SHEEPSHIPS: WHEN PASTORAL PUTS TO SEA (RABELAIS, CHOISY, VOLTAIRE)

Abstract

This article considers the curious case of three early modern texts involving sheep on ships: Rabelais's *Quart Livre*; Choisy's *Journal du voyage au Siam*; Voltaire's *Candide*. If pastoral power, in the Foucauldian tradition, has been figured through the power of the shepherd in relation to his sheepfold, this article explores a different political imaginary that emerges through considering the *sheepship.* It calls for a consideration of pastoral that considers the relation between the sheep, often considered a very regionally-specific creature, and the violent forms of early modern global mobility.

> *In the marshlands, rural shepherds abandoned their vast flocks in fear of the ships, believing them to be creatures emerging from the monster-harboring sea. For they had never before seen any sea-going ships.*
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> Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*[1]

The sheep is a creature widely seen as an expression of localness; witness a recent global bestseller, a shepherd's memoir from the north of England written by James Rebanks, the latest

[1] Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.316-322, ed. and trans. by William H. Race, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009 (p. 353). My thanks to Fiachra Mac Góráin for this reference.

in many generations of local shepherds, who also works for UNESCO on the notion of the local in agriculture.[2] Rebanks opens his book by describing sheep as creatures 'hefted' to a particular hillside or hollow, using a local Cumbrian word designating the sheep's rootedness in a landscape; the worldwide success of his book demonstrates the wide appeal of this localness, something which seems to figure across multiple locales.

Like Rebank's book itself, early modern sheep were both linked to a local landscape and importantly mobile; early modern Europeans prized sheep so highly in part because of their ability to be moved around, making them a useful tool in the apportioning of estates.[3] Similarly, in the early modern literary field sheepish texts also build relations between a localized landscape and the larger world. The pastoral, a mode indebted to the presence of sheep even as it rarely figures them, often insists in its early modern instances on a regionality (such as the Forez of Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée*) in order to carve out its literary landscape. Laurence Giavarini has suggested that pastoral builds itself on what she terms the 'ancrage local' - the *heftedness* - of texts in order to address questions of larger political significance.[4] Conversely, if the pastoral has

[2] James Rebanks, *The Shepherd's Life: A Tale of the Lake District* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), p. ix.

[3] Susan M. Ouellette, 'Divine Providence and Collective Endeavor: Sheep Production in Early Massachusetts', *The New England Quarterly*, 69: 3 (1996), 355-380 (p. 367).

[4] Laurence Giavarini, *La distance pastorale: usages politiques de la représentation des bergers, XVIe-XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Vrin, 2010), p. 8; on the regional cultures of pastoral and their relation to a national imaginary, see also Ellen R. Welch, *A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), p.23.

been imagined as part of a shared European literary tradition, Paul Alpers has argued that it in fact 'everywhere reflects cultural histories and interests that belong to specific languages and political-social entities.'[5] The histories of imagining the literary pastoral, then, involves shifting relations between the local and the transnational.

In this essay, I will consider the value of tracking the sheep's mobility across the globe and across three early modern French texts, two canonically fictive – François Rabelais's *Quart Livre* (1552) and Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) – and the other delightfully neither – François-Timoléon de Choisy's *Journal du voyage au Siam* (1685), but all figuring sheep on ships: I will call this amalgam *sheepship*. This ovine triptych is built on literary detail, attending to deliberately small things that nonetheless speak to a larger history of the early modern period. In French studies, sheep have remained in the margins of texts, so that pastoralism appears chiefly as an aristocratic cosplay that displaces both human labour and animal life.[6] This is an attempt to follow three sheep and their pastors on a different sort of journey.

In reading these texts I turn away from an exploration of politics as what Michel Foucault calls 'une affaire de bergerie,' a story of the sheepfold.[7] In this imagining of political life, the shepherd's care for his sheep famously figures a form of government of men that grows out of a Christian tradition. 'There can be a perverse enjoyment in taking the Foucault of pastoral power

[5] Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 348.

[6] On the long history of pastoral considered in relation to human labor, see Julian Yates, *Of Sheep, Oranges, and Yeast: A Multispecies Impression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. 36.

[7] Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France 1977-1978* (Paris: Gallimard-Seuil, 2004), p. 134.

literally by invoking biological sheep', writes Nicole Shukin in an essay on the displacement of animals in biopolitical thought.[8] Here I take that perversity further afield by taking pastoral power not just literally but *literarily*, and by uprooting it from its familiar enclosures. If the figure of the pastor-shepherd shapes Foucault's reflections on governance within a state, in what follows I bring the sheepfold into a different Foucauldian scene, the heterotopia of the ship: 'un lieu sans lieu […] qui […] va jusqu'aux colonies chercher ce qu'elles recèlent de plus précieux.'[9] Like the sheepfold, the ship is an enclosed world, and it figures its own form of collective; unlike the sheepfold, the ship is on the move, gathering and creating new forms of value. The political history of the expansion of European power is, crucially, not only the story of the sheepfold, but also of the sheepship.

Of course, the pastoral mode from its origins always told a story of a kind of mobility; even as it sings of what Alpers calls 'herdsmen and their lives', it also acknowledges the presence and demands of the city.[10] What has been termed pastoral's 'dual perspective' has always lent a real sociopolitical edge to its literary whimsy.[11] More recent work on pastoral has suggested how that sociopolitical reading might be inflected by a transnational history. Javier

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[8] Nicole Shukin, 'Tense Animals: On Other Species of Pastoral Power', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 11: 2, (2011), 143-167 (p. 144).

[9] Michel Foucault, 'Des espaces autres.' This text given as a lecture in 1967 was published in 1984 and is collected in *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, vol. 2, *1976-1988* ed. by Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard-Quarto, 2001), pp. 1571-81 (p. 1581).

[10] Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 22.

[11] Amelia Zurcher Sandy, 'Pastoral, Temperance, and the Unitary Self in Wroth's *Urania*', *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 42:1 (2002), 103-119 (p. 104).

Irigoyen-Garcia has shown how writing about sheep in post-*convivencia* Spain drew on and constructed a discourse of religious and racial classification: a claim about the possible African origins of the word and creature *merino*, for example, provoked ire from writers claiming the creature's European purity.[12] Our understanding of pastoralism has been diminished by this focus on a national purity, Irigoyen-Garcia suggests; from Cervantes on, he writes, Muslims have been excluded from historical or literary accounts of pastoralism, even though pastoral figuration is not exclusively Christian.[13] Drawing attention to this scholarly lacuna, he argues that 'If there is nothing written on the subject, it might be because the "pastoral habitus" that crystallized in early modern Spain prevents us from asking such questions of texts related to Islam.'[14] Following Irigoyen-Garcia, I want to suggest that a more mobile and migratory reading of pastoral's politics, stepping out from our familiar sheepfolds, would give us a richer reading of the literary world.

1. Transhumant Rabelais

[12] Javier Irigoyen-García, *The Spanish Arcadia: Sheep Herding, Pastoral Discourse, and Ethnicity in Early Modern Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 36-7.

[13] Irigoyen-García, p. 210.

[14] Irigoyen-García, p. 235.

My first sheepish traveller comes from the vigorously mobile world of François Rabelais's *Quart Livre*, a text often read as a travel narrative – although of human travellers rather than animals.[15] Yet from early on, the *Quart Livre* insists upon the relation between the animal and its economic value, and the way in which that value might shift when the animal is on the move. Traveling around the coast of India, Pantagruel and Panurge do some shopping for 'marchandises exotiques et peregrines' ranging from paintings to unicorns.[16] The text carefully details the extraordinary creatures they acquire: one, a 'Tarande de Scythie', is something between a chameleon and a deer, but, as Pantagruel writes to his father, the creature is 'autant maniable et facile a nourir qu'un aigneau'; in many early modern texts, the sheep marks the standard French measure of animality, against which all other encountered creatures must be measured.[17] Marc Lescarbot's 1609 *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, for example, later notes that a Canadian beaver is 'à peu près de la grosseur d'un mouton tondu'.[18]

If the sheep represents a standard unit of measurement in the traveller's imaginary, it does so more broadly in the early modern economy, and Rabelais insists on the literary resonance of those economic terms. A certain kind of coin was termed 'à la grande laine', so that the materiality of money also marked the economic significance of sheep. In the famous and yet under-commented dispute between Panurge and the sheep merchant Dindenault, also

[15] On this tendency, see Andrea Frisch, 'Modes of Transit: Domestication and Estrangement in the Fourth Book', in *Approaches to Teaching the Works of François Rabelais* ed. by Todd W. Reeser and Floyd Gray (New York: MLA, 2011), pp. 233-237.

[16] François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes* ed. Mireille Huchon (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 540.

[17] Rabelais, p. 546.

[18] Marc Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (Paris: Jean Millot, 1609), p. 814.

encountered in the journey of the *Quart Livre*, the relation between sheep and money flips back and forth as Panurge plays with the linguistic coin of their exchange. When Panurge asks to buy a sheep, he is refused because Dindenault regards the sheep as too precious for reasons beyond mere material exchange value: 'Ce sont moutons à la grande laine. Jason y print la toison d'Or. L'ordre de la maison de Bourgogne en feut extrait. Moutons de Levant, moutons de haulte fustaye, moutons de haulte gresse.'[19] For the merchant, the sheep represents not just material coinage, but also tradition and genealogy: this truly precious sheep has a family tree that underwrites one beginning of world literature, the Golden Fleece. Panurge is predictably unimpressed by such a lineage, and the exchange quickens, so much that it vaults out of narrative fiction and is set out on the page like a back-and-forth theatrical exchange, with the names of Panurge and the merchant alternating. This repetition of names is significant, since the battle over who owns the sheep quickly escalates into a conflict over who is named for a sheep. 'Vous avez ce croy je nom Robin mouton', says the merchant, and he continues 'Voyez ce mouton là, il a nom Robin comme vous. Robin, Robin, Robin, Bes, Bes, Bes, Bes. O la belle voix'; the name's b slides into the bêê or baa of the sheep, so that in mocking Panurge-Robin the merchant is, pleasingly, forced to stand and bleat.[20]

Who *is* this Robin mouton? Robin is, simply, the name of a sheep, like Fido or Rover a dog, but it also indicates a fool. Some dictionaries suggest the naming might work the other way around: first the fool, then the sheep.[21] Perhaps the name comes from shepherding tradition,

[19] Rabelais, p. 550.

[20] Rabelais, p. 551.

[21] In either case, it is a rural name: the *TLF* suggests it is a derivation of Robert, a name used in the Middle Ages to indicate a simple rural sort. (The *Petit Robert* does not comment.) Richelet's

although individual sheep, unlike cows, were not usually named.[22] (In Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée*, a pastoral sadly silent on sheep, Astrée is said to put a ribbon to distinguish her favourite sheep, but it is her dog and not the sheep who is named.) But Robin is equally, and perhaps primarily, a literary name; Rabelais's flipping of the dialogue into the format of a dramatic text recalls that the Robin early modern readers might know best is a stage character, a dolt from a fifteenth-century farce *Robin Mouton*.[23] The generic name here carries a curious valence: Robin distinguishes a sheep, but the name insists on his individuality only as part of a tradition. Robin the sheep is already a citation, and for the modern reader this citationality is underscored by the way the episode has given rise to a proverbial expression, 'les moutons de Panurge.' Following a sheep who has wandered in from medieval farce, Rabelais underscores the sheep's migratory path.

1680 dictionary tells us, somewhat vaguely, that it is the 'Sorte de nom dont on se sert dans les épigrammes satiriques et autres ouvrages comiques au lieu du nom propre'; in his 1690 dictionary Furetière confirms it to be a name one uses 'avec mépris.' (All s.v. *Robin.*) Robert Marichal suggests that in late medieval manuscripts Robin is a literary type of 'franc-gontier' set against the behavior of the court; the name subsequently passes to sheep, and even on to plumbing: a 'robinet' was often ornamented with a sheep's head: Robert Marichal, 'Quart livre, commentaires', *Études Rabelaisiennes*, I (1956), 159-179 (p. 176).

[22] On this, see Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 96.

[23] See *Recueil de farces françaises inédites du XVe siècle* ed. by G. Cohen (Cambridge MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1949).

The dispute continues; the merchant refuses to sell, for this is a materially productive sheep: from his skin 'marroquins' or leather will be made, violin strings from his guts, and all of those, he confesses freely, can be passed off as something from some more exotic location. In early modern Europe, as the merchant's naming of exotic parts suggests, sheep's status as stock also underwrote a larger global economy. The term 'marroquin', *Moroccan*, for leather indicates the ways in which commodities figured foreignness; and they remind readers, whose lurching from play-text to prose might bring them to reflect on the status of the object they hold, about the relation between living sheep and the binding of their book, too.[24] In the vigorous exchange between adventurer and merchant, we learn that the sheep is a commodity that is mobile in every way: literally, because it can be put on a ship and taken round the world; figuratively, because its products can be passed off as something else, and are so banal (that is, found in so many locales) as to be endlessly translatable; and literarily, because this sheep has moved from our oldest Mediterranean narratives like the *Argonautica* into the new form proposed by the Rabelaisian narrator, to be bound for the reader in Mediterranean *marocain*.

Rabelais's text confronts us with the two values of the sheep. On the one hand, the sheep represents cash. Panurge, adamant in the face of the merchant's refusal to sell, offers his 'argent contant' to the merchant: in this phrase cash is money that one counts out, recalling the task of the shepherd to count his sheep. Foucault's analysis of pastoral power details a care made manifest through counting, in which the shepherd's knowledge of each individual sheep figures the technique of government and population management: 'Le pasteur dénombre les brebis […] il les soigne une par une. Il fait tout pour la totalité de son troupeau, mais il fait tout également

[24] On the sheepiness of books themselves, see Julian Yates, *Of Sheep*, 3.

pour chacune des brebis du troupeau.'[25] Panurge's pecuniary interest – from *pecus*, *pecorus*, the Latin term for a flock of domestic animals, not necessarily sheep – brings out the cold hard cash of this political form, with the trickster playing less the caring pastor and more the naked biopolitician. For the merchant, reaching for a loftier rhetoric, it is the sheep's mythological genealogy which counts: these sheep are 'exctraictz de la propre race de celluy qui porta Phrixus et Helle, par la mer dicte Hellesponte', the flying ram of that celebrated Golden Fleece (in some versions he swims) who rescues Phrixus and Helle from being sacrificed.[26] Rabelais stages this dialogue as irresolvable, but these languages are closely bound together; as Sarah Franklin has shown, the historical development of a language of *stock* stemming from the breeding of animals shows how central the language of lineage is to the cold hard cash of the economic register.[27]

Panurge's eventual purchase, though, famously disrupts this economy: 'Panurge sans aultre chose dire jette en pleine mer son mouton criant et bellant. Tous les aultres moutons crians et bellans en pareille intonation commencerent soy jecter et saulter en mer aprés à la file.'[28] His gesture, and his silence as the sheep bleat, makes a mockery of the merchant's careful counting of his flock. His unorthodox shepherding recalls in vicious fashion the merchant's attachment to his sheep as mobile property; here, as he discovers to his cost, they are so mobile that they can

[25] Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, p.132. For a virtuoso reading of this sheepish population technology in multiple scenes of modern life from Shakespeare to Chaplin, see Julian Yates, *Of Sheep*, p. 37.

[26] Rabelais, p. 552.

[27] Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 50.

[28] Rabelais, p. 554.

slip right out of the hands of he who insists on their value. In using sheepish mobility to undermine the merchant's control, Panurge points to the weak spots of pastoral power; he succeeds as the anti-pastor.

We do not count out the value of sheep often enough. Readings of Rabelais's episode do not dwell on the sheep, but instead see the dispute as an illustration of a larger human dynamic.[29] But the episode pushes us to keep a close eye on such creatures, lest the value of them slip out of our hands. Panurge's sleight-of-hand sketches a farcical account of global merchandise, but it also draws attention to the literariness of ovine mobility. Sheep move not just across the world but also from text to text, in a literary transhumance. When Panurge clears the ship of sheep, he calls out 'Reste il icy […] ulle ame moutonniere? Où sont ceux de Thibault l'aignelet? Et ceulx de Regnaud belin?' Thibault is the shepherd of *La farce de maître Pathelin* (1457); not even the Pléaide knows who Regnaud is, for he has slipped our shepherding of the sources.

Panurge's anti-pastoralism also points to fiction's place in a globalizing economy. The two sheepish narratives of lineage and money are entwined from the beginning of Western literature in the story of the Golden Fleece, a story that tells of extraordinary movements around the Mediterranean but that also was itself subject to centuries of dislocation and retelling, and which, as my epigraph suggests, sets shepherding and seagoing firmly apart from each other. If Panurge's seagoing shepherding bests the merchant, Rabelais also bests the epic tradition and ups his own literary stock by drowning the sheep that caused such a fuss.

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[29] See, for example, Edwin M. Duval, *The design of Rabelais's Quart Livre de Pantagruel* (Geneva: Droz, 1998) who reads this episode as 'the first of the many antagonisms based on *anticaritas*' set out in the 1552 edition (p. 117).

2. Choisy and the edible companion

The shift in representations and discussions of nonhuman animals between 1550 and 1685 has of late been at the forefront of critical animal studies.[30] Such work has often returned to the human/animal distinctions wrought by René Descartes and his machinist followers in order to undo them, or to grant the animal more room to maneuver than as a heuristic in an argument about human capacity. Work on early modern animals has, instead, upheld other ways of imagining animal lives; Laurie Shannon's account of what she terms 'the creaturely dispensation into which seventeenth-century mechanism so decisively intervened' suggests the significance of a broader understanding of such relations, typified by Montaigne's observations in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', in which nonhuman animals are imagined as kin or companion to humans.[31] More recently still Peter Sahlins has argued that it is not the Cartesian moment but rather the courtly 1660s that represent a turning point in the figuration of early modern animals.[32] Sahlins's picture of the animal seventeenth century troubles Shannon's Montaigne versus Descartes narrative (which serves a larger reading of English texts) by showing a broader range of intellectual traditions in early modern Paris on which writers drew to think about or figure animals.

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[30] See, for example, Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[31] Shannon, p. 2.

[32] Peter Sahlins, *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (New York: Zone, 2017).

Sahlins mostly focuses on the more graceful or exotic animals figured in and around Versailles, and there are few sheep detailed in his rich bestiary.[33] But his account also puts a series of transfusion experiments drawing on sheep at the centre of the animal culture of this period; in April 1667, the first xeno-transfusion between species occurred when Jean Denis gave the blood of rams to a horse, and by June he transferred blood from a lamb to an adolescent boy. This was so successful that a week later from sheer scientific curiosity Denis tried the lamb-human transfer again on a healthy individual who, after the transfer, butchered the lamb for human consumption, and then went on to be praised for his newly invigorated sexual capacity.[34] The lamb who gives himself up for humankind represents not Christian purity, but pure animality.

In describing this incident, Sahlins argues that 'the logic of the Eucharist' which imbues the accounts of the sheep-human transfusion 'could not have been more anti-Cartesian.'[35] Yet my second sheepship, Choisy's 1687 *Journal du Voyage au Siam*, draws on both those registers, suggesting how seventeenth-century writers did not understand themselves neatly as either machinist or Christological. Choisy is best known for his crossdressing memoirs and for his account of the French diplomatic embassy to Siam, whose ceremonial elephants still grace scholarly arguments about France and the Orient.[36] But the animal I will focus on in his account

[33] Sahlins does note the presence of a sheepfold in the Versailles menagerie (p. 75).

[34] Sahlins, 256-7.

[35] Sahlins, p. 258.

[36] Rebecca Zorach, 'An Idolatry of the Letter: Time, Devotion, and Siam in the Almanacs of the Sun King', in *Ut Pictura Meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500-1700*, ed. by

of that journey is none other than our friend Robin Mouton, for whom Choisy serves as a particularly ruminant pastor.

Passing the Cape of Good Hope in calm weather on his 1685 journey to Siam, Choisy notes in his journal that from what he had read he was expecting things to be much worse. Instead of the raging seas he had expected, the waves moved gently so that 'on voit seulement de petits moutons blancs'.[37] Is this sheer luck, he wonders, 'Ou ne serait-ce point que les relateurs grossissent les objets, et d'une mouche, comme l'on dit, on fait un éléphant?'[38] In typical *relations* or travel writing of this period, elephants abound. In the texts of the Jesuit *relateurs* who set out in the same ship as Choisy, large and exotic animals are frequently discussed; tucked throughout the Jesuit Guy Tachard's account, which tells the story of the same journey, are images of zebras and rhinos and other such wonders, discovered at the Cape and dwelled on throughout the rest of the undoubtedly dull journey. These are the same sort of large creatures that have inhabited the world of animal studies. Choisy's account of the journey, however, is interested (metaphorically and otherwise) in flies, in small things; in the quotidian dullness of a long journey; and in sheep. Out of these details he builds his account of the world.

Choisy's deliberately small-scale account of the sea turns from the life of the imagined adventurer to the life, broadly considered, that he observes on board ship:

Walter S. Melion, Ralph Dekonick, and Agnes Guiderdoni-Bruslé (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2012), pp. 447-479.

[37] François-Timoléon de Choisy, *Journal du Voyage au Siam* ed. by Dirk van der Cruysse (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 124.

[38] Choisy, p. 106.

> Tout y est plein d'animaux différents pour le manger ou pour le plaisir: vaches, moutons, cabris, cochons, oies, codindes, canards, poules, singes, perroquets, chiens, chats [...] et un nombre infini de rats forts familiers. Les animaux raisonnables s'y trouvent aussi, rassemblés de pays assez éloignés: Français, Suisses, Flamands, Hollandais, Bretons et Provençaux (car ces deux derniers ne se disent pas Français), Siamois, Pégus, Macassars: tout cela vit dans une grande union et mange au même plat.[39]

In playing knowingly with the rhetoric of the list so important to early modern natural history, Choisy also nods to the debates about the distinction between animals and humans that had shaped early modern French philosophical conversations.[40] In Choisy's list, human and non-human animals all journey together, companions in heterotopia.

But Choisy's interest in his creaturely co-voyagers, be they the Breton sailors who dance on deck or chickens laying eggs, often shows less high-minded motivations: he is interested in the eating habits of some creatures and the *eatability* of others. In this passage, Choisy makes eating into something distinct from pleasure, 'pour le manger ou pour le plaisir', but it is clear that ideally, for him, they go together, and it is equally clear that eating (and eating from the same dish) sets out a kind of political theory – here, the 'grande union' of shipboard life is brought about through the sharing food. But eating can also admit of a differentiation that structures maritime life. Social rank shapes different ideas about eating for pleasure, and Choisy

[39] Choisy, p. 287.

[40] On the list, see Rowan Tomlinson, *Inventive Inventories: Literature, and Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (forthcoming, OUP).

frequently notes that the sailors' taste (at one point they eat a harpooned beluga whale that he refuses) is not to be trusted, since they are always hungry.[41]

Yet Choisy is always hungry, too, and he is anxious about the dwindling supplies left on board, even though he mocks himself for the small scale of these domestic concerns:

> Nos poules donnent des œufs frais, mais les deux petits agneaux sont morts. Voila de grandes nouvelles. Elles sont grandes pour nous. Voyez sur la carte ou nous sommes, et avouez que si nous n'avions pas de quoi frire, nous serions assez embarrassés où en aller chercher. Laissez donc passer nos lamentations sur la perte de nos agneaux, et mangez tant qu'il vous plaira de bonne salade. Heureux ceux qui voient de l'herbe, plus heureux ceux qui en mangent![42]

If shepherds worry as they count their flocks who might be eaten by the wolf, Choisy worries as he counts the remaining animals that he himself will eat. On March 20, he reports that many chickens and pigs have died but there is 'bonne chère' remaining; a little later, supplies are dwindling, and 'Ce serait un plaisir de faire voyage, si on mangeait de la viande' he writes on Palm Sunday. [43] Shortly after he worries that with no wind and no means of restocking in port they will be reduced to eating another onboard animal, the rat. In May he visits the ship's hold, and comments with some satisfaction 'C'est un grand pays: là les moutons, ici les cochons; l'eau d'un côté, le vin de l'autre.'[44] The longed-for arrival at the Cape meant tasting the famously delicious fat-tailed sheep, imported by the Dutch as an agricultural experiment. The Cape was a

[41] Choisy, pp. 60 and 63.

[42] Choisy, p. 72.

[43] Choisy, pp. 55 and 349.

[44] Choisy, p. 92.

good larder: on the way back, the governor of the Cape is tardy with his diplomatic gifts, but eventually sends out two sheep and some melons.[45] The travellers restock in preparation for the final journey, counting creatures on board as eagerly as Panurge counted them off: 'Cinq cents poules à bord, cinquante moutons.'[46]

These Cape sheep remind us that the investment in stock that was so compelling to Panurge's merchant rival was also central to the European settlement of other territories. These sheepships point to the larger story of the global transportation of livestock. In telling the story of early modern journeys, we tend to privilege exemplary human agents: travellers, narrators, and the people they observe. Yet European exploration and settlement was importantly vehicled, and New World landscapes and livelihoods forever changed, by the movement of livestock; early modern readers knew from Thomas More's *Utopia* of the sheep's capacity to devastate. Sheep were not just things to be eaten on the journey, but also agents of a very European understanding of civilization. [47] Competing with local fauna, entailing the conversion of forests to farmland, the

[45] Choisy, p. 341.

[46] Choisy, p. 343.

[47] Alfred Crosby showed how the passage of livestock from one continent to another brought about historical change on a large scale: *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). On the ecological and metaphorical upheavals of the introduction of sheep to Australia, see also Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures* and Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters The Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2007).

advent of sheep in new territories brought damaging ecological shifts, as well as new understandings of property rights that often clashed with those of Indigenous peoples.[48] The sheep Choisy reports as counted in the hold and eaten at the Cape are less immediately fascinating than the wild creatures European travellers saw abroad and depicted in their books, but they point to a probably more significant story about exploration, settlement, and the remaking of the world. And occasionally, Choisy's ship also encounters a more immediately violently world-changing form of forced mobility: on their journey out, they run across a British slave ship headed to the West Indies.[49]

Like the good shepherd, in the midst of these many worldchanging sheep Choisy also makes room to single one out, and this sheep has a familiar name. For July 15, the entry begins

> Robin est mort, et nous le mangerons. C'était un mouton fameux entre les moutons par ses grands voyages. Il avait fait plusieurs campagnes fort heureusement, avait vu les iles de l'Amérique, toujours entre les deux ponts à la tete des autres qu'il endoctrinait sur la tangue et sur le roulis. Et après avoir passé la ligne, doublé le cap de Bonne-Espérance, à cinq cents lieues de Batavie, la sotte bête s'est laissée tomber et s'est incommodée d'une jambe de derrière. Robin était fort gras: on a eu peur qu'il ne maigrît, on l'a abandonné au boucher.[50]

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[48] Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 147. Anderson shows how the translation of the notion of sheep as stock into Indigenous languages was often difficult.

[49] Choisy, p. 87.

[50] Choisy, p. 127.

The notion of a famous and accomplished sheep appeals, even if we already know Robin to be generically famous. It was not rare for an animal to break a leg at sea; Choisy reports other such incidents after storms. [51] Why, then, is Robin distinguished? Choisy's tale counts out the sheep's singularity. This is a worldly sheep, famed for his ability to brave the waves and teach other sheep to do so too – a knowing sort of animal - but also a 'sotte bête' who drops before reaching journey's end. (The mingled compassion and contempt for those who die in such a way is evident at other moments of Choisy's journal when he recounts people who die a few days from port). Robin's story brings us up short because he is both livestock and exemplar, both property and proper noun: he points to the oddity of the generic name.

Choisy continues:

> Cet accident a mis la discorde dans le vaisseau. Quelqu'un s'est avisé de dire que Robin n'était qu'une machine. Là-dessus grande dispute. Tout le monde a pris parti, et les histoires ne finissent point sur ce qu'a fait un chien, sur ce qu'a fait une guenon. M. Vachet nous cite des éléphants, chacun retient à faire son conte. Après chaque conte fait, on dispute, on crie, et personne n'avance. Les machinistes font une mine dédaigneuse. Les autres se croient fondés sur le bon sens et sur l'antiquité. La retraite sonne, et chacun se va coucher, plein de son opinion et de soi-même.

This shipboard dispute between the hungry *machinistes* and the creaturely peddlers of anecdotes is perhaps the clearest distillation of philosophical difference from this period and a wonderful hotpot of allusions: M. Vachet's elephant is presumably one of the traveller's tales from India reporting on the wisdom or compassion of the beast, stories that we also see in Montaigne and

[51] On the journey home, a big storm means 'les moutons se cassent les jambes, les cochons se crèvent…' Choisy, p. 330.

that are frequent points of analogy in Jesuit writing.[52] Certainly some of these stories might be more about a literary tradition than about live observation. If Robin had been witness of extraordinary journeys, here we get the sense that the animal stories told in his defense might themselves be distinctly secondhand. The bristling of differences in the reported argument is central to debates about the animal: the animal is not like us, ie is a 'sotte bête', and so we claim dominion and good eating; or the animal is like us, a seasoned traveller, and generates jovial anecdotes. Travel could either erode or confirm such distinctions: Marcy Norton's work on European travellers in the Caribbean describes how the Carib term *iegue*, meaning both a tamed wild animal and an adopted human child, disrupted the familiar human/animal boundary.[53] But Choisy does not frame the clash as a philosophical problem, rather as a witty *fait divers* of shipboard life; from the small detail, a larger world emerges.

Choisy's account of this argument is itself not accounted for in the journals of his shipboard companions. Guy Tachard, a Jesuit fellow-traveller, mentions sheep only to say they ate some fat and tasty ones at the Cape.[54] Another Jesuit, Joachim Bouvet, mentions for the same

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[52] On this early modern elephant, see Katherine Ibbett, *Compassion's Edge* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), pp. 113-14.

[53] Marcy Norton, 'The Chicken or the *Iegue:* Human-Animal Relationships and the Columbian Exchange', *The American Historical Review*, 120: 1 (2015), 28-60.

[54] Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam des pères jésuites* (Amsterdam: chez Pierre Mortier, 1688): 'Nous avons vû des Moutons qui pesoient jusqu'à quatre-vingts livres, et qui étoient de tres bon gout', p. 66. On the journey to Siam, see Florence Hsia, 'Jesuits, Jupiter's Satellites, and the Académie Royale des Sciences', in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences and Arts, 1540-1773* vol.1 ed. by John W. O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 241-257.

period only sailors dying of scurvy, and two Calvinists they converted, with no sheep noted. [55] Meanwhile and typically, Choisy does not tell us his own role in the argument over Robin's soul. Perhaps he is more an eater than a philosopher, or rather, in Panurgian style, his eating forms a kind of philosophy. When a week later Choisy reports they had lamb for Saturday lunch, I would wager it is our friend Robin. 'Il est demain dimanche, et nous allons tuer un mouton et un cochon qui sont bien meilleurs qu'à terre, parce qu'on les nourrit de pain.'[56] Eating like a human, that is, makes the sheep more edible. Choisy would rather be full of roast lamb than of a pronouncement about machinism, but he makes that greedy choice into his own philosophy, and his celebration of eating together brings the sacred into the ship in a light-hearted but full-bellied Eucharist that might have been familiar to Rabelais, too.

We have seen that the sheep's familiarity often made it a basis for useful comparison: in Siam, Choisy writes, a trained elephant 'devient doux comme un mouton.'[57] On the way home, Choisy explains to his reader Dangeau what motivates the good works of Buddhists:

> Leur fin dans toutes leurs bonnes oeuvres est quelque bonne transmigration de leur âme dans le corps de quelque homme riche ou roi, ou dans le corps de quelque animal docile, comme d'une vache ou mouton, qu'ils n'osent tuer de peur de tuer leur père ou leur mère.[58]

This non-edible sheep, familial if not familiar, recounted on the journey home stands in delicious counterpoint to Robin on the journey out: both shepherd us on towards larger philosophical

[55] *Voiage de Siam du Père Bouvet*, ed. by J. C. Gatty (Leiden: Brill, 1963), p. 60.

[56] Choisy, p. 131.

[57] Choisy, p. 255.

[58] Choisy, p. 307.

debates. Does Choisy refer to a Siamese sheep, even though they are not native to the region, making local religious expression materially dependent on transnational movements?[59] Or does the sheep stand only as a French analogy, domesticating a foreign theology? In either case, the docile sheep is itself migratory, reminding us of its capacity to roam both materially and metaphorically.[60]

3. Voltaire: the 'mouton de sauvé'

No one has more fun with territory-traversing sheep than Voltaire, whose red sheep of *Candide*'s Eldorado, 'gros moutons rouges qui surpassaient en Vitesse les plus beaux chevaux d'Andalousie, de Tétuan et de Méquinez' *might* be the llamas Voltaire could have seen in Garcilaso de las Vega's *Histoire des Incas*, but could be something quite else again, an identification pondered in scholarly commentaries and also within the text by the Académie des sciences de Bordeaux with whom Candide eventually leaves the one surviving sheep, and in particular by 'un savant du Nord, qui démontra par A, plus B, moins C divisé par Z, que le

[59] That there are no local sheep is attested in a description of local fauna: 'ni lions, ni ânes, ni moutons, mais beaucoup de bufles...' (Choisy, p. 316).

[60] On the way in which animals allow us to read a link between 'the material economy' and a larger 'symbolic economy', see Paul Yachnin, 'Sheepishness in the *Winter's Tale*,' in *How to do things with Shakespeare: new approaches, new essays*, ed. by Laurie Maguire (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 211.

mouton devait être rouge.'[61] As Philip Stewart astutely (and animalistically) puts it, for this text and these problems of ovine origin 'there will always be more sources to be ferreted out, with dubious gain.'[62] The commentaries to which Stewart gestures are chiefly concerned with the colour of the sheep; here, perhaps equally dubiously, I concentrate instead on their presence on a ship.

After their visit to the extraordinary topsy-turvy economy of Eldorado, Candide and Cacambo continue to Surinam, where, in encountering an enslaved man under a tree, they learn of the human suffering that fuels a new global economy: 'C'est à ce prix que vous mangez du sucre en Europe,' the man tells them, and he explicitly links the state of enslaved people to that of animals: 'Les chiens, les singes, et les perroquets, sont mille fois moins malheureux que nous.'[63] Meanwhile the same chapter has begun with the story of the ever-decreasing flock of Candide and Cacambo: gifted a hundred precious red sheep as they leave Eldorado, the hapless

[61] Voltaire, *Romans et contes*, ed. by Fréderic Deloffre et Jacques van den Heuvel (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 184.

[62] Stewart sets out the arguments about the possible origins of these sheep only to skewer them: Philip Stewart, 'Candide', in *The Cambridge Companion to Voltaire*, ed. by Nicholas Cronk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 131; for an exhaustive review of the possibilities of their 'real' origin, see Pierre Flobert, 'Voltaire et les moutons rouges', in *Missions et démarches de la critique: Mélanges offerts au professeur J. A. Vier* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), pp. 487–89. See also Christiane Mervaud, *Bestiaires de Voltaire* (Oxford: SVEC, 2006), who gives a detailed account of Voltaire's relations to Cartesian mechanism (p. 20) as well as to other contemporary thought about animals.

[63] Voltaire, p. 193.

pair lose two sheep in a swamp, two more to exhaustion, 'sept ou huit' are nonchalantly counted out as victims of hunger, and still others fall from cliffs:

> Enfin, après cent jours de marche, il ne leur resta que deux moutons. Candide dit à Cacambo : "Mon ami, vous voyez comme les richesses de ce monde sont périssables; il n'y a rien de solide que la vertu et le bonheur de revoir mademoiselle Cunégonde. --- Je l'avoue, dit Cacambo ; mais il nous reste encore deux moutons avec plus de trésors que n'en aura jamais le roi d'Espagne.[64]

The placement of this failed shepherding alongside the suffering of the man places the loss of the flock as a figure for the losses of the Middle Passage, in which so many bodies are lost, and with so little care for their individualism, that they too go uncounted. In the *Essai sur les mœurs* Voltaire writes of the 'moutons du Pérou' who 'servaient à porter des fardeaux.'[65] In placing the suffering body of the enslaved man in counterpoint to the ever-disappearing sheep, Voltaire ensures that the ridiculous failed flock also carries a real moral and political weight, underlining the failures of pastoralism writ large. In *Candide*, we learn in the horrific narrative of the enslaved man, it is power itself which has gone astray; in this fable political power is no longer content to count bodies at home but instead sets out to plunder worldwide.

Meanwhile, left with only two sheep, our hero watches aghast as a ship's captain steals them by sailing off without their owner: 'un tour digne de l'ancien monde' says Candide, and indeed the trick has a Panurgian air about it.[66] For a brief instant, the sheepship sails off to profit

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[64] Voltaire, p. 192.

[65] Voltaire, *Essais sur les mœurs*, ed. René Pomeau, 2 vol (Paris: Garnier, 1995), vol. 2, p. 341, cited by Christiane Mervaud, *Bestiaires de Voltaire*, p. 61.

[66] Voltaire, p. 194.

from the extraordinary riches figured by its flock. But in a characteristically and casually brutal narrative, the boat comes to a bad end and is suddenly shipwrecked: 'en un moment tout fut englouti.'[67] In amidst the devastation of human lives, though, Candide spies a lone survivor:

> Il aperçut je ne sais quoi d'un rouge éclatant, qui nageait auprès de son vaisseau. On détacha la chaloupe pour voir ce que ce pouvait être ; c'était un de ses moutons. Candide eut plus de joie de retrouver ce mouton, qu'il n'avait été affligé d'en perdre cent tous chargés de gros diamants d'Eldorado.[68]

The 'mouton de sauvé' is the sole survivor of a wreck which punishes a Spanish boat and a Dutch pirate, both figures of an imperial greed. This surviving sheep sinks the economy plotted by the thieving captain of the sheepship; for Candide, the sheep's value is solely affective, and is thus set in clear contrast to the material economy of colonial riches. Coming back home clutching a sheep can be considered a prize only in a sentimental – Christian – economy.

Candide hopes that his discovery of the lost sheep might lead to other reunions ('Puisque je t'ai retrouvé, dit-il, je pourrai bien retrouver Cunégonde') but the sheep also leads us to look at Voltaire's teasing account of pastoralism. The reclaimed sheep is, of course, an echo of Luke 15, the parable in which Jesus describes a shepherd with a hundred sheep (colour unspecified) who loses one of them and sets aside all others to find it again, reclaiming it, like Candide, 'avec joie.' In the Gospel, the rediscovery of the lost sheep – a sinner – is an occasion for rejoicing; in Voltaire's wry version, instead, the sinners are joyfully cast aside so that the fable might continue.

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[67] Voltaire, p. 198.

[68] Voltaire, p. 198.

Voltaire's acerbic account of the sheepship is the culmination of a trajectory traced by both Rabelais and Choisy. Each text tells the story differently, but taken together each points to ways in which the political pastoralism of the enclosed sheepfold was set adrift by the introduction of the sheep to a global economy. Panurge's submersion of the travelling merchant's economic logic, Choisy's consideration of the sometimes violent distinctions between human and animal or between man and fellow man, and Voltaire's pairing of the found sheep with the enslaved man denied his humanity all give us a decidedly bitter appraisal of the failings of pastoral power in the age of colonial projects and the forced mobility they entailed.

A 'robinerie', says Randall Cotgrave in his French-English dictionary of 1611, is a 'pleasant conceit'.[69] Yet the conceit of these sheepships suggests how the incidental pleasures of accruing literary detail might also let us read a significantly larger picture. If environmental historians have come to place livestock at the fore of their story about European exploration and its violent consequences, perhaps it is time for literary scholars, too, to read animals in a global perspective. Let the sheep out of the sheepfold, and we will see what new paths they might lead us down. Bêê.

[69] Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London, 1611), sv 'Robineries.'