[105] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 149.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

has taken his ideas from the current plaintiff or someone else. There is a further suggestion of rivalry when the writer places himself in the aristocrat's place and both act, momentarily, on an equal social footing: 'car j'aurais possible gagné à ce jeu-là une Principauté'.[108] After all this, however, the reader is no closer to identifying the addressee. The references to social rank and the lowering of the nobleman's position are all the reader has to go by: the letter 'A Monsieur de V***' reveals nothing of the addressee's identity.

A playful tension is produced between the contents of this very personal letter and the partially named addressee, 'V'. The caricature of 'Monsieur de V' is so particular that the reader is sure that its original intended audience (Monsieur de V?) will know very well that this accusatory letter is meant for him. Why publish such a libellous letter at all? And why bother to include the mysterious and teasing first initial rather than mask the name entirely? The effects produced by these contradictions arouse the reader's curiosity. By creating such a cryptic title, Cyrano seems to be leading the reader down multiple avenues of inquiry, none of which may be true.

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This is seen elsewhere in Cyrano's œuvre through different literary techniques. The acronyms and pseudonyms are particularly provocative in that they do not erase but reconstruct the identity of the addressee. In this case the name of the addressee is actively changed. In an era of history where a person's name held great social

[108] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 148.

significance, revealing social rank and position in society, the reconstruction of names, or re-naming, had the potential to cause outrage.[109] Cyrano's re-naming practices in his œuvre therefore take on a new power. His tactics are bold and provocative and they would have undoubtedly attracted the reader's attention. With this in mind, let us take for example the particularly long acronym, 'DLMLVLF'.[110] This name becomes something new on paper to those who know its referent; to those who do not, it is an especially teasing puzzle: what could these letters possibly signify? There is a similar change in the metamorphosis of d'Assoucy into 'Soucidas', a new name that plays on the word 'souci'.[111] This fusion, through anagram and onomatopoeia, produces a hybrid identity, of a person whose name embodies worry and, possibly, gambling if the 'd'As' is read as an ace of cards. His name now carries negative symbolic weight. By transforming his adversary's name, the writer vanquishes his opponent in another clever game of wits: first, by taking his name away, and thereby stripping him of his title, his identity and respect, and, second, by bestowing upon him a new insulting title.

Those letters that enigmatically replace the name of the addressee with an epithet are also effective: 'Contre un médisant', 'Contre un poltron', 'Contre un gros homme', 'Contre un pilleur de pensée', 'Pour une dame rousse'. As I shall now show, in these transformations the author dismantles the subject's identity and reduces it to some

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[109] This is particularly pertinent given Théophile's insistence on the defence of his name in the 'Au lecteur' to his *Œuvres diverses* (1623): 'qui n'ont abuzé de mon nom que pour l'utilité de la vente de leurs Livres', p. 3. In light of this, one cannot help but read Cyrano's name calling as a satirical gesture.
[109] On the power of names in seventeenth-century France see the following article and book chapter by Delphine Denis: 'Lire le nom propre de fiction au XVII^{e} siècle' in *Littérature*, 140 (2005), pp. 90-101; 'Le statut du nom propre au XVII^{e} siècle: glanes grammaticales, perspectives littéraires', in *Le langage, le style et le sens. Études offertes à Anne-Marie Garagnon* (Paris: L'improviste, 2005), pp. 31-40. See also the work by Hélène Merlin-Kajman, 'Une troisième espèce de simple dignité, ou la civilité entre l'honneur et la familiarité', in *Dire et vivre l'ordre social en France sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005).
[110] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 217.
[111] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 143.

quality in order to subjugate his opponent. This is reminiscent of the transformation earlier of 'Monsieur de V' into a tree.

In the letter 'Contre un médisant', the opponent once more showcases his clever wit by assuming the qualities of a slanderer through the image of an all-consuming beast: 'le Créateur n'a donné à ceux de votre espèce une langue que pour avaler, et non pas pour parler'.[112] A distinction is thus made from the letter-writer who, through the words he is now writing, automatically gains an elevated position, unlike his opponent, as a man of reason. In this *jeu d'esprit*, the plaintiff argues that, like an animal who can only follow basic instincts, 'une âme basse, comme la vôtre, ne saurait naturellement s'empêcher de médire'.[113] The slanderer must, like a dog, heed his commands, 'cessez de mordre', or else, he has been warned, the plaintiff could take further action: 'autrement, j'aurais appliqué à vos maux de rate un plus solide et plus puissant antidote que le discours'.[114] The letter-writer reduces the 'Médisant' to a beast who can be brutally beaten, tortured, 'en vous brisant les os', and thus incapacitated.[115]

As the reader soon discovers, the letter 'Pour une dame rousse' is not actually a letter in her defence. Rather than provide a eulogy, the letter-writer uses this platform vigorously to attack all those who persecute red-haired persons. He creates a frightening portrait of his anonymous opponent who is '[un] monstre à cent têtes', and thus turns the imagery of a dangerous redhead against his adversary.[116] As Furetière writes, 'un monstre' is 'contre l'ordre de la nature', and so the roles switch and it is now the persecutor of

[112] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 136.
[113] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 135.
[114] Ibid.
[115] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 136.
[116] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 92.

redheads, the letter-writer argues, who defies nature.[117] There are no clues to suggest that the writer has a particular redhead in mind. Several times he refers to a cryptic 'M...', who is noted for her beauty and charm: 'adorable M...', 'la beauté de M...', 'belle M...'. Yet, aside from her red hair, there is nothing personal that might distinguish her.

Instead, the letter 'Pour une dame rousse' is clearly an opportunity for the letter-writer to experiment with a persona that he can use for other means: a parody of a *lettre amoureuse*. It is also an instance of the genre of the mock encomium.[118] In this letter, even more so than in the others I have looked at so far, the name, 'dame rousse', operates as a fictional prop. The writer is blatantly ironic when he advises 'Ne pensez point que ce discours soit une hyperbole', and the comedy of the letter takes a farcical and dramatic turn when he argues that we should praise redheads because the Biblical Adam, too, had red hair.[119] But, as he explains in the conclusion, this has, ultimately, been an exercise in freedom: 'de promener ma liberté'.[120]

What is most interesting about the letter 'Contre un gros homme' is less the writer's descriptions of his opponent's hefty size, to which he compares 'le globe de la terre', than the process of creating this character.[121] The letter-writer considers himself a portraitist, 'je donne votre portrait à la postérité', and explains that he is leaving evidence for future generations: 'un jour [la postérité] sera bien aise de savoir comment

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[117] On early modern monsters, see Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges* (Genève: Droz, 1977) and Wes Williams, *Monsters and their Meanings in Early Modern Culture: Mighty Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also, *Monster Theory* ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
[118] See Patrick Dandrey, *L'éloge paradoxal de Gorgias à Molière* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997).
[119] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 93, p. 95.
[120] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 96.
[121] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 162.

vous étiez fait'.[122] The writer envisions himself as a historian who is doing a good service for the public in chronicling the times as they really are. Of course, the reader suspects that the writer is, yet again, out to prove his satirical skills. Soon, he makes accusations of deceit and deception:

> Eh! bien, qu'en dites-vous, le portrait est-il ressemblant, pour n'y avoir donné qu'une touche? par la description de votre sphère de chair, dont tous les membres sont si ronds que chacun fait un cercle, et par l'arrondissement universel de votre épaisse masse, n'ai-je pas appris à vos neveux que vous n'étiez point fourbe, puisque vous marchez rondement?[123]

In what is essentially something of a threat, the writer will reveal the man's true identity. In doing so, comic effects are produced: by playing on the pun of 'rondement', which can mean loyally or honestly, the reader learns that, in fact, this man is not an *honnête homme* at all, but 'un fourbe'. What is interesting is how the writer teases the reader with the idea of revealing the truth. He claims he will show the public, his adversary's 'spectateurs', and thus the letter-sender's 'reader', what he really is. The irony, of course, is that he never actually names him. Cyrano's reader is left, once more, wondering at the wider purpose of the letter and why Cyrano would ever publish it. In doing so, the reader also takes great pleasure from the possibility that it is very much a *jeu d'esprit*.

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When the modern-day critic considers Cyrano's manuscripts, they can see significant differences between the manuscript and printed versions of these letters. The letter

[122] Ibid.
[123] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 163.

published under the title ‘Contre un pilleur de pensée’ was originally entitled ‘Contre la Mothe brigand de pensées’, referring to La Mothe Le Vayer. ‘Contre un gros homme’ was originally entitled ‘Contre le gras Montfleury, mauvais auteur, et comédien’, referring to a well-known actor and dramatist of the time. Names are also omitted within the letters themselves. The letter entitled ‘A un Comte de bas aloi’ originally twice revealed the subject’s identity as Charles Girveau. The name is removed in the printed version and replaced with simply ‘un comte’. No longer is the comte Charles Girveau, he is now ‘de bas aloi’. This editing encourages the reader to ask whether Cyrano’s letters are in fact addressed to real people. Yet, if the reader considers that some of the letters in the printed version still bear names directly, such as the unambiguous ‘Contre Scarron’ and ‘Pour Messire Jean’, and even one of the more controversial letters, ‘Contre Soucidas’ (such an easily decoded pseudonym), their line of inquiry quickly changes. Censors may have suppressed certain identities (scholars cannot be sure whose decision it was, Cyrano’s, an editor’s, an official censor’s), but this does not detract from the final result: the collection’s name games are all that the reader perceives.

Furthermore, the names in the printed collection do not necessarily aid the reader in uncovering the identity of the addressee. They, too, can reveal playful processes. The name Messire Jean, for example, appears in Cyrano’s other work, *L’Autre Monde*, a coincidence that suggests that the two works may have been written around the same time. In *L’Autre Monde*, Messire Jean, the preacher from Colignac, is the character who instigates the arrest of the protagonist, who bears a close resemblance to Cyrano. While modern readers may question the consequences of including this fictional character again in the letters, Cyrano’s contemporaries might have recognized that Messire Jean is also a type of pear and so the effect is quite comic. Furetière writes: ‘Messire Jean est

une poire rousse fort sucrée'. What a real name is for Cyrano is therefore not at all obvious.

The letters addressed to Scarron and d'Assoucy present the reader with other false avenues of inquiry as they appear to be part of a longer chain of correspondence. What is the significance of juxtaposing these different characters, of which some are false, others perhaps real? Cyrano intentionally blurs the real and the fictional in order to raise his reader's doubts and produce a collection that is above all playful. Of course, the reader might be led to question why the author would switch between different forms of concealment. Do different levels of concealment indicate that some letters are more controversial than others, and therefore might refer to real events and people? Questions are raised about his intentions, for instance in relation to various scandals that may have required names to be concealed, but if his readers really try to decipher these they miss the point of Cyrano's literary games and their wider comic effects.

On this note I shall consider the letter 'Pour une dame rousse' once more. Here, the letter-writer alludes to a censor who has interrupted his letter writing process:

> J'en étais là dans ma lettre, adorable M…, lorsqu'un censeur à contresens m'arracha la plume et me dit que c'était mal se prendre au panégyrique de louer une jeune personne de beauté, parce qu'elle était rousse. Moi, ne pouvant punir cet orgueilleux plus sensiblement que par le silence, je pris une autre plume, et continuai ainsi.[124]

In reading the letter in print, the wider reader knows that the letter-sender has ignored the censor. As they read on, they realize that the so-called 'second letter' he claims to

[124] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 93.

commence is, in fact, still the first. Cyrano openly plays with the possibility that a censor could have been involved in the writing process. The reader, in this case, thinks it is unlikely and suspects the letter-writer is joking. However, the wider impact for the collection as a whole is that it draws the reader's attention to the possibility of censorship elsewhere. Cyrano leads his audience, yet again, down a potentially false avenue of inquiry.

Perhaps Cyrano *does* address a letter to Scarron, and *does* intend to slander his enemies Chappelle and d'Assoucy. But the reader can never know Cyrano's intentions for sure. Rather, Cyrano's writing practices throughout the collection of letters, as he moves between different structures of disclosure and concealment, reveal him celebrating the freedom he endorses in the opening dedication. Without the epistolary genre and its framework of multiple *énonciations*, Cyrano would not be able to achieve the comic effects he seeks. By juxtaposing letters that visibly play with the identity of the addressee, the letters encourage the reader to doubt the authenticity of the collection. Thus it is the visible process of games and the erroneous paths of inquiry that are important in the collection and not so much whether an addressee is actually real. Of that we can never be certain.

ii. The Authorial Voice and Ambiguous Signatures

Before I conclude, I shall consider one of the other ways in which Cyrano manipulates the setting up of multiple *énonciations* in his collection and how he continues to engage

his reader's curiosity. This section will look at the role of the letter-writer, a voice that in a printed collection of letters might claim to be that of the author. From the opening pages of the first published collection of letters, the reader knows that the author is Cyrano: the letters have all been collected together in the same 'ouvrage' under the heading 'Les Œuvres Diverses de Mr de Cyrano Bergerac' and the opening dedication to the collection is signed with Cyrano's name. The Table demonstrates that only a few of the letters explicitly bear the author's name: six out of fifty-eight say 'de Bergerac', a further two letters contain the initials DB, one DC and another DCDB. If the reader has read the author's name on the title page, this is surely enough, however, for him or her to associate the 'real-life' Cyrano, as author, with the Cyrano of the text. An early relationship is therefore established between author and signatory.

Why does Cyrano sign some of the letters in the collection in his name? The Table reveals that, like the diverse headings of the letters, the signatures also change, and the boundaries between reality and fiction become increasingly unclear. What is the significance of the author playing on his own signature, revealing it when he chooses but hiding it, manipulating it, elsewhere? Why would the author carry his name into a fictional setting?

All seems straightforward in the signatures of the first four letters of Cyrano's collection, 'Contre l'Hiver', 'Pour le Printemps', 'Pour l'Été' and 'Contre l'Automne', which end 'Votre serviteur'. At this point there is apparent consistency and the signature is not important. This is especially so given that it was not uncommon practice in epistolary collections of the time to exclude a named signature if there was a name on the title page of the collection; although readers might have remembered that Balzac

signs his letters, as well as the fact that his name appears at the top of every other page in the printed collection: a constant reminder to his reader.[125] In Cyrano's œuvre, the reader discovers that the pattern is inconsistent. When he or she reaches the letter 'Description II de l'Aqueduc, ou la Fontaine d'Arcueil', Cyrano's name suddenly appears: the letter is signed 'Votre serviteur, De Bergerac'. Why the sudden need to emphasize the author? Is this a real letter that Cyrano composed?

Of course, the reader has been warned that these letters are 'des caprices' in the opening dedication. But what games should he or she expect? Naming Cyrano has raised the stakes of the inquiry, throwing the fictional framework of the letters off-balance. As the author's voice moves freely between reality and fiction, the meaning of 'caprice' is pushed to a different level, where even the authorial voice cannot be trusted.

Familiar processes emerge when Cyrano plays with different temporalities. Because of the ongoing feud between d'Assoucy and Cyrano, 'Contre Soucidas' is a letter capable of being situated in the present moment, in a real as opposed to fictional context. The inclusion of a timescale, as the writer imagines his adversary's death, makes his arguments more convincing: 'je trouve bon que vous viviez encore demain, ou que vous mouriez dès aujourd'hui'.[126] The same effect is produced by a contemporary reference to d'Assoucy's work: 'Vous espérez sans doute m'attendrir par la dédicace de quelque

[125] In Cyrano's printed collection of letters, to the contrary, it is the title of the letter that spans the width of the heading of both pages. Although it is difficult to say whether this was an editorial decision or not, it certainly stands out in contrast to Balzac's letters and supports the claim that Cyrano very much intended for his name to be called into question.
[126] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 143.

ennuyeux Burlesque. […] selon que ma belle humeur me rendra miséricordieux', an allusion and a pun on d'Assoucy's, *L'Ovide en belle humeur*.[127]

In addition, there is the suggestion that this is not an isolated letter; rather, it forms part of a chain of correspondence. These letters are written in response to accusations, injuries and insults, presenting an arena of contestation in which words become actions with consequences in the wider world. The writer accuses his opponent of having insulted him: 'je trouve que vous êtes bien impudent de demeurer en vie, après m'avoir offensé!'[128] The reader is led to wonder what came before, and whether d'Assoucy ever replied. When he or she reads on to discover another letter in the collection also to d'Assoucy, 'Pour Soucidas', the illusion of correspondence is amplified. Here, the writer explicitly refers to a letter from his adversary, 'je reçus votre lettre', and there is the suggestion that the two have been exchanging words for some time.[129] After all, similar themes are raised, importantly, concerning reputation and social rank. In 'Contre Soucidas' the letter-writer attempts to vanquish his adversary by nullifying his social status and the anal references even scandalously hint at sodomy: 'si sale et si puant, qu'on doute en vous voyant si votre mère n'a point accouché de vous par le derrière!'[130] In the letter 'Pour Soucidas', the saga continues. The letter-sender suggests that he was only Soucidas's friend in return for financial compensation, without which he is adamant he would never have risked sullying his own reputation:

> car ne pensez pas qu'à moins de quarante pistoles j'eusse voulu salir ma réputation en prostituant ma compagnie à vos promenades; et que je me fusse tant de fois donné la peine de

[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 169.
[130] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses,* p. 143.

> protester, contre ma conscience, que vous étiez le plus honnête homme du monde.[131]

The reader wonders at the morality of the letter-writer in all this: how can a voice be trusted that claims to have previously lied 'tant de fois'? Despite attacking Soucidas, the letter has other advantages for the letter-writer, enabling him to showcase his wit. Some letters, it seems, have been chosen to be included in the collection over others, and one wonders if these are simply the best exercises in style.

A tension is produced when elsewhere the authorial voice cunningly captures the reader's attention by including him or her, willingly or not, in his group of witnesses. In 'Contre Soucidas', the letter-writer is never alone in his judgements: 'je ne suis pas le seul'.[132] In a powerful rhetorical gesture, he orders his adversary, through the imperative, to seek a second opinion: 'demandez ce que vous êtes à tout le monde'.[133] But the answer is already given: 'et vous verrez si tout le monde ne dit pas que vous n'avez rien d'homme'.[134] The writer makes his disputes those of the public, and the reader is consequently led down further false avenues of inquiry. This is a tactic that occurs elsewhere in the collection. In the letter 'Contre Scarron', where the letter-writer criticizes the writer Paul Scarron, it is unclear whether the authorial voice is speaking to his adversary or to the reader of the published letter. The opening suggests that the public has solicited a critique from the letter-writer, 'Vous me demandez quel jugement je fais de ce renard' and, later, he imagines his reader's response, 'Vous me

[131] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 169.
[132] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 144.
[133] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 145.
[134] Ibid.

reprocherez, peut-être'.[135] The levels of *énonciation* are not obvious: the ambiguous, unnamed pronoun, 'Vous', is extended to include the public reader. The verb choice, 'demandez', also implies that the public and letter-writer have been in communication. The reader of the published collection cannot help but wonder, is this a letter for me?

The authorial voice enhances the effects of the letter's name games by playing with the possibility that the public reader has a voice too, alongside the many 'voices' of the published collection. These literary techniques suggest that the collection has indeed been reworked for publication and, yet, to what extent, the reader is still unsure. When the modern critic turns to the manuscript copy of 'Contre Soucidas', however, Cyrano's writing practices are quite clearly revealed. The manuscript copy of the letter bears the signature 'De Bergerac', but the printed copy only reads 'Votre serviteur'. Yet much more is at play than just censorship. Keeping the context of Cyrano and d'Assoucy in mind, a reader within Cyrano's circle would inevitably have associated these letters with Cyrano, regardless of the signature: the pseudonym, 'Soucidas', would have been obvious. Furthermore, the wider reader, too, is likely to make a connection with Cyrano given his name on the title page. Cyrano's masking of the writer's identity, when all along both author and addressee are quite obvious, is evidence of a wider game at stake.

For Cyrano's reader who does not have access to the manuscripts, literary processes become apparent when they compare the different letters in the collection as a whole. I shall now look at 'Contre Soucidas', a letter that names, and the letter 'Autre', a letter that does not. The Cyrano scholar, Lacroix, concludes that 'cette lettre ['Autre'] est

[135] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, pp. 167-68.

incontestablement dirigée contre Dassoucy'.[136] The content of the letter, however, demonstrates little such evidence. Even if the reader considers this letter alongside 'Contre Soucidas', or is aware of the bitter feud between Cyrano and d'Assoucy, the text contains no clear allusion to d'Assoucy or to his work. There is the similar theme of a friendship having turned sour: 'Par l'affection que je vous ai portée, dont vous étiez indigne'.[137] It is also suggested that the letter-sender's adversary may be in prison: 'et Socrate ne cessa pas d'être le premier homme de l'univers quand il eut écrasé les poux qui le mordaient dans son cachot'.[138] The suggestion that the incarceration may be d'Assoucy's, not least because of the mention of Socrates, a figure of authority at the time for those who sought to question the doctrine of the Church, is not obvious, however, to those outside of Cyrano's inner circle.[139] Furthermore, unlike in the letters 'Contre Soucidas' and 'Pour Soucidas', there is no pseudonym in 'Autre' that may be decoded. Is this a letter therefore that refuses to reveal anything? The letter's ambiguous but dramatic signature catches the reader's attention and he or she is suddenly stirred from apathy:

> sachant que vous aviez, en moi seul,
>
> Votre Partie
> Votre Juge et
> Votre Bourreau.[140]

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[136] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 141.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] See the article by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, 'Socrate libertin', in Ettore Lojacono, ed., *Socrate in Occidente* (Grassina: Le Monnier, 2004) pp. 33-65. Of course, the figure of Socrates had been previously appropriated by the Church and had become a respectable reference. Christian authorities who sought to condemn libertines argued that the use of Socrates was therefore a strategic gesture: libertines could mask their true subversive intentions by naming Socrates, and thus appear to follow a respectable Christian tradition, whilst in reality promoting an alternative philosophy.
[140] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 142.

The lack of a named sender does not render this signature any less powerful. The reader is invited to question the source of this threatening, self-reflexive voice as it comments retroactively on the letter it claims to have written. The empty title of the letter, 'Autre', contrasts sharply with the signatory's symbolically charged persona. The result is that the unidentified addressee becomes even more mysterious to the reader. To whom is such a violent threat being made? When the writer suddenly stops midway through his attack, to question the identity of his opponent, the reader of the published collection is also encouraged to contemplate this dilemma through the powerful rhetoric: 'Enfin, vous n'êtes pas homme; et que diable êtes-vous donc?'[141]

Given that the majority of letters terminate in the standard form of 'Votre serviteur', the ending, 'Votre Partie / Votre juge et / Votre Bourreau', makes a tyrannical mark given that it can be all three at once and thus free to punish at it sees fit. Yet this is not the only example of such transgression. The authorial voice embraces other liberties. In the letter 'Thésée à Hercule', the letter-writer is 'Thésée', a mythological figure and, curiously, the authorial voice encourages the reader to doubt this designation by the question mark that accompanies the signature: 'Thésée?'[142] The voice of the writer playfully asks to be questioned and the reader finds him or herself becoming an active participant in the correspondence.

A similar playful effect is produced from the letter headed 'A Monsieur Le Coq' – who, according to the Erba edition, was Edouard Lecoq, 'conseiller à la première chambre

[141] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 141.
[142] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 233.

des Enquêtes'.[143] The letter 'A Monsieur Le Coq' leads the reader down multiple false avenues of inquiry, although it is also most obviously a parody of a *lettre amoureuse*. Furetière writes that 'un Coq-à-l'âne' is 'un propos rompu, dont la suite n'a aucun rapport au commencement'. Ironically, however, Cyrano's letter is not 'un coq-à-l'âne', for it has a clear aim: to accuse and ridicule Monsieur Le Coq. While the reader may initially think that the letter is simply an exercise in style, he or she may also have suspected that Monsieur Le Coq is a real person. Furthermore, the contents of the letter put forward a serious accusation. The writer claims to have instructed Le Coq's wife – his 'poule'? – to reproach her husband for his adulterous liaisons, and the reader certainly wonders what the writer's own relationship with Le Coq's wife might be and the ironical tone suggests perhaps something more than friendship: 'Je lui ai fort recommandé de vous reprocher votre ingratitude, et de vous conjurer de revenir au nid de votre amiable poule'.[144]

The playfulness of this letter continues with its singular ending, 'un petit Coq-à-l'âne', that also incites a response from the reader. On the one hand, the signature could refer to the addressee of the letter, the 'Monsieur', as the syntax of the complete sentence suggests: 'et pour excuser la coquetterie de votre poule, je publierai que tout ce qu'elle en a fait n'a été que pour faire, Monsieur le Coq, un petit Coq-à-l'âne'.[145] On the other, stepping back from the text, it is clear that the positioning of 'un petit Coq-à-l'âne' follows the format of a signature. A new line, separate from the body of the letter and indented to the right, introduces it thus:

[143] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 189. See footnote a in Erba's edition.
[144] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 189.
[145] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 190.

> et pour excuser la coquetterie de votre poule, je publierai que tout ce qu'elle en a fait n'a été que pour faire, Monsieur le Coq,
>
> un petit Coq-à-l'âne.[146]

From this perspective, the signatory adopts for himself the pet name he has given his addressee. But Cyrano's games work on many levels: if one considers that the letter may have been read aloud, the listener's positioning changes too. Would the reader have paused, as the spacing might indicate, for the dramatic ending? Or continued to read the sentence as fluidly as the grammar indicates? There are several options available to the reader.

The letter 'A Monsieur Le Coq' is another good example of how the epistolary format provides a platform for Cyrano from which to perform and show off his wit whilst also parodying a love letter. The name games in this example, as in the letter 'Thésée à Hercule', are so visible to his readers that they are encouraged to question the extent of his literary performances elsewhere: are the other letters in the collection as entertaining?

I shall consider one last signature in Cyrano's collection – and it is from a letter I have already analysed: 'Pour une dame rousse'. The freedom of the signature reaches a climax in this letter when it adopts the form 'Votre je ne sais quoi'. How is the reader to interpret this ambivalent ending? In the dictionaries of the time, Richard Scholar notes

[146] Ibid.

that this seventeenth-century 'vogue-word' is defined as undefinable.[147] He emphasizes that the *Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi* 'cannot be pinned down: '[I]t remains ever on the move'.[148]

It is this notion of movement that is particularly interesting for the conclusion of the letter 'Pour une dame rousse':

> Voudriez-vous bien me promettre que ma vie ne sera point plus longue que ma servitude? Et que vous ne serez point fâchée que je me dise jusqu'à la mort, Madame,
>
> Votre je ne sais quoi.[149]

The authorial voice names itself: 'que je me dise'. It thus informs the reader that it wishes to be undefinable. But which reader is it addressing: the addressee of the letter, or the reader of the published collection? Presumably the addressee is fully aware of the identity of the sender and this is simply a pet name. To the reader, however, the name is completely unidentifiable. This signature therefore works on two levels.

Paradoxically, the *Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi* is now the author's permanent identity: 'que je me dise jusqu'à la mort'.[150] It now adopts an apparently fixed position and the tension produced from a name that is both a name and not a name perplexes the reader: its contradiction but also frustrating ambiguity make us ask whose signature it is. It is the

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[147] Richard Scholar, *The 'Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi' in Early Modern Europe: Encounters with a Certain Something* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 41. In coming to a definition, Scholar consults, in particular, the monolingual dictionaries of the time of Pierre Richelet (1680), Antoine Furetière (1690), the Académie Française (1694) and Thomas Corneille (1695), see pp. 45-48.
[148] Scholar, *The 'Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi'*, p. 59.
[149] *Lettres satiriques et amoureuses*, p. 96.
[150] Ibid.

visibility of the game that captures the reader's attention in this parody of yet another love letter. At the end they are left wondering: are they supposed to uncover any of the identities in the letters?

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The signatures of the letters, like the addressees, refuse to make the authenticity of Cyrano's project clear. The inclusion of Cyrano's name in the letters raises this question of inauthenticity to a new level, as an association is made directly between the signatures of the letters and the authorial voice. This encouragement to question is sometimes blatantly literal: as we have seen, the reader is offered a question mark as a visual guide.

From the opening dedication onwards, the reader is prepared and led to question the authority of the text. Is this not the ultimate result of an addressee and a signature that constantly metamorphose? With no one clear positioning, these are errant voices indeed. They tease and taunt the reader, inviting forms of engagement that they refuse to fulfil. The multiple *énonciations*, between *dédicataire*, the addressee and reader, create a layered web of voices, from within and outside the letters. The consequences of Cyrano's literary processes emerge only with the complicity of the reader.

iii. Comedy or Risk?

Unlike his predecessor, Balzac, Cyrano does not make any claim to defend the authenticity of his *œuvre épistolaire.* He uses the genre for quite a different purpose. The idea that his letters could be accused of artificiality or fiction does not worry him, nor does he execute his letters with regard to a 'science de la publication' designed to censor information and references for the good of a larger public.[151] Differences between the manuscript and printed versions demonstrate that some references may have been suppressed, but these are the ones that could have hindered the publication of the letters altogether, as they were controversial enough to threaten Cyrano's life.[152] Instead, as we have seen, the majority of discrepancies between print and manuscript show no consistency in naming and not-naming. These letters do not play with concealing and revealing with the intention of protecting the author's privacy, or that of his close intimates, precisely because they are not authentic letters that have been 're-edited' for print.

Cyrano's letters revel in obscuring the boundary between the real and the fictional. Any connections between the different types of voice, between certain signatures, the addressees and letter headings, only emerge in the similarity of their process. The reader may delight in questioning why Cyrano chooses to use a mask here and not there, and

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[151] Mathilde Bombart, 'La publication épistolaire: deux recueils de lettres de Jean Louis Guez de Balzac', in *De la Publication: Entre Renaissance et Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), ed. by Christian Jouhaud and Alain Viala, p. 51 and p. 53.

[152] For more on the suppression of controversial subject matter see Darmon, *Cyrano de Bergerac, Lettres satiriques et amoureuses précédées de Lettres diverses*: 'il semblerait même que certaines lettres aient été l'objet d'auto-censure […] il y aurait eu nécessité de dissimuler les provocations les plus hétérodoxes', p. 16. And in particular, Madeleine Alcover, *Cyrano relu et corrigé*.

why he might adopt such different disguises. However, trying to discover any reasonable pattern between the voices of the letters and their subject matter is ineffectual: while Cyrano reveals himself in one letter to d'Assoucy, in another his name disappears. The different ways of writing that I have considered in this chapter – masking and unmasking through ellipses, pseudonyms, acronym and word play – audaciously obscure the letters' authenticity so that Cyrano can parody and satirize. I have shown how the authorial voice manipulates the reader's position, and obscures the layers of *énonciation*. In this way, Cyrano parodies the literary *querelles* of his time and to a certain extent his use of the epistolary framework is therefore a provocative gesture. For Cyrano, however, the letters provide first and foremost a platform for literary performance; an arena in which voices can demonstrate their wit, and through which Cyrano can demonstrate his literary skill.

If the playful ways in which the letters are often written overshadows the seriousness of the subject of parody, however, it remains to be seen whether Cyrano's novel achieves the same effect. The next chapter in this thesis, which looks at Cyrano's novel, *L'Autre Monde*, will begin to reveal how the author further develops his comic mode of writing and how the multiplicity of voices found in the letters evolves in the different context of the novel. How might these multiple voices take on a new significance and function in a different framework?

Chapter II

The Peripheral Voices and their Powers of Persuasion in *L'Autre Monde*

i. Un mort hors du commun[153]

The exact reasons for Cyrano's death on 28 July 1655 are unknown. One theory is that he suffered a serious head injury during an attack on his patron, the duc d'Arpajon's, carriage the night of 10 January 1654, and passed away following a long period in convalescence. Other evidence suggests that he died from a fever, perhaps from complications following his head injury or even syphilis.[154] Either way, Cyrano was only thirty-six years old and already his life was over.

His literary career, however, would continue. 1654 had seen his first published works and, strangely, despite Cyrano's personal misfortunes, more important publications, which would fix his status as a polygraph, were to follow. The late 1650s and 1660s were the most successful years for Cyrano's literary reputation. In 1657, Cyrano's editor, Charles de Sercy, posthumously published the first half of Cyrano's travel narrative: *Les États et Empires de la Lune*. In 1662, *Les Nouvelles Œuvres* followed, including not only a reprint of Cyrano's letters but the second half of his novel:

[153] Le Bret, 'Préface' to Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 479.
[154] See Alcover's 'Biographie' on Cyrano which forms part of the introduction to her edition, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, pp. XXXVI-XXXVII and pp. LXI-LXIV.

l'Histoire comique des États et Empires du Soleil. There was clearly a market for Cyrano's work; even counterfeit copies of *La Lune* were circulating.

It is tempting, because of the publication dates, to consider *La Lune* and *Le Soleil* posterior to Cyrano's collection of letters. It is likely, however, that *La Lune* was written around the same time as some of the letters: the poet, Le Royer de Prade, references 'l'auteur de *l'Autre Monde'* in his *Œuvres poétiques* (1650), suggesting that a manuscript copy of *La Lune* was in circulation as early as seven years before publication; while there is a manuscript of the letters from 1651. There is no evidence of how the *Lune* manuscript looked at this time and it may have borne little resemblance to later copies. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that Cyrano's literary projects overlapped at some point.

In Chapter I, I demonstrated that Cyrano's letters are a parody of the epistolary genre. A second line of inquiry is whether his novel calls for a similar analysis: after all, *L'Autre Monde* references the voguish, yet controversial, subgenre of the novel, the *histoire comique* – a form that Charles Sorel, Cyrano's contemporary, had previously used in order to parody pastoral romances.[155] What does Cyrano accomplish with the genre of the novel? How is *L'Autre Monde* similar or different to his collection of letters? These are important questions to take into account in considering Cyrano's burlesque in his narrative work: is *L'Autre Monde*, like the letters, another parody?

This thesis will shortly come to address these important questions but for the moment I would like to pause to consider one of *L'Autre Monde*'s striking textual phenomena: the

[155] The *histoire comique* will be considered in more detail in Chapter III.

novel's peripheral voices. This chapter will therefore function as a case study, looking at one particular aspect of the novel. It gives an insight into the author's unusual literary forms; and thus, in many ways, it also highlights the need for a different approach to Cyrano's work. This chapter, however, is not altogether an independent study; by focusing on Cyrano's use of voices in the novel, it very much complements the previous chapter, which showed how Cyrano used to his advantage the different *énonciations* offered by the epistolary framework. This chapter will consolidate the evidence so far, that literary voices – what is said, when and how – are a striking trait of Cyrano's burlesque.

ii. Voices in Combat

I should emphasize once more the importance of considering Cyrano's letters as part of a collection: the reader can see how the precise identity of the writer or addressee is not actually that important; one of the most interesting traits of the collection is the way in which Cyrano plays with different voices through the function of the 'letter-writer'. The letters present an arena of voices, many of which argue from a point of attack or defence – who can outdo whom through witty repartee? – not altogether unlike the competitive yet playful context of a sports tournament: Cyrano's letters stage contests in which the writer can show off his literary talents and beat his opponent; and I have already looked at one letter 'A Monsieur de V***' in which the writer likens his quarrel to a tennis match.

In *L'Autre Monde*, Cyrano's literary characters – the narrator, protagonist and other dramatis personae, as well as the 'author', present in the text – are often muddled by burlesque techniques; different layers of narrative overlap. Voices open up the way in which Cyrano's burlesque can be understood; what is being argued when and how? By considering voices, hierarchies of arguments can be called into question, an approach which echoes Patrick Dandrey's research: more clarity may be found 'au point de rencontre entre la forme du discours, ses thèmes et ses modèles'.[156] The literary techniques that underpin intellectual debate in Cyrano's work must be taken into account; and one way to do this is to change the angle of observation.

To date, scholars have focused on decrypting the intellectual discourse in the novel as expressed by the central voices alone and through this restrictive lens have ignored other important voices in Cyrano's work: the females and fools, two combative factions which this chapter will uncover. They seem to play a secondary role in the novel, yet it is because of what they say, when and how, that these voices gain significance. The voices in Cyrano's letters were often quarrelsome but also playful; the peripheral voices in the novel are more militant and often subversive. They are all competing voices, however the context has evolved from a battle of wits; the reader may wonder whether comedy is still a defining trait of the novel.

The scholarship on dissimulation in libertine novels, and the emphasis on the techniques writers have had to use in order to convey controversial ideas while eluding censorship, supports my approach. At the centre of some of the most important and recent scholarship on Cyrano is the unremitting need to understand properly libertine strategy.

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[156] Dandrey, *L'éloge paradoxal de Gorgias à Molière*, p. 113.

The protagonist of *L'Autre Monde*, in particular, has caused problems on account of his mention of a 'burlesque pédagogie': what could this be?[157] Isabelle Moreau writes that in Cyrano's novel 'Il ne s'agit pas d'enseigner mais d'affranchir'; that it is 'une invitation à la réflexion […] en acceptant de se constituer en juge et arbitre de son propre savoir'.[158] Cavaillé gives equal importance to the role of the reader of libertine texts: 'C'est à l'auditeur, au lecteur de juger'; 'on choisit le lecteur que l'on veut être, en faisant parler les textes à son propre profit'.[159] Moreau suggests that the paradox of libertine pedagogy lies in the importance of the reader teaching him or herself through 'une pleine liberté de jugement'; this constitutes an 'art de penser'.[160]

This is all very well said, but it is no easy task for the reader of *L'Autre Monde*: voices compete to obscure many of the philosophical messages in the text. If dissimulation abounds, however, then new approaches are needed. This chapter takes up the invitation extended by recent scholarship, and looks beyond obvious hierarchies.

A. Unsung Heroines: Fact or Farce?

In *L'Autre Monde*, the lunar creatures disagree over what the protagonist is – 'homme', 'singe' or 'perroquet' – but agree that, whatever the species, he must be 'la femelle'.[161] The switching of masculine and female genders in the novel, and the suggestion that the

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[157] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 120.
[158] Moreau, *Guérir du sot*, p. 1110.
[159] Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation, Quelques éléments de réflexion' in *Libertinage et philosophie au XVII^e siècle*, 5 (2001), p. 82.
[160] Moreau, *Guérir du sot*, p. 475.
[161] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 75 and p. 99. This topic is taken up again in more detail in Chapter V of the thesis.

protagonist – who at times is described as female, others male – has sex with a man, has been the focus of queer theory on Cyrano, and Alcover draws a connection between the protagonist's adventures and the biographical evidence of Cyrano's relationship with fellow writer, Charles Coypeau Dassoucy.[162]

On first appearances, it seems as though there are few female characters in Cyrano's novel, compared to other *histoire comiques* of the time, by Sorel and Scarron, in which there are significant female parts. There *are* female characters in *L'Autre Monde*, however, and although they may not have an obviously central part to play, it is important to consider their role in the margins: what purpose do they serve? Three female voices deserve attention: Achab, who is Noah's daughter at the beginning of *La Lune* when the protagonist encounters Élie in the *Paradis Terrestre*; one of the unnamed 'filles de la reine' in *La Lune* who visits the protagonist when he has been imprisoned by the lunar community;[163] and the magpie Margot in *Le Soleil*, whom the protagonist encounters while on trial in the kingdom of the birds. What kind of authority do these characters have and how do they achieve it?

Cyrano does not use obvious means: the female characters are not central to the story and only play a fleeting role, appearing, at most, for a couple of pages before discreetly disappearing; at times they disrupt the plot and, thus, at best, seem a tool of suspense;

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[162] In particular, Alcover maintains that the novel is an apology for homosexuality, despite the problems of this anachronistic term. See 'Un gay trio: Cyrano, Chapelle, Dassoucy' and also her commentary in Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*. On queer identity, see Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990) and also Lewis Seifert's *Manning the Margins: Masculinity and Writing in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[163] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92. There is no straightforward translation into English of a 'fille de la reine' so I will use the French title in this paper. A 'fille de la reine' is an attendant or follower of the Queen and not as high ranking as a 'dame d'honneur'.

and they are often overshadowed by other, more dominant characters who criticize their actions. The peripheries, however, are not a less important position from which to be operating. The females compete with the main characters, and the margins offer a powerful angle from which to attack. They partake in a constant battle of voices, each trying to outdo the next.

i. Battle of the Sexes?

One of the main characteristics of the female voices is the way in which they are defined in relation to Church doctrine, which proposes a model from which they clearly deviate. Readers of *L'Autre Monde* will recognize that Christian parody is central to the text – a theme to which I shall return in more detail in Chapter V – and is staged by the main characters through their debate of doctrine. The reader wonders, however, at the purpose of a secondary subtext of female discourse.

Achab is the first female in the novel and the reader – especially if he or she has read Cyrano's letters – might wonder who or what this person is given that the name is a Latin derivative of the masculine Ahab: the name of an Israeli King in the Hebrew Bible who was known for worshipping the cult of Baal and refusing to listen to the prophets. Is Achab Ahab? After all, there are parallels between Cyrano's story and the Bible: Cyrano's 'Élie' is similar to the Biblical prophet, and in the Bible Elijah and Achab do meet. The reader may wonder why Ahab has changed sex and, even more so, been placed in the new context of Genesis.

When Cyrano was writing, religious parody had been a longstanding tradition in literature and readers would have known to read Élie's retelling of Genesis as a comic subversion.[164] The character Achab, however, is more troubling because she goes beyond the reader's expectations of a carnivalesque overturning of gender. For a start, her ambiguous name, which lies at the borders between masculine and feminine, encourages the reader to question what parody might mean for Cyrano if the position being parodied is not that obvious. In any case, the reader is encouraged to recall whether Noah had a daughter named thus; after all, her name is convincing as a Biblical reference. Multiple avenues of inquiry are created, perhaps some or all of them false, and the reader is reminded of Cyrano's name games in the letters.

In Cyrano's text Achab belongs in a twisted retelling of the story of Noah and his Ark. She abandons the Ark, taking off amidst the perilous floodwaters, in a small and flimsy rowing boat, to investigate an indefinite mass on the horizon; her shipmates are convinced that it is 'un canton de la terre', yet to be submerged by the ocean; she believes the oceans to have risen as high as the heavens and that this mass of earth is in fact the moon. From an extra-textual perspective, Achab's story is distinctive because her actions are narrated in the third person, as opposed to those of the two male characters – the protagonist and Élie – both of whom have direct speech. From a Christian perspective, her secondary place is perhaps to be expected given her status as a woman.

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[164] See Aron, *Histoire du pastiche*, p. 28. See also, 'Humour and Satire in the Renaisance' by Anne Lake Prescott in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. III, The Renaissance*, ed. by Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 284-291, and Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

Élie stages her story as one in which she should be reproached and the relationship between the two is reminiscent of a parent chastising his or her disobedient child. She leaves the Ark, 'malgré la défense des hommes', suggesting a transgression against her superiors. When he exclaims that 'On eut beau lui répresenter que', he recalls their frustration with a hint of satisfaction and even joins the group of critics himself via the 'on'.[165] The decision made by the women of the Ark to follow her is equally undermined; as Élie argues, 'chacun opine pour son semblable'.[166] His matter of fact observation, 'Les voilà donc', patronizingly oversees the deplorable scene. The reader is surely reminded that women are the 'weaker vessel'.[167]

Within the story, Achab's status is in fact far from passive.[168] There is little comedy in her actions and this is unusual, given that the reader is expecting a comic parody. Élie first describes her decision to sail to the moon as 'hasardeuse', suggesting that her choices involve danger; perhaps she is irrational to take such a risk in the context of the flood. Achab's accomplishments tell a different story, however: she is integral to Élie's narrative in confirming that the moon is also the *Paradis terrestre*, from where, ironically, Élie and the protagonist now claim to be speaking. Within the parodic

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[165] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil,* p. 39.
[166] Ibid.
[167] See, 1 Timothy 2. 11-12; 1 Peter 3. 7.
[168] See Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 10, where he emphasizes the prevalent Renaissance view of woman, that man should be superior to woman because he is 'active', and in turn more honourable, while she is 'passive' and less robust. See also Natalie Zemon Davis's chapter, 'Women on Top' in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 124-151, and for a more general study, Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For a more recent study on women in early modern France, see *Challenging Orthodoxies: The Social and Cultural Worlds of Early Modern Women*, ed. by Sigrun Haude and others (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Domna Stanton, *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France: Women Writ, Women Writing* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); and Lyndan Warner, *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France: Print, Rhetoric, and Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

framework, Achab has a major part to play; her actions are a sign of bravery: 'voulut-elle la première essayer le péril';[169] the members of her family are, instead, disbelievers.

Is Achab a comic character, however, or one whose actions possess gravitas? This is not completely clear; Élie's messages are conflicting (a difficulty reflected elsewhere). The second female, 'la fille de la reine', is unnamed, her anonymity denying her the role of a primary agent in the text – not unlike Achab's third-person narrative – and the reader is once more reminded of the Christian subtext.[170] She finds other ways to be heard, however, making a noisy racket: '[elle] tambourinait contre les bâtons de ma cage'.[171] A similar conflict arises with the bird Margot. While she is privileged to have been given a name at all – a rare occurrence in Cyrano's novels – her name is synonymous with a gossiping magpie, and therefore not a good name at all. She fulfils the talkative stereotype: the protagonist confirms her chatty disposition, '[elle] m'apprenait tout ce qui se passait', but in making herself heard, like 'la fille de la reine', Margot uses the stereotype to her advantage.[172]

Should the women be silenced or should they be heard out? A struggle ensues between different factions, the main characters and those at the margins. When Margot recounts her life story – another subtext in *L'Autre Monde* – her excessive narrative is offset by her story's farcicality. Informing us that she never met her parents, she explains how she was lucky enough to meet Guillery l'Enrhumé who informed her that her father was called Courte-Queue, her mother Croque-Noix and that the former died in battle 'd'un

[169] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.
[170] 1 Timothy 2. 11-12.
[171] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92.
[172] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 254.

coup de bec'.[173] Then, all of a sudden, Margot disappears from the storyline for a noteworthy one hundred and eleven lines and it is difficult not to read this as another form of silencing, although by whom is not clear. Why has she disappeared from the text so suddenly? Is this the narrator's decision?

Elsewhere, it is clearly the protagonist who is undermining 'la fille de la reine', joining voices (and forces) with the narrator, yet his use of the 'nous' form includes even the reader in his voice, as he seems to be speaking for one and all. He suggests that her actions are dominated by the passions rather than reason when he describes how she succumbs to hysteria through her misunderstanding of the Christian faith: she is fascinated by the 'mystères de *notre* religion', and by the most superstitious and superficial aspects, by '*nos* cloches' et '*nos* reliques'.[174] The 'fille de la reine' is weak and emotional: overcome, 'les larmes aux yeux', she demands that he take her back to Earth.[175] Her passion implies, by standard opposition, her irrationality and is clearly associated in this case with a childlike and foolish distortion of understanding, and with being fascinated by the superficial aspects of the faith. Later in the novel, it seems as though the 'démon de Socrate' joins in to weaken her character. Sarcastically, he was 'fort édifié' to realize that her motivations for wanting to go to Earth were religious: she wanted to 'se faire chrétienne'.[176] Can voices therefore gang up with others?

Achab is reproached for her religious waywardness: she is too proud and fails to submit to her husband Enoch. Élie takes pleasure in concluding her story with great melodrama, emphasizing that Enoch was forced 'de se retirer dans les bois', 'dans les

[173] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 262-3.
[174] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92 (italics are my own).
[175] Ibid.
[176] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 134.

retraites les plus sauvages'; all because of 'l'orgueil de sa femme'.[177] According to their country's customs, the female characters are inherently corrupt (or so the narrator tells us…): on the moon, female lunar creatures have a 'désir exécrable qui les brûl[e] de se mêler aux bêtes […] contre nature'.[178] He also informs the reader that the 'fille de la reine' was breaking the law when she continued to visit the imprisoned protagonist.

For all their errant ways, a Christian reading sees their punishment as culminating in their disappointing exits from the storyline: the reader is conscious of the lack of any proper conclusion to their actions and instead a sense of failure. Achab is guilty for having failed to maintain a happy family and to submit to her husband, while the actions of Margot and the 'fille de la reine' seem cut short or interrupted; the reader wonders again if the narrative voice is keen to undermine them? While both are bold enough to risk their lives in trying to help the protagonist, they fail to be the factor that finally, successfully liberates him. The last the reader sees of Margot, for example, is her failure to represent the protagonist at court. The narrator explains that this was as a result of her corrupted nature: her attempt was 'impossible' because she had been 'nourrie parmi les hommes, et peut-être infectée de leur morale'.[179]

The female characters lack the strength to follow through their goals. Other notable characters, such as the 'démon de Socrate' and the parrot, César, complete their actions. Even the names of these characters speak for themselves: Margot is the typical name of a rustic peasant woman, and César the name of an Emperor. By denying the female voices a conclusively successful outcome, the narrator seems to make one lesson clear:

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[177] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil,* p. 40.
[178] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 97.
[179] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 268.

submitting to the excess of the passions, and sinning against God, does no good. He thus turns these voices to his advantage, as do the protagonist and other main characters – Élie and the 'démon de Socrate' – who manipulate the position of the female characters in order to promote themselves.

ii. Retaliation

The female voices fulfil a parodic role – as hysteric, irrational and prideful women – but they also go beyond obvious caricatures. One of the ways they achieve this is in their willingness to transgress – a sign of retaliation. Far from being blinded by the passions in their decision-making, the female characters refuse to listen to the advice or orders given to them by so-called authoritative voices that apparently aim to redress their errant ways. The result is an unremitting tension in the text as voices compete.

At the centre of this tension is the discord between the criticism of the females in line with doctrinal authority, and the comedy of the subject under criticism. There is a fierce irony beneath the facade of the narrator's anti-feminist positioning; is this a glimpse of the author, Cyrano?[180]

Contributing to a burlesque retelling of Genesis, it is comic that Achab is overpowering enough to force Enoch to retire to the woods to live alone as a hermit. The reader

[180] Prudence is required in assessing the links between the narrator, protagonist and Cyrano because of complications: use of pseudonyms; direct or indirect references to a real life context; publishing posthumously; censorship and severe editing by Cyrano's editor Le Bret. Chapter IV and V of the thesis will return to this issue but this chapter already clearly hints at the playful obscuring of the narrative voice with the author's and the other characters in the novel.

wonders why Enoch cannot stand up to his wife and why he is forced from his home. Élie's over-emphasis on Enoch's most 'sauvages' and 'affreuses' daily escapades into the woods to avoid his wife and children ridicules rather than pities him.[181] That he is called 'Enoch le Juste' and could have lived his life 'avec toute la douceur dont Dieu bénit le mariage des justes' is obviously ironic.[182] Enoch is only 'un bon vieillard', and in spite of his 'cœur en holocauste', the reader feels little sympathy for him.[183] Are Achab's Christian crimes therefore counterbalanced by Enoch's humorous limitations?

It is also difficult to take the birds' reproaches of Margot seriously. As I demonstrated earlier, Margot's comic life story weakens the plausibility of her character, reducing her to a farce and, yet, the reader learns that the birds wanted to kill her because of her beliefs and that she was 'à craindre'.[184] It is hard to conceive how this character could cause so much disruption and disgruntle the other birds to such an extent. This contradiction serves to benefit Margot by undermining in turn the strength of the authorities.

The reader cannot deny, either, the humour present in the protagonist's encounters with the 'fille de la reine'. While her hysteria is clearly a parody, his own predicament is farcical: he is imprisoned in a cage, only visited by the 'filles de la reine' who treat him like a pet and always put 'quelque bribe dans mon [son] panier'.[185] The conversation over war strategy that follows is unexpectedly humorous on both sides. The 'fille de la reine' strangely explains how the lunar people may only engage in battle with an exact

[181] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 40.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 268.
[185] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92.

equal, whether physically or intellectually: thereby ensuring 'tant d'égalité'.[186] The protagonist reminds the reader of the comedy: 'Je ne pus m'empêcher de rire'.[187] However, the 'fille de la reine' cuttingly retaliates, redressing the balance, sarcastically asserting that it must be important for men on Earth to die in battle, 'car il s'agit d'être le vassal d'un roi qui porte une fraise ou de celui qui porte un rabat', clearly alluding to the Franco-Spanish war.[188] She has the final say on the matter, defeating her opponent with a witty and pertinent observation.

Burlesque humour counterbalances the undermining of the female voices by forcing the reader to re-evaluate the status of all the voices at play. Refusing to create 'une action univoque', as Nédélec argues, burlesque humour is always 'équivoque dans les mots et équivoque dans la pensée'.[189] It prefers 'le doute aux certitudes établies'.[190] So while the reader is left laughing, ambiguity still reigns when it seems no particular side is taken. The wider significance is the consequential readdressing of the hierarchy posed by those in power. The reader cannot deny that there is a subversive element to this comedy, 'un regard critique', given its intention to question the strength of Scripture.[191] The use of humour therefore should not be undervalued. It is still powerful enough to cause the reader to question Christian authority, even if only momentarily, which is a bold move in itself.

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[186] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 93.
[187] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 94.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 448.
[190] Claudine Nédélec, 'Le Burlesque au Grand Siècle: une esthétique marginale?' in *XVII^e siècle*, 224 (2004), p. 436.
[191] Cavaillé, *Dis/Simulations*, p. 147.

The fictional device of the narrative voice is a useful tool for Cyrano to manipulate, allowing him to pass judgement and criticize religious authority. It is therefore quite possible that the narrator's apparent refusal to allow the female voices the clear upper hand through this humour serves if anything to conceal the risk of this audacity; evidence of the author's acknowledgement of the need for censorship with such controversial subject matter. In this case it certainly seems that Cyrano knows 'la valeur de la Loi'![192] And therefore his presentation of female voices is strategically moderated so that they can appeal to an audience whose intention it is to find fault.

iii. A Paradoxical Eulogy?

The reader may be wondering: does one voice ever conquer all? Are the female voices *only* part of a counterbalancing double act? The reader should not underestimate Cyrano's cunning arts of persuasion. If his burlesque humour 'ne remet pas fondamentalement en cause les fondements du système hiérarchique', his genius lies in the use of subtler means by which to tip the scales and, as I shall show, this appeals to another audience entirely.[193]

In order to achieve this, Cyrano emphasizes the heroism of these characters' actions. Achab convinces the vast majority of the Ark's inhabitants to abandon ship and join her: including the entire female population and over one thousand animals. While she may have been described as a risk-taker, her qualities stand out when Élie fails to hide his admiration for the animals that follow her: they are 'assez forte pour risquer le

[192] Nédélec, 'Le Burlesque au Grand Siècle', p. 439.
[193] Ibid.

voyage' and 'courageux'.[194] They notice her 'généreuse' nature and are willing to put their lives in the hands of this born leader.[195]

Margot and the 'fille de la reine' show equally positive qualities. Playing the role of lawyer defending the protagonist against prosecution, Margot lives a life constantly under threat. In the minority, she is one of the only birds willing to listen to the protagonist's cause, and in doing so places herself in a perilous situation. She summarizes the birds' foreboding philosophy by announcing that 'un homme parmi les vivants est une peste dont on devrait purger tout état', yet she sides with the protagonist, causing uproar among the other birds, many of whom wanted to 'mettre [Margot] en pièces'.[196] Margot battles on, alone, courageous enough to stand by her convictions. As for the 'fille de la reine', while her siblings also show sympathy for the imprisoned protagonist, she is the only one brave enough to venture where the others dare not: boldly, having 'conçu quelque amitié' for the protagonist, she meets in secret with him to talk and learn about his culture.[197] But, most importantly, she is courageous enough to hatch up a rescue plan: 'de vous sauver'.[198]

In the light of these heroic acts, the underlying tension that the female voices create goes beyond the disjunction that the reader has seen between their criticism and the author's use of comedy. In fact, it now seems that the latter was if anything a distraction from the main cause at stake. Indeed, there is evidence of a much more seditious displacement occurring between the apparent condemnation of the female voices in

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[194] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 39-40.
[195] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 40.
[196] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 254.
[197] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92.
[198] Ibid.

accordance with doctrinal authority, and the praiseworthy actions of the subject under criticism. For the alternative reader willing to question the status of the female voices, the narrator's excessive undermining of these voices can appear to have the contrary effect, instead serving to highlight the stupidity of the criticism that they face in the light of such praiseworthy action. It seems that Cyrano's reverence for the female voices owes something to the tradition of paradoxical eulogy.[199] The claims by authority that the female voices lack reason is contradicted by the logic of their actions and by the fact that these voices do not adhere to authority simply because they are ordered to do so. Instead, the female voices show an independence of mind. They are not so dissimilar to the protagonist, then, but I shall return to this later.

First: how does Cyrano achieve a paradoxical eulogy? Cyrano's Achab could be read as a subverted Ahab, who notoriously refuses to listen to the prophet Elijah's advice, and so engineers his people's downfall. Achab refuses the advice of her fellow shipmates: 'On eut beau lui représenter que' and 'On eut beau crier après elle'. According to Élie's story, she is correct to ignore their cries and, yet, the reader exclaims, the idea that the *Paradis terrestre* is located on the moon is absurd! And, so, her shipmate's name-calling – she is a 'lunatique'[200] – takes on a second connotation for the religious reader: Achab is crazy for seeing the moon, but this also means she is crazy for believing in the *Paradis terrestre*. Achab's parodic role is therefore more subversive than Élie's, which works at the obvious level of a retelling of Genesis. Yet the wider message of Achab's story is even more risky: Ahab was perhaps right not to listen to the Prophets: it is not Achab who is crazy, it is Élie – an observation which is doubly worrying, given that he is Achab's spokesperson. Is he the real blasphemer? The roles are not immediately

[199] See Dandrey, *L'Éloge paradoxal de Gorgias à Molière*.
[200] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.

obvious, but on a scale of culpability, it does seem as though Achab is perhaps less corrupt relative to Élie.

Cyrano secures a reverential status for the female voices through the powerful images created by their disruption. Thanks to Achab, the Ark is turned into mayhem, with animals fleeing in all directions and the majority of its inhabitants trying to escape: 'Il en était sorti près de mille, avant que les fils de Noé pussent fermer les étables que la foule des animaux qui s'échappaient tenaient ouvertes'.[201] The final vision evoked is a desolate one, with most of the animals and all of the women having deserted the Ark; only Noah and his sons remain on board. Margot's voice, on the other hand, is disruptive because interruptive. By meddling as she does in the protagonist's affairs, she manages to inhibit his trial by ending up on trial herself for conspiracy. There is a significant delay while the reader waits to hear the outcome of the protagonist's trial when Margot recounts her life story in defence of her actions because of the 'plainte que le grand censeur des oiseaux dressa contre [elle] la pie'.[202]

Visually, the female voices continue their disruption through their divisiveness. Achab, the 'fille de la reine' and Margot have an independence of mind that causes them to rebel against authority. This causes them to separate from certain groups. For example, Achab splits from her male siblings to embark on her voyage, taking the entire female cohort with her and leaving the men behind; the 'fille de la reine' separates herself from her sisters' and transgresses through the close bond she forms with the protagonist; and Margot dangerously goes astray by refusing to follow the birds' customs.

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[201] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 40.
[202] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 262.

Their rebellion is not done discreetly. Achab has the audacity to laugh at her aggressors in the face. Fearlessly setting off in her boat, leaving her male siblings behind, 'elle se moqua d'eux'.[203] Once on the moon, it is then made clear that she 'ne voulut point se rembarquer pour rejoindre ses frères'.[204] Margot, too, makes a scene, because she ends up being caught and sent death threats. When she is captured, the narrator explains that 'on la soupconnait *déjà* de quelque intelligence'.[205] Lastly, it is worth noting that the 'fille de la reine' also refuses to keep quiet. Her drumming against the bars of a cage marks her presence and, later, the reader discovers that she has confided everything to the 'démon de Socrate'.

The combination of these images of disruption and heroism suggests that the female voices in Cyrano's novel possibly win the battle against religious authority. These processes create a powerful image, one that has a lasting impact, and even permits them to secure, momentarily, a position of authority. The paradox lies in the excessive undermining of these voices. This can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it offers an illusion of conformity to a traditional hierarchy inextricably tied to Christian doctrine. On the other, for those readers of sufficiently open mind, it subversively reveals a daring, nonconformist eulogy. For the latter, it follows that the narrator's apparent alignment with Christianity is simply a mask, but also a platform from which to criticize.[206] It therefore seems that Cyrano himself, in his subtle manoeuvring of the narrator's position, is fully aware of the benefits of using fiction to attack. With this in mind, his use of burlesque can be seen actually to support this method of dissent through the displacement and discord it creates, preparing the reader for an alternative

[203] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.
[204] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 40.
[205] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 262 (italics are my own).
[206] Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation, Quelques éléments de réflexion', p. 68.

interpretation. But having now seen how Cyrano persuades the reader of the female voices' authority, the question of their wider significance remains to be answered. Before I do this, I shall look at one more set of peripheral voices.

B) More Trouble on the Horizon: Paying Heed to 'Fools'?

There is another peripheral group in *L'Autre Monde*. These are the voices that seem to belong to obvious outsiders. So farcical are their actions that they appear to alienate themselves from the other characters they encounter, including the reader. They fit the category of simpletons, dimwits or fools at whom the reader immediately wants to laugh. But how far should the reader trust this comedy? Should he or she bank on first impressions or expect another paradoxical eulogy?

The farcical nature of these voices dominates and thus they initially appear as part of a satire on popular superstition. The most obvious example is the peasant from Cussan in *Le Soleil* who, in the hope of capturing the protagonist, accuses him of fraternizing with the devil. Crossing the village fields to brave the devil, he is covered from head to toe in a sort of religious armour constituting hundreds of pages of religious incantations. Even his face is hidden – 'caché d'une carte où l'on avait écrit l'*In principio*' – the only part visible being the slits left open for his eyes.[207] Perhaps hoping to exorcize the protagonist, he begins a religious prayer, but he forgets his words: 'il hésita; mais répétant toujours "le grand Dieu vivant", et cherchant d'un visage effaré son pasteur

[207] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 178.

pour lui souffler le reste'.[208] Unfortunately, no one is there to help and in a panic stricken moment his teeth fall out: 'un si effroyable tremblement le saisit, qu'à force de claquer la moitié de ses dents en tombèrent'.[209]

The reader can only laugh at the peasant's excessive superstition and ignorance. Yet, the narrative voice drums home the silliness of his actions further by depicting him as something other than human: something monstrous. This process can be seen from the beginning of the scene when the peasant is first introduced as 'une étrange apparition'; 'un spectre'; 'le fantôme'.[210] The narrator then describes his frightening appearance: he was 'énorme', like a giant, with '[un] regard triste et rude' and he 'cria'; he behaves like a caricature of a lowly peasant.[211] He is violent, too, threatening the protagonist's life: 'je t'étriperai'.[212] His fiancé completes the bestial portrait, behaving like a dog: '[elle] glapissait son amoureuse', and confirms her partner's monstrosity by calling him 'borgne'.[213]

There are similarities between the peasant of Cussan and the chief gaoler and prison wardens whom the protagonist encounters at the beginning of *Le Soleil*, all portrayed as imbeciles, fickle and easily bribed. The gaoler insists on the protagonist's culpability and refuses to respond to his request for better clothing and yet he is quick to change sides when the protagonist offers him money.[214] From being sure that the protagonist was 'un sorcier', he changes his tune a mere eighteen lines later, suddenly arguing that

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[208] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 179.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 178.
[211] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 178-79.
[212] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 179.
[213] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 180.
[214] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 185.

the prisoner's misfortune 'le touchait'.[215] Ecstatic at the sight of the money, he then hysterically promises 'toutes choses', gets down on the floor to kiss the prisoner's knees, before assuring him that within three days he will have managed to 'faire blanchir [ses] manchettes'.[216] The reader should be in no doubt as to whose side he or she should be on in light of the protagonist's sarcasm when he thanks the gaoler 'sérieusement de sa courtoisie' and calls him his 'cher ami'.[217]

The condescending tone of the narrative voice is constant during these encounters, as if to ensure that the reader definitely realize these characters' stupidity. The first prison warden is a 'rustaud', a naive 'coquin', and the second a 'bête sauvage', a 'maraud'.[218] Descriptions of their uncivil and vulgar actions further drum home their ignorance. The first warden, for example, brings the prisoner some cabbage soup and coarsely sticks 'ses cinq doigts jusqu'au fond'.[219] The protagonist copies his actions, so as not to offend, but the simpleton believes this to have much greater meaning, suddenly exclaiming that he is 'bon frère!' and most definitely the victim of traitors. Like the gaoler, he is also easily bribed by the prisoner's money, this time with the pretence for the need to pray in Church, which is really the prisoner's plan to escape.

On frequent occasions the narrator explains that these characters were so ridiculous that he had difficulty refraining from laughing at them. When the protagonist encounters the peasant of Cussan he describes how 'les éclats de rire […] me suffoquaient' and then again that he had 'quelque émotion pour rire'; a gesture which recalls the protagonist's

[215] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 185-86.
[216] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 186.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 186, p. 189, p. 198, p. 199.
[219] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 187.

reaction to the 'fille de la reine' and her theories of war: perhaps the reader then should not be laughing with him… [220] When in prison, he also expresses a need to laugh at the warden, explaining that his naivety 'm'enfla par deux ou trois fois la gorge pour en rire'.[221]

If the reader had ever been in any doubt as to the comedy of the characters, these direct affirmations, repeated in a short space of time, should surely have persuaded him or her by now. And, yet, the narrator's excessive persuasive techniques actually create a strange dislocation in the text: the narrator is so insistent, that his arguments begin to have an adverse effect. Nowhere else in *L'Autre Monde* does the narrator feel the need to laugh at and criticize a character in such an insistent way.

The reader is encouraged to scrutinize the narrative voice. It seems unlikely that the protagonist would be threatened by these simpletons and yet the narrator's descriptions are defensive: he patronizes them, referring to them as noble and good friends, and interrupts them because he does not have the patience to listen to their stories, one of which he refers to as 'une longue enchaînure de coq-à-l'âne'; is this a humorous sub-reference to Cyrano's letter, 'A Monsieur Le Coq'? If so, the reader should certainly be wary of other games being played.[222] If the characters the narrator has described really are as senseless as he claims, then these attacks seem unnecessary. Instead, the protagonist's behaviour brings tension to the text because of the sudden dislocation between his need to attack and defend, and the weakness of his opponents. This forces the reader to question the protagonist's intentions and whether everything he claims can

[220] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 179-80.
[221] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 187.
[222] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 189.

be trusted. It is reminiscent of the excessive undermining that the female voices must endure, and another hint at Cyrano's subtle manipulation of the narrator-protagonist's positioning towards a possible ulterior motive. Is the extreme mockery of these simpletons therefore a paradoxical way of actually offering praise?

In many ways, these 'fools' have some utility. This becomes evident through the protagonist's misfortunes. His troubles uncannily coincide with the presence of these 'fools' and their value soon emerges. The protagonist constantly takes their idiocy for granted and fails to read the signs of impending misfortune, even though these are very much evident. Two prison wardens foreshadow the protagonist's approaching hardship. The first shouts out in exclamation that the protagonist is 'gueux comme le Diable'.[223] It is no coincidence that the protagonist soon finds himself enacting the part of a beggar asking passers-by for money following his escape in Toulouse. The theme of money is repeated again with greater warning in the case of the second prison warden. The protagonist thinks he can deceive him into helping him escape and bribes him with money, but in doing so finds that the fool's hand was 'si tremblante' that he confesses: 'ce commencement me sembla de mauvais augure'.[224] But the protagonist fails to interpret this sign of impending misfortune, instead concluding that it was only trembling 'de joie'.[225] The protagonist is also blind to the significance of the reference to cabbage soup and seems to have failed to have taken heed from his adventures on the moon and his lesson on the intelligence of cabbages.[226]

[223] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 185.
[224] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 187.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 111-15.

The 'fool' has the potential to be a wise and useful character in *L'Autre Monde* thanks to his ability to prophesy. With this in mind, much seems owed to Erasmus's account that 'all human affairs are like the figures of Silenus described by Alcibiades and have two opposite faces'.[227] In *L'Autre Monde*, Cyrano's fools tell the truth and yet the protagonist fails to understand them.

i. Who is Fooling Whom?

Two powerful visual images suggest that the protagonist is the most ridiculous character of all. In both scenarios, the protagonist is made to resemble a fool. The first occurs during the encounter with the peasant from Cussan when the villagers 'cousirent' the protagonist 'dans une grande nappe'.[228] They sew him up so well 'qu'on ne me voyait que la tête'.[229] The second occurs when the protagonist manages to escape prison for the first time and he explains that 'Je laissai mes habits dans la prison et je m'équipai de guenilles'.[230] The protagonist ironically comes to the decision to don beggar's clothes by heeding the advice of the so-called foolish gaoler that he had previously mocked. He claims that they both decided that this was best: 'nous l'avions ainsi concerté la veille'.[231] However, the protagonist then confesses that once out in the open 'tout le monde […] me regardait' because, as he explains, 'j'avais arrangé sur moi mes haillons

[227] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly and Letter to Martin Dorp 1515*, ed. by Levi and trans. by Radice (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 103.
[228] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 179.
[229] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 179.
[230] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 189
[231] Ibid.

si bizarrement, qu'avec une démarche qui ne convenait point à l'habit, je paraissais moins un pauvre qu'un mascarade'.[232]

A chaotic escape scene in Toulouse, which is imbued with Biblical significance, confirms the protagonist's status of fool. A constant theme of Proverbs is the importance of distinguishing the 'way of wisdom'. Those who are wise take the right path and go unhindered: 'when you walk, your steps will not be hindered, / And when you run, you will not stumble'.[233] Instead, the fool will 'stumble' and 'shall go astray'.[234] When he escapes to Toulouse, not only does the protagonist physically resemble a fool in his ridiculous clothing, but his actions clearly parody the images in the Bible. In the Bible, 'shame be the legacy of fools'; the reader will recall that the protagonist felt 'honteux' upon his escape.[235] The plot focuses on an endless pursuit, as the protagonist runs from one path to the next, aimlessly trying to figure out the best route to take, but making continual errors of judgement. With constant reference to the 'chemin' he must take, the protagonist ultimately confesses, with obvious comic connotations, that 'j'abandonnai mon salut à mes jambes'.[236]

The city is a parody of wisdom. Proverbs insist on the necessity to 'hear' wisdom that 'cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, / At the entrance of the doors', 'She cries out from the highest places of the city'.[237] But the protagonist fails to find her, so he clearly isn't listening. Instead he picks the wrong 'petite porte' to hide behind, and finds

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[232] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 190.
[233] Proverbs 4. 12.
[234] Proverbs 4. 19 ; Proverbs 5. 23.
[235] Proverbs 3. 35.
[236] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 192.
[237] Proverbs 8. 3 ; Proverbs 9. 3.

himself back in prison where he started, curiously confessing that he has himself to blame: 'j'étais venu me jeter moi-même en prison'.[238]

The protagonist seems to embody the fool depicted in Proverbs, not only physically but also in his failure to heed Scripture. As a consequence he makes persistent errors and is faced with great misfortune, taking wrong paths that eventually lead back to prison. So is the narrator warning the reader not to make the same mistakes? Is this a Christian lesson? Far from it. From what initially seemed like a simple mockery of the simpleton's superstition and ignorance, a much more dangerous feature becomes apparent: the protagonist's heresy.

Once again there are glimpses of Cyrano's use of the narrator-protagonist as a means by which to convey his own judgements. The extent of the protagonist's stupidity is designed to attack the Bible's lessons regarding the need to listen out for the wise. His nonsensical actions serve to emphasize the difficulty of looking for wisdom and they are clearly a play on the Scripture's ambiguous claim of the need to understand 'a proverb and an enigma / The words of the wise and their riddles'.[239] The fools who foreshadow the protagonist's impending doom are so idiotic that they are the last people one would suspect of uttering wise words. Cyrano has cleverly manoeuvred the narrator's portrayal of the protagonist, with the aim of mocking the ideal of a wisdom that could possibly be enigmatic. Evidence emerges of a possible partnership: the 'fool' working together with the protagonist, and the protagonist with Cyrano? We shall soon see.

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[238] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 196.
[239] Proverbs 1. 6.

Firstly, however, behind the apparently nonsensical actions of the protagonist lies further tension through the narrator's hints at his desire deliberately to transgress. The point is not that the protagonist is a wayward Christian, but that he chooses to ignore advice and take a separate path entirely. When the Bible states that the 'complacency of fools will destroy them', it is difficult not to think of the protagonist's smug self-assuredness in front of the prison wardens.[240] A tension emerges from the dislocation between the apparently intelligent behaviour of the protagonist – he has a love for learning and books[241] – and his ignorance in front of 'fools'. The reader wonders whether the protagonist is deliberately ignoring Scripture? During his escapade in Toulouse he even confesses that he could not resist foolishness ('ne pouvant résister à la foule, je la suivis'), thereby – jeopardizing his life.[242]

This is a dangerous confession. Erasmus makes clear in his defence of folly, that those who are foolish will be forgiven in Heaven because 'she alone is granted forgiveness of sins', and therefore everyone wishes to claim folly for an excuse. He argues that God 'made no other excuse for them but their ignorance: 'for they know not what they do' […] What else is acting ignorantly but acting foolishly, with no evil intent?'[243] But as for the protagonist of *L'Autre Monde*, the narrator has revealed an ulterior motive to his foolishness beyond just ignorance. His impiety is manifest.

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[240] Proverbs 1. 32.
[241] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*: 'De tous ceux que l'esprit peut trouver dans l'étude et la conversation, aucun ne nous manquait; et nos bibliothèques unies comme nos esprits', p. 171; 'Je n'allais pourtant qu'au pas, afin d'accompagner ma petite bibliothèque, et pour enrichir mon âme', p. 178; 'Il ne me manque rien, leur dis-je, sinon des livres', p. 202.
[242] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 196.
[243] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, p. 200.

ii. A Question of Perspective

Perhaps we have uncovered too much… As Cavaillé insists, 'rien n'autoriserait l'historien à faire dire aux libertins, ou prétendus tels, ce qu'ils ne disent pas expressément […] il faudrait bien sûr tenir pour parole d'Évangile leurs déclarations de foi ou leurs protestations d'orthodoxie!',[244] especially given the extent to which the narrator insists on the protagonist's stupidity. Can the reader take anything the protagonist says seriously? Or perhaps this is yet another hint at Cyrano's subtle use of the narrator-protagonist, again as a means cleverly to elude censorship whilst remaining on the attack. Several interpretations of the protagonist's behaviour become apparent. The reader may either conclude that the protagonist is just a blundering, nonsensical fool and that by mocking the so-called village simpletons he only makes himself look the most foolish of all. Or the reader may make a parallel between the protagonist's position and that set out in Erasmus's treatise, concluding that it is never safe to identify folly and that 'the whole of human life is nothing but a sport of folly'.[245] It certainly seems this way when the people of Toulouse interpret the protagonist's ridiculous foolery as a sign of faith, assuming that he must have been 'martyrisé pour la foi', 'en Turquie'.[246] The protagonist appears surrounded by fools throughout his escapades.

Lastly, there is one other interpretation possible for the reader who was aware of the wider context in which Cyrano was writing. If Cyrano's arguments constitute some form of paradoxical eulogy, this is not in the line of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*. There is

[244] Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation, Quelques éléments de réflexion', p. 66.
[245] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*, p. 102.
[246] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 193.

no lesson to be learnt from folly, no serious Christian message praising the ability of man to perfect himself. Cyrano certainly uses the narrator-protagonist to mock the foolish/wise opposition through a Christian framework and aims to show how ridiculous both positions can be: one should not be expected to heed the fool when he is so foolish, or to listen out for a deceptive wisdom when this is in fact hidden behind the fool. There is a more important conclusion to be reached, however. Reference to Toulouse and issues surrounding the protagonist's impiety carry another significance for the seventeenth-century reader. For Cyrano, with the trials of Théophile, Vanini, Campanella and even Galileo in mind, ecclesiastical or civil authorities have no legitimate right to punish atheists. His point is that he who ignores God is guilty of no crime, whether there be a God or not.[247] The reader may recall the protagonist's encounter with the 'fils de l'hôte' in *La Lune*. The argument that God plays hide and seek with man, masking himself before some and exposing himself to others, punishing those who do not acknowledge him, rings uncannily true in the context of the protagonist's escapade in Toulouse and his failings to see wisdom.

Cyrano's cunning lies in the possibility of various interpretations that make it difficult for the reader to pinpoint his precise attack on Christianity. Conclusions about the foolishness of humanity serve if anything as a cover and alibi, side-tracking the reader and preventing him or her from recognizing the use made of the narrator-protagonist for ulterior goals. But the significance of this for the fool, who initially appears as a peripheral, inconsequential voice in the text, is that his authority does not simply lie in paradoxically being raised to the same level as everyone else in a world of fools, but that in the minds of the reader who is aware of Cyrano's dangerous criticism of the

[247] Cavaillé, 'Qu'il y ait un Dieu,… je vous le nie tout à plat' in *Littératures Classiques*, 53 (2004), pp. 68-69.

Church he has the most important role of all, that of protecting the narrator-protagonist from accusations of the most serious kind. It is therefore becoming clearer that the 'fools' of *L'Autre Monde*, like the female voices discussed earlier, seem to play an important role in alliance with Cyrano. The next section will analyse this possibility in more detail.

C. A United Front?

I have established that the peripheral voices in *L'Autre Monde* possess an important status, but what is their wider significance? An interesting place to begin is the strange similarity between the role of the peripheral voices and that of the protagonist. At times it seems as though they were allies.

Supporting this claim is evidence of conspiratorial behaviour, which challenges DeJean's insistence on Cyrano's obsessive portrayal of alienation.[248] In asserting that the protagonist appears set apart from others in *L'Autre Monde* through the course of his voyage, what DeJean calls his 'secret', there has been a failure to acknowledge the sharing of his experiences with other characters.[249] Achab's discovery of the moon early on in the text suggests that the protagonist is not the only character in *L'Autre Monde* to travel to other worlds; his experience is by no means 'unique'.[250]

[248] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*, p. 122.
[249] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*, p. 121.
[250] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*, p. 134.

Conspiracy between the peripheral voices and the protagonist changes the reader's perspective of his position and causes an upheaval of any notion he or she might have had of the protagonist as an outsider. The reader is aware, for example, of the clandestine meetings of the 'fille de la reine' with the protagonist when at one point their conversation is cut short as the protagonist explains: 'Elle ne m'entretint pas cette fois davantage, parce qu'elle craignait d'être trouvée toute seule avec moi […] elle ne m'osait pas fréquenter publiquement'.[251] Yet she has clearly been willing to meet with him in secret, disobeying orders, with the full intention of plotting an escape. An even more obvious example of conspiracy with the protagonist can be seen in the case of Margot. From the moment the protagonist is captured by the birds, and throughout the terrible trials and ordeals he must endure, Margot loyally stays by his side, the protagonist referring to her repeatedly as 'ma charitable pie'. In complete contrast to the other birds, Margot is 'pleine de compassion', showing an understanding and willingness to listen to the protagonist.[252] Her actions stand out in stark contrast to the vast majority of other birds who would like to see him pecked to death without even a trial in what she describes as a 'procédé barbare'.[253] It is made clear that the bird community is forbidden to communicate with the protagonist as he explains: '[elle] ne m'osa pas entretenir seul plus longtemps, de peur d'être soupçonnée d'intelligence'.[254] Margot tries to help, however, and when a trial has been agreed she gives him various 'instructions […] salutaires' throughout the long process and, as the protagonist explains, 'elle m'avertit'.[255] In doing so, Margot goes against the laws of the kingdom of the birds by uniting with the protagonist, offering him forbidden information. In true

[251] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 96-97.
[252] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 260.
[253] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 254.
[254] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 259.
[255] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 256, p. 254.

conspiratorial style, her actions are always concealed, 'en secret', '[en] feignant de se divertir'.[256]

Both Margot and the 'fille de la reine' conspire in this way to form an intimate bond with the protagonist, despite communication between them having been forbidden. So strong is the bond of the 'fille de la reine' with the protagonist, that she confesses to him that if he one day found a way of returning to his homeland, she would follow him 'de bon cœur'.[257] As for Margot, her faith in the narrator is such that she may put aside her prejudices as a bird. Her compassion for the protagonist and her consequent desire to defend his cause against the most intimidating and ruthless judges of the bird court take precedence. In a moment of confidence between herself and the protagonist, she admits to him that 'je sens pour vous des tendresses', concluding that 'vous ne sauriez croire combien votre malheur m'est sensible'.[258] Far from being isolated, then, it is not for the protagonist to think that 'there is no place for him in the societies he hopes to frequent'.[259]

On the contrary, conspiring in this way suggests sympathy towards this central character. It certainly looks as though the female voices offer support to the protagonist because of the difficult situations in which he finds himself. Throughout *L'Autre Monde*, the protagonist frequently faces persecution. Even while on Earth he is criticized and accused for his beliefs and must face outrageous allegations when a faction of 'ennemis' accuse him of being a 'sorcier' and for siding with the Devil.[260]

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[256] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 263, p. 260.
[257] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 92.
[258] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 260.
[259] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*, p. 109.
[260] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 169.

Soon the whole village, including those from nearby, come to look at the protagonist 'comme la Bête'.[261] The protagonist explains that he is the victim of enemies wanting to slander his reputation, in particular the 'pasteur de Colignac' who attacks him; he 'mettait mon nom en exécration' and 'faisait milles contes ridicules de mes enchantements', with the wider project of seeking revenge on Colignac, the protagonist's good friend.[262] He is the victim of direct charges of sorcery, but also unnecessary bait while unintentionally caught up in other people's problems. Accusations against the protagonist, however, reach their climax when he is put on trial in both worlds, in both cases because of questions surrounding his identity. He is constantly forced to defend himself, often over lengthy periods, either because the trials he must attend are postponed or dragged out and in the meantime he must spend his time locked up in a cage or prison. On one occasion the trial is described by the protagonist as a 'procès criminel' and he explains how he must face a 'tribunal des oiseaux', one of whom is particularly intimidating when he shakes 'majestueusement ses plumes'.[263] All this takes place when the protagonist is interrogated sitting humiliatingly 'à califourchon sur un chicot de bois pourri'.[264]

Can the relationships between the protagonist and the peripheral voices only be understood as part of the protagonist's insistence on his own persecution? The culpability of the female voices proves how the protagonist does not have a 'desire for uniqueness' in his victimization.[265] Criminal accusations in *L'Autre Monde* are a central and recurring theme for the peripheral voices as well as for the protagonist. For the

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[261] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 172.
[262] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 172-3.
[263]Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 256.
[264] Ibid.
[265] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies, Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France*, p. 134.

female voices, demonstrating compassion for the protagonist leads to accusations of treason. Margot's dangerous decision to conspire with him results in her eventual capture by the armed guards while passing on sensitive information during one of his trials. Some of the assistants at the trial 'la soupçonnait déjà de quelque intelligence', and the guard 'se saisit de sa personne'.[266] She is then put on trial herself and forced to defend her actions. The protagonist then explains that the king of the birds 'lui défendit toutefois de me plus parler en secret'.[267]

The female voices are constantly accused or found guilty on account of their actions. When Margot is seized for conspiracy at one of the protagonist's trials, it is called a 'scandale' for which 'elle était cause'.[268] The lunar women face accusations, this time from the religious authorities. The narrator tells us that, going against the arguments of the lunar priests, 'c'étaient les femmes principalement qui publiaient que j'étais homme'.[269] Likewise, Achab's male siblings argue that she will be the future 'cause', the reason, for why all women will be accused of madness.[270]

The association of a peripheral voice, such as Achab's, with madness, highlights a further similarity with the protagonist. When she discovers the moon, she faces numerous reproaches from her male siblings, and despite her cries 'qu'assurément c'était la lune', they call her a 'lunatique', protesting that she will be the reason 'qu'un jour on reprocherait à toutes les femmes d'avoir dans la tête un quartier de la lune'.[271] A comparison to the narrator's own lunar adventures seems inevitable. Like Achab who

[266] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 262.
[267] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 263.
[268] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 262.
[269] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 97.
[270] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.
[271] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.

divides opinion on the Ark between the female and males, the protagonist divides the town, 'partagée en deux factions, la lunaire et l'antilunaire'.[272] This is reminiscent of the beginning of *Le Soleil* when the narrator faces constant accusations of madness for having 'commerce avec la lune'.[273] The work that the narrator claims to have published of his voyages is considered 'un pot-pourri de contes ridicules, un amas de lambeaux décousus, un répertoire de Peau-d'Ane à bercer les enfants', some critics arguing that the narrator should be forced to carry 'une bougie à Saint-Mathurin', the patron saint of fools.[274]

Perhaps the most obvious example of the protagonist's madness is during his escape from the prison in Toulouse and the chase that subsequently follows. His actions go beyond the call of duty, even as a fool. Far from appearing another simpleton, the protagonist comes across as a real mad man. He tells us that he must make efforts to blend in with the village crowd but he pursues this method of 'blending in' to such an extent that he appears to have lost all sanity. He tells us:

> Je me barbouillai le visage, frottai mes cheveux de poussière, dépouillai mon pourpoint, dévalai mon haut-de-chausses, jetai mon chapeau dans un soupirail; puis ayant étendu mon mouchoir dessus le pavé, et disposé aux coins quatre petits cailloux, comme les malades de la contagion, je me couchai vis-à-vis, le ventre contre terre, et d'une voix piteuse me mis à geindre fort langoureusement […] dans l'espérance de n'en être point connu […] me prenant tous pour un pestiféré, ils [les Toulousains] passèrent fort vite'.[275]

Surely as 'un pestiféré' the protagonist transgresses the image of a fool? His distortions continue when he describes his ridiculous efforts at begging as a mute: 'je pointe un

[272] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 168.
[273] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 169.
[274] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 168.
[275] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 194-5.

doigt dessous le menton, puis dessus la bouche, et je l'ouvre en bâillant, avec un cri non articulé, pour faire entendre par ma grimace'.[276] He is possessed by a 'terreur panique' and deludes himself that all the townspeople are plotting against him to the point of insanity. He admits that his arguments are contradictory: 'Si je rencontrais un quartier plus chargé de peuple qu'à l'ordinaire: "Tant de monde, pensais-je, ne s'est point assemblé là sans dessein!" Si un autre était vide: "On est ici prêt à me guetter"'.[277] Eventually he confesses that fear took over his reason.[278] The reader may recall the protagonist's claims to his melancholic temperament when he tells us that he is 'bilieux, mélancolique'.[279] But his description fits Burton's analysis of madness more neatly. Madness, he argues, is 'raving without a fever, far more violent than melancholy, full of anger and clamour, horrible looks, actions, gestures […] with such impetuous force & boldness'.[280]

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By aligning the protagonist with the peripheral voices in *L'Autre Monde*, I have shown how accusations of conspiracy, culpability and madness are all interlinked. In many ways the female voices and fools may be seen as allies with the protagonist. But what are they partners in? The female voices seem like partners in persecution. At the crux of their accusations lies their obvious deviation from so-called common opinion. It is for their alternative beliefs that these voices and the protagonist are specifically criticized. Playing the role of freethinker, going against the will of the majority, carries grave

[276] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 192-3.
[277] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 192.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 175.
[280] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), ed. by Dell and Jordan-Smith (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1927), p. 122.

consequences. As a result, these voices are constantly castigated, forced to face accusations from all sides. This takes on even greater significance in the light of the very real context of persecution in which Cyrano was writing. Again, ties become apparent between Cyrano and the narrator-protagonist, who is now clearly a prismatic image of the author himself: a means by which to pass judgement on real-life events. It is undeniable that he has in mind the accusations endured by Vanini and Théophile de Viau. Indeed, the connotations of having commerce with the moon take on a new meaning when we consider Théophile's similar remark that his persecutors 'disaient entr'eux sourdement / Que je parlai avec la Lune'.[281] The female voices are therefore collaborators not only with the protagonist but with other real writers, beyond the sphere of fiction, who were accused of libertinism.

In addition to this the fools demonstrate a different kind of support, but one that is equally associated with real life controversy. They are persecuted themselves by the protagonist; however, as already mentioned, this paradoxically enables the author to conceal the gravity of his criticism of religious institutions and therefore they offer some protection. Of course, Cyrano is conscious of Vanini's trial and burning at the stake in Toulouse when the protagonist is accused of sorcery and threatened to be burnt by the parliamentarians at M. de Colignac's residence.[282] It is at once a mockery of those deemed intelligent but also a method of protection and censorship for himself.

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[281] *Requête de Théophile au roi*, Quoted in Graux, F. de, '*En enfant perdu*. La folie de Cyrano', in *Dissidents, excentriques et marginaux de l'Âge classique: Autour de Cyrano de Bergerac*, eds. by Harry, Mothu, Sellier (Paris: Champion, 2006), p. 571.

[282] Isabelle Moreau, 'Mises en scène de la censure: Vanini et Descartes à l'ouverture des *États et Empires du Soleil*', *La Lettre Clandestine*, 10 (2001), 290-91.

But there is another more important message underlying the madness that I have demonstrated. Indeed, the significance of the transformation of the protagonist into a veritable madman undoubtedly offers us the key to that which ties together Cyrano's peripheral voices. For in the literary context of the protagonist's constant capturing and imprisonment, Cyrano's vision of liberty becomes clear. In line with Cavaillé's theory concerning liberty in *L'Autre Monde*, it is as though his 'mad' transformation is in of itself an attempt at the act of liberation in body and words.[283] Turning to the female voices, it is no coincidence that when Achab decides to leave the Ark, the animals follow her, impatient to leave their 'première prison' which had deprived them of their 'liberté'.[284] In this way all the peripheral voices seem to take on a higher meaning. Dandrey explains this as a 'transcendance de la pensée par la forme' in what seems a similar use of paradoxical eulogy to that employed by Rabelais'.[285] They join hands with the accused libertine Tristan l'Hermite, 'le seul poete, le seul philosophe et le seul homme libre que vous ayez'.[286] Clearly then they are united in some way to Cyrano's theory of 'liberty'.

But what kind of liberty does this point to? Cavaillé concludes that Cyrano's theory of liberty is 'forte et amère: en ce monde comme dans les autres, qui s'évade est poursuivi, qui songe à vivre librement est persécuté'.[287] This chapter has certainly seen how the idea of persecution applies to the peripheral voices as well as to the protagonist. What

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[283] Cavaillé, 'Une pensée de l'évasion. Liberté et enfermement dans les romans cyraniens' in *Lectures de Cyrano de Bergerac, Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 83.
[284] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 39.
[285] Dandrey, *L'Éloge paradoxal de Gorgias à Molière*, p. 109.
[286] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de La Lune et du Soleil*, p. 61. See the 'songez à vire librement' of the 'démon de Socrate'. Echoing Théophile's 'Preface' to his *Œuvres diverses*, p. 10: 'Le fond de mon ame a des amorces assez puissantes pour ceux qui ozent vivre librement avecques moy' (transcription in keeping with the original).
[287] Cavaillé, 'Une pensée de l'évasion', p. 83.

of the unity of these different characters? Previous Cyrano scholars have always ignored the peripheral voices. Perhaps they have therefore failed to see the strength of this unity of a group of dissidents working together towards the same goal. The acknowledgement that the protagonist's persecution is by no means unique changes the very meaning of persecution. The significant implication is that there is strength in unity. Therefore would it be going too far to suggest that Cyrano's vision of freedom is not so negative as Cavaillé suggests, but that there is a positive light or hope somewhere to be found?

D. … or Burlesque Excess?

This chapter has demonstrated how Cyrano can stir polemical debate in *L'Autre Monde*. The peripheral voices are of vital utility to the author in not only conveying one of the most essential messages in his work, that of the importance of freedom of thought, but also simultaneously playing a central role in assisting him with his attack on religious authority. Thus the peripheral voices are able to defend Cyrano's ideals while attacking his enemies.

But it is their very nature as 'peripheral' voices that gives them such great authority. By appearing on the margins they are in the perfect position to strike the hardest blows. This chapter has shown how they work to their advantage the appearance of being two-sided and seeming to defend contradictory positions. Cyrano is up to much more with his subtle techniques of persuasion, however. By creating powerful images of these players' actions, the peripheral voices gain strength and are able to compete with other, apparently more dominant voices.

Of course, the fact that the reader may even want to consider these voices as peripheral is where their strength lies. On the peripheries their power seems weakened, and therefore Cyrano may rely on this positioning as a means of conceding to censorship as controversial arguments appear moderated. For it is of utmost importance to Cyrano's work that 'la conformité est garantie en apparence'.[288] In this way, Cyrano's peripheral voices can be seen to speak to a possible double audience when necessary, on the one hand to those 'elected', favoured readers, and on the other to those who might look to persecute.[289]

It is not easy to arrive at one of these 'alternative' readings, however. This chapter has demonstrated how Cyrano's voices constantly battle to be heard and through a cacophony of interlocutors, the reader struggles to find a fixed position: the voices are burlesque forms which continually switch sides. There are even multiple layers of competition: the peripheral voices, although appearing on the margins, use other powerful means to retaliate. From the margins, they disrupt hierarchies of arguments, but in a much more subversive way through their constant overturning of comic caricatures and parodic roles. The peripheries may indeed conceal another important message for Cyrano's reader but the constant clash and conflict of positions is ultimately disorienting. At times it seems as though Cyrano is deliberately misleading his reader: there is a continual, incessant game of masking and unmasking.

[288] Cavaillé, *Dis/Simulations*, p. 147.
[289] Cavaillé, 'Libertinage et dissimulation, Quelques éléments de réflexion', pp. 62-63.

Should the reader look for an alternative message in Cyrano's work, or is his battle of voices poking fun at those who seek to read between the lines? This thesis will continue to look in more detail at Cyrano's burlesque forms but, first, some context is needed.

Chapter III

Cyrano, the Novel and Burlesque

Cyrano's *L'Autre Monde* provides the historian with a particularly difficult case study. The novel has been categorized in many different ways over the years – as a scientific or philosophical novel, a utopian fiction, science fiction, a baroque novel, an *histoire comique*. Can it be all of these things?

L'Autre Monde deals with scientific, philosophical and literary ideas and it is tempting to want to privilege one theme over another while trying to determine what exactly Cyrano's novel is. Given that it can be seen to support a number of different and often conflicting theses, and in order to avoid reading into the text a message that the author never intended, a change in approach is needed. Instead of asking 'what is *L'Autre Monde*?', which elicits a multitude of responses, an alternative line of inquiry is, 'what is it that makes Cyrano's novel different or innovative?', a question that is encouraged by *L'Autre Monde*'s refusal of any straightforward categorization. Rather than try yet again to fix Cyrano's work within one model of understanding, it is important to turn to the text itself, look at Cyrano's writing practices and question how and in what ways *L'Autre Monde* defies any one model: what is it that makes Cyrano's work Cyrano's?

This chapter will prepare the way for a more detailed analysis of *L'Autre Monde* by beginning with the context of the novel as a genre in the seventeenth century and

looking at comic writing practices. I shall demonstrate, by contextualizing Cyrano's work, what is unusual about his novel – and what, for Cyrano's seventeenth-century reader, might not be unusual at all. Indeed, why is *L'Autre Monde* necessarily a novel out of the ordinary? Resituating Cyrano's work within its wider literary context will help show how it works as a novel, as much as a controversial attack on the Church. What literary traditions might have influenced Cyrano as a writer? In what ways does his novel fit alongside, or distance itself from, other literary models of the time?

A. The Novel

i. The History of a Free Form

Literary histories of the seventeenth century often split the novel into subgenres, such as the heroic, pastoral, comic or tragic novel, in order to identify similarities and differences between literary works of the period.[290] Yet there is little to suggest that writers at the time saw themselves as directly engaging with such subgenres. Importantly, the process of trying to group works under one heading reveals more than anything the sheer diversity of novelistic forms and the difficulty of categorization at

[290] See Henri Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967); Maurice Lever, *Le Roman français au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981) and more recently, Jean-Paul Sermain, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011). Coulet and Sermain both use Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* as a turning point. Coulet for example has a section, 'Le roman sentimental avant *L'Astrée*', followed by '*L'Astrée* et autour de *L'Astrée*' before sections on 'Les histoires tragiques', 'Le roman héroïque' and 'Le roman comique et parodique', while Sermain leaves his categories a little more open ended by calling *L'Astrée* '[une] option'. Sermain also has a title for the 'Romans héroïques et galants' but groups comical novels under the more ambiguous heading 'Les libertés du rire'. He suggests that the works under this heading have been grouped together because of their defining *raison d'être*, which was to oppose the 'roman héroïque'.

all. The first half of the seventeenth century was an unstable time for the novel as writers and literary critics sought to try and regulate a previously unclear form of writing; thus it marked a step in the evolution of the genre, bringing it closer to what we might consider today the 'modern' novel.

Henri Coulet, despite trying to group novels together under subheadings, suggests that such attempts are actually not that helpful:

> La coexistence de tendances diverses, la survivance du passé, à côté des prémisses de l'avenir, les hésitations et les contradictions des auteurs, le grand nombre des œuvres rendent toute classification arbitraire.[291]

Maurice Lever goes so far as to describe the novel at this time as being defined by 'chaos', although this suggests that writers did not subscribe to any literary traditions, and that there was complete freedom; and as I shall soon argue, this was not the case.[292]

Certainly, when writers turned to the genre of the novel at the beginning of the seventeenth century they were relatively free to use it as they wanted because the genre had never been formally defined. Over the years there had been no one literary masterpiece providing a model of style or content for future writers; and there were no guidelines for writers to follow from classical antiquity as there were for poetry and drama, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *The Art of Poetry*:[293] Sermain explains

[291] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 139.
[292] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 7.
[293] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 8.

that, 'à la Renaissance, le roman n'a aucune place théorique assignée', and Lever, too, writes that:[294]

> Nulle 'Pratique' du roman, comme il en existe pour le théâtre ou la poésie. Point de manuel. Point de savant traité pour en codifier l'écriture. Point de mémorialiste pour en dresser les annales. De tous les genres, il est le plus libre.[295]

The seventeenth-century novel does have a lineage, however. The French word 'roman' originated in twelfth-century texts that were written in 'la langue romane' – the vernacular spoken in the north of France – as opposed to Latin. The first so-called novels – fictional narratives – were medieval courtly romances, first in verse, by authors such as Chrétien de Troyes (1135-*c.* 1181/91), and later in the thirteenth century, in prose, such as the Lancelot-Grail cycle.[296] Medieval courtly romances were popular in France up until at least the sixteenth century as a result of the 'exploitation commerciale d'un stock ancien', according to Sermain: following the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, French printers profited from reproducing old texts in new forms.[297] Under the reign of Henri IV (1589-1610) and into the beginning of the seventeenth century courtly romances were still in print; although Coulet suggests that they were less venerated.[298] Nevertheless, their influence would still be seen in late-

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[294] Sermain, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution française*, p. 60.
[295] Lever, *Le Roman français au XVII^e siècle*, p. 7.
[296] I use the term 'medieval courtly romance' loosely to refer to a wide range of different texts at this time but which share similar forms and themes. Chrétien de Troyes actually uses the term 'roman' in the *Conte du Graal* and *Le Chevalier de la charette*, as Coulet points out. Typically, the 'roman' at this time took the form of an octosyllabic poem which would have been read out loud; they expressed courtly ideals, the spiritual quests and adventures of knights, often concerning love. Unlike the *chanson de geste*, however, the 'roman' was not sung and the text could be read in public and in private. The 'roman', however, was not always about noble, courtly ideals: the 'fabliaux', which were comical stories, often focused on realism and were vulgar and obscene, sometimes satirical. Although less popular in the fourteenth century, they would influence later writers such as Rabelais and, in the seventeenth century, Scarron.
[297] Sermain, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution française*, p. 25, p. 31.
[298] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 100.

sixteenth-century and early-seventeenth-century novel, whether writers sought to imitate or parody old forms.[299]

During the Renaissance, the distinction between a fictional and historical account of past (but also contemporary) events was not as divided as it is today: 'histoires', 'narrations', 'récits' and 'livres' were used interchangeably by humanists (who were not fond of the chivalric romances) to refer to narratives that often displayed literary writing practices such as rhetoric and poetry.[300] There was also a tradition of 'contes' – stories originating orally – and in the sixteenth century, fables, which had a moral element. The rediscovery of Greek manuscripts, or 'histoires fabuleuses', such as Heliodore's *Histoire éthiopique*, translated into French by Jacques Amyot in 1548, and also Longus's *Les Amours pastorales de Daphnis et Chloé*, would also be held in esteem by writers of the following century: they took from these, in particular, non-linear plots and the themes of adventure and contested love affairs.

In Spain and Italy new novels were being written: although still influenced by chivalric romances, *Amadis* (published at the beginning of the sixteenth century) by Montalvo was popular in France and translated into French between 1540 and 1615;[301] Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* was read and printed in France in Italian, as well as translated into French in 1543 and 1575. Italian writers, including Ariosto and Tasso, had already

[299] The influence of *Amadis* can even be seen in the second half of the seventeenth century, for example, in Jean-Baptiste Lully's musical adaptation, first premiered in 1684.
[300] Jean-Paul Sermain, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), p. 27. Coulet also notes that in the fifteenth century, medieval 'romans' were often transposed into prose because it was believed that they were, essentially, retellings of historical events; novels were history. See Coulet, *Le Roman*, p. 84.
[301] The exact date of the composition of *Amadis* is unknown but it is likely to have been written at the end of the fifteenth century and to have been widely circulated and read at this time.

begun to debate the genre of the novel at this time, although this did not mean that they had reached a consensus.[302]

In the sixteenth century there were still no regulations regarding the format of a fictional narrative and the genre of the novel did not officially exist. It is not so surprising, then, that one of the most important French writers of the era, François Rabelais (1483-1546), was able to adopt such freedoms (although of course influenced by oral storytelling)[303] with his series of comical and satirical novels about the life of the giants Pantagruel and Gargantua: *Pantagruel* (1532); *Gargantua* (1535); the *Tiers Livre* (1546); the *Quart Livre* (1552); and, published posthumously, the *Cinquième Livre* (1564). Rabelais's work would greatly influence seventeenth-century comic novels. His use of narrative voice and the way in which he establishes a dialogue between text and reader were innovative literary gestures and scholars have commented on the singularity of his 'novelistic' project in its context.[304] Rabelais avoids conforming to previous chivalric models, but takes from these in order to parody, as well as refer to, a whole range of other narrative forms:

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[302] Sermain, *Le Roman*, p. 44.

[303] In referencing Rabelais, Guy Demerson emphasizes that, 'Au XVI[e] siècle la tradition orale demeure vivace' in 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', in *Personnage et histoire littéraire* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1991), p. 23.

[304] Coulet raises the question whether Rabelais can be considered a novelist at all, see *Le roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 106. Sermain writes in *Le roman* that Rabelais's project, 'place le lecteur dans la position d'un interprète dont la décision dépend de sa seule volonté', thus 'le voilà libre [le lecteur], et c'est cela l'esprit de la Renaissance qui inquiète tant les autorités religieuses', p. 39 and p. 42. There is an abundance of secondary literature on Rabelais. For a selection, see Marie-Luce Demonet's essay, 'Pantagrueline humanism and Rabelaisian fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Rabelais*, ed. by John O'Brien (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 73-91; *François Rabelais: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Jean-Claude Carron (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Michel Jeanneret, *Le Défi des signes: Rabelais et la crise d'interprétation à la Renaissance* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1994); *Rabelais's Incomparable Book: Essays on his Art*, ed. by Raymond La Charité (Lexington: French Forum, 1986); Michael Screech, *Rabelais* (London: Duckworth, 1979).

> Il y a de tout dans l'art de Rabelais: du débordement verbal, mais parfois du laconisme; des récits, des descriptions, des dialogues, du lyrisme, de la rhétorique, des allégories, des jeux de mots, des énumérations, des lettres, des poèmes […] Chez Rabelais, l'art consiste à employer tous les moyens d'expression possibles.[305]

In the sixteenth century, the 'novel' was still open to interpretation. What a novel or a novelist could be were not easy questions to answer and Rabelais's work, although indebted to a history of chivalric adventures and parodic of religious and even humanist traditions of the time, highlights the freedom of this form.[306] The liberties that Rabelais adopts, as well his literary innovations, would influence the comic strain of novel writing that became popular in the first half of the seventeenth century in France and which this thesis will look into in more detail in the following chapter.

ii. Recognition and Recompense?

In the seventeenth century, the word 'roman' was finally used more liberally in France; this coincided with an increased number of writers experimenting with the form of the novel and, later, literary critics expressing their concerns about the genre. In Cyrano's time – the first half of the seventeenth century – writing was still not the lucrative enterprise it would become, but nevertheless the book market was evolving and there was the possibility of appealing to a wider public than just the aristocracy and the

[305] Coulet, *Le Roman*, p. 111.

[306] Aron, *Histoire du pastiche*, p. 28: 'L'œuvre de François Rabelais condense pour sa part tous les procédés parodiques que l'on a pu énumérer pour la période médiévale […] l'auteur fusionne en quelque sorte les pratiques scolaires et érudites avec les procédés en usage dans le monde des clercs, dans celui de l'Église et chez les humanistes'.

Church;[307] some writers, such as Honoré d'Urfé and Paul Scarron received considerable recompense and forged successful careers.[308]

This new public was not as large as one might imagine today: Cyrano's audience, his 'public potentiel', was made up of only 'quelques dizaines de milliers de personnes', the increased number of educated readers from the urban nobility and bourgeoisie – 'gentilshommes', 'marchands', 'dames' and 'jeunes gens', 'désireuses de se faire valoir par une compétence culturelle'.[309] They were significant enough, however, to influence writing trends: in contrast to the small percentage of intellectuals, those who controlled educational institutions, for example, the new public 'détestait le pédantisme'. Comic and satirical writers, including Cyrano, would take up this sentiment: '[ils] tournent en dérision des néophytes de ce milieu'.[310]

As the dynamics of the literary market were gradually changing, the novel's potential, as a free form, was attractive to writers: with its lack of defined rules and the possibilities in terms of literary innovation, the novel appealed to those seeking to make their mark in literature. Of course, writers at this time did not have complete autonomy and their success depended on other factors: the recognition of the Académie Française,

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[307] See in particular, Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au 17 siècle* (Genève: 1969), pp. 186-89. Martin emphasizes the increase in novel reading in the first half of the seventeenth century. According to the holdings in the Bibliothèque Nationale, by 1640 five hundred titles under 'novel' had been published.

[308] Roger Chartier, *Lecteurs et lectures dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (1987); H.-J. Martin, *Livres, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle* (1598-1701) (1969); H.-J. Martin, *Le Livre français sous l'Ancien Régime* (1987)

[309] Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, pp. 145-47. Care is needed when using the term 'public' at this time, a category which Viala divides into three distinct parts and thus three markets: the 'strate populaire', 'strate du pouvoir' and 'strate intermédiaire' (Cyrano's market). The first group, the least educated and defined by the introduction of cheap editions such as the 'Bibliothèque bleue', did not influence writers' decisions given that there was still little financial profit to be had from them.

[310] Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, p. 147.

for example, and patronage were both still important. Yet, the new public did increase the writer's autonomy, providing 'une voie nouvelle de légitimation'.[311]

Justificatory prefaces to novels of the time indicate that authors themselves were aware of the novel's loose form and uncertain literary role and how they therefore sought both to define and to defend it. Sorel, in the 1623 'Avertissement d'importance aux lecteurs' of *Francion*, insists upon the utility of his work and that it is for the 'instruction' of his reader.[312]

Authors were struggling to define their novels and identify with a tradition. In retrospect as many as four types of 'roman' can be identified as having emerged at this time; evidence of the novel's open form and the potential for different avenues of exploration: the 'roman sentimental' or pastoral novel, such as Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607-27) which told the idyllic life of a group of shepherds;[313] 'les histoires tragiques', by writers such as Jean-Pierre Camus and François de Rosset, who were influenced by the violent and bloody religious conflicts of the French civil wars during the second half of the previous century; 'le roman héroïque', used to describe novels 'qui racontent de grandes actions et décrivent de grands sentiments' and thus opposed the sentimentality and implausibility of novels such as *L'Astreé*, for example Mlle de Scudéry's *Ibrahim, ou l'illustre Bassa* (1641) and *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* (1648-53); 'le roman comique et parodique', influenced by Rabelais but also, more recently, the picaresque novels of

[311] Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, p. 151.
[312] Charles Sorel, *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623), ed. by Yves Giraud (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).
[313] Charles Sorel calls them '[des] romans de bergerie'. See *De la connaissance des bons livres* (Paris, André Pralard, 1671).

Spain, in particular Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615) – translated into French in 1614 and 1618.

The variety of novelistic forms at the beginning of the century can be seen as a competition of form: by means of different versions of the novel, whether pastoral, tragic, heroic or comic, writers could try to assert an authority over a particular subgenre and perhaps even claim a style of 'roman' for their own, a strategy that reflected the growing autonomy of writers during this period. Novels, as Henri-Jean Martin argues, were popular with the new public, at least up until the mid 1640s;[314] writers therefore turned to this unstable genre also with a view to targeting a new audience.

The wider context of the rise in popularity of the novel in the first half of the seventeenth century; the relative freedoms of the genre; the increased autonomy of writers as well as the potential for financial recompense and fame, all explain the importance of taking into account Cyrano's decisions as a writer. The context within which he was writing was a turbulent but exciting time of change in the literary field, marked by ambiguity but also possibility: writers were not completely free to do whatever they wanted but they now had some choices.

[314] Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société*, p. 1078.

iii. A Contested Genre

D'Urfé's *L'Astreé*, which brought the pastoral romance novel into fashion, is perhaps the most important example of an author's decision to use the novel to generate critical acclaim. It was without doubt the bestseller of its time, coming out in more than ten editions. Martin argues that this could suggest a readership in the tens of thousands.[315] Yet, *L'Astrée* was not received positively by all. The form of the novel in general was a contested one and some argued that it belonged at the bottom of a hierarchy of genres, inferior to other literary forms such as poetry because it favoured prose over verse.[316] Some critics ignored the genre entirely because Aristotle, they argued, had excluded it from his *Poetics*.

From the point of view of the wider reading public, *L'Astrée* was extremely popular.[317] As Lever argues, 'par un curieux paradoxe, le genre romanesque fut en même temps le plus maltraité par la critique et le plus chéri du public'.[318] Historians suggest that novel reading was in fact more widespread than the reading of poetry or plays. Solid literary

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[315] Martin, *Livres, pouvoirs et société*, p. 189.

[316] In 1635 the Académie française was established. This was a turning point in the evolution of the literary field because, for the first time, a systematic attempt was made to institutionalize the art of literature. Committees were set up to debate and regularize all literary forms with the goal of perfecting French language and literature. While many writers flourished as a result of the favours bestowed upon them by the Académie, ultimately, an overarching structure of authority had been created that sought to control and regiment the type of literature produced. The form of the novel provided freedoms for the writer, but the Académie enforced literary hierarchies and thus prevented those writers from gaining any serious, official literary prestige.

[317] According to Viala, 'le public littéraire a pris corps et forme en même temps que prenait forme et consistance le champ littéraire', in *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, p. 124. For a detailed study on this subject see Hélène Merlin, *'Public' et Littérature en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994). For more on the dynamics of the literary market and the importance of the role of the printers and editors alongside the author, see Chartier, *Lectures et lecteurs dans la France d'Ancien Régime France* and also his book, *L'ordre des livres. Lecteurs, auteurs, bibliothèques en Europe entre XIV^e et XVIII^e siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1992)

[318] Lever, *Le roman français au XVII^e siècle*, p. 11.

criticism on the genre only appears as late as the second half of the century. Most likely, critics continued to ignore the novel's literary value, as Coulet argues, because 'on ne peut pas lui dicter les règles, lui rappeler de modèles antiques'.[319] To a certain extent, the novel's free form protected it from close scrutiny. When it was no longer possible to overlook its popularity, literary theorists returned to age-old arguments, asserting that the novel incited dangerous passions amongst its readers (who were often women) and was therefore a public menace.

Criticism came from all sides, and was not only moral.[320] Literary authorities argued that the novel was fundamentally flawed given that it consisted of fiction. According to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694), it was '[une] invention fabuleuse', that is to say, '[un] Mensonge, [une] Dissimulation, [un] Déguisement de la vérité'. For Furetière, himself a novel writer, the reader of novels was a lazy, good-for-nothing: novels are '[des] livres fabuleux qui contiennent des histoires d'amour et de chevalerie, inventées pour divertir et occuper les fainéants'.[321]

Such opposition meant that even supporters of the pastoral and heroic novels envisioned the genre of the novel itself as having an internal hierarchy: novels were always secondary to poetry and theatre, but within the genre itself there were good novels and bad novels. The most ill-favoured were comic novels, placed at the very bottom of the literary scale. Comedy, with its roots in farce and the vernacular (the language of the

[319] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, p. 18.
[320] For a useful anthology of literary theory on the genre of the novel see, *Pour et contre le roman: anthologie du discours théorique sur la ficiton narrative en prose du XVII^e siècle*, ed. by Günter Berger (Paris, Seattle, Tübingen: Biblio 17, 1996).
[321] See Furetière.

ordinary people), and the opposite of tragedy, was seen as base and appealing only to the masses.

Were writers who turned to this comic subgenre, including Cyrano, therefore making a rebellious gesture? Were their decisions contentious? To a certain extent one of the first *histoires comiques*, Sorel's *Francion* of 1623, came about in reaction to the author's dissatisfaction with the current literary model: *L'Astrée*; but Dandrey also emphasizes that the form of the *histoire comique* stemmed from the farce and satire of the stage. For Dandrey, the defining principle of the *histoire comique*, was that it was literally made up of other genres, those that formed part of a hierarchy: 'créé par référence à des genres eux-mêmes définis par analogie et distinction par rapport à d'autres plus prestigieux'.[322]

Following d'Urfé's initial success, in subsequent decades writers would both imitate this model, but also parody it.[323] Writers, therefore, and not just critics, disagreed over what made for a good novel. According to Sorel, *L'Astrée* was not at all realistic. D'Urfé had defined the novel in terms of noble and courtly qualities by means of his story of shepherds leading an idyllic lifestyle and speaking eloquent French, but Sorel criticized what he saw as a pretentious and ridiculous fiction. For him, the *roman comique*, on the contrary, was a 'genre vraisemblable' because it focused on the daily lives of ordinary people, and therefore it did not cater directly for the interests of the nobility. Sorel emphasized that in real life 'il y a peu d'hommes qui méritent d'être estimés des

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[322] Patrick Dandrey, *Le Premier 'Francion' de Charles Sorel: ou le 'jeu du roman*' (Paris: Klincksieck, 2001), p. 19. Within the history of comic modes of writing, Dandrey considers the *histoire comique* between Rabelais and Molière. In explaining that the *histoire comique* stemmed from other genres, he calls it a form of palimpsest.

[323] Many writers took their ideas from d'Urfé's pastoral model, see Lever, *Le Roman français du XVII^e siècle*, p. 67.

héros'.[324] Influenced by the *picaro* novel from Spain, in particular as a result of the popular French translation of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* – here was one important *histoire comique* to emulate – Sorel sought to parody *L'Astrée*, in both style and content, and to refuse any idealization of the novel and its grandiosity.[325] In defence of the *histoire comique*, Sorel writes:

> Nous ne mettons pas en oubly les Romans Comiques qui ont grand besoin d'estre defendus; car les Roman Heroïques qu'on devroit estimer leurs freres, les rabbaissent mesmes pour s'élever au dessus d'eux. Quelques Auteurs croyent que ne conversant qu'avec des Héros, ils en sont bien plus estimables que ceux qui se trouvent toûjours avec la lie du peuple: Mais ils ne voyent pas que les bons Livres Comiques sont des Tableaux naturels de la Vie humaine, au lieux que pour eux il ne nous representent souvent que des Heros de masquerade, & des aventures chimeriques.[326]

Yves Giraud suggests that Sorel's *Francion* is an 'Anti-*Astrée*'.[327] And thus he plays on the name of Sorel's later novel, *Le Berger extravagant* (1627-28), which Sorel changed to *L'Anti-Roman* for the second edition of 1633. Sorel's gesture was not a radical gesture, however; if his work parodied heroic-romance novels, it was with the aim of providing not only entertainment, but a literary critique of the genre; *Francion* could even be seen as an alternative model for writers to follow.

This early context is important to take into account when considering the significance of Cyrano's decision to turn to the *histoire comique*. Some critics indeed frowned upon the

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[324] Charles Sorel, *Bibliothèque françoise* [1664] (Geneva: Slatkine, 1968).
[325] Lever, *Le Roman français au XVII^e siècle*, p. 51. Lever writes, 'Le langage romanesque se caractérise par l'ostentation. L'insatiable désir de paraître fait de chaque phrase un ruissellement de pointes, d'hyperboles, de périphrases, de métaphores où les mots s'accouplent parfois de la manière la plus incongrue'.
[326] Sorel, *De la connaissance des bons livre ou examen de plusieurs autheurs*, pp. 157-58.
[327] Giraud, 'Préface' to *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623), p. 16.

genre of the novel and, in particular, the comic subgenre, and so Cyrano can certainly be seen to engage with a contentious mode of writing. Within the subgenre itself, however, writers did not necessarily see themselves as making a risky gesture. Sorel, a polygraph like Cyrano, would later be historiographer to the King, and go on to theorize the novel by means other than fictional parody. Although writing comic novels, his was a serious and erudite gesture and he sought to raise the *roman comique* to a more esteemed position; behind his comedy was a serious message for writers.

When Cyrano turned to the subgenre much later, there had therefore been attempts to fix the genre and codify it, although the variety of different types of *histoires comiques* during his own time would still testify to the instability of the genre. My next chapter will look in more detail at the types of differences between these novels. For the moment it is enough to mention Scarron's *Roman comique* to see how the genre had evolved, providing a very different model to Sorel's. His choice of title alone, the polemical juxtaposition of 'roman' with 'comique', points to an 'anti-roman'. Scarron's novel favoured farce and it was easy to see theatrical influences given that it told the adventures of a troupe of comedy actors, but it did not have the moralizing, pedagogical subtext of Sorel's.

Clearly, by 1651 – the date of the first published part of Scarron's novel, and already well into Cyrano's writing period – conflicting models of the *histoire comique* existed. According to Jean Serroy, the *histoire comique* was a cradle of innovation, and this offers one explanation for such a variety of forms: 'Le roman comique se présente, ainsi, au XVII^{e} siècle, comme un laboratoire où s'expérimentent les formules les plus

originales: prenant ouvertement ses distances avec les formes établies'.[328] It further testifies to the continuing development of new novelistic forms in the 1650s. Yet it is important to emphasize that while Sorel and Scarron refused the terminology of the 'roman' in the titles of their work, this does not constitute the 'paradoxe' that Maurice Lever asserts when he describes this as '[un] refus du romanesque à l'intérieur même de l'espace traditionnel du roman'.[329] As I have shown, the 'espace traditionnel du roman' was a contested one. The emergence of the *histoire comique* cannot be seen as simply a paradox or a subgenre to the novel. These comic works carry their own authority. Not only do they refuse the terms of previous successful novels such as *L'Astrée*, by parodying the 'romanesque' and the artificial, these writers create new models that cater for a new market.

B. Burlesque

Cyrano's writing spans two periods: the pre-Fronde, from 1641 to 1648 and the Fronde, from 1648 to 1653. When Cyrano left the army in 1641 and began a literary career, the novel was at its most popular with the new reading public. Between 1645 and 1655, however, romance novels went out of fashion, heroic novels became more popular and satirical and polemical writing peaked. The second strand of writing that is important to take into account when considering Cyrano's writing practices is the burlesque: a comic mode of writing that had emerged at the end of the previous century and which became very popular by the time Cyrano was writing. The burlesque, unlike the novel, had also

[328] Jean Serroy, *Roman et réalité. Les histoires comiques au XVII^e siècle*, p. 17.
[329] Lever, *Le Roman français au XVII^e siècle*, p. 83.

attracted the attention of literary critics early on. A writer's decision to use the burlesque therefore involved, to a certain extent, greater risk; burlesque forms were under scrutiny.[330]

The word burlesque originated from the Italian *burlesco*, the radical of which, 'burl', signified 'une plaisainterie, une raillerie, une farce (parfois une tromperie)'.[331] So how might it be distinguished from other comic modes of writing? Nédélec's research demonstrates, as she traces the use of burlesque in seventeenth-century French literature, that this comic mode was characterized by many different forms and practices. In order to understand Cyrano's burlesque, and how his use of this comic mode fits alongside other models – or, indeed, distances itself from these – it is necessary to consider it in more detail.

The burlesque has been seen to favour verse, but there were burlesque novels also, as well as burlesque theatre.[332] In Sorel's *Bibliothèque françoise*, he explains that there are different types of comic novel: burlesque and satire, for example. Of course, both Sorel and Scarron, two important authors to influence Cyrano – and whose work I shall look at in more detail in the next chapter – use burlesque literary techniques in their writing: one in the form of the novel, and thus a narrative context; the second in both prose and verse.

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[330] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 165.
[331] See the *Dictionnaire du littéraire*.
[332] Perrault talks of Scarron's *Roman comique* as being the great burlesque novel, see Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, pp. 270-71. Furetière also notes that burlesque could be prose. This means it was not actually reduced just to verse even if the adjective 'burlesque' often linked it to verse.

The first important point to make is that the burlesque was not a genre: the burlesque 'n'est ni *un* style, ni *un* genre' (italics in the original).[333] It could be seen in many different forms, whether theatrical or poetic, and even in the libellous Mazarinades. Thus it was 'ni genre théâtral, ni genre poétique, ni genre narrative, ni genre discursive, mais tout cela à la fois'.[334] Nédélec calls it 'transgénérique': 'D'une part, on peut dire qu'il existe, pour chaque genre, un sous-genre qui mérite l'épithète de burlesque'.[335]

It was a mixture of many different styles and genres, and thus 'discordant, dissonant, hétéroclite et déhiérarchisant'.[336] The burlesque was a comic mode and it was important that it succeed in making its reader laugh; although this may sound obvious, there was significant debate amongst critics and writers over what made 'good' burlesque as opposed to 'bad' burlesque – 'un burlesque "froid"'. One of its defining traits was that, in seeking to make its audience laugh, it transgressed rules and laws (political and social orders) by mixing up the serious with the comic. Good burlesque would create an effect of surprise and of the unexpected through the confusion and disorder that came from juxtaposing disparate subject matter; language could be subverted (levels of register and style and also the association of words) but also ideas (serious and base topics):[337] through the burlesque, the world was thus transformed and disfigured.[338] Furthermore, by mixing everything up, the burlesque was by its very nature ambiguous. Importantly, however, as Nédélec emphasizes, this transgression had to be 'suffisamment mesurée

[333] Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace"', p. 256.
[334] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 20.
[335] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 272.
[336] Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace"', p. 256.
[337] Especially from the point of view of literary critics, the burlesque was considered a form of writing that was base in style: that is to say, it reflected the language of the ordinary people. Cyrano certainly plays on this idea by exaggerating the idiocy and incomprehensibility of his fools and madmen, as I have shown in Chapter II.
[338] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 305.

pour rester plaisante' and it will be important to keep this in mind when looking more closely at Cyrano's burlesque given its obviously controversial content.

Nédélec helpfully outlines some of the different forms of burlesque. She notes that, although it was not a style per se, it could be seen to use stylistic traits: 'figures de l'excès', 'figures de l'analogie' and 'figures de l'équivoque'. Often the burlesque mocked *vraisemblance*, seeking out monstrous forms by mixing up words and their meanings, and playing on ambiguities.[339] Readers of Cyrano's letters observed that his collection used many 'équivoques', some passing judgement more favourably than others. Sorel writes that Cyrano's letters are: 'd'un Stile particulier dont elles sont l'exemple, qui est d'avoir la plupart de leurs pointes sur les Mots par équivoque, & sous une double signification.[340] And Balzac accuses Cyrano's letters of containing '[des] équivoques puériles' and 'fades allusions'.

It was not only Cyrano's burlesque that elicited criticism. Writers were in heated debate about its merits. By mixing the serious with the comic, the burlesque was seen by some as a highly contentious mode of writing. Through its ambiguity, the burlesque was provocative because it could not be seen to support one argument over another; given that it mixed serious with comic subject matter, this meant that it did not openly support whatever the authorities deemed was 'right': it opened up many possible interpretations and this was subversive, dangerous even, if one considers that religious parody could be the focus of ridicule. With this in mind, Cyrano's own burlesque forms, which nearly

[339] Nédélec describes it as a 'monstre linguistique, stylistique', p. 293.
[340] Quoted by Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 292.

always targeted controversial subject matter, could be seen as a particularly provocative and risky gesture.

At the time he was writing, the burlesque was especially popular with the public and therefore Cyrano was engaging with a successful model, despite its dissenters. Hubert Carrier emphasizes the popularity of burlesque verse during the Fronde period, arguing that it dominated literature – one in three Mazarinades was written in burlesque – and that it was 'l'esprit même de la Fronde'.[341] Martin supports this: the popularity of the burlesque 'coïncide avec la décennie la plus troublée'.[342] Carrier suggests its popularity reflected changes in public demand: 'nombre de pieces sérieuses écrites en prose font l'objet d'une "traduction"en style burlesque pour répondre au goût public'.[343] Of course, the burlesque had been popular in France before the start of the Fronde, but it seems to have dramatically increased in usage during the civil wars, most likely because its provocative nature suited the context of conflict.[344] Importantly, Nédélec emphasizes that Cyrano was writing before 'la vague burlesque de la Fronde', which she argues began in January, 1649, and that it is therefore necessary to consider Cyrano's work prior to the critics' condemnation of the burlesque for its role in the conflict.[345]

How can Cyrano's influences be summarized during this period? It is not possible to know when exactly between 1641 and 1650 (the first reference to a manuscript of Cyrano's) he was writing, but likely scenarios emerge: Cyrano was influenced by the

[341] Hubert Carrier, *Les Muses guerrières, Les Mazarinades et la vie littéraire au milieu du XVIIe siècle : courant genres, culture populaire et savante à l'époque de la Fronde* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996), p. 24 and p. 91.
[342] Martin, *Livre, pouvoir et société*, p. 638.
[343] Carrier, *Les Muses guerrières,* p. 95.
[344] Carrier, *Les Muses guerrières*, p. 91.
[345] Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa "burlesque audace"', p. 255.

histoires comiques written before the Fronde because of the rise in popularity of this subgenre; authors working with the *histoire comique* prior to Cyrano had used burlesque methods, thus Cyrano had seen two trends combine; the sudden success of the burlesque at the outbreak of the Fronde, epitomized by writers such as Scarron, who wrote not only burlesque verse related to the Fronde but an *histoire comique*, the *Roman comique*, proved that the burlesque was one of the most fashionable literary forms in verse *and* prose.

In addition to these literary influences, however, one might ask whether Cyrano's participation in writing some of the Mazarinades reflected other political or philosophical goals? The provenance of many of the Mazarinades are uncertain, so it cannot be confirmed whether Cyrano wrote any of them, but Carrier does suggest nevertheless that the Mazarinade itself was not a libertine gesture. Carrier argues that they were 'un divertissement pur et simple'; and, thus, writers were not necessarily engaging politically, but using the form as a literary exercise. In this respect, Carrier confirms that the content of one of Cyrano's most important Mazarinades, *Le Ministre d'État flambé*, shows nothing out of the ordinary:

> Ce ne sont pas des griefs personnels qu'énumère Cyrano; […] aucune rancœur individuelle ne vient prendre place parmi les charges retenues contre le ministre: ce sont les griefs ordinaires des Frondeurs'.[346]

When Cyrano was writing his novel and letters, the burlesque had already been trialled and tested and it was the focus of discussion in literary circles and beyond: it was in

[346] Carrier, *Les Muses guerrières* p. 125.

vogue. If Cyrano's work reflects this fashionable context, what kind of burlesque writer might he be?

Drawing on Alain Viala's research, Nédélec suggests that Scarron used the burlesque as a strategy for success: 'Or le burlesque paraît particulièrement adapté à une stratégie conquérante et qui "se plie moins au principe de hiérarchisation dominant tel qu'il s'exprime dans l'échelle des pouvoirs littéraires"'.[347] Scarron could therefore be seen to use the burlesque to his advantage in forging a literary career; like the form of the *histoire comique*, it offered certain freedoms to writers to experiment and be innovative; they could also challenge literary trends and traditions; and, thus, possibly make a mark in the literary field. Similarities between Scarron and Cyrano's situation might encourage us to ask whether Cyrano's gesture is similar but, first, it is important to look more closely at Cyrano's burlesque forms.

C. Cyrano and the Burlesque

Cyrano's novel certainly presents burlesque forms and it is obvious that he can be considered a burlesque writer. In fact, the author even references the burlesque at the beginning of his novel, thus offering the reader a framework in which to situate his work. Studies have commented on the burlesque humour of Cyrano's work and the importance of blurring the comic with the serious: the uncertainty between these two positions prepares the reader for an alternative reading and thus it masks what is

[347] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 97.

essentially ‘un regard critique’; such moments occur throughout *L’Autre Monde*. Critics have not asked, however, what is different about the extent of uncertainty, and the effects of discomfort, in Cyrano’s work. Sorel and Scarron are considered burlesque writers too, but their texts produce very different effects. Unlike these, the reader of *L’Autre Monde* experiences a kind of pleasure that could perhaps even be labelled anti-cathartic and the reader may wonder what kind of burlesque is Cyrano’s.

i. *L’Autre Monde*: Cyrano’s Risk?

The first published edition of Cyrano’s *L’Autre Monde* bears the title ‘Histoire comique’, and while it is not certain whether this was Cyrano’s decision or that of his editors, there is little doubt that the early *Histoire comique* influenced Cyrano’s writing, from the vulgarity of the humour and lowly language used to the social origins of the protagonist and setting of the novel. So why is it still difficult to label Cyrano’s work? In the most recent literary anthologies, *L’Autre Monde* is placed under the heading of anything but ‘Histoire comique’. The original heading is reduced simply to an issue of censorship: the ‘author’ (Cyrano, the editors, the printers) adopted this heading out of a necessity to quash the more polemically charged aspects of the text. In short, research has focused on the libertine content of the novel in order to explain the writer’s literary choices.

One of the ways it may be possible explain the apparent strangeness of Cyrano’s novel and the difficulty of labelling it, is through its use of burlesque. In the next chapter, I

shall continue to situate Cyrano's project in its literary context and compare *L'Autre Monde* to other works of its time, but before doing so, I would like to take an example of the unusual comedy found in Cyrano's novel. I mentioned earlier that an element of surprise and of the unexpected is one of the effects produced by the burlesque, and that it is by nature a form of play, which is supposed to provide pleasure, specifically, laughter: 'Tout est jeu', or 'prétexte à jeu'.[348] Cyrano's novel certainly has unexpected moments, which I shall look at here, but the extent of the comic effects produced from his literary games, is not so certain.

First of all, Cyrano's editor, Le Bret, hints to the reader in his preface to the 1657 edition that they may be confronted with something 'unusual'. In the preface he talks of the author's intentions, insisting that the reader interpret the work comically:

> Mais je prie les plus généreux de se laisser prévenir par cette favorable pensée, qu'il [the author] n'a eu pour but que le plaisant, et c'est ce qui lui a pu faire négliger quelques endroits, auxquels, à cause de cela, on doit une attention d'autant moins austère que, par ce moyen, on l'excusera plus facilement de la circonspection, qu'autrement on y désirerait trop grande de sa part, de la mienne et de celle des imprimeurs.[349]

Le Bret mentions ambiguously 'quelques endroits' that may cause the reader to doubt the author's humorous intentions. He further alludes to these uncertainties as shadows in the text, suggesting that they will very likely perplex the reader: 'Et, en effet, si on souffre bien des ombres dans un tableau, pourquoi ne pas souffrir dans un livre quelques endroits moins forts que d'autres […]?'[350] This kind of guidance does not

[348] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 298.
[349] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 479.
[350] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 486.

appear in his contemporaries' prefaces, and the reader wonders why there is the need to drum home the comedy of the novel if the text itself does not make it obvious. What is Le Bret alluding to exactly?

One of the scenes that Le Bret possibly had in mind is when the author of *La Lune* is accused of being a sorcerer, a serious accusation at the beginning of the seventeenth century, something of which Cyrano is fully aware given the conclusion of the scene where the threat upon the protagonist's life is imminent (he may be burnt at the stake). There is nothing comic to be had here. In contrast to the worrying significance of this scene, the protagonist's friend, M. de Colignac, feels the need to laugh out loud at the farcicality of what he sees:

> A ces mots, Colignac, quoique ses poings dans ses côtés, ne put se contenir; un éclat de rire le prit, qui n'offensa pas peu messieurs ses parents; de sorte qu'il ne fut pas en son pouvoir de répondre à aucun point de leur harangue, que par des *ha a a a*, ou des *ho o o o*.[351]

Through the direct expression of the sounds of laughter (as ridiculous as these are, and therefore drumming home their effects), the reader is impelled to laugh too through the reading exercise before them.

Yet threats of heresy are no light matter. The seventeenth-century reader, like Cyrano, would have been well aware of the tragic fates of Vanini and Théophile. Colignac's response is unexpected, especially when he is supposed to be the protagonist's ally; should he not be defending his life? His laughter creates a dislocation, disrupting the

[351] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 170.

scene and destroying the equilibrium: the reader is torn between the comedy of Colignac's physical act, which resembles a ridiculous caricature, and the gravity of the subject matter. The reader's participation in the laughter is uncomfortable, and not entirely willing: the scene is both comic and not comic.

It is moments such as these, in *L'Autre Monde*, which are unsettling and difficult to explain. The episode is obviously burlesque: Colignac's ridiculous (imbecilic?) behaviour contrasts sharply with the serious subject matter. Furthermore, who is arguing what, when and how? These are not easy questions to answer and it is difficult to pinpoint the exact source of the discomfort – who or what exactly is the culprit? Is Colignac at fault? There is a blurring of positions; which of these is comic and which is serious? Should the reader be laughing at the men in beards, the comical 'barbes à longue robe', who come to inform the protagonist of his sentence?

If the reader is disturbed by such troublesome moments in the text, it is curious that in a *mise en abîme* Cyrano remarkably stages his own scandalous 'querelle' over the reception of his work. His novel 'La Lune' has split the population: 'Chaque famille se divisa, et les intérêts de cette querelle allèrent si loin, que la ville fut partagée en deux factions, la lunaire et l'antilunaire'.[352] The narrator scorns the public's ignorance and poor reading skills: some praise the novel but for the wrong reasons, '[ils] s'écrièrent 'Qu'il est bon!' aux endroits qu'ils n'entendaient point';[353] some are quick to turn on it, arguing that '[ce] n'est plus qu'un pot pourri de contes ridicules, un amas de lambeaux

[352] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 168.
[353] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 167.

décousus, un répertoire de Peau-d'Ane à bercer les enfants'; others are simply uneducated, 'et tel n'en connaît pas seulement la syntaxe'.[354]

Cyrano passed away before the publication of *L'Autre Monde* and so he did not live to see the real reception of his novel. The text's posthumous publication may explain the absence of any actual public scandal. Still, if Cyrano's fabricated 'querelle' is considered within the wider socio-political context at the time he was writing, it seems that the author was fully aware of the very risky project he was undertaking. His staging of a scandalous text that is misunderstood by the public encourages the reader to question what his intentions were in writing the novel and what sort of literary effects he hoped his burlesque would achieve.

Moreover, considered in context, Cyrano's burlesque elicits further concerns. Although literary theorists, as we have seen, were less concerned by the genre of the novel than they were by the epistolary genre, the question of the burlesque, on the other hand, was a highly contentious one – its merits and weaknesses were debated throughout the seventeenth century and it was a thorny issue for the literary authorities.[355] This included the official literary authority of the French state, the Académie française. Opponents of the burlesque argued that it dangerously subverted literary hierarchies; it was a base and vulgar style; it broke all literary rules; it deliberately promoted vice and corruption; and worst of all, it was ambiguous – it was difficult to know whether the

[354] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 168.
[355] See Chapter I.

burlesque was being serious or comic and therefore it could be a vehicle for political and religious attack.[356]

Nédélec argues that the burlesque, from its origins, was always a risky literary venture and that its very nature was subversive (religiously and politically). It was in the 1630s that the increasingly frequent use of burlesque in literature began to cause serious problems because of the renewed interest in regulating and perfecting the French language and the importance of looking back to the Ancients as providing an exemplary literary model. The founding of the Académie in 1635 enforced these ideals. The burlesque thus became implicated in the *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* from the beginning: it challenged language and genre and thus indirectly favoured the 'Moderns' (those who believed in the merits and authority of contemporary writers); it upset the 'Ancients' because it often ignored the authority of classical models.

Given that the burlesque is always ambiguous and is always provocative in that it confounds the serious with the comic, should the scene with Colignac and the 'barbes à longue robe' seem like anything out of the ordinary? Cyrano was using a contentious form of writing when he turned to the burlesque, but as the remainder of this thesis will show, Cyrano's use of the burlesque goes beyond the 'unexpected' to produce troubling effects of monstrous proportions. Everything is displaced and ridiculed and the wider effects are destructive.[357] The next two chapters of this thesis will investigate further Cyrano's burlesque and its effects.

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[356] Nédélec, *Les États et empires du burlesque*, pp. 174-78.

[357] Several early seventeenth-century texts have been labelled 'monstrueux' – a literary work that scholars have argued is difficult to categorize because of its mix of genres or styles. See for example, Richard Parish's description of Scarron's *Roman comique* as 'un étrange monstre', in 'Scarron's *Roman comique*:

Chapter IV

Narrative Voice in the *Histoire comique*

Given the variety of novelistic models at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is not enough to define Cyrano's *L'Autre Monde* by its freedom of thought and forms. Other writers before Cyrano, and during his time, had benefited from the freedom of the genre and as the previous chapter has shown, distinctive subgenres had already started to emerge when Cyrano was writing. In light of these diverse and competing literary models, where does Cyrano's project fit?

Chapter II demonstrated that what exactly a literary character might be for Cyrano is not always obvious and yet, of course, the role of a character, and what this is and how it functions, is central to the framework of any fictional novel. I demonstrated how the role of more minor parts in *L'Autre Monde* – those in the margins – could be better captured through an analysis of voice. My findings established the competition between voices in Cyrano's novel and their disorder; one of the issues raised was the difficulty of defining Cyrano's narrator, even though he is clearly an important presence in the text. It is now time to go back to this central literary agency and look more closely at how it functions in the novel. In order to do so, I shall first look at the narrator in the

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Contradictions and Terms', in *Seventeenth-Century French Studies*, vol. 16 (1994), p. 105. As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, however, many writers were experimenting with literary forms and unfixed genres at this time. What a literary 'monstre' is exactly at this time is therefore not clear and merits further research. On early modern monsters see in particular Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges* and Williams, *Monsters and their Meanings in Early Modern Culture*. For a more broad study see Cohen's *Monster Theory*.

works of Cyrano's contemporaries, specifically in the *histoire comique* so that I can better situate Cyrano's.

For this comparative study, five important *histoires comiques* from the beginning of the century will be considered: Théophile de Viau's *Première journée* (1623), a short *récit* about the first day of a voyage of a young group of friends;[358] Charles Sorel's *Francion* (1623, 1626, 1633) and *Le Berger extravagant* (1627-28), the first an *histoire comique* that takes the name of its protagonist and tells of the trials and tribulations of his farcical life, the second a parody of the *roman héroïque*, making fun in particular of the model's implausibility; Tristan L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié* (1643), a narrative about the life and adventures of a young page; Paul Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651), a burlesque account of the adventures and mishaps of a theatre comedy troupe.

My own reader may be wondering what kind of narratives these novels present: are they 'first person' or 'third person'? Of course, researchers agree that these terms offer only a very limiting understanding of the novel, and yet one of the things that this chapter will show is that trying even to forge a preliminary label for these stories as 'first-person' or 'third-person' is particularly difficult.

[358] The *Première journée* is only six chapters long and it is unclear whether it is complete or if Théophile intended for his project to be larger. However, the work demonstrates novelistic techniques; it has much in common with the other novels I am comparing; and it clearly influenced those later novels.

A. Forms and Norms[359]

The narrator in a novel 'organise les éléments dont il fait état, il les met en "intrigue", ce qui revient à dire qu'il établit des liens (chronologiques ou logiques) et donc impose, au sens strict du terme, un "point de vue" sur ce qu'il raconte'.[360] The narrator is clearly an important part of a novel and yet the extent to which the narrator establishes a presence in the text varies greatly: for example, the narrator could be an important 'personnage' in the story itself; or only interfere momentarily 'pour juger'; or even be more subtly hidden behind the 'point de vue' of his assumed character.[361] In the *histoires comiques* that this chapter considers, the narratorial voice intervenes in complex ways and to different extents and often it is not easy to situate despite these markers – an argument expressed by Tzvetan Todorov of the narrator in general: 'cette image fugitive ne se laisse pas approcher, et elle revêt constamment des masques contradictoires, allant de celle d'un auteur en chair et en os à celle d'un personnage quelconque'.[362] What should the reader expect of the narrator in an *histoire comique*, which is likely to use parody or irony and therefore further complicate the layers and registers of narration? Who (or what) is narrating in these *histoires comiques*? Can the figure of the narrator itself be used for comic or other literary effect?

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[359] The title of this section, 'Forms and Norms' is borrowed from The Johns Hopkins University French Graduate Conference 2011 where questions about literary 'norms' and 'abnormalities' were raised, about what these could be exactly, and how one can establish a framework of understanding in order to compare literary models, inspired my own research on Cyrano precisely because his work seemed too difficult to categorize.

[360] *Le Dictionnaire du littéraire,* ed. by Paul Aron and others (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), p. 408.

[361] Ibid.

[362] Ibid., quoting Tzvetan Todorov, *Les genres du discours* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1978).

Even outside of the context of the *histoire comique*, the narrator raises tricky questions, in light of which Gérard Genette emphasizes that the narrator, too, is a voice in the text, with a distinct relationship with the author and character(s): 'la voix: "aspect, dit Vendryès, de l'action verbale considérée dans ses rapports avec le sujet" – ce sujet n'étant pas ici seulement celui qui accomplit ou subit l'action, mais aussi celui (le même ou un autre) qui la rapporte, et éventuellement tous ceux qui participent, fût-ce passivement, à cette activité narrative'.[363]

Given the complexity of the 'situation narrative' which necessitates a careful dissection of the 'relations étroites entre l'acte narratif ses protagonistes, ses déterminations spatio-temporelles, son rapport aux autres situations narratives impliquées dans le même récit, etc.' Genette's classic definitions are helpful to my study, in particular his analysis of different layers of narrative ('les niveaux narratifs') and also the extent to which, and ways in which, the narrator is connected to the story he is telling ('la personne'):[364] is the narrator extra-diegetic or intra-diegetic, hetero-diegetic or homo-diegetic?[365] Are these positions easily distinguishable in the novels or more complex?

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[363] Genette, *Figures III*, p. 226.

[364] See the opening pages to the chapter on 'Voix' in Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 225-27 (p. 227), in which he sets out the difficulties of narrative voice.

[365] Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 252-53. In the first category (extra-diegetic/intra-diegetic), Genette distinguishes different levels of narrative voice. These exist in relation to one another in a hierarchy. The first-level narrative ('au premier degré') precedes, overarches and is superior to, the second-level narrative ('second degré'). The second exists within the framework of the first thus it is intra-. In line with this framework, for example, the author of the *Confessions*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, would be considered extra-diegetic when he addresses the public but intra-diegetic as the protagonist/hero within the récit. In Genette's second category (hetero-diegetic/homo-diegetic) he distinguishes two major forms of narrator. The hetero-diegetic narrator is absent from the story he is telling while the homo-diegetic narrator is present in the story as a character. The homo-diegetic narrator may be labelled auto-diegetic if the narrator is the hero of the story rather than a secondary character, for example, a witness or observer. Genette emphasises that these categories can overlap and although his study does not focus on seventeenth century French literature, he does suggest that 'le roman baroque nous ont [a] habitués à des situations beaucoup plus complexes' (p. 227).

In a novel the narrator is not necessarily the author (Genette emphasises that the narrator is 'lui-même un rôle fictif') and yet literature often raises the question of the relationship between the author and his or her fictional characters: to what extent is the work autobiographical? Are there references to real life people or events? Even though the modern novel as we know it today was only just emerging in the first half of the seventeenth century, these questions are important for the corpus of works I have chosen.[366] The term itself, 'author', carried significance at a time when the literary field was undergoing significant change.[367] The use of this word in literature testifies to its double meaning: to refer to both literary 'creator' and 'authority'. This chapter will show how these writers obscure, often to playful effect, the fictionality of their stories by blurring the narratorial voice (which should be 'fictive' in a novel) with an authorial voice (real, for example, in the case of an historical account).[368]

Early incarnations of this practice go as far back as antiquity. There is no doubt that the *histoire comique* of the seventeenth century, in particular Cyrano's work, was influenced by the satirical novels of writers such as Apuleius and his popular first

[366] Contrary to those theorists in line with Roland Barthes (famously outlined in 'La Mort de l'auteur') the question of author is extremely important for seventeenth-century literature. While the reader can never be sure of an author's intentions, literary works can of course reveal much about the context they were written in, and for the first half of the seventeenth century this is important to take into account given the evolving socio-historical dynamics of the literary field at this time, specifically, the tensions between the rising status of 'author' and the establishment of literary authorities such as the Académie française. The ways in which certain authors assert their 'authority' and/or play with this idea, can often be seen directly in the texts. Such issues are especially pertinent for libertine works where dissimulation, polemical content and literary innovation go hand in hand. In creating an authority of a new kind, the unstable position of 'authorship' is an issue very much addressed by these writers and it is no coincidence that the ambiguous 'identity' of the author in the fictional novel at this time is a recurring theme, whether used polemically or as a literary tool.

[367] See Viala, *Naissance de l'écrivain*, p. 276.

[368] Genette suggests a distinction between 'fictive' and 'real' narrative voices in *Figures III*, p. 226. Alongside historical accounts, he includes autobiography, although the form known today did not exist in the seventeenth century.

person-narrative, *Metamorphoses*.[369] Apuleius fabricates an ambiguous author-narrator relationship in the opening pages of his novel. The first voice is an authorial persona, talking about his project: 'What I should like to do is'; it is self-reflexive, questioning the creative processes of writing: 'So let me begin! Who is the narrator?' Apuleius anticipates the reader's desire to know more about the identity of the storyteller. We must learn more of his biography, specifically, his credentials: is he a reliable source? The equilibrium is later tipped, however, by the discovery of the narrator's name: Lucius, the hero of the book, a character who is clearly not Apuleius. The reader is led to wonder about the narrator's identity: are these voices one and the same? Whose, or what are they exactly?

The works of Théophile, Sorel, L'Hermite and Scarron, raise similar questions, albeit indirectly, as a result of their literary forms. Influenced by burlesque and satirical models from antiquity, these writers also parody traditional Renaissance models of author and narrator found in the earliest novels, going as far back as the late medieval period. In a long line of tradition, to refer to Deborah Losse's work on Renaissance prologues, the preface to a novel was an important addition to a text providing a position from which the author could establish himself or herself vis-à-vis the text.[370] Traditionally, this meant referencing the important classical sources of the story, but increasingly authors sought to appropriate the novel for themselves, making reference to their own literary efforts.

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[369] Or better known as *The Golden Ass*. I refer to the following edition; Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. by Peter Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). The title *Metamorphoses* is in keeping with the original manuscripts.

[370] Deborah Losse, *Sampling the Book: Renaissance Prologues and the French 'Conteurs'* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1994), p. 20.

As this chapter will demonstrate, the seventeenth-century writers I have chosen to look at play with these traditions. They blur the distinction between what should be a distinct author's voice in the preface and the narrator's, a voice within the story. These writers obscure the text's historical value and create a literary character that is a type of 'author-persona', thus implying a personal connection with the story. This encourages the reader to ask 'who is the author?' and 'what is his relationship to the text?' Readers familiar with Rabelais will recognize similar lines of questioning that arise from his prologues, in which the author assumes a persona. Coleman emphasizes that 'it is not the real author's voice that is heard – that is, the real Rabelais talking in real life – but the created author's voice; for Rabelais adopts a conscious, indeed self-conscious rôle of literary creator'.[371] We can certainly see this when in the Prologue to *Gargantua*, the 'author' asks the reader: 'À quel propos, en voustre advis, tend ce prelude, et coup d'essay?'[372] In the seventeenth century, with the example of Théophile de Viau, who was publicly condemned for being a libertine and whose controversial life and times were well known to his readers – including later writers like Sorel, L'Hermite, Cyrano and Scarron – the identification of the author takes on a new gravity: in questioning 'who', the reader must also confront the libertine context.[373]

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[371] Dorothy Gabe Coleman, *Rabelais: A Critical Study in Prose Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 26.

[372] François Rabelais, 'Gargantua' in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) p. 6.

[373] According to Jean Serroy in *Roman et réalité*, Théophile and his libertine circle of friends (Boisrobert and Saint-Amant) were considered in the 1620s to be 'les nouveaux maîtres du monde des Lettres', thanks to the success of their innovative work, p. 97. Théophile was a known and celebrated public figure, and the importance of this as a context to reading his work cannot be overlooked. In 1621, when he returned to Paris from exile, he was still admired for his writing. The eventual persecution that he faced from the Jesuit Père Garasse and the ensuing scandal was a public affair. The events of his prosecution became a reference point for future writers, not least Cyrano, and Théophile was hailed as a hero. Sorel, for example, bases his character Francion on Théophile.

Cyrano's narrator is not easily defined and between the narrator, an authorial voice and the protagonist, it is difficult to see who is arguing what; voices compete but are also divided; as I demonstrated in Chapter II, the narrative is highly disruptive. One of the problematic issues that arises in particular with Cyrano's novel is the pact with the reader. Such pacts are often set up from the start of a text, instructing the reader how to read, what to expect and the relationship between the author and his or her story. In Chapter I, I demonstrated that the opening dedication to Cyrano's collection of letters warned the reader of the capricious nature of the collection as a whole. The playfulness of the dedication was in many ways a reading exercise in preparation for the comedy and inauthenticity of the wider collection; the dedication's fictional traits disoriented the reader as to the relationship between author and reader: could the authorial voice be trusted? Within the collection of letters, the authorial voice in the dedication did not seem particularly misplaced alongside the variety of characters adopted by the letter-writer.

One message was clear, however: the capriciousness of the dedication averted the reader to the comedy and irony to come later. Such a 'pact' is not so obvious in Cyrano's novel, partly due to the absence of a dedication or prologue from the author and it is not clear whether this was Cyrano's intention given the posthumous publication of his work. It is therefore all the more important to look very closely at how the narrative voice functions within the novel itself. Before turning to Cyrano, however, I would first like to consider the different types of narrator that Théophile, Sorel, L'Hermite and Scarron create in order to establish a framework of comparison.

i. In Defence of One's Name? Théophile's *Première journée* (1623)

In Théophile's *Première journée*, there is no authorial voice distinguished by a preface; the *récit* starts immediately with 'Chapitre I': 'L'Elegance ordinaire de nos Ecrivains est a plus pres selon ces termes'.[374] The unnamed voice begins by defending what might be his own literary values, echoing prefatory practices in which the author defends his project: here, the importance of not imitating the Ancients. Although what is striking is that the arguments are staged as a commentary on literary practices and there is a notable absence of an authorial voice – or 'je', at this point; instead, there is an assertive and neutral 'Il faut que', followed by an all inclusive 'nous' suggesting a community of writers, of which the author is a part: 'Il faut escrire à la Moderne, Demosthene & Virgile n'ont point escript en notre temps, et nous ne scaurions escrire en leur siècle, leurs livres quand il les firent estoient nouveaux, et nous en faisons tous les jours de vieux'.[375]

The literary commentary takes a sudden change off course, however, when the personal voice of the narrator jumps in to mention specifically, now, his own writing methods: 'Or ces digressions me plaisent, je me laisse aller à ma fantaisie &, quelque pensée qui se présente, je n'en détourne point la plume'.[376] He who has the 'plume' must be the author, an assumption confirmed by the personal assertion of the narratorial voice over

[374] Théophile de Viau, 'Première journée' in *Œuvres diverses* (1623), p. 17 (original transcription).
[375] 'Première journée', p. 19.
[376] 'Première journée', p. 22.

'mon livre'; the reader is reminded of Montaigne's personal assertion over his own text.[377] Is it the author speaking?

Yet this chapter is not called a prologue, it is labelled 'Chapitre I', and is therefore part of the novel. Before the popularity of the autobiography in the eighteenth century with Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) and today's common assumption that there is always a personal link between the author and his novel, for the seventeenth-century reader the narrator in the *Première journée* was unusual.[378] The reader wonders what this familiar voice is, appearing suddenly out of context and interrupting the commentary. Indeed, the commentary has changed, as the narrator informs us, into 'une conversation' – perhaps with his reader: 'Mon livre ne pretend point d'obliger le Lecteur'; the familiar and informal voice is reminiscent of Montaigne's.

In 'Chapitre II', Théophile introduces a second layer of narrative. This intra-diegetic voice begins a story about the adventures of a group of young men, of which he is a part, on the first day of their 'voyage': 'Ce jour là, comme le ciel fut serain, mon esprit se trouva guay'.[379] Whose is this 'je', the reader wonders; is it the author's? Curiously, the narrator digresses for much of the chapter to tell tales from his own youth, thereby introducing yet another layer of narrative. Is one story more important than the other?

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[377] Michel de Montaigne, *Œuvres complètes*: 'Ainsi lecteur, je suis moy-mesmes la matière de mon livre', p. 9.

[378] Jean Serroy in *Roman et réalité*, argues that Théophile's 'je' is a sincere voice reacting in the face of accusations (Serroy compares Théophile's 'je' to Rousseau's, for example). The 'je' 'est une nécessité romanesque. Le 'je' est là pour affirmer la part irréductible de l'individu, face à toutes les contraintes du monde', p. 101. I argue that the 'je' produces other, more disturbing effects, on the reader. If we are reminded of Rousseau's opening lines, 'Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur. Je veux montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature; et cet homme, ce sera moi', there is little ambiguity in the setup of the narrator function. Théophile's, to the contrary, is a hesitant gesture.

[379] 'Première journée', p. 24.

Indicators in the text distinguish the two threads: for example, the narrator refers to his own adventures as 'ce conte'.[380] But for the reader it is not clear what the narrator classifies as a 'conte': is one story invented, another perhaps true?

The ambiguous links between the first and second chapter arouse the reader's curiosity; is the narrator entirely fictional? is he the author? is this an autobiography? Friends of Théophile and readers familiar with his scandalous past will recognise that there are passages from both narratives that bear heavily on Théophile's own life and times.[381] In 'Chapitre II', the narrator's fellow adventurer, Clitiphon, is shocked at how his friend has so quickly overcome his recent exile. This is no doubt a reference to Théophile's own banishment: 'Est-il possible que vous ayez dormi si à repos dans une affliction si récente? Vous ne fûtes banni que d'hier, et vous voilà déjà guéri de peine!'[382] And the narrator-protagonist's lengthy reply as he stands up for himself – heavily laden with a real and troubling subtext – suggests a platform from which the author Théophile is actually speaking: 'Ce qui ne me touche, luy dis-je, ny le corps ny l'ame, ne me donne point de douleur […] On m'a chassé de la Cour ou je n'avais que faire, si on me presse encore de sortir de France, quelque part de l'Europe ou je veuille aller, mon nom m'y a

[380] 'Première journée', p.34.

[381] Guido Saba, *Théophile de Viau: un poète rebelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), pp. 146-47. Much has been written about the autobiographical nature of Théophile's text. Evidence suggests he intended to write an autobiography (and Lachèvre reads it as such), but the text of the *Première journée* is in the form of a narrative fiction and, in line with Saba's arguments, the literary elements must be taken into account. At times, its biographical aspects are undeniable, especially when compared to texts such as *L'Autre Monde* where 'real-life' references are only tentatively hinted at. Saba suggests that by tracing the 'biographical' character of the *Première journée*, it is possible to read this novel in reaction to the popular sentimental and heroic novels of the time: Théophile was playing with the idea of a *roman* 'réaliste'. Importantly, Saba emphasizes that Théophile 'veut certainement susciter le rire', p. 156. For how Théophile constructs an 'autoportrait' elsewhere, see Bernard Bray, 'Effets d'écriture, image du moi dans l'œuvre en prose de Théophile', in *Théophile de Viau: Actes du Colloque du CMR 17, Offerts en Hommage à Guido Saba* (Paris, Seattle, Tübingen: Biblio 17, 1991), pp. 129-138.

[382] 'Première journée', pp. 24-25. See the 'Au lecteur' to *Œuvres diverses* (1623), in which Théophile makes reference to his exile: 'ils ont pris a tache, des pousser mes infortunes jusqu'au bout, & me font voir jusqu'à la veille de me bannir moy-meme pour trouver une liberté à mon ressentiment', p. 9.

fait des cognoissances', the reference to his fame in particular an indication of the celebrated author himself.[383] Elsewhere, the narrator digresses yet again into this second level of narrative to amuse his friends about an encounter he once had with a possessed woman.[384] Those familiar with Théophile will know that he takes this story from his own experiences as a youth.

Writers before Théophile had taken references from their own lives as literary material, there is nothing unusual about this, and as this chapter will highlight later, other comic writers used references from their own life and times. The *Première journée* is interesting because of its different levels of narrative, which obscure the narrator's position as homo-diegetic or auto-diegetic. The reader wonders about the extent of real references in the novel and its fictionality; after all, the *Première journée* alone is not an autobiographical text: it relies on the reader's prior knowledge of Théophile's life.

Guido Saba suggests that the *Première journée* takes on further significance when the reader considers its location in the printed collection. Placed at the beginning of a collection of Théophile's works, he argues that it acts as an introduction to the reader of the dangers in Théophile's life at the time of publishing. His earlier printed collection had caused controversy, as had his involvement in the risky collaborative project, the *Parnasse satyrique*.[385] The chronology of events suggests that Théophile was aware of the impending attack from the Jesuit Père Garasse when he published the second part of

[383] 'Première journée', p. 26.
[384] 'Première journée', p. 34.
[385] For more on the importance of the context of the controversy of Théophile's work, specifically, the reactions of Père Garasse, for understanding the second part of Théophile's collected works, see Cecilia Rizza, 'Un manifeste déguisé: la *Première journée* de Théophile de Viau', in *Le Miroir et l'image: Recherches sur le genre narratif au XVII^e siècle*, actes du colloque de Pavie, 1998 (Geneva: Slatkine, 2000), pp. 47-88.

his collected works.[386] The introduction to the second collection, 'Au Lecteur', supports this. Théophile defends his life: 'Je ne produis point icy l'impression d'un travail si petit & si desadvantageux à ma mémoire, afin qu'on le voye: mais afin qu'il fasse voir que Dieu veut que je vive'.[387] The *Première journée* therefore takes on an added meaning when the reader steps back to consider Théophile's collection as a whole.

More generally, critics argue that libertine writers had to conceal their identity as a mode of protection and this offers one possible explanation for Théophile's literary choices. Joan DeJean argues that the blurring of the identity of the narrator with the author is one of the ways in which they can achieve this dissimulation, specifically by dividing the 'je' into both subject and object.[388] The reader can see this in Théophile's creation of a figure of himself in the *Première journée*, through an 'autoportrait'. As a result of a self-portrait he becomes the 'object' being looked at and this method allows him to recreate himself, a method that is also used in L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié*.

Of course, libertine strategies should be taken into account when considering a text like the *Première journée*, but at the same time it is necessary to take into account the literary effects of these techniques. The *Première journée* might set the dangerous context, but what are the effects of Théophile's decision to create a narrator that speaks over several different narrative layers? It is necessary to ask whether the layering

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[386] Rizza, in 'Un manifeste déguisé', notes that the Privilège of Théophile's work dates from April 1623, and that the Privilège of the *Doctrine curieuse* is from March, 1623. Importantly, the latter had been circulating in Paris for several months prior.

[387] Théophile, *Œuvres diverses* (1623), p. 1; Théophile's 'Au lecteur' is defensive from the very beginning: the author is clearly writing in response to serious accusations and the tone is disconcertingly worrying,

[388] Joan DeJean, *Libertine Strategies: Freedom and the Novel in Seventeenth-Century France* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1981), p. 65. Elsewhere, DeJean explains that libertine writers had to 'adjust their terms' and 'locate their writing in the middle ground between autobiography and novel', p. 25.

reveals more than it conceals of the author's scandalous life to the reader; he is perhaps no better protected. There is no transition from the 'Avis au Lecteur' to the first chapter: this is a bold move because the reader finds him or herself forced to confront the author's presence, one which is synonymous with real scandal.

Filippo D'Angelo insists on the 'double lecture' produced as a result of the 'équivocité de la voix narrative', but really it seems as though Théophile's presence in the text is unavoidable; if there is at times ambiguity, then this only encourages the reader to question further the identity at stake.[389] The writer, Guilio Cesare Vanini, whose work had a significant influence on Théophile, also plays with his identity in his work, naming the central interlocutor by the initials 'J.-C.' (rather than any other), a pun on his own name Guilio Cesare and Jesus Christ (Gesù).[390] Théophile, like Vanini, needs his own identity to be blatantly present in the text for the identity of the author to be raised. The absence of a named character in the *Première journée*, the opposite of Vanini's 'J. C.', provokes the same reaction: the reader's curiosity is triggered by the very absence of a name. Yet, far from there being two possible interpretations, one real the other fictive, the reader is not free to choose. Théophile cannot be pinned down in the text (just as J.C. is both Jesus Christ *and* Vanini), but the reader cannot escape his presence as a result of literary techniques. The ambiguity of the author-narrator's identity is as playful as any name game and therefore not very ambiguous at all.

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[389] Filippo D'Angelo, '"Je suis le héros véritable de mon roman" : l'équivocité de la voix narrative dans les récits à la première personne au xviie siècle', in *Les Cahiers du Centre de Recherches Historiques* [en ligne], no. 33, 2004.

[390] See G. C. Vanini, 'Dialogue 50' in Les secrets admirables de la nature. Saba argues that Théophile had read Vanini's work, see op. cit., *Théophile de Viau : un poète rebelle*, p. 153.

ii. Delegating in Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623, 1626, 1633)

It is interesting to note that Sorel and Théophile's works were published the same year and that they were acquaintances, part of the same literary circle, and very likely read each other's work whilst composing their own.[391] Their texts set up the same literary quandary concerning multiple levels of narrative, and yet they do so in two distinct ways.

The three different editions of *Francion* reveal a remarkable insight into the writer's creative decisions; three books, which Patrick Dandrey argues should be considered together as part of a continual and dynamic process of rewriting, 'comme un phénomène expérimental'.[392] Differences across the three texts demonstrate Sorel's literary games: Sorel's model is ludic; it plays on itself and 'l'auteur propose à ses lecteurs le jeu d'une lecture par superposition'.[393] It is therefore important to take into account the literary effects of Sorel's changes, rather than only read these as revealing a libertine form owriting.[394] For this study, Sorel's decisions about the narrator in the

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[391] Along with other poets, Théophile and Sorel worked together on the *Vers pour le Ballet du Roi. Représentant les Bacchanales* (1623).

[392] Patrick Dandrey, *Le premier Francion de Charles Sorel ou le 'jeu du roman'* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2001), p. 10. Yves Giraud, for example, prioritizes the 1623 edition, *Histoire comique de Francion (1623)* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979); Fausta Garavini, the 1633 edition in *Histoire comique de Francion: Édition de 1633* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996)

[393] See Dandrey, *Le Premier Francion*, p. 15 and p. 26. I position myself in line with Dandrey who emphasizes the literary value of each of the three editions of *Francion*. The three versions should not be considered as mere drafts, and that Sorel was working towards one definitive version, but appreciated together as important layers in an on-going project. Dandrey affirms that 'il n'est pas de version définitive, préférable, stabilisée: la superposition des trois versions rend compte seule de la richesse entière du texte, ou plutôt du processus créateur qui en l'occurrence remplace l'ordinaire objet de lecture qu'on ne peut plus nommer ici texte, mais palimpseste', p. 10. This process of 'palimpsest' is deliberate, Dandrey argues.

[394] This argument is supported elsewhere; see *Le 'Francion' de Charles Sorel*, ed. by Michèle Rosellini and Genève Salvan (Neuilly: Atlande, 2000): 'La contextualisation historique ne permet donc pas de

novel encourage a re-evaluation of the *Première journée* and the interesting way in which Théophile himself uses the narrator as a type of character in his work.

It is best to start by looking at the original 1623 edition of *Francion*. The author engages directly with the reader in the opening, 'Avertissement d'importance aux lecteurs'. He explains that the novel began as a remedy for his melancholic 'ennuy' but that his reasons for publishing are pedagogical: 'Jamais je n'eusse fait veoir ceste piece, sans le desir que j'ay de monstrer aux hommes les vices ausquels ils se laissent insensiblement emporter'.[395] Above all he is concerned with the utility of his novel and that the reader interpret its message correctly. This 'author' references everything the reader might expect of an author in his preface: the origins of the novel and the author's intentions; the censors, critics and editors; the printing process; the reader and how the novel should be read. He distances himself for a moment from the text, stepping back to observe its purpose and flaws and to situate it; and in doing so Sorel observes the age-long traditions of a preface, introducing a voice that is distinct from the fictional realm of his creation; one that speaks directly, as the author, to the audience of his novel.

Sorel's prefatory 'author' acts like a Renaissance author positioning himself or herself vis-à-vis the text. This voice is distinct from the voices of the narrator within the novel itself, which are clearly situated in a fictional context. Within *Francion*, there is more than one layer of narrative: for the most part, the first level narrator (extra-diegetic and hetero-diegetic) sets the opening and closing scenes of each chapter (only occasionally appearing in between), but is not himself a character within the novel, instead always

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trancher la question du sens des remaniements de l'HCF [l'Histoire comique de Francion]. Au moins en fait-elle apparaître les ambiguïtés', p. 34.

[395] Sorel, *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623), p. 45.

passing the main story over to the other characters; this voice therefore orders the multiple internal narratives, switching between a neutral, detached tone, to one that is also moralizing – increasingly so in the 1633 edition.[396] The presence of the first narrator is limited in the text and it is predominantly the protagonist Francion, but also other characters, who dominate. This is established by the *gentilhomme* Raymond, a character who encourages Francion to tell him his stories, and the result is the creation of other narrators who 'content' and 'racontent' their tales: 'Toutes ces choses me donnent une extrême envie de savoir qui vous êtes, de quel pèlerinage vous venez, et qui c'est qui vous a blessé à la tête comme vous êtes'; to which Francion replies, now beginning a new role as an intra-diegetic narrator: 'Sachez donc que je m'appelle Francion [and so on]'.[397] Raymond incites other characters to tell their stories too, for example Agathe: 'le gentilhomme s'approcha d'elle et témoigna qu'il serait fort joyeux d'entendre les contes qu'elle ferait';[398] at which point the first narrator passes over his role of narrating to her: 'Après donc s'être un peu arrêtée et avoir dit qu'elle voulait conter ses actions aussi bien que celles de Laurette, elle commença ainsi:'[399] This is clearly a very different set up to Théophile's where, in the *Première journée*, the layers of narrative were obscured, and the 'narrator' seemed to be part of the story. In *Francion*, within the first narrative framework the characters tell stories to each other, beckoning to whomever it may be to listen to them; thus other characters take on the role of an internal audience (mirroring the position of the reader of the novel itself): Agathe thus calls to Francion to pay attention: 'Or, Francion, apprêtez maintenant vos

[396] For example, at the end of 'Livre I': 'En tout cela l'on voit clairement que ses mœurs étaient fort perverties et qu'il se laissait merveilleusement emporter aux délices', in *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 84. For the multiple *énonciations* introduced by the 'je' within the novel, see Jean Alter, ''C'est moi qui parlons': le jeu des narrateurs dans *Francion*' in *Charles Sorel/Histoire comique de Francion* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2000), pp. 106-11.
[397] *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 76.
[398] *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 90.
[399] Ibid.

oreilles à ouïr ce que je conterai de Laurette'.[400] Raymond shares the pleasures he has in listening to Francion's story, as though an internal critic: 'le plaisir que je reçois à vous l'ouïr raconter […] Mes oreilles n'ont jamais rien entendu de si agréable'.[401]

Sorel's later editions of *Francion* differ partly in reaction to the controversy and persecution that Théophile endured in 1624 and, certainly, his later work is more dissimulative as a result.[402] Yet, all writers had to be much more careful about what they wrote and published after Théophile's trial – what DeJean calls a turning point in the history of censorship – and this does not lesson the variety of literary forms adopted during and after this time.[403]

In Sorel's 1633 *Francion*, it is clear that the set up has changed. Significantly, the 'Avertissement d'importance aux lecteurs' has been cut and replaced with a new and entirely different introduction, entitled 'Avertissement sur l'auteur du livre'.[404] No longer, then, is the introduction concerned with the reader, but now the subject has changed to the identity of the author. It is not clear who has written the new 'Avertissement', and it is unnamed. The reader wonders if it is the work of an editor. This new voice distinguishes itself from the so-called 'real' author, whom it claims to know, and tells us that the writer is a gentleman named Du Parc, whose name is also

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[400] *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 122.
[401] *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 149.
[402] For more on the passages that Sorel cut, see *Le 'Francion' de Charles Sorel*, ed. by Michèle Rosellini and Geneviève Salvan, pp. 33-34.
[403] See the chapter by Joan DeJean, 'Male Practices: Théophile's Sodomite Sonnet', in *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies and Tabloids in Early Modern France.*
[404] Such obvious changes support Dandrey's claim to Sorel's editorial 'games', see Dandrey, *Le Premier 'Francion' de Charles Sorel*.

now included on the title page as the author of Sorel's work: 'Composée par Nicolas De Moulinet, Sieur DU PARC, Gentilhomme Lorrain'.

A dedication is also included, supposedly by Du Parc, which is addressed to none other than the protagonist of the novel, Francion:

> Cher Francion,
> À qui pourrais-je dédier votre histoire qu'à vous-même? Ce serait vous faire tort de l'aller présenter à un autre; car s'il est besoin d'en donner le jugement, qui est-ce qui se trouve plus capable de le faire que vous, qui savez toutes les règles qu'il faut observer pour bien écrire?[405]

The dedicatory note suggests a direct relationship between the author and this character, one who the reader wonders is perhaps not fictional at all: the author claims to know the protagonist, Francion, and he is writing his biography as a friend.

Sorel was not the first to address an *êpitre* to one of his characters, d'Urfé having already done so.[406] What is interesting in *Francion* is how Sorel carefully fabricates a new voice that is obviously that of an imposter: readers would have been aware that Du Parc, once a real author, died eight years before the publication of Sorel's novel. Thus Sorel creates a new and false layer of narrative between a dead author and his fictional creation. Compared to the 1623 version, there is now a proliferation of 'other' voices: Du Parc and the mysterious, unnamed 'Editor', who distances himself from both the author and the novel. The result is that the supposed 'author' of *Francion*, Du Parc, who is now referenced in the third person, has no direct dialogue with the reader (unlike the

[405] *Histoire comique de Francion*, ed. by Garavini, p. 33.
[406] Honoré d'Urfé, *L'Astrée (Première partie)*, ed. by Delphine Denis (Paris: Champion, 2011). See pp. 109-114.

authorial voice of the 1623 edition in the 'Avertissement d'importance aux lecteurs'); instead, the 'author' now speaks to a fictional character. Sorel has therefore multiplied the layers of narrative, in one of which the author has become a character too.

Of further interest, the author's words of advice from the 1623 'Avertissement d'importance aux lecteurs' have been cut and pasted elsewhere in the 1633 novel. The transfer of the author's words from the original 'Avertissement' demonstrates the author's palimpsestic literary games. The cut sections can be seen pasted in the concluding passages of each of the individual books that make up the 1633 edition, now transforming into the narrator's words. Francion, too, adopts some of these passages. In an ironic interlude, Francion talks of the importance of prefaces to novels:

> […] je vous assure qu'il est quelquefois très nécessaire de faire un avertissement ou une préface dans ses ouvrages, car l'on y dit quelquefois beaucoup de particularités qui importent à notre gloire. Néanmoins, il y a des hommes si peu curieux qu'ils ne les lisent jamais, ne sachant pas que c'est plutôt là que dans tout le reste du livre que l'auteur montre de quel esprit il est pourvu. Je demandais un jour à un sot de cette humeur pourquoi il ne lisait point les préfaces. Il me répondit qu'il croyait qu'elles étaient toutes pareilles, et qu'en ayant lu une en sa vie, c'était assez: il se figurait que le contenu se ressemblait ainsi que le titre. Que ceux qui auront mes livres entre leurs mains ne fassent pas ainsi, s'ils veulent obliger à les avoir en quelque estime![407]

Of course, by arguing that readers are imbeciles if they do not read the prefaces to novels, Francion encourages every reader of *Francion* to reconsider its 'Préface' and 'Avertissement'. By suggesting that it is here that they will find the author's true

[407] Charles Sorel, *Histoire comique de Francion* (1633), ed. by Garavini, pp. 564-65. The 1623 edition reads: 'il est bien nécessaire de faire une préface à son ouvrage, l'on advertit le monde de beaucoup de particularitez qui importent à nostre gloire. Neantmoins il y a des hommes si peu curieux qu'ils ne les lisent jamais, ne sachons pas que c'est plutost là que dans tout le reste du livre, que l'Autheur monstre duquel esprit il est pourvu', p. 49.

'esprit', the reader wonders what these forewords will reveal about the author. By arguing that a novel's title may have nothing to do with its content, but that a preface may divulge much more, the curious reader may wonder why *Francion* includes an 'Avertissement' about the author: why should they care about the author at all? Elsewhere within the 1633 novel, an authorial voice makes its presence more distinct from the narrator, thus emphasizing a different *énonciation* between author and reader (even if the author is possibly fictive); the layers of narrative discourse multiply, even within Francion's *récit*.[408]

In many ways, the 1633 edition stages two stories: that of Francion, and that of the origins and identity of the author. The creation of Du Parc is an elaborate addendum to the novel and the effects are that Du Parc (now another type of narrator) plays a part in the novel itself. To reduce the proliferation of characters into one 'je', all ultimately Sorel's, is to miss the deliberately playful effects of these layers. The internal discourse is not as fragmented as some critics suggest given the importance of these prefatory games.[409] By making the mysterious identity of the author an element of play, the author has become a literary device – a character – in the 1633 edition. Who the author is, and what his relationship is with the novel and its characters, fictional or real, are now questions that contribute to the literary games of Sorel's work.

In summary, it seems that Sorel was a good reader of Théophile's work. If prefaces are as important as he argues, the reader is encouraged to reread the *Première journée* and

[408] Dandrey, *Le Premier 'Francion' de Charles Sorel*, p. 72.
[409] Alter, 'C'est moi qui parlons. Le jeu des narrateurs dans Francion'. Alter argues that it is up to the reader to 'refaire l'unité d'une parole fragmentée' but this overlooks the literary effects of a plurality of voices.

reconsider the importance of Théophile's 'Avis Au Lecteur'. When the reader follows Francion's guidelines (and perhaps they should, given that Sorel modelled Francion on Théophile!), they can be in no doubt at all about the presence of the author in the *Première journée*.

iii. A Commentary on the Novel: Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant* (1627-28) and *L'Anti-Roman* (1633)

Le berger extravagant, ou parmi des fantaisies amoureuses on void les impertinences des Romans & de Poësie is a satire of heroic romance novels: 'un livre qui se moquast des autres'; and one of the works Sorel had in mind was d'Urfé's *L'Astrée*.[410] Interestingly, the title of Sorel's novel changed for the 1633 edition to *L'Anti-Roman*, making its intentions to criticize even clearer to the reader.[411] What might the reader expect of the narrator in an overtly satirical piece?

On first impressions the novel itself follows a predictable format: there is an authorial voice in the preface, in which Sorel sets out the reasons for his project, asserting his authority over his book, 'mon entreprise', and his characters, 'mon berger', referring to

[410] *Le Berger extravagant* is full of quotes and references to other novels and authors to the extent that Serroy, in *Roman et réalité*, writes 'pratiquement pas un épisode, un personnage, une situation, une phrase même, qui ne renvoie pas à un episode, un personnage, une situation, une phrase, dèjà imaginés par quelque autre romancier', p. 297.

[411] Sorel would later expand on the importance of satire in his *Bibliothèque françoise* (Paris: Compagnie des Libraires du Palais, 1664), pp. 169-70: 'Vous remarquerez que nous ne prenons pas la Satyre pour un Ouvrage impudique & licentieux comme on a fait quelquefois, mais dans le Sens des Anciens qui entendoient par là des Remontrances sur les Vices du Siecle'.

the protagonist, the shepherd Lysis.[412] Perhaps more striking is the author's well-argued case for his project, which he claims is for the 'utilité publique'.[413] The narrator within the novel itself is predominantly hetero-diegetic but as I shall show, although he often recounts events in the third-person in a detached tone, he occasionally intervenes to share his opinions, appearing as a voice that represents the other characters in the novel.

What is most interesting about *Le Berger extravagant*, however, is not this first narrative framework, but the existence of two other narratives – one internal between characters, the other a parallel external narrative in the form of a commentary on the text by the author – both of which theorize the *roman*.[414] *Le Berger extravagant* is of course a parody of novels, yet the reader discovers within the main parody itself, another tableau, in which characters debate the novel. Clarimond and Philiris, for example, debate ancient and modern authors, complete with one of the characters, Anselme, filling in as 'judge', 'se présentant, en deux parties antithétiques, comme une critique et une défense de la littérature de fiction'.[415] Clarimond begins his exposition: 'J'ay entrepris de leur remonstrer combien ils perdent de temps, & quelles impertinences se treuvent dans les Romans & dans la Poësie', and amongst the names

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[412] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 15 of the cited edition.

[413] Ibid.

[414] Michèle Rosellini argues that the theorisation of the *roman* in *Le Berger extravagant* was an opportunity for Sorel to explore ideas about the novel which would be central to his later work: 'La fiction et tout particulièrement la fiction comique semble être pour Sorel une manière d'explorer le champ littéraire avant de le réduire en analyses et classements. En effet, dans le traitement du corpus romanesque, le récit du *Berger* associé à son commentaire des *Remarques*, prépare la section consacrée aux romans de la *Bibliothèque française'*. See her thesis, 'Lecture et "connaisance des bons livres": Charles Sorel et la formation du lecteur' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Paris III-Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2003), p. 236.

[415] Serroy, *Roman et réalité*, p. 302. See book thirteen of *Le Berger extravagant*, in particular where Clarimond and Philiris take up opposing sides. There are more minor examples throughout the novel, however, such as when Oronte comments 'Cela se pratique dedans les bons Romans', p. 319 of the cited edition (p. 229 of the original).

he references are Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Tasso and also Ronsard.[416] The reader wonders if Clarimond might be a *porte-parole* for the author, especially given the sarcasm of his witty disapprovals. It is difficult not to find some truth as well as comedy in statements such as this one, when Clarimond comments on the *invraisemblance* of the *Iliad*: 'En scauroit on voir de plus grandes [fautes de jugement] que de faire compter de longues histoires à les Heros sur leurs genealogies, ou de leur faire tenir d'autres discours au milieu de leurs combats, lors qu'ils ne pouvoient pas seulment avoir d'haleine pour respirer'.[417] As for Ovid, Clarimond explains that there are so many 'sottises' in the *Metamorphoses* that he would have to quote the entire book.[418]

The counter arguments put forward by Philiris are convincing and so, too, is his rhetoric: 'Clarimond ressemble à ce malicieux peintre qui representoit plustot les pieds du Paon que la belle queuë';[419] and the debate between the two is not easily, or obviously, resolved. In fact, far from Clarimond being clearly a spokesperson for Sorel, the first narrator obstructs such quick judgements from being made by interfering at the end of Clarimond's speech and just before Philiris's to state that, 'Personne ne put endure l'impertinence de cet homme'.[420] Again, at the beginning of book fourteen, at the end of the debate, the narrator confirms that 'sur tout l'on admiroit Philiris'.[421]

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[416] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 487 of the cited edition (p. 3 of the original). In his critique Clarimond writes for example that, 'Il ne faut que lire son [Homer's] Iliade & son Odyssee pour trouver toutes les sottises qui se peuvent imaginer ramassees ensemble', p. 487 of the cited edition (p. 4 of the original).
[417] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 490 of the cited edition (p. 16 of the original).
[418] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant,* p. 495 of the cited edition (p. 36 of the original).
[419] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 523 of the cited edition (p. 145 of the original).
[420] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 511 of the cited edition (p. 98 of the original).
[421] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 526 of the cited edition (p. 157 of the original).

This internal debate on the *roman* is mirrored elsewhere in the over eight hundred pages of 'Remarques' in which the author explains in great detail the reasons for his literary choices and satirical passages – as such, a code for reading; these are at the end of the 1627 novel but in the *Anti-Roman* the comments have been cut and pasted to the ends of each individual book (fourteen in total) thus emphasizing their absolute importance to the novel; the reader finds them unavoidable.

The 'Remarques' have a lasting impact on the novel. The ever present voice of a critical author commenting on his work (a form of extra-diegetic narrator) overshadows the story itself: 'De la sorte, s'évanouit toute illusion romanesque'.[422] In *Le Berger extravagant* there is no room for irony or double readings; the critical commentary is there to ensure that there are no misunderstandings and that the reader understands the precise purpose of the parody. Even the title must be fully explained – an explanation that lasts over eight pages: 'Il ne peut pas estre honteux pour moy, puisque s'il y a de l'extravagance, c'est celle des autres & non pas la mienne'.[423] Throughout the 'Remarques' Sorel situates his work in reference to other novelists: what it is that they often do wrong and what he is parodying; thus making it clear each time that he is not making these aesthetic decisions because he thinks they make for a good *roman*, but only in order to draw attention to their flaws.

He describes the 'Remarques' as a 'discours continu' and this is important for Sorel, it seems, because he emphasizes that he does not want his notes to appear like other

[422] Serroy, *Roman et réalité*, p. 298.
[423] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 551 of the cited edition (p. 7 of the original).

commentaries:[424] 'Je ne preten pas faire comme les Commentateurs ordinaires, qui mettent au commencement de chaque article le mot sur lequel ils veulent parler avec le nombre de la page dont il est pris'.[425] Like a conversation, he wants his commentaries to be 'quasi enchaisnées les unes avec les autres'. The 'Remarques' are more than just footnotes to his novel, they are part of the novel itself, and crucial to it achieving its purpose.

The idea that the 'Remarques' are a form of dialogue crops up repeatedly given the author's obvious choice of verbs 'parler' and 'dire'. In the preface to his novel, Sorel predicts the possible negative reception to his work, 'qui diront qu'en blasmant les Romans, [il fait] un autre Roman', and thus in many ways the 'Remarques' are also an author's defence of his project to his reader. The dialogue might then very well be with his dissenters but it is more than just a defence, it is also a guide to reading.

The author explains that 'Je ne m'arresteray donc qu'aux lieux où je croiray qu'il sera besoin que je parle', although the reader soon discovers this to be a rather empty claim, the explanations for the first book alone spanning forty-eight pages.[426] Likewise, whilst the reader might expect such justificatory arguments to be located at the beginning of the 'Remarques', it soon becomes clear that the authorial voice often disrupts the flow of the commentary to remind the reader of the wider purpose; as such, there are even layers of *récit* within the commentary itself. The magnitude and scope of the 'Remarques' are astounding and it is fitting here for my own study to include a significant excerpt, one in which the authorial voice butts in once more whilst

[424] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 554 of the cited edition (p. 17 of the original).
[425] Ibid.
[426] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 554 of the cited edition (p. 18 of the original).

discussing Lysis's encounter in book one with Echo – a common literary character in the *roman* taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:[427]

> Je ne dy pas cecy afin que l'on m'en donne de la loüange, je n'y ay rien inventé, & n'ay fait qu'écrire les choses comme l'on me les a rapportees; je veux seulement que l'on croye que Lysis estoit infiniment heureux de s'estre avisé de tenir des discours, sur lesquels Anselme luy pouvait responder pertinemment, comme si c'est esté la fille de l'air. Le livre ou il y a le plus d'Echos, c'est celuy qui porte le nom des Bergeries de Juliette, mais il y a fort peu de responses qui se rencontrent bonnes: l'on n'y trouve pas grande finesse. D'ailleurs je scay d'autres livres où l'on void des Echos qui ne prennent pas la terminaison du dernier mot de celuy qui parle; ils la changent afin d'y responder mieux.
>
> [Sorel inserts three examples, in order of preference]
>
> Si tous les Echos rencontroient comme cela, je les trouverois assez bons: mais l'on en void de si mauvais, qu'ils ne meritent pas d'estre leus, comme par exemple, dans les Bergeries de Juliette.[428]

This excerpt gives a good idea of the levels of analysis within the commentary. The author predicts the reception of his work, feeling it necessary to defend himself: the 'je' of the authorial narrator makes things personal and emphasizes, despite the need for a commentary, the simplicity (and honesty?) of his project, 'Je veux seulement que'. Not only does he then reference a novel to support his argument (*Les Bergeries de Juliette*), he offers an appraisal of Echo in all novels, followed by three examples.

Reading this type of explanation at the end of each book creates the illusion of two books: one commenting on the other. No matter how much the author insists on the dialogic nature of the 'Remarques', it is difficult to read them as part of the novel, even though they are intrinsic to it; instead they can be read as a second layer of narrative,

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[427] 'Lysis poursuivant toujours son chemin arriva vers un costé de la montagne, & le souvenatn que dans les livres qu'il avait leu, les bergers interrogeoient l'Echo en de pareils lieux que ceslui-cy, il fut d'avais de les imiter', Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 30 of the cited edition (p. 47 of the original).
[428] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 557 of the cited edition (p. 32 of theoriginal).

distinct and separate from the first; after all, it is as though the author is stopping to look back at his novel in retrospect. The internal debate over the *roman* within *Le Berger extravagant* offers yet another perspective, and here Sorel passes over discussion to his characters in the novel. Clearly, he felt that their arguments were not enough on their own, however, and the form of a commentary offered a distinct space for the author to introduce his own voice alongside the fictional project.

iv. Objectification in L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié* (1643)

Tristan L'Hermite, another acquaintance of Théophile's, chooses a very different literary course to Sorel's in *Le Page disgracié*.[429] Yet, the autobiographical nature of the novel easily lends itself to a comparison with Théophile's. L'Hermite's narrator presents what appears to be a sombre and melancholic autobiography to his reader; as in the *Première journée*, the narrator appears to be auto-diegetic. This is not the work of pleasure, he tells us, but written from necessity. Speaking to a mysterious correspondent, 'Thirinte', in 'Chapitre I', an authorial voice explains his autobiographical project and the motivations for writing: 'je connais bien que ma résistance est inutile, et que vous voulez absolument savoir tout le cours de ma vie'.[430] This character warns Thirinte that he will not recount the amusing and adventuresome tales of a youth, but that his tales are 'peu considérables'.[431] He even imagines a critical

[429] Evidence of their friendship can be see in the letter to Tristan L'Hermite, 'Lettre IV. Lettre de feu Monsieur de Th. à l'Auteur, étant tous deux malades en même temps', in Théophile de Viau, *Œuvres complètes*, Tome II, ed. G. Saba (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999)
[430] Tristan L'Hermite, *Le Page disgracié*, ed. by Jacques Prévot (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 23.
[431] Ibid.

audience, and his letter is thus reminiscent of a preface: 'Puis, que dira-t-on de ma témérité d'avoir osé moi-même écrire ma vie avec un style qui a si peu de grâce et de vigueur'.[432] The answer he gives suggests that his lowly style is a reflection of the 'déplorable' content of his novel: 'je n'écris pas un poème illustre, où je me veuille introduire comme un Héros; je trace une histoire déplorable'.[433] The reader wonders what to expect from this ominous claim, which seems ill-fitting for a novel whose title suggests a novel about a page: a common literary figure associated with adolescence, mischief and even farce.[434] To what extent will the story be autobiographical; if the writer is the protagonist, is this a novel about L'Hermite?

The narrator of 'Chapitre I' prepares the reader for a story that is not solely fictional. For example, he makes it clear that there is an unusual method at work: the 'je' refers to himself as 'un objet', specifically, 'de pitié', and the reader wonders what this might mean.[435] There is an unusual dislocation between the narrator's insistence on the telling of his own story, 'd'avoir osé moi-même écrire ma vie' (is this the author?) and his referring to himself in the third person, 'je trace une histoire déplorable, où je ne parais que comme un objet de pitié'.[436]

In the first chapter, the narrator tells Thirinte that, 'On ne verra point ici une peinture qui soit flattée; c'est une fidèle copie d'un lamentable original, c'est comme une réflexion de miroir'.[437] The narrator obscures his meaning by referring to the text as

[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.
[434] See Jacques Prévot's 'Préface' to *Le Page disgracié*, p. 9.
[435] For more on Tristan L'Hermite as 'object' see DeJean, *Libertine Strategies*, pp. 58-62.
[436] L'Hermite, *Le Page disgracié*, pp. 23-24.
[437] L'Hermite, *Le Page disgracié*, p. 24.

both a mirror image and artistic copy – the image may not be 'flattée', but it is still '[une] copie'! A dislocation is created between the 'real' and the narrated story. The reader's concerns are exacerbated when they discover the extent of the narrator's personal investment in the story – although this was hinted at in the opening chapter: he frequently interferes to pass moral judgement and explain the reasons for wrongdoing. Oddly, therefore, the narrator is auto-diegetic but there are two levels within this narrative; he is both subject and object. This is confirmed by the title of the second chapter, where the narrator begins his story – thus this is now an intra-diegetic narrator – and in which there is an absence of possessive pronoun: 'L'origine et naissance du page disgracié'.

The narrator's interference highlights other important agencies within the text, a result of the page's objectification, for the reader soon discovers that his life has been determined by other external influences. A close linguistic analysis reveals that the subject of wrongdoing is not the page but youth:

> La jeunesse, encline aux licences, est si sujette à prendre de mauvaises habitudes qu'il ne faut rien pour la corrompre. C'est une table d'attente pour les bonnes ou pour les mauvaises impressions, mais elle est beaucoup plus susceptible des mauvaises que des vertueuses'.[438]

Elsewhere, it is destiny or fortune, which in turn tempts the narrator's 'mauvais génie'. In an interesting passage, the reader can see the transformation of the page's personal assertion over his destiny, defined by the possessive pronoun 'mon', into a separate and independent agent, able to act upon him:

[438] L'Hermite, *Le page disgracié*, p. 29.

> Mais *mon mauvais destin voulut* que je fisse connaissance avec un certain page le plus malicieux et le plus fripon de la Cour. J'ai sujet de croire que *ce fut l'organe dont se servit mon mauvais génie pour me tenter et me détruire*. *Ce mauvais démon* travesti *sut* interrompre *par son artifice* le cours heureux de mes études, en me montrant secrètement les subtils préceptes d'un art qui ne tend qu'à damner les âmes. *Ce fut lui* qui m'apprit le premier l'usage des dès et des cartes, et qui, *se servant de mon innocence* pour s'emparer du peu d'argent que j'avais, me fit follement piquer du désir de réparer mes pertes, et m'engager toujours avant dans le malheur, par les instigations d'une trompeuse et folle espérance. *Il m'imprima* de telle sorte cette passion qu'elle se rendit bientôt égale à celle que j'avais pour l'étude [439]

'Mon mauvais destin' and 'mon mauvais démon', even though belonging to the narrator, have a will of their own through the verbs 'vouloir' and 'savoir' and they have a direct impact on the 'je'. As the grammar suggests, the 'démon' actively encourages the 'je' to behave badly. The reflexive verbs 'me tenter', 'me détruire', 'm'engager', emphasize the action being done *to*, rather than *by*, the 'je'. Later, the possessive pronoun is replaced by the demonstrative adjective 'ce'. A new, distanced, position is thus created, in relation to the position of the narrator. This is emphasized later, when the narrator dramatically points the finger directly at the perpetrator: 'Ce fut lui'. The switch to the third person possessive in 'son artifice' makes the transition complete: the 'démon' is now a separate agent who conjures up cunning schemes to tempt the young narrator away from his studies; the page seems absolved from all responsibility. The transformation reaches a climax with the verb 'imprimer', indicating that the page has been physically configured to behave thus; he has been shaped and moulded by external influences. The narrator resorts to the commonplace literary topos of the daemon to

[439] L'Hermite, *Le Page disgracié*, pp. 30-31 (my italics).

shift the blame and excuse his youthful errors;[440] the 'je' is set up as a victim. Despite the familiar topos, however, the way in which the narratorial voice slips between different positions, adopting various vantage points, unsettles the reader's own position; the movement is subtle, and the shift is difficult to pinpoint.

Jean Serroy has emphasized an existential dimension to *Le Page disgracié*: Tristan '[est] à la recherche d'un moi perdu';[441] above all, the writer is *un romancier* who wishes to turn his life into a novel. This does seem slightly reductive however of the literary effects produced by a shifting narratorial voice, the ambiguities thereof obscuring the extent of the fictionality of L'Hermite's project: the reader's curiosity is certainly aroused by the writer's retrospective construction of himself. Today, scholars of L'Hermite will be aware of the second edition to the text (1667) that was edited by Tristan's younger brother. He includes a key to all the references in the novel and the extent of his detective work is remarkable. While the original edition does not include any guide for the reader, his brother's editorial decision to decode the text suggests that L'Hermite's original novel does indeed very much invite the reader to raise questions about possible real-life references. It is possible to understand his brother's gesture, therefore, as a need to answer the questions the text poses;[442] he felt that the text was incomplete as it originally stood.

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[440] See the article by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé about demons in literature and the perversion of this topos by libertine writers in the seventeenth century, 'Socrate libertin', in E. Lojacono, ed., *Socrate in Occidente* (Grassina: Le Monnier, 2004), pp. 33-65.

[441] Serroy, *Roman et réalité*, p. 369. Serroy emphasises a lack of ambiguity of the 'je': 'le narrateur dit 'je', parce qu'écrire le roman de sa vie est pour lui, comme pour tout romancier préoccupé de sa vérité intérieure, le seul moyen de partir à la recherche d'un moi perdu'.

[442] DeJean overlooks the wider significance of Tristan's brother's editing. She argues that *Le Page Disgracié* is not a text that asks to be decoded, p. 38. The reception of the novel by a contemporary of L'Hermite's is important to take into account, however, and supports the disorientating literary effects produced by the text.

Given that the narratorial voice slips from subject to object and that the layers of narrative elude the reader, it is not surprising that Tristan's brother sought to provide a stronger framework for the text. Without the aid of a key, however, L'Hermite makes an interesting literary gesture in *Le Page disgracié*. The tensions from the narrator's objectification of himself produces effects not completely dissimilar to Théophile's novel: the reader, like Tristan's brother, wants to know more about the author.

v. Telling Tales in Scarron's *Roman comique* (1651)

Scarron represents a very different generation of writers to the one I have looked at so far. It is likely that the first part of his novel was drafted in 1650-51, and thus in the middle of the Fronde civil wars, when the popularity of burlesque writing was at its peak. Scarron was clearly influenced by Spanish comic novels, in particular *Don Quixote*, but his *Roman* stands out from other *histoires comiques* because of its farcical nature and orality; it can and must be situated within the tradition of the French *conteurs*. As though he is telling his story as he goes along, spontaneously adapting it, the narrator intervenes in multiple layers of narrative and the playful vocality produces different effects to those found in the novels studied so far.

In the *Roman comique*, Scarron parodies sentimental and heroic novels and their unrealistic plots by presenting characters from a theatre comedy troupe, which he bases on his own every day experiences. The reader quickly realizes that the characters are

quite flawed and thus not at all representative of the type of idealized heroism found in the *roman*. As for Scarron's narrator, he too partakes in the farcical shenanigans of the dramatis personae. Through a hetero-diegetic narrator, Scarron actually sets up two principal tableaux; the first describes the action taking place between the different characters, the second exists between the narrator and the reader. This extra-diegetic narrator adopts an authorial persona but has a significant presence in the text, constantly intervening in the plot to comment on the characters and also his own literary choices, as such dialoguing with his audience. Yet the two tableaux are muddled, the 'authorial' voice stepping in seeminglywhenever he feels like it.[443]

The first level of narrative – first because it opens the novel and because it is also the dominant narrative – meets certain expectations of a traditional oral account, the narrator claiming for example that he is recounting events according to hearsay: 'Vous allez voir cette histoire dans le suivant chapitre, non telle que la conta Ragotin, mais comme je la pourrai conter d'après un des auditeurs qui me l'a apprise'.[444] The orality of the story is emphasized elsewhere when the narrator hesitates in remembering specific details: 'C'est en un de ces tripots là, si je m'en souviens, que j'ai laissé trois personnes comiques'.[445] His memory is also intermittent; characters are introduced unnamed until the narrator can remember them: 'Ce cavalier (je me viens de souvenir

[443] Richard Parish emphasizes the 'dual persona' of the first-person narrative, as author *and* narrator. He refers to the 'je' (the creative inventor) as the 'author persona'. The title of 'narrator' is used to signify the teller of the story. See Richard Parish, *Scarron: Le Roman comique* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1998), p. 83. See also the article by Parish that deals with critics' attempts at resolving the contradictory elements of the *Roman comique*, 'Scarron's *Roman comique*: Contradictions and Terms', pp. 105-118. Parish contributes to the discussion with the definitional framework of the *roman* as 'un roman pur': 'that conflation of the anti-novel and the elusive yet endlessly desirable ideal', p. 116.
[444] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, ed. by Jacques Prévot (Paris, Flammarion, 1981), p. 86.
[445] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 42.

qu'il s'appelait dom Diegue)'.[446] All this adds to the feeling of spontaneity of the story as though it has not undergone any alterations but is being narrated on the spot; it is thus complete with errors! Indeed, he has clearly not had time to verify historical facts:

> Dom Carlos d'Aragon était un jeune gentilhomme de la maison dont il portait le nom. Il fit des merveilles de sa personne dans les spectacles publics que le vice-roi de Naples donna au peuple, au noces de Philippe second, troisième ou quatrième, car je ne sais pas lequel'.[447]

There is another level of narrative, however, in which the narrator switches scenes to dialogue directly with his reader about the pros and cons of his story: 'au roman se superpose le commentaire du roman'.[448] According to Genette, this would be the extra-diegetic narrator, although in Scarron's novel the distinction between intra- and extra- is not that clear: isn't Scarron's intra-diegetic narrator also occasionally speaking to the reader? The extra-diegetic presence perhaps conflicts with the supposed orality of the project, although this is of course also part of its playfulness. Scarron's novel is a *conte* but also a *roman*.

The authorial persona appears when the narrator is in the throes of comparing one of his characters to a giant tortoise, jumping in to justify his decision, interrupting the flow of the plot:

> Quelque critique murmurera de la comparaison, à cause du peu de proportion qu'il y a d'une tortue à un homme; mais j'entends parler des grandes tortues qui se trouvent dans les Indes et, de plus, je m'en sers de ma seule autorité.[449]

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[446] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 318.
[447] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 60.
[448] See Yves Giraud's 'Préface' to *Le Roman comique*, p. 27.
[449] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 66.

It does not matter whether the reader has ever heard of giant, man-sized turtles in India; an authorial persona suggests there is some truth to his story because he has heard other people talk about it but that, at the end of the day, this does not actually matter: he is resorting to his 'seule autorité'.

The authorial presence appears again when he asserts his authority over his work through a possessive pronoun: 'mon roman'.[450] He also divulges details about his methods of creative writing, explaining that he has written the book with no clear plan, 'un chapitre attire l'autre et que je fais dans mon livre comme ceux qui mettent la bride sur le col de leurs chevaux et les laissent aller sur leur bonne foi';[451] and he defends his literary choices, notably the number of heroes in his novel: 'Le comédien la Rancune, un des principaux héros de notre roman, car il n'y en aura pas pour un dans ce livre-ci; et puisqu'il n'y a rien de plus parfait qu'un héros de livre, demi-douzaine de héros ou soi-disant tels feront plus d'honneur au mien qu'un seul'.[452] This creative process fits well with Furetière's description: 'Auteur […] c'est lui qui l'a produit'.[453]

Another good example can be seen in one of his interludes, when he justifies the omitted details of his story: 'Je ne vous dirai point exactement s'il avait soupé, et s'il

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[450] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 298.
[451] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 86.
[452] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 47.
[453] Joan DeJean begins her argument by rejecting the significance of the traditional concept of 'author' as an 'inventor of a text' but it seems that Scarron plays very much on this definition in the *Roman comique*. See *Scarron's 'Roman comique': A Comedy of the Novel, A Novel of Comedy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977), pp. 48-49. See also Peter V. Conroy, 'The Narrative Stance in Scarron's *Roman comique*', *The French Review*, no. 6, 'Studies on the French Novel' (1974). Conroy's engaging arguments about the literary importance of Scarron's narrator are convincing but he, too, ignores the play on the word 'Auteur' and the wider effects of this reference for the reader: 'Since this novel is not an autobiography, the narrator's vitality derives not from any ressemblance to Scarron but rather from his own success as a literary creation', p. 29.

coucha sans manger, comme font quelques faiseurs de romans qui règlent toutes les heures du jour de leurs héros'.[454] The possessive pronoun of 'leurs héros', echoes the earlier example of 'mon roman', and drums home the role of the 'Author' in the making of the novel. Here, the narrator asserts his position as one who has full control over the telling of events. By implying that other novel writers adhere to a set of rules 'qui règlent', there is the suggestion that in the *Roman comique* there will be a lack of such rules. The 'je' thus asserts a new kind of authority.

Later in the novel, the narrator includes 'un billet' from the lovers Dorothée and Dom Sache. His subsequent concealing of the other billets suggests that his decisions are always evidence-led: 'Je ne vous ferai point voir ici de leurs billets amoureux, car il n'en est point tombé entre mes mains'.[455] Here, he fulfils the role of the narrator who, according to Furetière, is a historian, sticking to the simple and truthful facts, one who *narrates* '[un] récit d'une histoire telle qu'elle est': he has access to more than one first-hand witness account of the event, 'un des auditeurs', and written evidence in his very own possession, 'entre mes mains'.

After all this, the reader might wonder what kind of narrator is Scarron's: is it one that narrates events, or one that creates them? The farcical traits of Scarron's narrator make him a very unreliable historian. His buffoonery is reminiscent of the narrator in the works of Rabelais and Cervantes. By occupying a strong presence in the text, Scarron ensures that his narrator achieves, to full effect, the parody he seeks, and that the reader is well aware of such strategies. The narrator, for example, guides the reader through an

[454] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 64.
[455] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, 317.

observation process, interfering with the reading experience by alerting them that 'Chapitre V' contains nothing of importance: 'Qui ne contient pas grand-chose'; 'Chapitre XVIII', on the other hand, is important to the story: 'Dans lequel on verra plusieurs choses nécessaires à la savoir pour l'intelligence du présent livre'; 'Chapitre XXI' could be potentially boring for the reader: 'Qui peut-être ne sera pas trouvé fort divertissant'; 'Chapitre XIX' commands the reader to read: 'Nouvelle disgrâce de Ragotin et autres choses que vous lirez, s'il vous plaît'.

When the narrator imagines a 'lecteur' and wonders what reaction his novel may incite, he indirectly prompts the reader to pose the question too: 'On dira de quoi je me mêle' but the answer is rhetorical and the reader cannot help but reply 'de tout'.[456] Scarron creates two types of narrator: one who is the voice of the author in dialogue with the reader; the other is in charge of telling the story; yet both of these are introduced at random in the novel. With this in mind, the playful connotations of 'mesler' – 'confondre l'un avec l'autre, mettre les choses hors de leur ordre, les brouiller'[457] – is paramount for Scarron's novel: constantly switching between two narratorial voices is one way to parody.

B. Imposters in Cyrano's L'Autre Monde

What kind of narrator is Cyrano's? *L'Autre Monde* is written in the first person and the reader might expect the kinds of literary forms that they have seen in Théophile or

[456] Scarron, *Le Roman comique*, p. 61.
[457] See Furetière.

L'Hermite's work. Like these novels, the narrator acts within the story as a character in the plot; the first-person narrator is the central character, the protagonist, and the opening lines of the novel introduce him as a participant, thus suggesting an auto-diegetic narrative:

> La lune était en son plein, le ciel était découvert, et neuf heures au soir étaient sonnées, lorsque nous revenions d'une maison proche de Paris, quatre de mes amis et moi.[458]

The opening of *L'Autre Monde* does not present the reader with such an ambiguous voice as the 'je' of Théophile and L'Hermite's work, which were presented in the forms of a fictional letter (*Le Page disgracié*) and prefatory 'chapter' (*Première journée*).

Elsewhere in the opening pages, the novel meets certain expectations of a satirical adventure novel. There is little unusual about the narratorial voice when it conspiratorially beckons the reader to its side: 'Mais écoute, Lecteur, le miracle ou l'accident dont la Providence ou la Fortune se servirent pour me le confirmer'.[459] Playing on the fantastical nature of the story was common practice since antiquity: 'une aventure si merveilleuse'; and so, too, the subsequent 'voyage', precipitated by a vision, reminiscent of a medieval dream sequence. In many ways the reader is carefully prepared for a transition through such textual markers and to expect the unexpected.

As familiar as the opening pages seem, however, Cyrano's novel quickly begins to unsettle the reader. Aspects of the narrator's behaviour, in particular, are unnerving mainly because it is difficult to see what relationship he has with the protagonist. The

[458] Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 5.
[459] Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 7.

first lines of the novel suggested it could be an auto-diegetic narrative and yet it soon becomes apparent that the narrator has a distinct voice from the protagonist and that even though one may claim to be the other, they are not one and the same. At the start of the novel, for example, the protagonist and friends discuss the moon: what is it? Could it be another world like their own? The protagonist certainly thinks so: 'je crois […] que la lune est un monde comme celui-ci, à qui le nôtre sert de lune'.[460] His friends laugh at his assertions, at which point the dialogue ends and a narratorial voice resumes, this time commenting on the scene to explain what he could have said, but did not: 'Mais j'eus beau leur alléguer que Pythagore, Epicure, Démocrite et, de notre âge, Copernic et Képler, avaient été de cette opinion, je ne les obligeai qu'à s'égosiller de plus belle'.[461]

What is the purpose of this additional information and, furthermore, should it be read as a comedy or is the narrator suggesting that there is a serious philosophy to his arguments? The conversation obviously troubles the narrator who explains that he became fixated on defining the moon, and the reader finds him or herself wondering whether he or she, too, should be giving this some more serious thought:

> Cette pensée, dont la hardiesse biaisait en mon humeur, affermie par la contradiction, se plongea si profondément chez moi que, pendant tout le reste du chemin, je demeurai gros de mille définitions de lune, dont je ne pouvais accoucher; et à force d'appuyer cette croyance burlesque par des raisonnements sérieux, je me le persuadai quasi.[462]

[460] Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 6.
[461] Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 7.
[462] Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 7.

In trying to justify his argument, which the narrator describes as 'burlesque' – in this case, representing an alternative belief system that conflicts with Christianity's, and that considers that there are other planets in the universe, possibly inhabited – he finds himself inadvertently convinced; well, partly. Why the hesitation, the reader wonders?

The protagonist's direct speech offers the reader one tableau, in which to assess events; but the story is in fact a flashback of past events, as the narrator is recollecting his adventures, a narrative device that Cyrano is clearly playing with here. The narrator's interference in the telling of the story provides the reader with an interpretation of the protagonist's actions. In short, the narrative voice provides a second narrative; it is not a commentary on the novel, however, like in the *Roman comique*, but a commentary on himself. The reader is actively encouraged to read between the lines and look for other interpretations; to question, like the narrator, the protagonist's position. Three observation points are established: the protagonist's, the narrator's and the reader's and we are reminded of the multiple *énonciations* that Cyrano plays with in his letters.

The narrator's interference in the novel suggests that he is the protagonist – even though, as I have shown, his meddling observations hinder, rather than clarify, the reader's assessment of the protagonist – but another question is also raised: do his explanations amount to an authorial voice? In the manuscripts of *La Lune* there is no mention of Cyrano within the novel, yet the editor Le Bret made a significant decision to include the author's name in the 1657 published edition. On his return to Earth, the protagonist stays with M. de Cyrano in Rome: 'Enfin après y être demeuré quinze jours en la compagnie de M. Cyrano, mon cousin, qui me prêta de l'argent pour mon

retour'.[463] In *Le Soleil*, Cyrano makes for a much stronger presence: the protagonist is named Dyrcona, an easily identifiable pseudonym for 'Cyrano de'. The inconsistent references to the author – in one book, as a minor character, in the other, as the lead role – add other layers of inquiry. Is the protagonist the author? Is the narrator the author? Should the reader assume at all that the fictional characters might be spokespeople for Cyrano?

Concerns about Cyrano's narrator are complicated by the references to other 'libertine' writers, specifically to the trials of Vanini and Théophile, and also the themes of persecution and imprisonment that are central to the novel. By alluding to the persecution of real writers, accused of libertinism, the reader is encouraged to ask whether the novel has other goals in mind and to ponder the extent of a 'real' subtext underpinning the fiction. Given the possibility of a libertine subtext, should readers expect the narrator-protagonist to be the dissimulated voice of the author's?

i. Le récit est un piège[464]

If it is accepted that the novel expounds Materialism, then it may be possible to read Cyrano's fiction as a dissimulative tool in order to elude the censors and avoid serious repercussions. The pact that Cyrano's narrator-protagonist establishes with the reader in the opening pages, however, is not a philosophical one. Through the multiple layering

[463] In 'Variantes et corrections', Cyrano, *L'Autre Monde*, p. 453.
[464] Louis Marin, *Le Récit est un piège* (Paris: Minuit, 1978)

of arguments, it is not obvious in what ways the narrator might at all be a spokesperson for Cyrano: the opening pages of the novel suggest that the first pact is based on fiction.

Scholars have read the scientific references to 'Pythagore', 'Epicure', 'Démocrite', 'Copernic' and 'Kepler' as clues to the scientific material to come. Why should the reader, however, read into the comedy of the scene another message, which is not evidently there? Cyrano may well be alluding to a scientific and philosophical subtext, but if it is not explicitly laid out here, it is also quite possible for the reader to interpret the references with irony.

Cyrano's opening raises similar problems to Rabelais's famous analogy in his 'Prologue' to *Gargantua*, in which he compares his work to a bone full of marrow that the reader must extract like a dog, to reap the rewards. Rabelais's imagery has caused a great deal of disagreement over whether his work hides a deeper, more meaningful message: 'par curieuse leçon, et meditation frequente rompre l'os, et sugcer la sustantificque mouelle. C'est à dire : ce que j'entends par ces symboles Pythagoricques avecques espoir certain d'estre faictz escors et preux à ladicte lecture'.[465] Dorothy Coleman points out that Rabelais's introduction should be read in the light of Cervantes's – and, I add, why not Cyrano's given that readers of his work would have been familiar with these popular models? When Cervantes is offered some helpful advice by a friend, it can be read as a guide to an ironic subtext according to Coleman: 'To gain respectability as a writer, you simply add a list of Latin and Greek sources in every conceivable place so that the readers will find such a weighty tome that they will immediately think you are a scholar'.

[465] *Gargantua*, p. 7.

Readers of Cyrano's earlier works will be familiar with the author's disdain for pedantry and if the narrator is indeed alluding to a more serious subtext, it is not implausible that he is taking care not to become a subject of ridicule too. What is certain, however, is that the narrative voice which intervenes to comment on the protagonist's adventures multiplies the angles of observation, although in doing so it does not offer a clear alternative argument; on the contrary, it complicates the narrative by hinting that there might be something in the text that the reader has missed without, of course, referring to it directly.

The narrative voices in the *histoires comiques* that I looked at earlier in this chapter do not create the same layering of voices that I have shown in Cyrano's work. They might show different layers of narrative voice but they do not produce the same effects. This is because Cyrano's voices constantly meddle with one another in what could be described as burlesque. Cyrano's voices are disorientating for the reader because they constantly transform and change position. In Théophile and L'Hermite's novels, the narrative voice created ambiguity because it was not clear what the relationship was between the narrator and the author, yet this ambiguity primarily concerned the voice of the author. In Cyrano's work, the shift between voices happens more often and it is more subtle and therefore often more disconcerting. In Sorel's *Histoire comique de Francion* and Scarron's *Roman comique*, there was a very different type of narrative voice to Cyrano's: Sorel's narrator clearly passed things over to the characters in his story; Scarron also had a distinct narrative voice, separate from the other characters. *Le Berger extravagant* was interesting for this study in other ways: it showed how layers of

narrative could be created by a commentary on the novel, although this meant that Sorel's project sought to reduce ambiguity, rather than encourage it.

Cyrano's gesture is a playful one and it echoes his capricious name games in the collection of letters, which also raised the question of the extent to which one should read into the text 'real' references. What I have shown here, however, is that Cyrano's narrator obscures the narration and makes it difficult to see who is arguing what, when and how: what are the protagonist and narrator arguing? If there is a message for the reader in these opening pages to *L'Autre Monde*, it is to mistrust the narrative voice.

Questions still remain about Cyrano's narrator: what role does he play in the text at large and how do other voices interact with him? This central character in *L'Autre Monde* merits more detailed analysis precisely because of the layers he introduces that seem to obscure rather than clarify the main action. The next chapter will continue to look at Cyrano's narrator but in light of other voices in the text. What other kinds of narrative are there? What happens when multiple voices, not only from the peripheries, collide?

Chapter V

Battling with Burlesque

At the beginning of his *Œuvres complètes* (1654), the last work of Cyrano's to be published in his lifetime, the author includes a self-portrait in which he is, unusually, dressed in classical attire. Unlike other portraits of Cyrano's time, in which authors are most often dressed in contemporary clothing, Cyrano's image captures attention. The drawing is likely a burlesque allusion to the poet Ronsard, whose own striking portrait opens the first volume to his *Œuvres poétiques*, a work that Cyrano likely consulted.[466] What is the reader to expect in the work of an author who burlesques even himself?

Cyrano's reader will remember that he had already taken part in a burlesque project, a re-telling of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: d'Assoucy's *L'Ovide en belle humeur* (1650), for which he wrote an opening sonnet.[467] He was thus well aware of the potential entertainment of 'le travestissement' in literature:[468] praising d'Assoucy's transformed

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[466] Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85) was a celebrated Renaissance French poet, a member of La Pléiade, whose members advocated the imitation of classical models as a means of poetic invention. His work continued to be published in the seventeenth century. There is a re-edition of Ronsard's poetry, volume one of the *Œuvres poétiques* of 1623: *Les Œvvres poétiques de Pierre de Ronsard* (Paris: Nicolas Buon, 1623).

[467] In a prefatory text to d'Assoucy's work, Corneille writes of Ovid that 'Sa plume osa beaucoup: & Plantes, Animaux, Fleuues, Hommes, Rochers, Elements, & Metaux, Par elle ont veu changer leurs estres & leurs causes' but of d'Assoucy's 'plume' that, 'La tienne plus hardie a plus encor osé'. See Charles Coypeau d'Assoucy, *L'Ovide en belle hvmevr de Mr Dassovy* (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1650).

[468] As Jean Leclerc emphasizes in *L'Antiquité travestie et la vogue du burlesque en France (1643-1661)* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2008), even in this comic exercise, the recognition of the model which is being subverted is central, and that writers who resorted to using sources from Antiquity were in fact working within the familiar framework of the long tradition of *imitatio*: 'Quand, par exemple,

gods, Cyrano writes that he 'les as [a] déguis[és] en fous', an observation that rings true of his own novel in which Dyrcona – Cyrano? – dons beggars clothes whilst on the run in the city of Toulouse.[469] Cyrano's playful dressing up for his 1654 portrait – an erudite and witty gesture – would resonate with those who had read not only Ronsard's poetry, but *L'Ovide en belle humeur*, in which d'Assoucy includes his own impressive burlesque drawing: a jester sits on a thrown, smiling, as Claudine Nédélec points out, like a 'masque comique', at the portrait held up to him – but which is d'Assoucy and which is Ovid?[470] By appending a sonnet to d'Assoucy's work, Cyrano too partakes in 'la fête de la déraison'; and his later attire is yet another indication of the author's *jeu d'esprit*.

Cyrano's portrait is made up of layers: one writer dons the external attire of another but is still clearly visible beneath his new 'cloak'. Of course, layers are crucial in any burlesque work, image or text: there is always an ambiguous mixture of serious *and* comic. The previous chapter showed that layers of narrative voice in *L'Autre Monde* made it difficult to distinguish the narrator, the protagonist and sometimes the author, and here then, too, there is a game of 'dressing up': one looks like the other, but isn't … or is it? The opening pages of *L'Autre Monde* hinted at further games to come and this chapter will show how narrative voices become more complex as perspectives continue to multiply. As other voices are introduced, they compete, as each tries to outdo the

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Scarron ou Dassoucy reprennent la matière d'une œuvre de Virgile ou d'Ovide et qu'ils la réécrivent à leur manière, ils participent à l'appropriation imitative des modèles antiques et privilégient une invention classique. L'exercice de travestissement implique dès lors la reprise fidèle d'un modèle reconnaissable', p. 130.

[469] See Chapter II of this thesis for a detailed analysis of the fools and madmen central to *L'Autre Monde*.

[470] See the article on the burlesque images that accompany D'Assoucy's *L'Ovide en belle humeur* by Claudine Nédélec, 'Dassoucy et ses « Figures burlesques », in *Avez-vous lu Dassoucy: Actes du colloque international du Centre d'Études sur les Réformes, l'Humanisme et l'Âge classique (CERHAC)*, Clermont-Ferrand, 25th-26th June, 2004 (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), pp. 93-125.

next. This is not a battle for survival, however, but rather burlesque: voices fight through burlesque forms; and there are no limits, the reader soon discovers, to the parody and subversion. What is this battle? Is there a victor? What is the outcome?

A. The Front Line

Questioning external appearances is a good place to start with Cyrano's novel. What literary forms and norms are for Cyrano is not obvious and an overview of *L'Autre Monde* reveals the many different shapes that voices can take, not at all dissimilar to the variety in Cyrano's letters. The forms of the novel naturally invite a comparison to those of the letters and yet the context has changed considerably: the gesture in *L'Autre Monde* is not simply part of a parodic project. Cyrano's novel presents fantastical worlds – fictional worlds – where such forms are not out of place; the reader has been warned of all things 'merveilleux' from the opening pages.

i. From Who's Who to Who's What

The most unusual figures are the types of animals that inhabit the moon and the sun, which are all humanized, whether corporeally (the lunar beasts have human heads and both the lunar creatures and the birds can talk – although in different languages) or through their societal structures (their worlds are governed by similar social and political customs to our own: there are legal systems, for example, and both cultures

have rulers in the forms of kings and queens). There are other stories within *L'Autre Monde*, however, where different types of character are introduced. Alongside these unusual human-beasts, there are Biblical figures, and I have already mentioned Elijah. Later in the novel, other named characters appear: the aristocrats, Colignac and Cussan; and the priest, Jean. Others are more recognisable: the philosophers, Descartes and Campanella. The same question arises with regard to these characters as to those in the letters: why are these characters named but many others, including the protagonist of *La Lune*, not? The divide is not just one between an animal and human world, however; there is a spiritual realm: the ghost of Cardan and the 'démon' of Socrates are both evoked. Inanimate objects also come to life: there are intellectual vegetables, such as the cabbages, and trees talk. Forms are not always constant, they metamorphose: a pomegranate becomes a prince. More disturbingly, the devil himself makes an appearance: 'l'Antéchrist'. And amidst this 'pot-pourri' (to quote from Cyrano's famous lines)[471], Cyrano, too, partakes in this medley through the named protagonist of *Le Soleil*, Dyrcona, an obvious pseudonym.

Such characters refer back to one of the earliest fantastical travel narratives, Lucian's *True History*; the latter's characters, in turn, are parodies of figures found in Homer's *Odyssey*. Deformed humans – half human, half beast – also recall characters from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.[472] Mythical tales were

[471] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*: 'L'ouvrage dont ils avaient fait tant de cas, n'est plus qu'un pot-pourri de contes ridicules, un amas de lambeaux décousus, un répertoire de Peau-d'Ane à bercer les enfants', p. 168.

[472] Lucian writes in his preface that, 'every episode is a subtle parody of some fantastic 'historical fact' recorded by an ancient poet, historian, or philosopher, p. 3, in Lucian, 'The True History', in *True History and Lucius or the Ass*, transl. by Paul Turner (London: John Calder, 2010). Lucius criticizes Homer in particular: 'Of course, the real pioneer in this type of tomfoolery was Homer's Odysseus, who told Alcinous and his court an extremely tall story about bags full of wind, and one-eyed giants, and cannibals and other unpleasant characters, not to speak of many-headed monsters and magic potions that turned

popular references in the heroic romance novels of the first half of the century and satirized in Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant*. The reader may also remember Rabelais's giants, a 'type populaire' and 'commun', and recall that their origins were debated elsewhere in a long line of discussion.[473] Obviously, defining what is unusual about a character and what is not requires some caution. In a burlesque novel the reader might expect to find unusual forms, 'grâce à la plasticité du genre [burlesque]' and 'parce que sa fonction est de pervertir les structures génériques tells qu'elles sont codifiées'.[474] Irregularities, misshapen forms, monsters, are part of the comedy, yet, as in similar fantastical adventures, the characters adhere to a recognizable framework: 'leur démesure est la mesure même de leur retranchement, de leur appartenance à l'espace clos de la littérature'.[475]

Forms and norms – and what these might be – are in fact discussed within *L'Autre Monde* itself. The reader is encouraged to question, too, not only who is who but who is what. A good place to begin my analysis is with the protagonist, given that I have already hinted at the unsettling layers of narrative between this character and the narrator. Strangely, for the reader, the narrator of *L'Autre Monde* finds himself observing his own self-portrait; one that, like d'Assoucy's burlesque drawing in *L'Ovide en belle humeur*, is a curious mixture of resemblance and otherness: in short, the narrator observes himself being *burlesqued*.

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human beings into animals. He evidently thought the Phaeacians were fool enough to believe anything', p. 4.

[473] Guy Demerson writes that Rabelais's giants were 'le sujet commun d'une classe d'aventures, parfois redoublées sans que le rédacteur ait conscience qu'il reproduisait le même motif sous des habillages différents', p. 23, 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', in *Personnage et histoire littéraire* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1991). Readers of *Gargantua* will no doubt remember the comic monk, Frère Jean; inspiration for Cyrano's priest perhaps?

[474] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 272.

[475] Demerson, 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', p. 33.

When the protagonist meets the four-legged lunar creatures of the moon, who the reader is informed are six metres in length, he closely inspects them to figure out what they might be:[476] 'je rencontrai deux fort grands animaux […] Quand je les pus discerner de près, je connus qu'ils avaient la taille, la figure et le visage comme nous. Cette aventure me fit souvenir de ce que jadis j'avais ouï conter à ma nourrice des sirènes, des faunes et des satyres'.[477] For a moment the narrator grapples to find a familiar name for them – one that harks back to tales from childhood; mythical and make-believe creatures – yet he insists on calling them 'ces bêtes-hommes' and not 'des satyres', as the reader might expect. The narrator suggests that they are not entirely of unknown origin, but in fact half human, half beast – 'bêtes-hommes' – and thus they are also not entirely different from himself; although, the reader also wonders if it is possible for such antithetical positions – 'homme', *with* reason, and 'bête', *without* – to coexist.[478] Furthermore, if the creatures are a form of satyr, this is perhaps not the best relationship to establish given the not altogether positive connotations of the animal as a lustful and drunken creature; and yet another dubious line of inquiry opens up if 'bête' is in fact a pun on 'stupide'…[479]

In these burlesque forms, the reader wonders who the imposter is when the narrator uses a simile (in parody of Homer, one wonders?) to liken himself to an ewe – 'une brebis,' and not 'un bélier', the reader notes! – who becomes ensnared by a wolf: 'Une de ces

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[476] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 51: 'la plupart d'entre eux ont douze coudées de longueur'. Madeleine Alcover offers a helpful footnote: 'La coudée mesurant un pied et demi, cela fait environ six mètres'.
[477] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 51.
[478] See Furetière: Beste, Animal privé de raison; Homme, Animal raisonnable.
[479] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 51. Furetière: 'Beste, se dit aussi d'un homme sans esprit, qui est stupide, lors qu'elle ne peut rien comprendre, ni retenir'.

bêtes-hommes m'ayant saisi par le cou, de même les loups quand ils enlèvent une brebis, me jeta sur son dos'.[480] This image is the antithesis of the narrator's earlier description of himself as 'un monstre': 'ils [the 'bêtes-hommes'] élevaient des huées si furieuses, causées sont doute par l'admiration de me voir, que je croyais quasi être devenu monstre'.[481]

The dislocation prompted by the narrator's point of observation – here, watching himself being watched and transformed – creates layers of surveillance, not so very different to those produced earlier from the narrator's side running commentary I demonstrated in the previous chapter; and, again, here there is that odd 'quasi' slipped in, and the reader wonders what it means for the narrator to be half-monster. Prompted to recall other mythical creatures through the narrator's childhood memories of mermaids, fauns and satyrs – all part human, part beast – the reader is confronted with an invasion of burlesques, all of them 'in-between'; 'quasi'. The narrator partly revels in his moment of fame, in 'admiration', but there is another dislocation from the double meaning of 'huée', to mean either the cries of 'la chasse' or mockery: is Cyrano anticipating the reception of his burlesque and its division of the critics?

Other burlesque effects are produced when the narrator stands back to observe his story, reminding the reader that this is a retelling of past events, thus playing with the effects of memory. He explains that, 'rêvant depuis sur ce sujet', he finds the 'bêtes-hommes' quite reasonable to walk on all four legs: 'j'ai songé que cette situation de corps n'était point trop extravagante, quand je me suis souvenu que nos enfants, lorsqu'ils ne sont

[480] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 51.
[481] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 51.

encore instruits que la Nature, marchent à quatre pieds'.[482] The narrator forms yet another connection between lunar creatures and human beings; however, despite the logic of his argument, a comic dislocation is created between his apparently rational observation and the fact that he is defending '[des] bêtes-hommes'.

The narrator makes a similar comic observation in *Le Soleil*, when he has something of an epiphany, following the extraordinary metamorphosis of the pomegranate-prince:

> Mille exemples d'événements quasi pareils, dont les peuples de notre globe font foi, achevèrent de me persuader. Cippus, roi d'Italie, qui pour avoir assisté à un combat de taureaux, et avoir eu toute la nuit son imagination occupée à des cornes, trouva son front cornu le lendemain.[483]

Such extraordinary events may have actually happened, he convinces himself. But here again 'quasi' creeps in and the reader wonders why the narrator has avoided a firmer comparison. Moreover, the comic sexual subtext of the king's 'horn'-filled nights suggests the narrator is dubiously naïve; a scene that is reminiscent of the narrator's justification that the 'bêtes-hommes' are actually quite reasonable.

When the protagonist is imprisoned in the kingdom of the birds, his appearance is once more the subject of heated debate. In relation to the birds he is described as 'le plus dissemblable et le plus affreux; enfin, une bête chauve, un oiseau plumé, une chimère amassée de toutes sortes de natures, et qui fait peur à toutes'.[484] There are levels of 'strangeness' – the protagonist 'le plus' – but a dislocation is created by the emphasis:

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[482] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 52.
[483] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 247.
[484] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 255

how different can he be? The birds' multiple definitions mirror the earlier scene in which the protagonist named the lunar creatures after mythical half-human figures; but this time, the roles have reversed as the birds look on at 'une chimère': 'Monstre fabuleux que les Poëtes ont feint avoir la teste d'un lion, le ventre d'une chevre, & la queuë d'un serpent'.[485] The protagonist is no longer human at all and the transformation seems to have gone one step too far when the narrator himself confirms the horror that he is indeed unrecognisable: 'un monstre'.[486]

Through the different observation points that the narrator creates, the protagonist's image continually transforms; and it seems that the narrator is not only observing these transformations but also partaking in them. It is interesting on this note to remember the layers of commentary in Sorel's *Le Berger extravagant* and in particular a scene in which Lysis fakes a metamorphosis. Lysis believes that the Gods might take pity on him in his distress and transform him: 'lors que le Ciel ne sçait plus ce qu'il doit faire d'un homme, & qu'il a pitié de son tourment, il le change en quelque nouvelle forme'.[487] Amusingly for the reader, he debates the different forms he would like to take on: perhaps a dog so that he can get close to his lover, Charite, or better still a flea so that he can jump from one to the other; a piece of furniture is also an attractive prospect, or a knife (except that this, Lysis considers after some reflection, may be more risky: 'il se pourroit faire que quelquesfois ie couperois les doigts de ma Charite, ce qui me donneroit bien du regret').[488] Either way, Lysis insists that he be transformed into something no one has been before and, with Sorel's parodic intentions in mind,

[485] See 'CHIMERE' in Furetière's *Dictionnaire*.
[486] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 257.
[487] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 183 of edition cited (p. 654 of original).
[488] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 184 of edition cited (p. 660 original).

Cyrano's protagonist can certainly be read as an interpretation taken too far; what excesses indeed, Cyrano's reader might be thinking, following the narrator's preposterous confession that, in restrospect, 'cette situation de corps n'était point trop extravagante'.[489]

Sorel criticizes such metamorphoses found in the poetry of the Ancients because they are *invraisemblable*. When Lysis gets stuck in a tree and believes he has been transformed into it, Clarimond tries to reason with him by arguing that he still has all his clothes on, and that in typical metamorphoses the clothes transform too: in a bid to get him to descend from the tree, Clarimond suggests that if he thinks he really has been transformed then he might at least think about removing his clothes in order to act out the part properly. In his 'Remarques', Sorel attacks the poets 'qui sont si sots que de faire metamorphoser les habits avec les hommes […] car il eust falu donc feindre que les Dieux voulans changer un home en arbre ou en oyseau, luy commandoient auparauant de se despouiller'.[490]

What is interesting about Lysis's transformation, is that he is not really transformed at all, but that this does not seem to matter: he is convinced he is a tree. Sorel's narrative voice does not help to establish clarity, for it interchangeably calls him 'Lysis' and 'la saule'. In Cyrano's novel, opposing views on appearances stir dangerous debates: in *Le Soleil* the narrator writes that 'la définition de ce que j'étais partagea la ville en deux factions'.[491] Unlike Sorel's gesture, Cyrano's inversions – and subversions – are unremitting. No one is exempt from his burlesque games and Cyrano's own burlesque

[489] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 52.
[490] Sorel, *Le Berger extravagant*, p. 601 of edition cited (p. 207 original).
[491] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 90.

portrait comes back to haunt the reader. Are there any limits to Cyrano's burlesque, one wonders?

On the moon, once captured by the lunar creatures and imprisoned, the protagonist is put on trial for, ironically, belonging to an unknown species: in struggling to name him, they ambiguously label him 'la femelle' de 'la petite animal de la reine'; a sex confirmed by the narrator's earlier comparison of himself to a ewe, and the reader wonders once more who is burlesquing whom. A strange dislocation is once more produced from the unusual position in which the narrator finds himself being animalized, looking back at his own transformation. There is a moment when the narratorial voice intervenes just before the protagonist is put on trial to paint a frightening image of his emotional state in light of the doubt surrounding his identity:

> Le grand pontife prit la parole et plaida contre moi. Je [ne] me souviens pas de sa harangue, à cause que j'étais trop épouvanté pour recevoir les espèces de la voix sans désordre, et parce aussi qu'il était servi, pour déclamer, d'un instrument dont le bruit m'étourdissait.[492]

Cyrano's burlesquing suddenly takes a sinister turn and it becomes clear that transformations ('travestissements') can have serious consequences. A 'trompette' announces the beginning of his trial, and the image of a military bugle call is evoked, signalling the coming of a major, perhaps life-threatening turn of events. The trumpet causes disruption: the protagonist is not only handicapped – deafened – but disoriented and disarmed of his ability to reason. In a vivid and violent simile, the protagonist compares himself to a 'soldat' on the battlefield – one on Earth, 'comme il arrive dans *nos* armées' – who in the call to battle is prevented from thinking about his imminent

[492] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 98.

death: 'ce tintamarre de trompettes et de tambours empêche le soldat de réfléchir sur l'importance de sa vie'.[493] Burlesque forms disorient through disruptive sounds; a gesture that echoes the 'fille de la reine' who bangs on the protagonist's cage bars. Voices thus do battle in other guises and the effects can be violent and damaging.

B. Behind the Front Line

In the letters, Cyrano's shifting forms highlighted the author's *jeu d'esprit*; even if the letter-writer chose to attack his opponent, the letter was a platform from which the writer could show off his wit. Burlesque forms in *L'Autre Monde*, however, produce effects other than just comedy: an excess of burlesque can be a destructive force.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how Cyrano's narrative voice could not be reduced to ambiguity: Cyrano's narrator does not simply act as a means to conceal controversial ideas; on the contrary, this character causes a great deal of trouble. Of course, by assuming different narrative points of view, the 'je' of the text can get away with saying controversial things and it is easier to elude censorship because it is difficult to pin down who is saying what and when. The narrative voice does not only offer alternative 'viewpoints', however; it obscures them. Jean-Pierre Cavaillé makes a strong case for the argument that, while there are different levels of reading and understanding within the libertine text and, ultimately, each interpretation of the text is 'right', because

[493] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 98.

every reader is free to interpret it as he or she sees fit, a 'liberté de pensée' in Cyrano's novel is actually very difficult.

Chapter II demonstrated the competition of voices in the novel that obscured hierarchies of arguments; Chapter IV revealed the disorienting layers of Cyrano's narrative voice; while the beginning of this final chapter looked at the invasion of burlesque images in the novel. The remainder of this thesis will highlight other processes in Cyrano's novel that make it particularly difficult for the reader to establish solid ground. Indeed, there are other troubling writing practices at stake.

i. Looking Elsewhere

Looking beyond masks, portraits, disguises – burlesque figures – means that it is necessary to look beyond obvious character forms. What does this entail exactly for a text written in the first half of the seventeenth century? When Cyrano was writing, the 'personnage' of the novel was not the character one finds today in literary works but, nevertheless, there was still a framework that Cyrano was working within and literary characters had evolved significantly; no longer were they simply of secondary status, acting as mere agencies to propel the plot. At the beginning of the Renaissance, their 'traits physiques, sociologiques et psychologiques' were only 'nécessaires à l'agencement de l'intrigue, pas plus, pas moins';[494] they were stereotypes; recurring,

[494] Demerson, 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', p. 24. Demerson continues: 'Les héros ne sont pas valorisés par des qualités d'avoir ou de pouvoir […] mais par l'*engin* des fabliaux, l'*ingenium* qui imagine les moyens de permettre à l'intrigue où ils sont impliqués de se dénouer', p. 25.

formulaic patterns. By the end of the Renaissance, however, the characters in the 'nouvelles' were characterized by a 'liberté de choix'.[495] The most important evolution was that now characters functioned to engage the reader, to raise questions outside of the text, to 'inquiéter le lecteur'.[496] One of the ways they achieved this was by multiplying the points of view in a text but also by playing on the realistic aspects of their story. Rabelais, however, would go a step further in creating the first 'literary' characters, ones that had their own logic in their own fictional world. The variety of his characters is therefore central to his work in this new, fictional framework. When Cyrano was writing, literary characters could be *vraisemblable* – the *histoires comiques* often used characters from ordinary, daily life – or equally inhabit fictional worlds of their own, in the vein of Rabelais, although, of course, satire and comedy always rely on the reader's recognition of wider socio-cultural references.

In *L'Autre Monde*, however, there is no one character that acts and carries consequence in the way that characters had previously: the protagonist is not an obvious hero, for example, nor an anti-hero; he does not evolve as a character or make progress; his attributes are not well defined; his sex is debated as well as his species; his name is even questionable. In short, it is not easy to delineate the 'je' of *L'Autre Monde*. What is clear, however, is that *L'Autre Monde* is composed of competing voices – and Chapter II offered several case studies of figures that were not easily discernible in the text but who had an important role to play. Voices in *L'Autre Monde* underpin and override obvious physical forms such as those that were considered at the beginning of this chapter.

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[495] Demerson, 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', p. 27.
[496] Demerson, 'Renaissance du personnage narratif en France', p. 31.

On this note, it is interesting to consider Philippe Hamon's approach in his seminal work *Le Personnel du roman* and his analysis of character in Zola's work.[497] What is particularly useful for this study, is how Hamon turns inside out the understanding of a literary character. In criticizing the limitations of traditional perspectives of character in literature, Hamon redefines the boundaries of character entirely:

> [Le personnage] localisable partout et nulle part […] n'est pas une partie autonome, d'emblée différenciable et différenciée, prélevable et homogène du texte, mais un 'lieu' ou un 'effet' sémantique diffus qui, à la fois, côtoie, supporte, incarne, produit et est produit par l'ensemble des dialogues, des thèmes, des descriptions, de l'histoire, etc.'[498]

According to Hamon, the literary characters in Zola's work do not embody traditional traits and cannot be defined by human characteristics. Instead, a character emerges gradually, little by little, as the text progresses. Eventually the reader is able to map the character's territory.[499] This is crucial for Hamon. What he refers to as the character's 'milieu', can be traced and, through this means, the true attributes of the primary agent revealed. Through this method, as he demonstrates in Zola's work, the primary agents are revealed to be not people, but clusters of attributes. His point is that there is no 'personnel'.

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[497] See Philippe Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman: Le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Emile Zola* (Geneva: Droz, 1998). Hamon is obviously analysing the work of an author from the nineteenth century and thus from a very different context than the seventeenth. Of course, the use of 'characters' in literature in these two periods differs significantly. Nevertheless, Hamon's perspective is informative in that it encourages us to think beyond certain categorisations.

[498] Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman*, p. 19.

[499] Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman*, p. 25.

This antithetical approach to the portrayal of literary characters is useful for my study of Cyrano. Faced with an author who defies traditional forms and norms, it is absolutely necessary to requestion approaches to his work. Hamon's insistence on following causalities or agents in the text, and that the 'lisibilité des personnages' is an 'accroissement', is helpful in considering the ensemble of agencies in Cyrano's work. What other processes are involved in Cyrano's novel?

ii. Slippery Pronouns

Changing perspective in order to take into account the movement of Cyrano's narrator in the text is crucial, and one of the ways in which Cyrano creates a new and different space is in his use of pronouns. Here I wish to return to the opening lines to *L'Autre Monde*, especially where I have emphasized in italics the words of particular interest to my study:

> La lune était en son plein, le ciel était découvert, et neuf heures au soir étaient sonnées, lorsque *nous* revenions d'une maison proche de Paris, quatre de *mes amis* et *moi*. Les diverses pensées que *nous* donna la vue de cette boule de safran *nous* défrayèrent sur le chemin. Les yeux noyés dans ce grand astre, tantôt *l'un* le prenait pour une lucarne du ciel par où *l'on* entrevoyait la gloire des bienheureux; tantôt *l'autre* protestait que c'était la platine où Diane dresse les rabats d'Apollon; tantôt *un* autre s'écriait que ce pourrait bien être le soleil lui-même, qui s'étant au soir dépouillé de ses rayons, regardait par un trou ce qu'*on* faisait au monde quand il n'y était plus.
>
> 'Et *moi*, dis-*je*, qui souhaite mêler *mes* enthousiasmes aux *vôtres,* **je** crois, sans m'amuser aux imaginations pointues dont *vous* chatouillez le temps pour le faire marcher plus

> vite, que la lune est un monde comme celui-ci, à qui le *nôtre* sert de lune'.
> *La compagnie me* régala d'un grand éclat de rire.[500]

From these opening lines, a multitude of voices, all unnamed, are introduced. Who is, the reader wonders, the 'je' that makes for such a forceful presence through the repeated emphatic pronoun 'moi', which is even at one point doubly announced, 'Et moi, dis-je'? And who are the unidentified friends, whose lack of identity is drummed home through the repeated anonymity of 'l'un' and 'l'autre', and who are thus stripped of any human or personal attributes? This is a very different setup to the one found in the novels of Cyrano's contemporaries where the 'je' addresses a clear audience: in *Le Page disgracié* and in *Francion*, it is Thirinte and Francion who are directly called; in *La Première Journée* and the *Roman comique*, it is the reader. In Cyrano's novel, the reader is introduced to a series of unidentified beings that operate around a linguistic framework of inclusion and exclusion. The words 'la compagnie' encapsulate the peculiarity of the scene. What is this exactly? The reader is unsure who is inside or outside: is it 'I' versus 'you', 'speaker' versus 'spoken to'?

The lack of clear identity begins with the first 'nous', an inclusive pronoun that blurs the boundaries between narrator and reader, fostering a fleeting moment of intimacy, and one that is supported by the specificity of the location ('une maison proche de Paris') and time ('neuf heures au soir étaient sonnées'). And yet while the sentence could close at this point, it is interesting that Cyrano appends some additional information, choosing to elaborate upon the 'nous' adding, 'quatre amis et moi'. Through this group, although still undefined, the reader is distanced from the scene: he

[500] Cyrano de Bergerac, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 5-6.

or she is not included in the 'amis', and the lack of naming is suggestive of the unimportance of naming altogether, because the reader would not know who they are anyway. At this point, the position of the reader is as observer to a scene he or she is not a part of: the reader does not belong within the close intimacy of the protagonist's 'group' or intellectual gang, a position further supported by the fact that he or she does not know whose house the friends have visited or even why. The scene is constructed around a drunken disagreement: 'cette boule de safran nous défrayèrent', '[nous] chatouillaient', and yet one observer 'protestait' and another passionately demands to be heard, [il] 's'écriait', suggesting a cacophony of voices. The reader, however, is neither part of the fun nor part of the debate.

It is important to recall briefly the difference of this opening to Théophile's *La Première Journée*. As disorienting as Théophile's opening chapters are, the 'Avis au lecteur' establishes the role of the reader: he or she is appointed as a final adjudicator, called to examine the truth behind the scandalous accusations. In *L'Autre Monde* the reader's role as observer is shaken up: at one point he or she is outside, elsewhere, included. Let us take, for example, the second half of the above citation, where the sudden direct speech of the protagonist in addressing his friends momentously transforms the pace and tone of the scene to the present. Two new pronouns are introduced: the possessive 'vôtres' and the direct plural 'vous'. This time the 'vous' is defined, too, like the 'nous' of the first sentence, and yet, by a very different category, 'la compagnie'. The exclusive 'amis' has widened to a broader category: no longer is the protagonist with friends but, more loosely defined, he is now with 'plusieurs

personnes', 'une société'.[501] From a shift in position, from a nous + amis, to a vous + compagnie, the voice of the narrator has subtly and gradually moved to include the reader in his group, as he speaks directly to a new audience. How, the reader might ask, can he or she refuse such an enticing invitation, to be finally included in the in-group, and to be amongst these friends that partake in such fun and mischievous activities, for example suggesting that the moon is a world like our own, and our world in fact a moon…

iii. 'Quasi', but of What?

Cyrano's literary practices recall what Maurice Lever labels the 'baroque novel', defined by 'la discontinuité'. Lever describes the disorienting effects of a dynamic style that constantly interweaves different layers of discourse: 'Le lecteur le plus attentif s'égare bientôt dans un labyrinthe de récits intercalés, qui lui font sans cesse remonter le cours du temps et prendre un nouveau départ'.[502] Cyrano's writing practices may defy easy categorization but to reduce them to a dislocated narrative is to overlook the wider literary effects produced.

Another example that reveals Cyrano's curious processes is the conversation between the protagonist and the 'démon' in *La Lune* about the reverence given to the younger generation, as opposed to the elder.[503] The 'démon' reverses the traditional father-son

[501] See Furetière.
[502] Lever, *Le Roman français au XVII^e siècle*, p. 31.
[503] See Isabelle Moreau, 'De quelques fictions paradoxales', in *Cyrano de Bergerac, Cyrano de Sannois.*

hierarchy, explaining that on the moon youth is more respected. This is no doubt an attack on the Christian hierarchy of God (Father) and Man (Son) and readers would have been well aware of the subversive message of this reading, but also familiar with the common parodic topos.[504] What is the reader's position regarding this controversial setup?

The 'démon' is supposedly in dialogue with the protagonist and the reader might expect a kind of Socratic dialogue where he or she quickly discovers that the protagonist's position has been the correct one all along.[505] What is unusual about the 'je' character, however, is that it disappears entirely from the scene. Instead, the 'démon' speaks to an imagined audience. He begins to formulate his arguments by guessing at the listener's position: 'Vous vous étonnez';[506] 'Mais, direz-vous';[507] 'Vous me répliquerez que';[508] 'Vous ne tenez, ô mon fils, que';[509] 'Vous demanda-t-il si'.[510] Interestingly, there is no obvious voice to counteract the arguments put forward by the 'démon', and yet the grammar suggests that this is not a monologue; perhaps it is a lecture. With no protagonist in sight, the 'vous' escapes a clear identity. The reader wonders: is the 'démon' speaking to me?

Oddly, at the end of the demon's lecture a narrative voice suddenly appears to comment on the scene and the same effects of dislocation occur, as I showed earlier, when the narrator appears to play with the idea of memory and recounting history. As though in

[504] See, especially, Rabelais.
[505] This is particularly fitting given that the daemon is likened to a kind of libertine Socrates.
[506] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 102.
[507] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 104.
[508] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 105.
[509] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 106.
[510] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, P. 107.

collaboration with the reader, he comments upon the scene as though he were only a spectator, observing from a distance the 'démon's' controversial arguments: 'J'avais bien de la peine, quoique je me mordisse les lèvres, à m'empêcher de rire de ce monde renversé'.[511] Why does the narrator need to remind the reader of the comedy?

The reader finds him or herself in a tricky situation. Why should he or she trust his judgement over the 'demon's'? Especially given that the narrator assumes a relationship with the protagonist, who has spent the majority of the novel on trial for his so-called ludicrous beliefs. Moreover, the 'démon's' arguments are not very comic at all, but in fact a deeply critical attack on the Church, suspicions that are confirmed when the protagonist is eventually carried away by the devil at the end of *La Lune* for his heretical remarks. This is not just a 'monde renversé'. Both voices, the 'démon' and the 'je', are errant. There is no relativity of position because within the text there is nothing to counterbalance. The only alternative is the one provided by the reader's own world-view. But as the 'je' demonstrates, it also dismantles this safety by suggesting complicity. It is at moments like these that the 'je' goes beyond traditional understandings of character because the boundaries between fiction and reality are blurred. Here, the 'je' transforms to be neither participant nor narrator, but something strange in between; is it 'quasi'? If this is another type of burlesque form, it goes too far in obscuring one figure from another.

While it is tempting to label the narrative voice as a kind of anti-guide, the role that these voices play in *L'Autre Monde* is disturbing and goes beyond what the reader might expect of a joker. When the narrative voice disappears from the text, the reader is

[511] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 120.

confronted with other forms of avatar; ones that are not easily distinguishable from the protagonist. In addition to the narrator, the other voices that assume a role of 'guide' make it impossible to discern who is playing which part. After all, the 'démon' is supposedly the protagonist's guide… Guides guiding guides? Or more burlesque forms?

iv. …and Where?

Cyrano's protagonist contrasts to Scarron's, where in his *Roman comique* the narrative voice can be easily delineated. In *L'Autre Monde* character parameters are confused; the 'je' jumps from fictional anti-hero to reader's accomplice. In both *Francion* and the *Roman comique*, the narrator directly confronts or engages with the other characters in the text in order to assume an authoritative position and thus secure a fixed place. The creation of an erroneous 'démon' who is supposed to be a teacher-guide for an erroneous protagonist in *L'Autre Monde* suggests that Cyrano's 'je' works on a different level to those seen elsewhere. In Sorel's *Francion,* the narrator often takes an active part in the story, as he dons the cap of moral adjudicator, a pedagogical guide, leading the reader to the 'right' conclusion.[512] This guidance stands out from *L'Autre Monde* where Cyrano's reader seems left to err like the protagonist and where there is no comfort to be found in reaching a solid conclusion. Never mind if *Francion* can be read in parts as a libertine text because of Francion's licentious lifestyle, Sorel has made sure to voice

[512] See for example: 'En tout cela l'on voit clairement que ses mœurs étaient fort perverties et qu'il se laissait merveilleusement emporter aux délices, et que néanmoins il était trompé par de faux charmes et qu'il ne jouissait point du bonheur qu'il s'était figuré, étant au lieu de cela en un très mauvais équipage qui doit servir d'exemple et d'instruction pour ceux qui veulent mener une pareille vie, leur faisant reconnaître que c'est un très mauvais chemin', in Sorel, *Histoire comique de Francion*, p. 84.

the moral high ground. *L'Autre Monde* has no overarching voice of authority to correct the libertine path (or even to appear to correct it).

It is tempting to make a link with Cyrano's playful voices and Scarron's narrative, except that Scarron's 'je', it too unnamed, leaves nothing to the reader's imagination. Scarron's narratorial voice is a nuisance, albeit a humorous one.[513] As I demonstrated in Chapter IV, Scarron's narrator, in talking about himself as 'Author' thereby distinguishes himself from the other fictional characters, which instead appear to be openly used and manipulated as obvious fictional constructs. Unlike in *L'Autre Monde* where there is no direct discussion about what is real or fictional, Scarron's narrator repeatedly mentions his literary project.[514]

In *L'Autre Monde*, it is up to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions from what a 'burlesque pédagogie' might entail (as hard as this might be). The movement of Cyrano's narrative voices encourages the reader to question how this is even a literary character. On the contrary, Francion is a character who ultimately exists in an 'histoire', stemming from the memory, real or not, of those recounting it, and like the characters of Scarron's *Roman comique,* has no direct voice, but must rely on the position of the narrator to tell his story. Cyrano's 'je' has a peculiar agency of its own given that it functions within no obvious literary framework. It thus has a power in the text that

[513] During a description of one of the main characters in the story the narrator suddenly switches from one story to another: 'La Rancune s'habilla devant que Ragotin fût éveillé. Il demanda au petit ivrogne si c'était par mortification qu'il avait quitté son lit pour dormir sur une paillasse. Ragotin soutint qu'il ne s'était point levé et qu'assurément il revenait des esprits dans la chambre. Il eut querelle avec le cabaretier, qui prit parti de sa maison et le menaça de le mettre en justice pour l'avoir décriée. Mais il n'y a que trop longtemps que je vous ennuie de la débauche de Ragotin; retournons à l'hôtellerie des comédiens', p. 86.

[514] See Scarron, *Le Roman comique*. This can be seen in the *mise-en-abîme* of his characters being professional comedians, and that 'les Comédiens jouent toutes sortes de personnages', p. 60.

Francion and Scarron's characters are refused. Francion and the comedians are props to convey the narrator's message and this is made clear to the reader via textual markers that distinguish the characters vis-à-vis one another. In *L'Autre Monde*, the reader never knows where the 'je' of the text lies.

v. Places of Conflict: Toulouse

In a novel that recounts a fantastical voyage to the moon and to the sun, it is obvious that effects of dislocation are produced by the change in location, and yet there are other more unusual and striking examples of how Cyrano's use of places in *L'Autre Monde* brings his burlesque to excess. In *Le Soleil*, amongst literary friends, the aristocrats Cussan and Colignac, and the protective confines of their homes, the protagonist is an erudite man, a lover of books. In this familiar context – one that is not so different from the reader's own world – the protagonist too assumes a familiar form. He is identifiable by his profession: he is a writer; and he has a social circle of friends, that help to fix his place in society – again, one not so different from the reader's.

What is interesting, however, is that this identity is not at all stable and later in the novel Cyrano quite clearly dismantles it. Indeed, a transformation occurs during the protagonist's escape and persecution in the city of Toulouse where he becomes an 'Arlequin'. The daunting maze of streets in which the protagonist loses himself seems to have an effect on the 'je' of the text so that this character is not at all the same type of

character that the reader first met; and neither, the reader discovers later on, the character to come.

The physical environment, specifically the city of Toulouse, takes on a persona of its own. A melting pot of people, words and sound combine, bringing the town to life: 'chaque homme me semblait un archer; chaque parole, *arrêtez*, et chaque bruit, l'insupportable croassement des verrous de ma prison passée'.[515] The power of naming the city drums home its double meaning. Toulouse is a living, breathing synecdoche for persecution. Readers familiar with the trials of Théophile and Vanini will realize this is no arbitrary setting.

It is not just the name, Toulouse, however that is important here. The city is a place of burlesque excess, in which violent and destructive effects are produced: it is a hostile place, both staging violence and imposing it. Chapter II showed how the protagonist resembles 'un fou' in the city, but on closer inspection it is possible to see that it is the disorienting effects of the city-labyrinth that propel the protagonist to lose all sense of himself. The protagonist's escapade across the city is circular: he finds he has made no progress, but that he has retraced steps already taken. The 'chemins' of the city literally ensnare him. While streets are 'detournée[s]', they are burlesque too.

In a delirious state, the protagonist – like in a farce – runs into his jailer, of all people:

[515] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, 192.

> ‘Monsieur, lui dis-je, le tirant par son manteau, si la compassion peut toucher…’
>
> Je n’avais pas entamé le mot qui devait suivre, que cet homme tourna la tête. Ô dieux! que devint-il? Mais, ô dieux! que devins-je moi-même? Cet homme était mon geôlier. Nous restâmes tous deux consternés d’admiration de nous voir où nous nous voyions. J’étais tout dans ses yeux, il employait toute ma vue.[516]

The choice of verb ‘devenir’ – repeated in ‘que devint-il?’ and ‘que devins-je moi-même?’ – is suggestive of the city’s physical impact on the protagonist and the role it has played in his transformation. In this curious passage, the protagonist momentarily freezes in the text as it exchanges looks with the ‘other’ it encounters in what is a distorted mirror: after all, the protagonist is dressed in beggars’ clothing like ‘un mascarade’ and is therefore not so easily distinguished from his imbecilic jailer, and the reader recalls similar processes of burlesque observation when the narrator observes himself with other ‘faces’ elsewhere. The layers multiply yet again: here the narrator observes the protagonist observing the jailer, and yet which is which? The game of points of view is destructive, however, because the dislocation is distressingly amplified by yet another burlesque when the jailer upturns the layers all over again in his unexpected exclamation: ‘Ha! misérable que je suis […] faut-il donc que je sois attrapé?’;[517] words that should be the protagonist’s. A narrative voice unhelpfully explains that it is ‘[une] parole à double sens’ but this does not seem to be true. The meaning of the jailer’s words are clear; the difficulty, rather, is that the words do not match the voice. Is this another ‘monstre’? Of course, through the theme of observation, the reader is encouraged to contemplate, too, the protagonist’s predicament and yet what

[516] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 190.
[517] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 190.

they must come face to face with is a form that is not easily identifiable; what has the 'je' become?

The city leaves its mark on the protagonist. When he later encounters the pomegranate-prince, it is the latter who refers to the protagonist as 'Animal humain'. What is curious is that something has changed about the protagonist's appearance, although the reader cannot discern what exactly. The pomegranate-prince observes him closely: 'j'ai cru lire dans ton visage que tu n'étais pas originaire de ce monde'.[518] What does this ominous statement imply about the protagonist's appearance that renders him so foreign? Recalling the disorienting effects of the city, in which the protagonist's face became muddled with others, here there *is* a double meaning to the Prince's words: the protagonist is not only foreign because he is from another world, but he looks, physically, monstrous.

vi. Burlesque Names

An important indication of the singularity of Cyrano's characters can be seen in Cyrano's use of names. Unlike in the works of his contemporaries, naming is a central theme in Cyrano's novel; and perhaps the reader should not be surprised given the entertaining games of his letters. Is it possible to have burlesque names, however? And what might this imply in the new context of the novel?

[518] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 237.

I have already drawn attention to the conflation of identities in the novel through the pseudonym Dyrcona, and at first glance this might seem like a name from one of Cyrano's letters; a name that plays on another, like Soucidas, for example. The effects produced from naming in *L'Autre Monde*, however, are much more unusual; an observation that is only emphasized by the playful gesture in the letters.

For a start, there are many fewer names, and many fewer name games, in the novel. The one name that is distorted, however, is the protagonist's, who is anonymous in the *La Lune* and named, as Dyrcona in *Le Soleil*. The reader may form a connection with Cyrano de Bergerac, the named author on the frontispiece of the published 1657 edition, and this was not uncommon practice for readers of first person narratives in the absence of a named 'hero', but they soon discover that the 'je' of *L'Autre Monde* is in fact far trickier. Why does the protagonist begin anonymously only to change later to an easily decoded pseudonym? Why name the protagonist at all? And what is the significance of playing with the author's own name, Cyrano, in a fictional context?

Joan DeJean offers one explanation. Libertine writers, including Cyrano, play with their name only with a view to 'dramatize themselves', thus becoming a character in their own novel. It is not that questions about the identity of the author are impossible to answer but that they are completely 'illegitimate'. The goal of the libertine is to imagine a new life for himself:

> They 'handle' their own existences as though these existences were equivalent to those of a character in a work of their own creation. 'Je suis le Héros véritable de mon Roman' (p. 9), says d'Assoucy in the first sentence of the *Avantures*, as if heroes were real and life were a novel. These libertines maintain a distance from the events of their lives that allows them to mingle

> what actually took place and what they imagine as having taken place (what they would have liked to take place?), so that in the long run all notions of true and false become inoperative.[519]

DeJean overlooks Cyrano's earlier writing practices. When the reader takes into account the processes in the letters, he or she is faced with similar forms. Of course, the epistolary format includes a letter-sender and, as I demonstrated, Cyrano parodied the authenticity of epistolary models by playing with his name in a fictional way. But in the letters, Cyrano was not using his name as a means solely to dramatize his own life and thus it seems unlikely that he would *only* use his name – and in such a playful form – with this goal in mind in the novel. After all, it is possible that he was writing both works at the same time and therefore forms might be repeated.

The game in the novel, however, has changed. Doubt about the narrator-protagonist's bizarre naming and unnaming in *L'Autre Monde* takes the issue of the identity of the author-narrator-protagonist to a new level. *Francion* might be seen to share similarities with Cyrano's work as an *histoire comique*, yet the reader will remember that Sorel publishes his work anonymously. Cyrano, on the contrary, manifestly plays with his own name and brings himself directly into his fictional creation. Unlike in *Francion*, there is no go-between such as Du Parc. In *L'Autre Monde* there are no careful layers of voice; instead, there is a continual blurring of boundaries, between the real (the identity of Cyrano), and the fictional.

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[519] Ibid., p. 41. DeJean expands upon Serroy's arguments. Serroy emphasizes the poetic dimension of the 'je'. He argues that it provides a place for the libertine writer's 'individualism' in the face of persecution (see also my earlier footnote 25). Serroy argues that 'la fiction lui permet d'aller plus loin que la simple expérience. En rassemblant ses souvenirs, en les condensant, en les liant les uns aux autres, il peut les organiser, non pas selon la simple ordonnance chronologique, qui ne révèle rien que la réalité brute du vécu, mais selon la ligne profonde qui les a inspirés', p. 103.

Indirect references and insinuations in *L'Autre Monde* that hint at a possible relationship between the author and the protagonist obscure one clear identity. For example, there is a *mise en abîme* of Cyrano's second work, *Le Soleil*, in *La Lune*, when the protagonist's guide, the 'démon de Socrate', offers him the book to read: 'Afin de vous divertir pendant que je ne serai point avec vous, voici un livre que je vous laisse. Je l'apportai jadis de mon pays natal: il est intitulé *Les États et Empires du Soleil*'.[520] And, curiously, earlier in the novel, it is suggested through the word 'publier', that the protagonist should communicate, once back on Earth, God's hatred of atheists: 'Va impie, hors d'ici. Va publier dans ce petit monde et dans l'autre, car tu es prédestiné à y retourner, la haine irréconciliable que Dieu porte aux athées'.[521]

While 'publier' does not explicitly refer to writing, leaving the means of demonstration open-ended, the reader cannot help but put two and two together given that he or she is now reading a published book that, uncannily, does precisely the very opposite: the protagonist's chosen method to narrate his adventures, an *Histoire comique*, unmistakably mocks the Church. In this *mise en abîme*, a relationship is set up between the author and the narrator-protagonist by their sharing of the same profession of writer. There is nothing unusual about this topos; Théophile, Sorel, L'Hermite and Scarron all share biographical similarities with their narrator as I showed in Chapter IV. Yet, Cyrano goes further by implicating his own name.

[520] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 134.
[521] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 50.

In *Le Soleil* the *mise en abîme* of Cyrano's work appears again, but this time it dominates the novel and it provides, significantly, both the context and motivation, through a complex scene of persecution and escape in the city of Toulouse, for Cyrano's voyage to the sun. *Le Soleil* opens with Dyrcona describing his return from the moon, and his plans to write a book about his adventures, following his friend's encouragement:

> Je lui racontai ensuite fort au long, toutes les particularités de mon voyage; et M. de Colignac ravi d'entendre des choses si extraordinaires, me conjura de les rédiger par écrit. Toutefois, honteux du reproche dont il me rabattait, de ne pas faire assez de compte de ses prières, je me résolus de le satisfaire. Je mis donc la plume à la main.[522]

The evidence so far contradicts DeJean's conclusion that naming in *L'Autre Monde* does not function as 'nom d'auteur, but as a nom de personnage'.[523] On the contrary, the name of the protagonist *as* Cyrano *as* author is clear. In the above quote, the status of the protagonist as writer has been established (and the suggestion of patronage too). Shortly afterwards, a direct Cyrano-protagonist connection is made when the reader learns of Dyrcona's subsequent fame, and that an engraving of the author has been commissioned. This announcement is made loud and clear by the colporteurs, who in direct speech, cry out: 'Voilà le portrait de l'auteur des *États et Empires de la Lune*'.[524] Of course, if the reader has read *La Lune*, and no doubt he or she will have, the reader will know that the author of *La Lune* is Cyrano. The mystery of the obvious pseudonym is therefore further compounded by a reference that this time less than blurs the protagonist-author distinction, choosing, rather, to directly point the finger at Cyrano in

[522] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 167.
[523] DeJean, *Libertine Strategies*, p. 46.
[524] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 167.

a declamatory, quasi-accusatory tone that grabs the audience's attention (and the reader's), 'Voilà'!

The reader may wonder what he or she is looking at (again). And the reader has likely already seen one real portrait of the author if he or she has also read Cyrano's letters, although as I demonstrated earlier, Cyrano's disguise was a playful burlesque gesture. Is this a hint for readers to recall Cyrano's 'real' portrait? As for the image in *Le Soleil*, the narrator explains that his 'graveurs' composed it without ever having met him: 'les graveurs, sans m'avoir vu, avaient buriné mon image'.[525] Dyrcona's engravers must have put together a picture based on second-hand reports and one certainly wonders what the final product resembled: a mismatched, made-up figure of many points of view; a burlesque? After all, this is the finished piece of multiple hands – 'graveurs' – on one portrait.

vii. New Hierarchies

In Chapter II I demonstrated how hierarchies of arguments are obscured by peripheral voices competing with other voices in the text. What happens when the 'je' in Cyrano's novel meets other interlocutors? A good example to consider more closely is a scene from *La Lune* when the protagonist meets the prophet Élie on the *Paradis terrestre*.

[525] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 167.

To begin with Élie is not the real Biblical Elijah. He may don the appearance of the prophet, bear the name and carry the authoritative voice, declaiming verse originating from the Bible, but he is in every way an impostor. For a start he lives on the moon, which the reader is told is located in the *Paradis terrestre*, and this is the first fiction. There is also a burlesque here: the reader may know that Elijah, like Enoch, are prophets whose bodies have not been found, and Cyrano's suggestion that Élie is in fact on the moon is a comic, although subversive, gesture. Élie is 'out of place' in other ways and the protagonist notes as much when he first catches sight of him: 'J'avais cheminé demi-lieue à travers une forêt de jasmins et de myrtes, quand j'aperçus couché à l'ombre je ne sais quoi qui remuait'.[526] Élie, then, seems to be yet another one of Cyrano's 'monstres', defying any one definition, '[un] je ne sais quoi', something which cannot be grasped, a vision, the reader soon discovers, that is supported by a contradictory appearance, at once 'un jeune adolescent' and '[un] vieil'.

But if Élie is an imposter, the reader might wonder, what is he or she to make of the protagonist whose decision to approach the false prophet in adoration encourages the reader to ask who is duping whom? Need the reader be reminded that the protagonist is equally displaced, having literally travelled through space now to be aimlessly wandering around the moon… It is important to begin by noting the protagonist's introduction, a direct speech that creates a distance, a vantage point, from which momentarily to observe:

> *Vous voyez une personne*, lui réponds-je, consternée de tant de miracles, que je ne sais par lequel débuter mes admirations; car, en premier lieu, venant d'un monde que vous prenez sans doute ici pour une lune, je pensais être abordé dans un autre que ceux

[526] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 34.

> de mon pays appellent la lune aussi; et voilà que je me trouve en Paradis aux pieds d'un dieu qui ne veut pas être adoré, et *d'un étranger* qui parle ma langue.[527]

These words echo those of the pomegranate-prince. As the narrator encourages the reader to observe, 'voyez', and contemplate the events 'et voilà', it is the direct speech that enables Cyrano to revert to the plural 'vous' and not the indirect 'il' of a narratorial voice (for example, 'il me voyait...') and which, importantly, gives rise to the potential inclusion of the reader in the observation process. Furthermore, the protagonist's speech endorses the same position of that of the reader's, surprised, likewise, at the unusual turn of events. For the first time the 'je' qualifies itself specifically as a 'personne', therefore distancing itself from the 'je ne sais quoi' of Élie, and instead aligning with the reader: the 'je' is now just an ordinary human being, equally surprised at the situation, and a mutual understanding is created with the reader as his or her shared 'worldview' is evoked by the references to 'un monde' and 'mon pays'. Élie is the distanced and unfamiliar 'other' – the 'étranger'- and the reader may note that this seems in opposition to the reference to 'compagnie' that the narrator used earlier in the story. Interestingly, Furetière, too, contrasts these two positions: 'Etranger: Il se prend aussi de Ceux qui ne sont pas d'une famille, d'une compagnie, d'une communauté'. A seventeenth-century reader might very well read into the description that Élie is the outsider in contrast to the protagonist.

That Élie is an imposter is supported by his dubious retelling of Genesis, and where the gravity of his authoritative tone, as he orders with imperatives such as 'Sachez', serves

[527] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, pp. 34-35 (my italics).

to drum home the farce of the situation as it is juxtaposed alongside the ridiculous content of his speech:

> *Sachez* donc qu'après avoir tâté tous deux da la pomme défendue, Adam, qui craignait que Dieu irrité par sa présence ne rengrégeât sa punition, considéra la lune, *votre terre*, comme le seul refuge où il se pouvait mettre à l'abri des poursuites de son Créateur. Or en *ce temps-là*, l'imagination chez l'homme était si forte, pour *n'avoir point encore été corrompue*, ni par *les débauches*, ni par la crudité des aliments, ni par l'altération des maladies, qu'étant alors excité du violent désir d'aborder cet asile, et que toute sa masse étant devenue légère par le feu de cet enthousiasme, il y fut enlevé.[528]

One cannot help but connect the 'débauches' (see Furetière: 'dérèglement') to which Élie makes reference with his own behaviour. The corruption of which he talks is being enacted by his very self through the perversion of the sacred Scripture. Time itself is thus even perverted, given that the corruption that is supposed to have taken place 'en ce temps-là' is taking place again, and not just once more through the address of Élie to the protagonist but twice, through the protagonist's repetition of Élie's story in the book he is now writing for the reader.

Following Élie's version of Genesis, the protagonist begins to meddle in the discussion, tipping the balance from, what has so far been, the authoritative voice of this meeting:

> En effet, lui dis-*je* en *l'interrompant*, *j'ai remarqué* que comme ce serpent essaie toujours à s'échapper du corps de l'homme, on lui voit la tête et le cou sortir au bas de nos ventres. Mais aussi *Dieu* n'a pas permis que l'homme seul en fût tourmenté; *il a voulu* qu'il se bandât contre la femme pour lui jeter son venin, et que l'enflure durât neuf mois après

[528] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 35 (my italics).

> l'avoir piquée. Et pour *vous montrer* que *je parle suivant la parole du Seigneur*, c'est qu'*il dit* au serpent, pour le maudire, qu'il aurait beau faire trébucher la femme en se raidissant contre elle, qu'elle lui ferait enfin baisser la tête.[529]

Instead of interrupting the false prophet in order to correct him, the protagonist begins his own blasphemous Biblical account, audaciously going so far as to speak for God: 'il a voulu'; 'il dit'. When the protagonist says that he will 'parle suivant la parole du Seigneur', there is another game of layering and this time God plays a part in the burlesque: is the protagonist the Lord's *porte-parole*? And, if so, the reader suspects that there may very well be some comic misinterpretations to come… The narrator's decision to report events once more in direct speech enables the use of the pronoun 'vous', thus momentarily drawing in the reader to witness the event. But as the protagonist defends his position, it is with the help of a verb that literally forces him to 'see' and that is particularly interesting. Earlier I noted how the protagonist encourages the reader to 'see' through the verb *voir*, but now the significance has subtly shifted with the verb 'montrer', which seeks to 'faire voir':[530] no longer is the reader simply encouraged to observe events, he or she is guided to do so.[531] This new stance has a dramatic impact in creating a blasphemous dialogue that directs the reader to the corruption.

While the protagonist is blasphemous in his mockery of the Church, Élie's actions occur at a more dangerous level, that of heresy, as he adopts a new set of ideas that challenges Scripture:

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[529] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 45 (my italics).
[530] See Furetière: 'exposer aux yeux'.
[531] Interestingly Furetière's definition also includes the definition 'enseigner', taking this connotation of direction further.

> il prit ainsi la parole...
>
> L'Arbre de Science est planté vis-à-vis. Son fruit est couvert d'une écorce qui produit l'ignorance dans quiconque en a goûté, et qui sous l'épaisseur de cette pelure conserve les spirituelles vertus de ce docte manger. Dieu autrefois, après avoir chassé Adam de cette terre bienheureuse, de peur qu'il n'en retrouvât le chemin, lui frotta les gencives de cette écorce: il fut, depuis ce temps-là, plus de quinze ans à radoter et oublia tellement toutes choses que lui ni ses descendants jusqu'à Moïse ne se souvinrent seulement pas de la Création.[532]

The reader realizes the obvious controversy of Élie's arguments and may find momentary safety in siding with the protagonist; a not altogether impossible alliance, given that elsewhere the reader has been included in the protagonist's gang and it has been suggested that they share the same 'worldview'. Yet it is a troubling alliance given that the protagonist endorses a position that is also not without risk. The reader is suddenly faced with a cacophony of troublemaking voices when, stepping back from the text, he or she recalls that the narrator is repeating Élie's words on paper (that will become the published *Lune*): the narrator's voice (and thus the protagonist's?) is Élie's, as one recounts the story of the other. Voices taking on other voices recalls Cyrano's burlesque forms elsewhere, where figures take on other disguises. These complex layers, as one speaks for another (including God!), are even alluded to by the protagonist himself: Élie is an 'étranger', 'qui parle [s]a langue', and here the protagonist suggests that these different characters do indeed possess similarities; they understand one another.[533] Points of view have multiplied and voices too, and in this excess of exchanging places, the end is more than obscured, it is disfigured and destroyed.

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[532] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 46.
[533] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 35.

C. Comedy or Affront?

There are many monstrous forms in Cyrano's novel and Furetière's explanation of 'Monstre' in the *Dictionnaire* as 'contre […] l'ordre de la nature' encourages us to ask what this definition might imply in the context of Cyrano's novel. What is the 'ordre de la nature' in *L'Autre Monde*? And what is it that Cyrano's forms go *against*?

The reader has been informed that the moon is in fact the Earth (and the reader's Earth, the moon) and thus part of the pleasure of the novel lies in the reader's pre-existing beliefs obviously being played with. Yet, if the planetary orders are being re-ordered, perhaps the reader should be unsurprised to soon find that what is normal on Earth does not apply to the moon. On the moon, unidentified animals rule in the place of humans, and human beings are considered an abominable race. For the seventeenth-century reader, the anti-religious subtext to the re-ordering is evident: instead of man, in the image of God, at the head of the hierarchy of species, man is placed at the very bottom, in disgrace. The reader will remember that even cabbages are held in higher esteem. In a comic, satirical critique of Christian doctrine, the reader is informed that cabbages were not the reason for the fall of Adam and Eve: 'nous savons fort bien que le premier chou n'offensa point son Créateur au Paradis terrestre';[534] they also possess a higher intellect than many humans, able to explain the nature of the universe; they live longer; and they do not need to compensate for their small stature by corrupt and deluded notions of 'grandeur', as the narrator sarcastically implies: 'ils furent sans doute avantagés de

[534] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 112.

quelque autre qui, par sa grandeur, récompense sa brièveté; c'est peut-être un intellect universel, une connaissance parfaite de toutes les choses dans leurs causes'.[535]

In the context of lunar society, the protagonist adopts so many different forms – including the name of 'monstre' – that he seems neither man nor beast, and the difficulty of defining him acts as a doubly powerful affront to the Church: he is not just a 'monstre' that defies God's ordering, or to cite Furetière, goes *against* Nature, but the 'je' is a 'monstre' that exists in a world where God is entirely denied. In Cyrano's other worlds, the 'je' cannot go against God because God does not exist. Cyrano's characters deny Christian doctrine in both form and context, making his burlesquing particularly risky – because heretical – for the seventeenth-century reader.

The burlesque excess in Cyrano's novel, suggests that the project goes beyond parody or travesty. In this chapter I have revealed that burlesque forms can produce destructive and violent effects. How should the reader react? Furetière suggests that monstrous things can incite mixed responses: 'qu'on admire ou qui fait peur'. Should the reader applaud Cyrano's burlesque empire? Or shrink in fear at its constant, incessant, transformations?

Writing later in the century, Boileau would famously praise Cyrano's burlesque in his *Art poétique* (1674): 'J'aime mieux Bergerac, et sa burlesque audace', and yet what exactly he means by 'audace' is open to interpretation: after all, the burlesque is always slightly risky given that it ridicules serious subject matter. So why does Boileau single

[535] Cyrano, *Les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, p. 114.

Cyrano out? What is so different about his burlesque in comparison to that of other writers?

Furetière offers two images in his definition in the *Dictionnaire*, both of which are military:

> Un soldat qui a l'audace de tirer l'épée contre son Capitaine est puni de mort.
>
> Trois cens Lacédémoniens eurent l'audace à s'opposer contre toute l'armée de Perse.

He, who is audacious, commits a crime against a legitimate social order and challenges the justification that might is right. The soldier and captain mirror the roles of servant and king and therefore function as a metaphor for the social hierarchy central to Ancien Régime France; the captain is also head of state, the king; the soldier is the ordinary citizen, his servant, and must obey orders. To raise one's sword against the king is to question and therefore challenge his authority; it is treason and warrants the death penalty.

Is Cyrano a wayward soldier who has turned against king and country? Are his burlesque gestures a threat to authority; are they gestures of revolt? Nédélec hesitates to conclude what Boileau's statement might mean, but hints that it could refer to the controversial subject matter of Cyrano's work:

> N'est-il au contraire qu'un masque plaisant, une grimace, qui sert à faire recevoir les pensées hardies et sérieuses, dont il ne serait que le

> véhicule […] En tout cas, Boileau ne trahit pas Cyrano en l'évoquant ainsi.[536]

This chapter has demonstrated that, in many ways, Cyrano's burlesque betrays itself: through an excess of burlesque forms, Cyrano's novel destroys all and everything; it invades at every opportunity. Cyrano has the audacity to raise his burlesque sword in the first instance and dare to conquer. But what could be a rebellious gesture, in fact, backfires. Burlesquing forms can also prove self-defeating.

[536] See Nédélec, 'Cyrano et sa burlesque "audace"', p. 254.

Conclusion

A Burlesque Libertine?

The title of Nédélec's book, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, is obviously a play on the title of Cyrano's own novel. Her book traces the different manifestations of burlesque across the seventeenth century and yet the title of her work asks questions to which she does not reply: can there be empires of burlesque? Can a writer invade with the burlesque? Nédélec's research opens with the description of a burlesque map and she asks how one can trace the limits of this 'pays'; 'dessiner les frontières'.[537] In doing so, other questions are raised about the governance of this kingdom; her title implies a game of thrones, one in which writers establish (and compete?) for territory through different writing practices. Are there conquerors of the burlesque?

This thesis has shown how the burlesque is not only one of the defining characteristics of Cyrano's work but that burlesque forms can be used excessively – aggressively? – and produce destructive results, although it remains to be asked what literary gesture Cyrano makes: can he still be considered a comic writer? Or does his writing reveal other intentions? Cyrano's burlesque resembles a space of battle; forms continually compete, but they can do so aggressively and produce violent effects. In *L'Autre Monde*, burlesque forms continually reproduce; they compete and also, it seems, invade.

[537] Nédélec, *Les États et Empires du burlesque*, p. 11.

With this in mind, it is possible to read Cyrano's own choice of title quite differently. Likely playing on another title – yet another burlesque – Pierre Davity's popular *Ėtats, Empires, Royaumes et Principautés du Monde* (1625), a written historical and geographical guide to the different regions of the world, Cyrano's *L'Autre Monde* of course parodies such travel manuals, yet his title also encourages us to ask whether it is only a parodic gesture or whether it is also a provocative hint at a rewriting of boundaries; of expanding frontiers: a claim to territory.

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In Chapters I and III, I emphasized the importance of the literary context to Cyrano's work and suggested that Cyrano's decision to turn to two contested genres – the epistolary œuvre and *histoire comique* – demonstrated that Cyrano was an author who was keen to engage with controversial literary debates of his time. I demonstrated how his published collection of letters parodied the terms laid out in the *querelle des Lettres*. In this instance, Cyrano used the heated epistolary debates of the time as a source of creative inspiration. The result was a comic parody of a serious literary dispute. In *L'Autre Monde*, Cyrano adopts a similar approach, given that two of the novel's central themes – the debates over Church doctrine and Materialism, both extremely controversial – are parodied within the comical framework of an *histoire comique*. With the novel, Cyrano was clearly attracted by the relative freedoms of the genre, yet to be formally regulated, but he was also interested in ridiculing other targets.

Cyrano's interest in the parody of polemical subject matter, whether literary, philosophical or religious, encourages us to ask whether Cyrano is a writer who uses controversial subject matter solely for comic purposes or whether he has other, more serious intentions. In Chapters IV and V, which looked closely at burlesque forms in Cyrano's novel, I revealed a change in the author's use of comedy in his writing: unlike in the collection of letters, the comedy of the novel was not always obvious and certainly, at times, the reader was encouraged to question the comedic value of the novel at all.

Similar burlesque practices can be seen in the letters and the novel: a multiplication of voices and forms, and, thus, a denial of univocality. In the epistolary collection, Cyrano used the format of the letter to introduce different interlocutors. Once the reader stepped back to consider the collection as a whole, it was possible to see the capriciousness of Cyrano's œuvre and the playfulness of the different personas of each letter. The author's *jeu d'esprit* was central to his project. In *L'Autre Monde*, Cyrano again used errant voices. Chapter II demonstrated, however, that this time voices were mixed in a disorienting cacophony, in competition with each other; no longer were they arguing over petty personal disputes but about major philosophical doctrines.

With *L'Autre Monde*, therefore, Cyrano significantly raised the level of risk. But does the controversy in the novel outweigh the comedy? In many ways, Cyrano's novel is typical of burlesque writing: he parodies authoritative discourse; and, by proliferating voices, he denies any one overarching, authoritative voice in the text. In this respect, Cyrano's burlesque is no more risky than any other burlesque text: the aim of the burlesque is of course to ridicule serious subject matter and this comic mode had

stemmed from a long tradition of parodying Church doctrine. Seventeenth-century critics of the burlesque were quick to point out its seditious potential. By mixing styles and genres, overturning hierarchies, setting up one argument against the other and presenting a multitude of different positions, the burlesque promoted ambiguity. Even though it did not provide an alternative order, it challenged authority because it toppled legitimate hierarchies.

What Cyrano's contemporaries may have less expected is his engagement with the most controversial *and* topical debates of the time. While Cyrano's parody of Scripture in *L'Autre Monde* can be seen as part of a longstanding tradition in comic literature, his parody of Church doctrine alongside the presentation of new and disputed contemporary theories make his burlesque particularly provocative. After all, Cyrano's work challenges the status quo whilst advertising a different model. Although Cyrano parodies both systems, the saying that all publicity is good publicity rings true in this case: by referencing Materialism, Cyrano elevates its status and allows it to share centre stage with the Church, in what is an outrageous gesture.

Cyrano's burlesque is therefore polemical because of its obviously controversial subject matter and because it engages with current debates. By debating regulations and governance, in short, all forms of authority – religious, political and literary – Cyrano's burlesque is in many ways militant; and perhaps this is one of the possible interpretations of Boileau's reference to a 'burlesque audace'.

Chapters IV and V also demonstrated, however, that the content of the novel was not necessarily its most striking aspect. Cyrano's burlesque forms held a dominant and unrelenting presence in the text. Chapter V showed that Cyrano's burlesque could not only disorient the reader, but could also be a destructive force. At times it was difficult to see what was what; what was being 'transgressed' and what was the 'transgressor'. Everything was parodied and as a result of a cacophony of voices, it was difficult to discern who or what exactly was being ridiculed. The letters demonstrated how Cyrano's reader could be misled down false avenues of inquiry; the novel multiplied points of view even further, and offered controversial paths to follow.

i. A Comic Writer?

How should Cyrano's battling forms be read? Is there any comedy at all to be found in Cyrano's work? Cyrano's agenda is perhaps not as noble as some academics might suggest: disorienting the reader through excessive burlesque forms obscures any alternative philosophical system to be followed and suggests that Cyrano may be more interested in the manipulation of philosophical and scientific ideas, and the wider literary effects of these distortions, than in promoting a coherent philosophical system.

At the end of Chapter V, I argued, quoting Furetière, that a 'burlesque audace' could provoke admiration or fear, and one of Cyrano's readers, the poet Le Royer de Prade offers one response. In an 'Épigramme' to the author, he begins by praising the author's

'audace' and suggests he be crowned in recognition.[538] But he then suddenly retracts his statement, arguing that 'L'inconstante Fortune / Semble avoir trop d'empire en celui de la Lune; / Son pouvoir n'y paraît que pour tout renverser'. De Prade suggests that Cyrano takes too many liberties with his writing and that the end result is something possibly monstrous, confirmed by his claim that he is quite afraid of the people in Cyrano's worlds: 'autant qu'une affreuse mort / Je crains les gens de l'Autre Monde'.

In light of the themes of persecution and death that haunt the novel, and the attack on the Church, de Prade's lines could be read with little humour. And yet one also wonders at his possible exaggeration. Cyrano mocks those who try to read into texts an alternative meaning that is not obvious and he parodies dissimulative methods by mocking erroneous interpretations, a theme which is central to his work. Scholars have read these cues as an underlying, secret code for libertine readers, which hint at the possibility of an alternative double reading (the exposé of a controversial libertine philosophy perhaps?). Cyrano's work, however, is not simply a warning about false readings: it is a parody. Cyrano excessively ridicules pedants for their complex and false doctrines, he even mocks the literary world, even himself… Of course, Cyrano was no trained philosopher: he must have been very aware of the risk of becoming the subject of ridicule himself by putting forward any serious doctrine, especially in the format of a novel, an inferior genre. Cyrano's work is not just 'audace', it is burlesque. And the definition of burlesque is a comic mode that aims, above all, to make fun of serious subject matter, not incite a revolt. Poking fun at, upturning established orders, is transgressive in itself and there were many critics of burlesque writing, including

[538] Le Royer de Prade, *Œuvres poétiques* (1650).

Boileau. If it were to present an alternative system – a reordering of arguments – and take itself seriously, however, it would no longer be burlesque.

If Cyrano's work presents comedy and controversy, must the reader choose between the two? Cyrano's burlesque is undoubtedly polemical in the subject matter it chooses to play with. But it is also a parody of the dissimulative 'libertine' text and thus it cannot be denied that there is a comical aspect to his work. If the reader allows him or herself to fall into Cyrano's trap and follow one of the false avenues of inquiry, he or she will miss the irony of trying to read into a text a deliberately obscure message. If reader tries to pick sides and make sense of one of the arguments, it is not the text but *the reader* that becomes the subject of ridicule.

Should the reader therefore disregard the philosophical and scientific content of the novel? It was never my intention to dismiss the obvious scientific and philosophical themes that run throughout Cyrano's work. On the contrary, these topics serve as an essential framework for Cyrano's burlesque. Cyrano is more interested in the manipulation of ideas, however, than in promoting a philosophical system. As this thesis has shown, the burlesque does not simply mask an ulterior message; it makes it as difficult as possible for the reader to find any overarching, coherent system. Of course, if the reader dissects Cyrano's work and tries to piece together the disparate threads, he or she may very well be able to find some coherency, a glimpse of a 'system'. But that is to overlook the wider literary effects produced by the burlesque and the pleasure and irony of a burlesque novel. In short, it is to deny the reader a role; it is to overlook the reading experience.

ii. A Burlesque Libertine?

As this project on Cyrano draws to an end, it seems necessary to return finally to a wider concern that my research raises about libertinism and other libertine writers. I have suggested that Cyrano even ridicules dissimulative methods. Does his burlesque reach out to include libertinism itself? To a certain extent this thesis doubts the sincerity of Cyrano's project. It therefore also doubts Cyrano's libertine identity. Can a burlesque writer be libertine?

Libertine writers can clearly use burlesque methods as a dissimulative tool to mask controversial ideas. Yet, Cyrano's excessive burlesque turns even the possibility of multiple interpretations on its head. Is his work a parody of a dissimulative text?

This is certainly a possibility when it is taken into account that the term libertine was first used as a term of abuse and that the idea of a group of libertines working together came from from adversaries who sought to determine a collective identity in order better to persecute. With this in mind, Cyrano's work could be seen as a playful trap; a deceit, for an authority-driven State intent on seeking out dissenters, atheists, heretics, homosexuals: libertines. I have shown how Cyrano dons many disguises: libertinism is perhaps one more mask that the author assumes in his project.

Cyrano, a burlesque libertine? The epithet is playful and fitting for a writer who can be seen to use burlesque practices for libertine themes but also one who burlesques libertinism itself. This thesis showed how the burlesque could at times be self-

destructive, and thus questions about the wider implications of other burlesque writing remain open. One might now ask whether there are other imposters within the ranks?

Appendix

Table 1. Cyrano's letters[*]

Destinataires **and letter headings**	**Manuscript headings**	**Signatures**	**Manuscript signatures**
1. A Monsieur Le Bret, Avocat au Conseil, 'Contre l'Hiver'	Lettre première, 'L'hiver'	Votre serviteur	
2. Au même, 'Pour le Printemps'	Autre, 'Le printemps'	Votre serviteur	
3. Au même, 'Pour l'Été'	Autre, 'L'été'	Votre serviteur	
4. Au même, 'Contre l'Automne'	Autre, 'L'automne'	Votre serviteur	
4. A mes amis les buveurs d'eau, 'Description II de l'Aqueduc ou la Fontaine d'Arcueil'	No manuscript copy	Votre serviteur, De Bergerac	
5. 'Autre, sur le même sujet'	Autre, 'Description de l'aqueduc, ou la Fontaine d'Arcueil, à mes amis les buveurs d'eau'	Votre serviteur	
6. 'Autre, sur l'ombre que faisaient des Arbres dans l'Eau'	Autre, 'Des miracles de rivière'	Votre serviteur	De B.
7. 'Autre, d'un cyprès'	Autre, 'Le Cyprès'	Votre serviteur	D. B.
8. 'Autre, d'une tempête'	Autre, 'Description d'une tempête'	Votre obéissant serviteur	

[*] These letters are in chronological order in keeping with the first printed editions. Unless otherwise stated, the empty sections of the Table indicate that there were no discrepancies between print and manuscript. For those whose title, heading or *destinataire* was unclear or left blank, I have included the first line of the letter to help differentiate. The use of inverted commas indicates, if any, the principal letter heading. Where inverted commas have been omitted indicates a preceding/following addressee or supplemental heading.

9. ‘Pour une dame rousse’	Autre, ‘Éloge d’une rousse’	Votre je ne sais quoi	
10. ‘Autre, d’une maison de campagne’	Autre, ‘Le Campagnard’	Votre obéissant serviteur	Serviteur très obéissant
11. ‘Autre, pour les Sorciers’	No manuscript copy	Votre serviteur	
12. ‘Autre, contre les Sorciers’	No manuscript copy	Le Serviteur très humble	
13. A Monsieur Gerzan, ‘Sur son *Triomphe des Dames*’	Autre, ‘A M. de Jerssan’	Que votre serviteur	Votre serviteur
14. ‘Autre, Le Duelliste’		Votre serviteur	Cyrano de Bergerac
15. ‘Sur un recouvrement de santé’	Autre, ‘Sur la guérison d’une maladie mortelle’	Votre serviteur	
16. ‘Contre un poltron’	Autre, ‘Le poltron’	Votre serviteur	
17. ‘Contre un médisant’	Autre Satirique, ‘Contre un médisant’	Votre très humble	Votre serviteur
18. ‘A Mademoiselle *****’	Autre, ‘Contre une femme intéresée’	Votre serviteur	
19. ‘Autre’	No manuscript copy	Votre Partie Votre Juge et Votre Bourreau	
20. ‘Contre Soucidas’	Autre, ‘Satire contre Soucidas’	Votre serviteur	De Bergerac
21. ‘A Monsieur de V*****’	Autre, ‘Satirique contre le sieur de Tage’	Votre serviteur	
22. ‘Consolation pour un de ses amis, sur l’éternité de son beau-père’	Autre, à Monsieur Chapelle, pour le consoler sur l’éternité de son beau-père’	Votre serviteur	
23. ‘Contre un pilleur de pensée’	Autre, ‘Contre la Mothe brigand de pensées’	Votre serviteur De Bergerac	
24. ‘Autre. Sur le même sujet’	Autre, ‘Sur le même sujet contre Chapelle’	Votre serviteur	
25. ‘Contre un gros homme’	Autre, ‘Contre le gras Montfleury, mauvais	Serviteur à la paillasse	

	auteur, et comédien’		
26. ‘Contre Scarron’	Autre, ‘Contre Scarron, poète burlesque’	Votre serviteur	
27. ‘Autre’, Messire Jean	Autre, ‘Apothéose, d’un ecclésiastique bouffon’	V.S.	De B.
28. ‘Contre un pédant’	Autre, ‘Au Régent de la rhétorique des Jés…’	Votre serviteur	
29. ‘Contre le Carême’	Autre, ‘Contre’	Votre serviteur, D. B.	
30. A Monsieur le Coq, ‘Pour Mademoiselle *****’	No manuscript copy	Un petit Coq-à-l-âne	
31. ‘A un Comte de bas aloi’	Autre, ‘D’un’	Votre serviteur, D.B.	Votre S.D.B.
32. ‘A un liseur de romans’	Autre, ‘Sur un hypocondre héroïque de roman’	Votre affectionné serviteur	
33. ‘Contre les Médecins’	No manuscript copy	Votre plus fidèle serviteur, D.C.D.B	
34. ‘Contre un faux brave’	No manuscript copy	*Manque*	
35. ‘D’un songe’	No manuscript copy	Votre très affectionné serviteur	
36. A Monsieur D.L.M.L.V.L.F, ‘Contre les Frondeurs’	No manuscript copy	Votre très humble, très obéissant, et très affectionné serviteur, De Cyrano Bergerac	
37. ‘Thesée à Hercule’	No manuscript copy	Votre serviteur, Thésée?	
38. ‘Sur une Enigme que l’Auteur envoyait à Monsieur de *****’	No manuscript copy	Votre très obéissant	

39. ‘A Madame *****’	No manuscript copy	Votre très humble et très passionné serviteur	
40. ‘Autre’. Madame, le feu dont vous me brûlez…	No manuscript copy	De Bergerac	
41. ‘Autre’. Madame, vous me voulez du bien…	Autre d’amour	Votre serviteur	Serviteur. Le pauvre D.C.
42. ‘Autre’. Madame, bien loin d’avoir perdu le cœur…	No manuscript copy	Votre fidèle serviteur	
43. ‘Autre’. Madame, suis-je condamné de pleurer encore bien longtemps…	Autre, ‘Effets amoureux d’une absence’	Votre serviteur	Votre serviteur, De B…
44. ‘Autre’. Mademoiselle, J’ai reçu vos magnifiques bracelets	‘Sur des bracelets de cheveux’	Votre serviteur	Votre esclave
45. ‘Autre’. Madame, je ne me plains pas…	Autre d’amour, ‘A Mademoiselle de St. Denis’	Votre fidèle esclave	Votre serviteur
46. ‘Autre’. Madame, Vous vous plaignez…		Votre très humble, très fidèle et très obéissant esclave, De Bergerac	
47. ‘Autre, Sur le faux bruit qui courut de la mort de Monsieur le Prince’	‘Autre, Sur le faux bruit qui courut de la mort d’un grand Guerrier’	Votre affectionné serviteur	
48. ‘Lettre d’amour’	No manuscript copy	*Manque*	
49. ‘Autre’, M…., Je ne te vois qu’à demi…	No manuscript copy	*Manque*	
50. ‘Autre. Pour Soucidas, contre un partisan qui avait refusé de lui prêter de l’argent’		Votre Médecin	
51. ‘Autre. Regret d’un éloignement’		Votre serviteur, De	

		Bergerac	
52. ‘Autre d’Amour’. Madame, Bien loin d’avoir perdu le cœur	‘Lettre d’amour’	Votre serviteur très ardent	
53. ‘Autre d’amour’. Madame, Le mal que je souffre pour vous	*Manque*	Votre Serviteur, D. C.	
54. ‘Autre. Reproche à une cruelle’		Votre Serviteur	
55. ‘Autre d’amour’. Madame, Vous savez que je n’avais encore…	‘Autre’	Votre esclave	
56. ‘Autre. Sur le Blocus d’une Ville’	No manuscript copy	*Manque*	
57. Lettre inédite. ‘Autre. Contre un Jésuite assassin et médisant’		Votre serviteur	
58. Lettre inédite. ‘Autre. A Mons le Chancelier Séguier, sur les Hommes Illustres de la Galerie du Palais Cardinal, graves par M. Heince’		*Manque*	

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