

**NEGOTIATING LITERARY IDENTITY DURING THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE
PHILOSOPHES AND THE ANTI-*PHILOSOPHES* (1745-1765)**

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This dissertation centers on the negotiation of literary identity in the *philosophes* vs. anti-*philosophes* divide during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. During that time, the ideas of the *philosophes* were gaining ground in readership and popularity, and, as a consequence, their enemies were beginning to perceive their ideas as pernicious threats to the traditional values upon which the French monarchy was built. Voltaire, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau squared off against anti-*philosophes* such as Élie Catherine Fréron, Charles Palissot, and the abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier in debates concerning literature, religion, and education. *Philosophes* questioned the principles on which the old order rested and relentlessly called on “reason” to challenge prejudices, while the anti-*philosophes* accused their adversaries of conspiring to subvert the French monarchy by rattling the foundations of the established religious practices and social peace.

The careers and writings of the playwright Michel-Jean Sedaine and the literary critic Élie Fréron are examined in the first two chapters as a means of analyzing the challenges faced by up-and-coming writers in order to establish legitimacy as an author in an unstable literary arena. There were also what I term the “ecto-*philosophes*,” writers who belonged neither to the philosophical camp nor to the anti-philosophical one. Their writings fell into oblivion for over two centuries as most scholarly studies have focused on the writings of the *philosophes* and their adversaries. The third and final chapter includes a detailed study of their contribution to the literary production during the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank my dissertation co-advisors Dr. Giuseppina Mecchia and Dr. Shane Agin, and the members of my committee for their generous support and wonderful mentorship during the writing of this dissertation.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents Arif and Diler Ertunga who would have been proud of me had they seen this day, to my brother Cenk whose support always felt very close although he was two continents away, and to my daughter Erin whose beautiful smile and glowing bright eyes, whenever I talked about my dissertation, always gave me the extra positive energy I needed, because I knew deep down that she did so not because she knew anything about my study, but simply because she loved me.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth-century studies of French literature and culture have for the most part focused on the writings of the *philosophes*. John Lough, while underlining the difficulties of satisfactorily explaining who the *Philosophes* were, argues that “some sort of working agreement can be reached” among specialists of the eighteenth century.¹ Taking into account what “contemporaries understood by the term,” he identifies Voltaire, Diderot, Raynal, Helvétius, d’Alembert, d’Holbach, and Condorcet as *philosophes*, and he mentions a number of others as likely candidates for the title, including Montesquieu, La Mettrie, Duclos, the Marquis d’Argens, Condillac, Toussaint, Marmontel, Abbé Morrelet, and Deleyre. Although Lough recognizes that other scholars have deemed Fontenelle and Dumarsais as being worthy of the title, he sees them as “precursors” (142, 147). Mark Hulliung, for his part, considers Voltaire and Diderot to be *philosophes*, and adds d’Alembert, Buffon, Condillac, Duclos, Grimm, Helvétius, d’Holbach, and Turgot as “supporting characters” of the philosophical movement.²

The *philosophes*’ crowning achievement was, without a doubt, the *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772). Although initially conceived as a simple French translation of Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopædia* (1728), the *Encyclopédie* quickly became “a massive reference work for the arts and

¹ John Lough, “Who Were the *Philosophes*?” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century French Literature Presented to Robert Niklaus*, eds. J. H. Fox, M. H. Waddicor, and D. A. Watts, (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1975), 140.

² Mark Hulliung, “Cast of Supporting Characters,” *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), xi-xiii.

sciences, as well as a *machine de guerre* which served to propagate the ideas of the French Enlightenment.”³ In its prospectus, the editors praised Chambers’ work, but added that two volumes were not sufficient enough to fully include all branches of human knowledge: “La Traduction entière du Chambers nous a passé sous les yeux, et nous avons trouvé une multitude prodigieuse de choses à désirer dans les SCIENCES; dans les ARTS LIBÉRAUX, un mot où il fallait des pages; et tout à suppléer dans les *Arts mécaniques*.”⁴ Their solution was the *Encyclopédie*, published “par une Société de Gens de lettres,” under the direction of Jean le Rond d’Alembert and Denis Diderot, with seventeen volumes of text and eleven volumes of plates. It contained 74,000 articles written by more than 130 contributors.⁵

As Richard Schwab notes, the publication of its first volume in 1751 coincided with a number of impressive works by the *philosophes*:

Montesquieu’s *Esprit des Lois* (1748), Buffon’s “Premier discours” to his *Histoire naturelle* (1749), Condillac’s *Traité des systèmes* (1749), Turgot’s *Discours* at the Sorbonne on the progress of the human mind (December, 1750), Rousseau’s *Discours [sur les Sciences et les Arts]* (1750), and Voltaire’s *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751). At this conjuncture of landmarks came the first volume of the *Encyclopedia* in June of 1751 with its *Preliminary Discourse* by d’Alembert. Immediately the encyclopedists were recognized as the chief spokesmen of the *philosophes*.⁶

D’Alembert wrote the *Discours préliminaire de l’Encyclopédie* in which he described the project’s structure and goal. As Schwab notes, many leaders of the Enlightenment at the time recognized the value of d’Alembert’s introductory text and viewed it as a representation of their

³ “The ARTFL Encyclopédie,” *University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project*, (Spring 2013 Edition), ed. Robert Morrissey.

⁴ “Prospectus,” *ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ Richard N. Schwab, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, translated by Richard N. Schwab with the collaboration of Walter E. Rex, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), ix-l.ii. *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, (Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2009).

vision: “It is the Enlightenment insofar as one can make such a claim for any single work; with a notable economy and vigor it expresses the hopes, the dogmas, the assumptions, and the prejudices we have come to associate with the movement of the *philosophes*.”⁷

As early as the second paragraph in his *Discours Préliminaire*, d’Alembert defined the primary goal of the *Encyclopédie* by breaking down the work’s title:

L'Ouvrage dont nous donnons aujourd'hui le premier volume, a deux objets: comme *Encyclopédie*, il doit exposer autant qu'il est possible, l'ordre et l'enchaînement des connaissances humaines: comme *Dictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, il doit contenir sur chaque Science et sur chaque Art, soit libéral, soit mécanique, les principes généraux qui en sont la base, et les détails les plus essentiels, qui en font le corps et la substance.⁸

The adjective “raisonné” in the title should not be taken lightly. The *Encyclopédie* project unified the philosophical party and its primary objective was to contribute to the betterment of society through the use of reason. As I will show in chapter two, the importance that the *philosophes* put on the capacity of human reason eventually became a focal point of criticism by their enemies who, in turn, believed that humans could not rely on reason alone and needed divine assistance in order to lead a proper and desirable life. For d’Alembert and the encyclopedists, however, reason was at the heart of their “philosophie” and played a central role in the plan laid out for the *Encyclopédie*’s contribution to human progress:

Ces trois facultés forment d'abord les trois divisions générales de notre système, et les trois objets généraux des connaissances humaines; l'Histoire, qui se rapporte à la mémoire; la Philosophie, qui est le fruit de la raison; et les Beaux-arts, que l'imagination fait naître. Si nous plaçons la raison avant l'imagination, cet ordre nous paroît bien fondé, et conforme au progrès naturel des opérations de l'esprit.⁹

⁷ Ibid. Schwab supports his statement with quotes from Montesquieu, Frederick the Great, and Condorcet.

⁸ Jean le Rond d’Alembert, “Discours préliminaire,” *University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project*.

⁹ Ibid.

In the article “Encyclopédie,” Diderot also associated reason with the project’s overall philosophy. He first defined the word as “enchaînement de connaissances.” He then explained the social goal behind the immense project, which was to essentially unite all human knowledge into one publication in order to transmit it to the masses:

En effet, le but d'une *Encyclopédie* est de rassembler les connaissances éparses sur la surface de la terre; d'en exposer le système général aux hommes avec qui nous vivons, et de le transmettre aux hommes qui viendront après nous; afin que les travaux des siècles passés n'aient pas été des travaux inutiles pour les siècles qui succéderont; que nos neveux, devenant plus instruits, deviennent en même tems plus vertueux et plus heureux, et que nous ne mourions pas sans avoir bien mérité du genre humain.¹⁰

Finally, Diderot emphasized that such an enterprise could only be realized in a “siècle philosophe” through the use of reason:

J'ai dit qu'il n'appartenait qu'à un siècle philosophe de tenter une Encyclopédie; et je l'ai dit parce que cet ouvrage demande partout plus de hardiesse dans l'esprit qu'on n'en a communément dans les siècles pusillanimes du goût. Il faut tout examiner, tout remuer sans exception et sans ménagement [...] Il faut fouler aux pieds toutes ces vieilles puérilités; renverser les barrières que la raison n'aura point posées [...] Il fallait un temps raisonneur, où l'on ne cherchât plus les règles dans les auteurs, mais dans la nature.¹¹

After defining the title of the work in his *Discours préliminaire*, d’Alembert established the intellectual genealogy of the term “philosophe.” In doing so, he championed the genius of the men whose ideas were scorned by their narrow-minded contemporaries:

Pendant que des adversaires peu instruits ou mal intentionnés faisaient ouvertement la guerre à la Philosophie, elle se réfugiait, pour ainsi dire, dans les Ouvrages de quelques grands hommes, qui, sans avoir l'ambition dangereuse d'arracher le bandeau des yeux de leurs contemporains, préparaient de loin dans l'ombre et le silence la lumière dont le monde devoit être éclairé peu-à-peu et par degrés insensibles.¹²

¹⁰ “Encyclopédie,” *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, (Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed).

¹¹Ibid. The *philosophes*’ reliance on reason, and their enemies’ criticism of this reliance, will be discussed in great detail throughout the chapters.

¹² D’Alembert, “Discours préliminaire,” ARTFL.

Beginning with ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle, d'Alembert worked his way forward to contemporary times, mentioning along the way Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Christiaan Huygens, Isaac Newton, and John Locke. D'Alembert noted that Bacon was the first to foreground the “nécessité de la Physique expérimentale,” and he credited him for having inspired the editors to form the “Arbre encyclopédique” at the end of the *Discours préliminaire*.¹³ He then lauded the “Illustre Descartes” for his innovative applications in the field of mathematics. More importantly, d'Alembert argued that “la philosophie” owed Descartes a great deal because he at least began by doubting everything, and in doing so, he showed future generations of *philosophes* that it was possible to question long-held prejudices:

Descartes a osé du moins montrer aux bons esprits à secouer le joug de la scholastique, de l'opinion, de l'autorité, en un mot des préjugés et de la barbarie; et par cette révolte dont nous recueillons aujourd'hui les fruits, la Philosophie a reçu de lui un service, plus difficile peut-être à rendre que tous ceux qu'elle doit à ses illustres successeurs. On peut le regarder comme un chef de conjurés, qui a eu le courage de s'élever le premier contre une puissance despotique et arbitraire.¹⁴

D'Alembert expressed his admiration for the way Descartes based his philosophy on human reasoning but pointed, along with other *philosophes*, to the shortcomings of his separation of the mind from the world of physical phenomena that, in the opinions of younger *philosophes*, could best be explained empirically. That was why, according to d'Alembert, the teachings of Newton and Locke were so valuable. Newton, following in the footsteps of Huyghens, showed that without empirical data, all hypotheses remained unproven: “Ce grand genie [Newton] vit qu'il était temps de bannir de la Physique les conjectures et les hypothèses vagues, ou du moins de ne les donner que pour ce qu'elles valaient, et que cette Science devait être uniquement

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

soûmise aux expériences et à la Géométrie.”¹⁵ D’Alembert finally turned to Locke who “créa la Métaphysique à peu près comme Newton avait créé la Physique,” and like Newton, relied on experimental data:

En un mot, il réduisit la Métaphysique à ce qu'elle doit être en effet, la Physique expérimentale de l'ame [...] Dans celle-ci on peut découvrir, et on découvre souvent des phénomènes inconnus; dans l'autre les faits aussi anciens que le monde existent également dans tous les hommes: tant pis pour qui croit en voir de nouveaux. La Métaphysique raisonnable ne peut consister, comme la Physique expérimentale, qu'à rassembler avec soin tous ces faits [...].¹⁶

Voltaire and Montesquieu, who came to be associated with the term *philosophe* even before the *Encyclopédie* project began, were disciples of Newton and Locke. Montesquieu strongly admired the empiricism of Locke and modeled his scientific method after Newton’s physics.¹⁷ Voltaire, for his part, saw Newton and Locke as the intellectual forebears of the new philosophical movement. As Nicolas Cronk writes, “in terms of the history of ideas, his [Voltaire’s] single most important achievement was to have helped in the 1730s to introduce the thought of Newton and Locke to France (and so to the rest of the continent).”¹⁸ Both Montesquieu and Voltaire were early supporters and contributors to the *Encyclopédie*, and their backing helped establish the project’s credibility within many political, social, and intellectual circles in mid-eighteenth-century France.

In the *Encyclopédie*, as well as in their individual works, the *philosophes* promoted the concept of progress in the arts and sciences with the goal of improving the general condition of humankind. While they were not necessarily promoting radical social change, they did believe

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Mark H. Waddicor, *Montesquieu and the Philosophy of Natural Law*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 24.

¹⁸ Nicholas E. Cronk, “Voltaire and Enlightenment,” *The Voltaire Foundation*, (University of Oxford, n.d.).

that human beings needed to rely less on tradition and more on reason and empirical data in order to achieve this process. In particular, they strived to put an end to the dominance of archaic prejudices that were often based on rigid religious beliefs. They did not approve of absolute authority, often associating the idea with despotism. As the prestige and credibility of the Ancien Régime diminished under Louis XV's reign throughout the middle decades of the century, the *philosophes'* criticism of its vast powers intensified. They denounced the excessive luxury that existed in the Royal Court and the financial burden created by never-ending wars. In the article "Paix" of the *Encyclopédie*, Étienne Noël Damilaville, close friend of Voltaire and Diderot, described war as the "maladie convulsive et violente" of the political body.¹⁹

Yet, this should not mean that the *philosophes* did not believe in rules and regulations, or in the idea of governance. In the *Lettres persanes* (1721), written by Montesquieu who was one of the earlier representatives of the first-generation *philosophes*, Usbek tells the story of the "Troglodytes." He is responding to the letter of his friend Mirza who asked him to elaborate on the idea that "les hommes étaient nés pour être vertueux, et que la justice est une qualité qui leur est aussi propre que l'existence."²⁰ Montesquieu evoked the myth of the Troglodytes to show that although they lived happily for a long time in their natural state, without strict rules and regulations, the Troglodytes felt obliged at some point to choose a king because the population grew to the point at which justice was needed to govern everyone equally. The next generation of *philosophes* like Diderot and Rousseau built on Montesquieu's ideas, especially those that he expressed in *L'Esprit des lois* (1748). Diderot began his article "Autorité politique" in the

¹⁹ "Paix." *Encyclopédie*.

²⁰ Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, (Paris: Pocket Classiques, 1998), 38. The story of the Troglodytes are in "Lettres XI to XIV, 39-48.

Encyclopédie by affirming that no man has the natural right to “commander aux autres,” but admitted that some type of authority was useful:

Quelquefois l'*autorité* qui s'établit par la violence change de nature; c'est lorsqu'elle continue et se maintient du consentement exprès de ceux qu'on a soumis [...]. La puissance qui vient du consentement des peuples, suppose nécessairement des conditions qui en rendent l'usage légitime, utile à la société, avantageux à la république, et qui la fixent et la restraignent entre des limites.²¹

Even Rousseau, the ardent defender of natural rights and *le bon sauvage*, conceded that as civilizations grew, governance became inevitable. Describing his vision of an ideally governed society in *Le Contrat social* (1762), Rousseau argued that the sovereign authority should function as the executor of the laws designed to protect each individual's civil rights, all the while ensuring that the general will of the people be respected.

An anticlerical attitude also marked the writings of the *philosophes*. They attacked religious establishments, claiming that they were the epitome of intolerance. They also rejected the legitimization of royal power as a divine right. Tzvetan Todorov, in his *L'Esprit des Lumières*, refers to the general trend in eighteenth-century French society to seek happiness among other humans in the present, instead of through God and heaven in the afterlife. In his book, which studies many of the *philosophes'* principal works, he claims that the French sought to diminish the distance between an action and its desired goal. According to Todorov, before the Enlightenment, humans acted with the goal of obtaining eternal happiness. For the *philosophes*, knowledge had to be acquired by humans through scientific progress and a rationalist approach

²¹ “Autorité politique.” *Encyclopédie*. Diderot further developed his argument that nobody had the natural right to “commander aux autres,” years later in his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772). He noted that one should abide by the laws of the society in which one lives and that no individual should impose his or her values on another culture. For example, in the dialogue between A and B, the latter tells the former to beware of those who want to impose their values on others: “J’en appelle à toutes les institutions politiques, civiles et religieuses; examinez-les [humans] profondément, et je me trompe fort, ou vous y verrez l’espèce humaine pliée de siècle en siècle au joug qu’une poignée de fripons se promettait de lui imposer. [...] ordonner, c’est toujours se rendre le maître des autres en les gênant.” Denis Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 91.

to critical thinking. During the eighteenth century, they realized that any individual can rapidly attain that goal on earth, and that human beings should adjust their actions accordingly.²² Several *philosophes* questioned the necessity of practicing religion in order to communicate with God. Montesquieu expressed a similar view through the words of a praying man that Usbek saw when he was visiting Venice in the *Lettres persanes*:

Seigneur, je n'entends rien dans les disputes que l'on fait sans cesse à votre sujet. Je voudrais vous servir selon votre volonté; mais chaque homme que je consulte veut que je vous serve à la sienne. Lorsque je veux vous faire ma prière, je ne sais en quelle langue je dois vous parler. Je ne sais pas non plus en quelle posture je dois me mettre: l'un dit que je dois vous prier debout; l'autre veut que je sois assis; l'autre exige que mon corps porte sur mes genoux. [...] je ne puis remuer la tête que je ne sois menacé de vous offenser; cependant je voudrais vous plaire et employer à cela la vie que je tiens de vous. Je ne sais si je me trompe; mais je crois que le meilleur moyen pour y parvenir est de vivre en bon citoyen dans la société où vous m'avez fait naître, et en bon père dans la famille que vous m'avez donnée. (92-93)

In his *Lettres philosophiques* (1733), Voltaire felt that an individual should be able to choose his own path to eternal happiness, without having to adhere to a religion: “un Anglais, comme homme libre, va au Ciel par le chemin qui lui plaît.”²³ Rousseau, for his part, echoed Montesquieu's criticism of religious fanatics in his *Émile ou de l'éducation* (1762): “Que d'hommes entre Dieu et moi!”²⁴

The *philosophes*' struggle to gain credit in the eyes of the public will be examined in detail in the upcoming pages. Their efforts were met with great resistance from their enemies and traditional institutions like the Church and the Sorbonne. They also suffered setbacks within their camp, such as the eventual rupture between Rousseau and the works' editors, which will be discussed in chapter two. The conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* will

²² Tzvetan Todorov, *L'Esprit des Lumières*, (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 89.

²³ Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*, (Rouen: Jore, 1734), 21.

²⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation*, (Paris: Garnier frères, 1878), 336.

remain at the center of my project throughout the following pages. I will examine in detail the tactics used by each side to gain the upper hand.

While a vast amount of scholarship has been devoted to the writings of the *philosophes*, work on their adversaries, the anti-*philosophes*, has been limited to particular sub-groups or single writers. For example, Sylviane Albertan-Coppola and Alain Niderst have published studies on various Christian apologists, while Dale Van Kley and Monique Cottret have written on the Jansenists' position in the eighteenth century.²⁵ François Cornou, Jean Balcou, and Jacqueline Biard-Millérioux have established the historical importance of the anti-*philosophe* journalist Élie Fréron as an influential literary critic.²⁶ Fréron published two journals, *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps* (1749-1754) and *L'Année littéraire* (1754-1776), through which he became the leading voice of the anti-*philosophe* camp. Dieter Gembicki, a scholar of Ancien Régime politics, has studied Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, a key enemy of the *philosophes* and the inventor of the disparaging term *Cacouacs*. Meanwhile, Raymond Trousson has written about the important figures of the anti-philosophical movement such as Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis. In *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française*, Daniel Mornet expressed the need for

²⁵ Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, *L'abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, 1718-1790: des Monts-Jura à Versailles, le parcours d'un apologiste du XVIII^e*, (Paris: H. Champion, 2010). Monique Cottret, *Jansénismes et Lumières. Pour un autre XVIII^e siècle*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998). Levesque de Burigny. *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne*, Ed. Alain Niderst, (Paris: H. Champion, 2001). Alain Niderst, "L'Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne, les frères Lévesque et leur groupe," *Le Matérialisme du XVIII^e siècle et la littérature clandestine [Texte imprimé]: actes / de la Table ronde des 6 et 7 juin 1980 organisée à la Sorbonne à Paris... par le Groupe de recherche sur l'histoire du matérialisme*, ed. Olivier Bloch, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982), 45-66. Dale Kenneth Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757-1765*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

²⁶ Jacqueline Biard-Millérioux, *L'Esthétique d'Élie Catherine Fréron (1739-1776)*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985). Jean Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, (Genève: Droz, 1975). Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron: Correspondance et documents*, (Geneva: Droz, 1975). François Cornou, *Trente années de luttes contre Voltaire et les philosophes du XVIII^e siècle: Élie Fréron (1718-1776)*, (Paris: Champion, 1922).

systematic studies of anti-*philosophe* publications and journals.²⁷ More specifically, he underlined the problem of categorizing Fréron as an anti-*philosophe*. Indeed, he noted that before becoming the *philosophes*' leading adversary, Fréron manifested a remarkable "esprit philosophique" in his writings (168-69).

It is only at the turn of the twenty-first century that comprehensive studies on the anti-*philosophes* appeared. Within a year of each other, Didier Masseau's *Les ennemis des philosophes: L'anti-philosophie au temps des Lumières* (2000) and Darrin McMahon's *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (2001) shed light on the role played by the anti-*philosophes* and the counter-revolutionaries in forming the critical framework of the Enlightenment.²⁸ Masseau showed that the anti-*philosophes* were composed of a wide variety of individuals and groups, often with diverging ideologies. McMahon argued that the anti-*philosophes* were more than just an insignificant group of traditionalists who confronted the *philosophes* for the sake of clinging to the established order and values: "[They] drew from a varied lot, comprising lofty courtiers, influential ecclesiastics, and powerful *parlementaires*, as well as lowly administrative officials, minor abbés, and Grub Street hacks" (24). These two works drew attention to memoirs and journals, as well as to clandestine publications, and have challenged scholars of the eighteenth century to take into consideration discourses beyond those of the *philosophes*. By exploring the anti-*philosophes*, the works of Masseau and McMahon narrow the gap between the extensive scholarship on the *philosophes* and the limited amount of information available on their adversaries.

²⁷ Daniel Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715-1787*, (Paris: A. Colin, 1967).

²⁸ Didier Masseau. *Les ennemis des philosophes: L'anti-philosophie au temps des Lumières*. (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel S.A., 2000). Darrin McMahon. *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Especially see the Introduction and the first chapter of McMahon's book.

I contribute to this renewed interest in the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. My project is original in that it interrogates the influence that the divide had on the career trajectories of mid-eighteenth-century writers, on the content of their work, on their social behaviors, and on their post-eighteenth-century fame. Because these writers included renowned *gens de lettres*, they negotiated a divide between two major camps that penetrated and polarized *le monde littéraire* of the time in a way that no other fissure had done before. Masseau and McMahon provide great insight as to how the two major camps attempted to recruit and persuade young and talented writers to join their camp. However, their studies mostly take into account the perspective of the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. By contrast, in the following chapters, the focus will be on the challenges that up-and-coming writers faced during the middle decades of the century, when confronted with a literary arena dominated by the partisans of the two opposing camps. In order to tackle the topic from the perspective of the new writers, it is necessary to have some knowledge of how the quarrel between the two camps was developing in the middle of the century. It also important to be familiar with the role that theater played in the divide. It is for this reason that Sedaine and his works are at the center of chapter two. Sedaine's literary production consisted, for the most part, of theatrical works. Thus, the second chapter also includes a section on the state of theater in the 1750s, leading into the staging of the divide in 1760 and its aftermath, prior to Sedaine's major play *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* (1765). Chapter three develops further my investigation of the influence that the divide had on writers who sought to establish a literary identity and to build a reputable career, by focusing on the journalist Fréron and his increasingly contentious relationship with Voltaire and the *philosophes*. Sedaine and Fréron ended up on opposite sides of the conflict. The second and third chapters show that although each began his career as neither a *philosophe* nor an anti-*philosophe*, the

divide left aspiring writers like them with very little room in which to maneuver in order to survive in the literary environment of the time. By the time Sedaine and Fréron began publishing, it was clear that they were going to need more than just a remarkable talent for writing if they were to achieve success. Many authors adapted their strategies, like Sedaine, to the dynamics of the conflict in an effort to build their reputations, while others, such as Fréron, found themselves forced to choose a side for the survival of their career. Both writers, aware of these challenges, placed as much importance on their ability to garner friends and protectors as they did on the development of their writing skills. In doing so, Sedaine aimed to have enough allies to facilitate the advancement of his career as a writer. Fréron, for his part, did so as the result of his reaction to the attacks headed by Voltaire and the *philosophes*. Although these two chapters are centered on their careers and works, I use the trajectories of their chosen careers to broadly describe how writers in mid-eighteenth-century France grappled with the changes brought about by the conflict between the two camps within the literary arena, as well as how this conflict ultimately influenced their writings.

In chapter four, I turn my attention to those writers who cannot be tied to one camp or the other. They challenged the divide between the *philosophes* and anti-*philosophe* in that they dealt with issues pertinent to the Enlightenment in their texts, yet managed to avoid favoring one camp over the other throughout their career. I call these writers the *ecto-philosophes* and in the introduction to the chapter, I identify several characteristics that define them. In the first two sections of the chapter, I examine the works of Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche (1702-1774), Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix (1699-1776), in order to expose the means by which the *ecto-philosophes* advanced their literary careers in a hostile milieu where two opposing sides held positions of authority. Finally, I investigate two female writers that I

consider to be ecto-*philosophes*, Marie-Geneviève-Charlotte Thiroux d'Arconville (1720-1805) and Madeleine d'Arsant de Puisieux (1720-1798). The ecto-*philosophes*, for the most part, fell into oblivion in the post-eighteenth-century period because of their non-affiliation with the two major camps during their time. In this chapter, I also argue why these figures should be taken into account when studying the middle decades of eighteenth-century French literature.

I chose to concentrate for the most part on the period of 1745-1765 for several reasons. In April 1745, the editors of the *Encyclopédie* obtained their first of three “privilèges” to go forward with what was to become the project that defined the Enlightenment. Five months later, Fréron launched his career with his first periodical *Lettres à Madame de la Comtesse de... sur quelques écrits modernes* (1745-1746). In 1746, Diderot published his first original work *Pensées philosophiques* which the Parlement of Paris condemned, ordering it to “be burned in effigy” in July of the same year.²⁹ When Diderot published the “Prospectus” to the *Encyclopédie* in 1750, and d'Alembert the *Discours préliminaire* one year later, the anti-*philosophes* immediately viewed the project as a subversive threat to the state and a defamation of religion. One of their leading figures at the time, Charles Palissot, began his *Petites lettres sur de grands philosophes* (1757) by discrediting the *philosophes* and their project:

Depuis quelques années, Madame, il s'est formé dans cette Capitale, une association entre plusieurs gens de Lettres, les uns d'un mérite reconnu, les autres d'une réputation plus contestée, qui travaillent à ce fameux Dictionnaire de toutes les connaissances; ouvrage qui en suppose beaucoup à ceux qui le rédigent. Personne n'a peut-être plus de vénération que moi pour les mains qui contribuent ce pénible monument à la gloire de l'esprit humain. Tous ces Messieurs se disent Philosophes, et quelques-uns le sont.³⁰

He found it remarkable that the *philosophes* were able to fool the very public that they held in such low esteem: “Ce charlatanisme a quelque chose de si séduisant pour ce même public

²⁹ Haig Bosmajian, *Burning Books*, (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006), 123.

³⁰ Charles Palissot, *Petites lettres sur de grands philosophes*, (Paris: 1757), 1-2.

que l'on méprise! Il est si naturellement dupe de tous ces stratagèmes [...]" (5). The support that the *philosophes* garnered through the *Encyclopédie* and their ability to seduce the public fascinated Palissot: "nous avons vu tout à coup des femmes qui dans leur jeunesse lisaient des Contes de Fées, et des importans qui ne lisaient rien, se mettre à portée de faire Secte avec ces Messieurs; se réveiller Philosophes; protéger l'Encyclopédie et la juger" (19).

Like many other anti-*philosophes*, Palissot claimed that the *philosophes* sought to impose their views on the public to the detriment of religious doctrine: "On vit à la tête de quelques productions philosophiques un ton d'autorité et de décision, qui, jusqu'à présent, n'avait appartenu qu'à la Chaire" (2). After quoting works by Charles Pinot Duclos, Diderot, and Rousseau, Palissot claimed that the *philosophes* did nothing more than cloud people's minds on concepts that were previously clear to them:

On transporta à des Traités de Morale, ou à des spéculations métaphysiques, un langage que l'on eût condamné, par tout ailleurs, comme celui du fanatisme. [...] On donna de nouvelles definitions de quantité de choses déjà très-bien définies. On affecta, pour jouer la concision et le style nerveux, d'embrouiller ce qui était clair. (3-4)

A recurring theme in the anti-philosophical discourse was the criticism that the *philosophes'* ideas were dangerous to the public's well-being. For example, Bergier maintained that human reason, championed so ardently by the *philosophes*, was limited and faulty, and needed the type of clarity that only God could provide. He argued in the first letter of *Le Déisme réfuté par lui-même* (1765) that God had already made the necessary guidance available to humans:

Nous ne pouvons comprendre les attributs de Dieu; il nous les a cependant révélés, l'Écriture Sainte les publie, les célèbre en mille endroits, et jamais les hommes n'en ont eu une juste idée que depuis que Dieu les a révélés. Dieu peut donc nous révéler ce que nous ne pouvons pas comprendre. [...] et sur ces objets, les Philosophes n'ont fait que

bégayer. Dieu peut donc nous révéler ce qui paroît contradictoire, ce qui révolte notre raison.³¹

In the tenth letter, Bergier reaffirmed God's superiority over human reason: "Dieu, en faisant prêcher la Religion Chrétienne, ne l'a point soumise aux recherches de la raison dont elle passe les lumières; nous renvoyer à ce seul tribunal, c'est anéantir la foi et l'autorité de la parole divine" (179). As McMahon notes, anti-*philosophes* would also quote other well-known writers such as Pascal and Rousseau to support their stance "when faced with the dire threat of corrosive, philosophical reason" (35).

The *Encyclopédie*'s publication continued into the 1770s, but the tension between the *philosophes* and their enemies reached its peak during the 1750s. The anti-*philosophes*, led by Fréron, did not hesitate to use a wide variety of terms to insult and to mock the *philosophes*. For Moreau, they were "charlatans," "guerriers," and "enchanteurs."³² According to Joseph Giry de Saint-Cyr, these "grands Génies" considered themselves to be "Philosophes par excellence, Philosophes universels" because they arrogantly believed that they held the highest degree of talent in "toutes les Sciences et tous les Arts."³³ Fréron, in an effort to efface the positive connotation that some associated with the terms "philosophe" and "philosophie," introduced the pejorative terms "philosophiste" and "philosophisme" in the late 1750s (and years later, "philosophaille") to replace them.³⁴

³¹ Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Le déisme réfuté par lui-même, ou Examen des principes d'incrédulité répandus dans les divers ouvrages de M. Rousseau, en forme de lettres*, (Paris: Humblot, 1765), 14-15.

³² Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, *Nouveau Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire des Cacouacs*, (Amsterdam: 1757), 10, 23, 29.

³³ Joseph Giry de Saint-Cyr, "Discours du patriarche des Cacouacs pour la réception d'un nouveau disciple," *Catéchisme et décisions de cas de conscience, à l'usage des Cacouacs*, (Cacopolis: 1758), xi, xvi.

³⁴ Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 44.

It was also during the 1750s that the anti-*philosophes* enjoyed their biggest victories in the effort to halt their adversaries' progress. The *philosophes* faced considerable opposition not only from traditional authorities such as the clergy and the royalists, but also from within the Republic of Letters. Fréron emerged as a major anti-*philosophe* figure and rallied the traditionalists around him. Writers such as Palissot and Moreau published their own virulent works and, along with Fréron, formed a threat to their adversaries. Another problem for the *philosophes* was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's break with from the philosophical camp.³⁵ This development particularly bothered *philosophes* like d'Alembert who wanted to see the Republic of Letters "band together" as a unified community, as well as to confirm its "claim to represent the nation to itself because of its self-assigned role as the arbiter of public opinion."³⁶ There were other events that hindered the *philosophes*' progress. The scandal that erupted from the thesis of l'abbé Jean-Martin de Prades in 1752 led to the suppression of the *Encyclopédie* project.³⁷ The assassination attempt on Louis XV in 1757, which created "une ambiance très hostile aux philosophes," resulted in the issuance of a royal decree that held responsible any writer that was convicted of disturbing "l'ordre et la tranquillité."³⁸

This decade of extreme tension came to a head with the staging of the conflict in 1760. Parisians concentrated on Palissot's anti-*philosophe* play *Les Philosophes* and Voltaire's riposte

³⁵ The details and consequences of Rousseau's break from the *philosophes* will be examined further in chapter two.

³⁶ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 38.

³⁷ For more on the affair of l'abbé Prades, see Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 116-120.

³⁸ Lee, Young-Mock, "Diderot et la lutte parlementaire au temps de l'Encyclopédie," *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 29 (2000), 61, 52.

Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise, performed within months of each other.³⁹ In the aftermath of this showdown, the balance began to tilt firmly in the *philosophes*' favor.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1760s and 1770s, both McMahon and Logan Connors confirm that the *philosophes* consistently gained influence over their opponents in established institutions.⁴¹ The *dévots* suffered a crushing defeat when a "coalition of Jansenist *parlementaires* and philosophic allies managed to orchestrate the expulsion of the Jesuits from France in the mid-1760s."⁴² During the early 1760s, several plays centered on the quarrel of *Les Philosophes*.⁴³ By the end of 1765, the *philosophes* had also won the battle on stage. It was during that year that Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* was performed for the first time. Sedaine described the play as his attempt to reconcile the *philosophe* figure with the public, and thus, to repair the damage caused by Palissot's play.⁴⁴ It became the last major play to emerge from the staging of the conflict and the most famous *drame bourgeois* in the history of French literature. In 1765, another blow was dealt on the religious front when they learned of "the premature death of the *dévots*' leader and erstwhile heir to the throne, Louis Ferdinand, the pious son of Louis XV."⁴⁵ By the time the most influential protector of Fréron,

³⁹ For more information on the crucial role of Palissot's and Voltaire's plays in the *philosophe* vs. anti-*philosophe* conflict, see Logan J. Connors, *Dramatic Battles in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), Ch. 2-5.

⁴⁰ These two plays and their impact in the conflict between the two camps will be explored further in chapter two.

⁴¹ McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 6-7, 19-26; Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 218.

⁴² McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 22.

⁴³ Olivier Ferret, "Mises en scène satirique des Encyclopédistes: autour de la querelle des *Philosophes* de Palissot," *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L'image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815*, ed. Pierre Hartman, (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2003), 113-128.

⁴⁴ I will examine *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* in detail in chapter two.

⁴⁵ McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 22.

Stanislas Leszczynski, the king of Poland, the duc de Lorraine, and the father of the Queen of France, died in February 1766, the fate of the anti-philosophical movement was already sealed.

It is for these reasons, established here, that my project will, for the most part, examine works and events from the period of 1745-1765. I build my chapters around writers who began their careers during this period as neither *philosophes* nor as *anti-philosophes*. Through the struggles of Sedaine and Fréron in their path to adhering to one camp or the other, and through the challenges that the *ecto-philosophes* faced in building a career without the support of major protectors or institutions, I will investigate, in the following three chapters, how writers negotiated their literary identity in the volatile *monde* of the mid-eighteenth century.

2.0 MICHEL-JEAN SEDAINE'S PATH TO THE *PHILOSOPHE* CAMP

In his book *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture, and Public Theater in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution*, Gregory Brown notes that in 1775, the playwright Michel-Jean Sedaine voiced the concerns of many writers when he described the troupe's conduct at the Comédie française during the readings of plays as "impolite, immoderate, and non-reciprocal."⁴⁶ According to Brown, Sedaine's status as an established writer allowed him to gain access to the court and provided him with the ability to directly address the First Gentlemen in case of complaints.⁴⁷ Yet in the middle of the 1750s, Sedaine admitted personally to not being a "grand artiste" when the director of the Opéra-Comique proposed that he write a piece for his stage.⁴⁸ Scholars have largely neglected to study in detail how Sedaine fashioned his literary identity in order to transform from a little-known poet to a sought-after playwright, during the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*.

⁴⁶ Gregory Brown, *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture and Public Theater in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution*. Gutenberg-e Series, 2003. Ch.2, p.7. I will indicate both chapter and page numbers in future references, because each chapter can be downloaded as separate pdf files on the book's online site.

⁴⁷ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Ch. 2, p.1. By royal Ordonnance in 1680, the troupe of the *Comédie française* was placed under the authority of four dukes at court, the First Gentlemen of the King's Bedchamber.

⁴⁸ René-Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt, "Quelques réflexions inédites de Sedaine sur l'Opéra-comique," *Théâtre choisi de G. de Pixérécourt, précédé d'une introduction par Ch. Nodier, et illustré par des notices littéraires dues à ses amis, membres de l'Institut, de l'Académie française, et autres hommes de lettres*, t.4. Nancy: Cours d'Orléans, p.502. In this work, Pixérécourt included a manuscript by Sedaine that one of his daughters kept after his death and offered to Pixérécourt as a token of appreciation for his efforts in obtaining the pension that she received from the treasury of the theater (see note 1, p. 501).

Because of his well-publicized friendship with Diderot and other *philosophes* beginning in the late 1750s, several articles in Grimm and Diderot's *Correspondance littéraire* praising his play *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, and a famous passage in Élie Fréron's journal *L'Année littéraire*, much of literary history has viewed Sedaine as a *philosophe*.⁴⁹ For example, Fréron's account of several *philosophes*' behavior in the *parterre* during the first performance of his arch enemy Voltaire's *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise* on July 26, 1760 designates Sedaine as a *philosophe*. Fréron refers to him as the person who organized the applause for the play, without explicitly mentioning his name: "Les gens de goût voulaient que cette pièce fût sifflée; les philosophes s'étaient engagés à la faire applaudir. L'avant-garde de ces derniers, composée de tous les rimailleurs et prosailleurs ridiculisés dans *l'Année littéraire*, était conduite par une espèce de Savetier appelé *Blaise* qui faisait *le Diable à quatre*."⁵⁰ Although he does not mention Sedaine by name, the reference to the playwright is clear, because two of his most well-known works at the time were *Le Diable à quatre* and *Blaise le savetier*. What is less commonly known is that Sedaine did not have any known ties to the *philosophes* until the late 1750s, several years after he had begun his literary career. Other than Mark Ledbury's book *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, which includes the most recent and detailed research on Sedaine's background, most studies of Sedaine have ignored how he negotiated his career in relation to the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. This raises several questions: If he did not start as a *philosophe*, how did he eventually become one? What was his motivation for choosing one genre over another? What were the main themes in his texts and why did he choose

⁴⁹ The pertinent passages in the *Correspondance littéraire* passages and Sedaine's burgeoning ties with the *philosophes* beginning in the late 1760s will be explored later in the chapter.

⁵⁰ Cited in Ira Owen Wade, "The Title of Sedaine's *Le Philosophe Sans le Savoir*," *PMLA*, vol. 43, no. 4, (Dec. 1928), 1031.

them? In this chapter, I demonstrate that Sedaine entered the literary arena with no allegiance to either of the camps and, in a maneuver that illustrates his astute approach to advancing his goals, allied himself with the *philosophes* only when they began to gain the advantage in the conflict. Ultimately, I argue that Sedaine succeeded in advancing his career as a writer precisely because he was well-informed of the social and political dynamics of the eighteenth century. He published and staged his works in relation to the developments in the conflict, and his acute social networking skills determined the alliances he established with the most influential figures at a given time.

Having gained recognition as an *opéra-comique* playwright in the first decade of his literary career, Sedaine leapt at the opportunity to have a play staged at the Comédie française in the early 1760s. This project would be more ambitious. In response to Palissot's anti-*philosophe* play, *Les Philosophes* (1760), he intended to reconcile the tarnished image of the *philosophe* with the public, through his first actual drama, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*:

En 1765, m'étant trouvé à la première représentation des *Philosophes*, je fus indigné de la manière dont étaient traités d'honnêtes hommes de lettres que je ne connaissais que par leurs écrits. Pour réconcilier le public avec l'idée du mot philosophe que cette satire pouvait dégrader, je composai *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*.⁵¹

As my analysis will show, the writer's handling of the reconciliation theme emerged as a pivotal factor in the play's success by situating it apart from the common themes of other plays of the time, which tended to gravitate around the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* divide.

In this chapter, I will first explore the years and events surrounding Sedaine's debut in the literary arena and social circles. Second, I will chart the strategic turns that Sedaine took in

⁵¹ Pixérécourt, *Théâtre choisi*, 509. Although Sedaine says it was in 1765, the first representation of *Les Philosophes* took place in 1760. Robert Garapon notes that Sedaine must have erroneously mixed his play's representation date with that of *Les Philosophes*: "Annexes," Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Robert Garapon (Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1990), 132, note 7.

negotiating his social connections and writing practices in order to establish legitimacy as an author in an unstable literary arena for up-and-coming writers. Then, a close look at the state of the Parisian theatrical scene in the 1750s and early-1760s, including the impact of *drame bourgeois* on the divide, will lead into an in-depth analysis of Sedaine's most important play, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* (1765). In essence, Sedaine crafted this latter work to position himself as a *philosophe* while ensuring that the play's content did not participate in the polarizing aspects of the divide between the *philosophes* and their adversaries. I will conclude the chapter with a commentary on the continuing legacy of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, and the play's influence on Sedaine's post-1765 career.

2.1 BIRTH OF A WRITER: SEDAINE IN THE 1750S

No detailed biography of Sedaine exists, and the information available often proves inconsistent.⁵² Nevertheless, literary historians essentially agree on the main turning points in his life. Sedaine was born in Paris in 1719. His architect father's death led Sedaine to interrupt his studies during his teenage years in order to provide for his family. At first, he practiced stone cutting, and later, following in his father's footsteps, he began working as an architect under the tutelage of Jacques Buron. Buron, however, encouraged Sedaine to nurture his interest in

⁵² For example, the exact date of birth differs in three of the many resources that I used for this autobiographical section. In "Notice sur Sedaine," his birthday is said to be July 4th, Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Œuvres choisies de Sedaine*, (Paris: Librairie de la Hachette et Cie, 1865), i-ii. In the Slatkine edition's "Notice sur Sedaine," Georges d'Heylli records it as June 2nd, Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Théâtre*, Ed. Georges d'Heylli, 1877, (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), iv-xxxiv. Garapon claims that Sedaine was born on July 2nd, "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, vii-viii. I therefore limit the information in my text to that which is consistent with most of Sedaine's biographies produced. For a larger listing of published sources for Sedaine's life, see Mark Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 77-78, note 1; also for Ledbury's own reconstruction of Sedaine's life until 1756, see *ibid.*, 77-86.

literature by allowing him to finish his studies while continuing his apprenticeship. The fact that Sedaine excelled in both led to Buron's decision to make the young architect his associate. This afforded Sedaine enough financial freedom and time to pursue his literary endeavors, and in 1752, he published his first work, a collection of poems called *Poésies fugitives*.

The wife of the renowned historian Jules Michelet, Athenaïs, has written about how Sedaine took advantage of his newly improved financial situation and extra time to improve his appearance, mind his manners, form alliances with the necessary figures, and frequent the establishments that could help him in his literary pursuits.⁵³ According to Mme Michelet, Sedaine's most widely-read poem in the collection, "Épître à mon habit," celebrates his success in the salons of the time.⁵⁴ His actions and comportment were those of a careful writer who closely observed the growing conflict between the *philosophes* and their adversaries, and made sure to not engage in the polemics. Sedaine's alliance with Jean-Joseph Vadé, a friend of prominent anti-*philosophes* such as Fréron and Claude Joseph Dorat, two arch-enemies of Voltaire, combined with his efforts in forming ties with the *philosophes* only a few years later, reveal his determination to advance his career by befriending influential allies regardless of their allegiance in the conflict. Ledbury notes Sedaine's familiarity in the early 1750s with the *Encyclopédie*, citing the writer's direct reference to the spelling of a specific word in it, which proves that "he had access to the work" (85). As an ambitious writer, Sedaine deliberately avoided choosing sides in the early 1750s and sought to first gain recognition, and then earn prominence by keeping a broad number of literary options available. As an aspiring poet, he

⁵³ Madame Jules Michelet, "La Maison de Sedaine et de Michelet: ses origines. – Ses belles années et sa décadence," *La Nouvelle revue*, Tome 26, (Paris: 1884/01), 17. The author's maiden name is Athénaïs Mialeret. She married the historian Jules Michelet in 1849.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17. Ledbury also calls it a "witty society poem, revealing Sedaine's own familiarity with salon life," *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 83.

formed a friendship with Vadé; as an aspiring *opéra-comique* writer, he formed alliances with prominent composers such as Philidor and Jean-Louis Laruelle; as an upcoming playwright, he formed alliances with Voltaire and Diderot. Finally, in the early 1760s, as the *philosophes* began to get the upper hand in the conflict, he showed his allegiance to the *philosophes* by presenting his most important play as a work intended to reconcile the figure of the *philosophe* with the public. The divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* remained an influential backdrop not only in Sedaine's literature, but also in function of his career's advancement.

The success of *Poésies fugitives* was modest, but earned the admiration of the then-retired ex-magistrate Claude-François-Nicolas Lecomte. The next opportunity arrived when Lecomte offered his protection to Sedaine and welcomed him to his home. Finally freed from financial worries, Sedaine abandoned architecture and fully concentrated on literature, always mindful of what steps were needed to build a successful career. Ledbury notes how, by the mid-1750s, Sedaine began to experiment with plays that he wrote for his friends in private parties and used personalized poems to enhance his social relations: "These occasional dramas, taken together with the significant numbers of poems addressed to individuals, provide evidence of the extent and importance of sociability to Sedaine at this time" (86). The roles that Buron and Lecomte played in Sedaine's early career cannot be emphasized enough: "Buron avait fait du tailleur de pierres un architecte; Lecomte fit de l'architecte un auteur."⁵⁵ Sedaine's literary talent and increasingly important social connections succeeded in attracting the interest of Jean Monnet, the director of the Opéra-Comique, who, in 1754, requested that the young playwright write something for his theater.⁵⁶ According to Sedaine, it was only when Monnet's longtime

⁵⁵ Notice sur Sedaine," *Œuvres choisies de Sedaine*, i. The author of the notice is not indicated.

collaborator and their mutual friend Jean-Joseph Vadé retired from writing, nearly two years later, that he acquiesced to the director's dogged pursuit. The result was the opera-comique *Le Diable à quatre*, which marked Sedaine's entry into theater.⁵⁷ From this moment on, he would work primarily in this genre, and his skill in forming friendships with influential figures would once again prove central to his career (Michelet 18-19). Until Sedaine left it in late 1760s, the Lecomte family's house, which had also become his home, welcomed highly prominent *gens de lettres* such as Rousseau, Diderot, d'Alembert, Fredrich Melchior Grimm, Jean-François de La Harpe, Jean-François Ducis, and Duclos, as well as composers such as Grétry, Philidor, and Monsigny (Michelet 19).

However, in 1756, Sedaine was still an unestablished writer. According to Maurice Albert, at the time he wrote *Le Diable à quatre*, Sedaine was largely seen as a newcomer to the literary scene.⁵⁸ Ledbury portrays Sedaine as a writer whose "practice had always met with resistance" and one that continuously struggled to gain the approval of Voltaire (214). He and Brown add that Sedaine's background and writing style continuously hindered his legitimacy as a writer.⁵⁹ This shows that the young writer needed to overcome more barriers than other writers to gain recognition. His successful career trajectory from the mid-1750s to the mid-1760s proves however that he possessed the dexterity needed to deal with challenges faced by an up-and-

⁵⁶ Pixérécourt, "Quelques réflexions inédites de Sedaine," *Théâtre choisi de Pixérécourt*, 501-03. See also Madame Michelet, "La Maison de Sedaine," *La Nouvelle Revue*, 21.

⁵⁷ Ledbury questions the validity of Sedaine's self-declared reluctance, and believes that as a close friend of Vadé and a writer who has shown recent and extensive interest in the *opéra-comique* genre, it is "unsurprising that he should begin writing for Monnet's theater," *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 86-87.

⁵⁸ Maurice Albert, *Théâtres de la foire (1660-1789)*, (Paris: Hachette, 1900), 210. Albert refers to Sedaine as a "nouveau venu dans les lettres" and a "nouvelle recrue."

⁵⁹ Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 196-97, 288. Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Ch. 4, p.29. Sedaine's struggles with authorities, academies and other elite bodies would continue throughout his career and life. The period after mid-1760s is outside the scope of my work, but for an extensive outlook at Sedaine's post-1765 career and times, I refer to Ledbury's *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, chapters six, seven, and eight.

coming writer. If Sedaine aimed to succeed in the theatrical arena, his literary talent would need to adapt to changing trends, and he would need to put his social skills to use, in order to successfully maneuver in influential circles.

2.2 FRENCH THEATER PRIOR TO *LE PHILOSOPHE SANS LE SAVOIR*

When the Comédie française, Paris's most prestigious theater, staged Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* for the first time on December 2, 1765, the *philosophes* and their enemies, despite opposing each other on several fronts, shared the same opinion of theater's potential for the propagation of their ideas. Throughout the 1750s, the publication of numerous pamphlets, journals, letters, and treatises, coupled with efforts by both camps to establish favorable liaisons with influential figures inside royal circles and powerful institutions, perpetuated the increasing animosity between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. The dissidence between the two camps finally culminated in the May 2, 1760 staging of Palissot's anti-*philosophe* play *Les Philosophes* and Voltaire's theatrical riposte *Le Caffé ou L'Écossaise* performed less than three months later, on July 26.⁶⁰ As the summer of 1760 came to an end, the public's lively reaction to both plays left little doubt that theater represented the most salient medium to reach the public and that both camps needed to appeal first and foremost to theatergoers in order to garner support for their causes.

Theater held a unique position in the conflict for a few reasons. First, it provided the anti-*philosophes* an opportunity to wage the battle against their enemies on equal footing: “public

⁶⁰ For more information on the crucial role of Palissot's and Voltaire's plays in the *philosophe* vs. anti-*philosophe* conflict, see Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, Ch. 2-5.

theater' meant a performance space to which access was restricted only by the price of admission and not by social standing, as opposed to private venues, such as the court or an aristocratic home."⁶¹ Hence, theater allowed the anti-*philosophes* to attack their opponents without the disadvantages that they faced in the other major literary form of the century, the novel. Masseau underlines the difference between theater and the novel in relation to the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*:

L'art du spectacle semble comporter des effets plus facilement contrôlables, d'abord parce qu'ils sont publics et collectifs, ensuite parce qu'une longue tradition les a répertoriés, analysés et soumis à l'épreuve du réel. À l'inverse, le roman, en plein essor, aux formes relativement nouvelles, fait l'objet d'une lecture solitaire, pouvant s'exercer à chaque instant et n'importe où: dans l'intimité calfeutrée du boudoir ou dans la chaleur du lit, objet, l'on s'en doute de toutes les suspensions.⁶²

Through the medium of novels, the *philosophes* proved more effective than their enemies in infiltrating their ideas even in the most intimate surroundings. In contrast, the anti-*philosophes* knew that their opponents held no such advantage in theater since a play sought less to form a one-on-one connection with the spectator than to resonate with a large group of people whose only common point may have consisted of the entry ticket that each possessed. In short, theater provided a battleground on which both camps had precisely the same tools available to them for the goal of propagating their ideas. Throughout the middle of the eighteenth century, theater's reputation as the most respected form of art continued to grow. As Henri Lafon observes, prior to the 1750s, novelists rarely talked about theater or put their works in dialogue with contemporary

⁶¹ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Introduction, p.15-16.

⁶² Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 299. Masseau also points out the anti-*philosophes*' overall uneasiness with the idea of having to battle the *philosophes* on the grounds of "l'esprit du siècle." The apologists are on the turf of the *philosophes* in terms of style and "goût du jour," thus hopelessly outmatched, especially when it comes to Voltaire who is particularly brilliant in "art de l'esquive": 273-76.

plays in their prefaces or *avant-propos*.⁶³ However, throughout the 1750s and the 1760s, the prefaces of novels manifested a gradual “rapprochement” to theater, and some novelists, such as Antoine Bret, openly expressed their fascination with theater. As Lafon shows, novelists worried that the less-regulated structure of novels, compared to that of plays, would cause their work to lose their value. They began to draw parallels between the two genres in the prefaces of their works in order to insure their legitimacy. As a result, references to models of major theatrical genres invaded the discourse of novels’ prefaces (438-39). Connors argues that theater owed its importance over other forms to its “inherently social” nature: “Theater performances, unlike reading, provide immediate visual sensory data, thus differing from the gradual interpretive process of deciphering words on a page” (23).

The second reason why theater held a unique position in the conflict concerned its usefulness to the *philosophes* as a way of achieving their objectives. Brown notes that theater constituted a crucial element for the *philosophes* in their quest to “redefine the relation of knowledge to society” after 1750.⁶⁴ Playwrights were able to present “their inimitable ‘genius’ to society at large” through their spectacles and “since public theater, more than any other venue, brought together multiple segments of society, Enlightenment writers considered it the best forum for [their] project.”⁶⁵ In *Mélanges pour Catherine II*, Diderot talks about theater’s vivid effects on the public: “On ne lit pas un sermon. On lit, on relit dix fois, vingt fois une bonne comédie, une bonne tragédie. On la trouve jusque dans le faubourg” (cited in Masseau 63). Yet the opportunities that theater provided were not exclusive to the *philosophes*. In the context of

⁶³ Henri Lafon, “Le Roman au miroir du dramatique,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 13 n. 2-3, (Janvier-Avril. 2001), 437-38.

⁶⁴ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Ch. 1, p.26.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*, there was no doubt about theater's role as the leading form of art for both camps. Connors observes that "as the 1750s came to a close, *philosophes* and anti-*philosophes* experimented with a variety of genres in order to reach the most people possible" (44). He adds that they experimented with several genres such as "vulgarisations, pamphlets, and polemical tracts," and concluded that "[...] in this [eighteenth] century of *théâtromanie*, there was no better way to get an idea across to a large segment of the population than with the dramatic arts" (44-45).

The third reason why theater held a unique position was that a play had more potential than any other type of writing to hold the attention of the reading public or the theatergoers, because it offered them more than one single way to enjoy the work. They could choose to see it as a performed spectacle or read it at their home. An individual could read novels, journal articles, or treatises, but unless he or she actively sought others who had also read the same work and set aside a time to discuss it with them, reading remained primarily a solitary activity. Theater differed from those genres in that it had a built-in social aspect that necessitated a different approach for the most part. Since playwrights traditionally published a play's text after its first representation, the ability to enjoy the same work twice usually began with the viewing and followed with the reading.⁶⁶ It allowed the public to become more familiar with the play, discuss it with their friends or in salons, and debate over its plot or style. Individuals could also read the play and then watch it at the theater. This allowed them to enjoy the same work twice and draw comparisons between the two experiences. Furthermore, since theater was a social

⁶⁶ Connors shows that Voltaire was an exception to this rule since he wrote and circulated *Le Caffé ou L'Écossaise* in 1759, one year before it was performed on stage, 149. According to Connors, this was unintentional since Voltaire originally did not plan on staging the play. He did nevertheless use the pre-publishing of the text to his advantage to promote the play through pamphlets, once he decided to bring it to the stage as a riposte to *Les Philosophes* by Palissot, 145, 149, 186-87.

event where many spectators simultaneously enjoyed the same performance, one did not need to search for others in order to share their thoughts; the discussion could begin as soon as the performance ended. Connors affirms that once “we strip theater down to its bones,” its “inherently social” nature is blatant since “it is an interpersonal action among individuals and groups, including, but not limited to, authors, readers, actors, and spectators” (23).

Theater fascinated the public not only because the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* spread to the stage but also because some of the major shifts within the Republic of Letters emanated from developments related to theater. As the philosophical camp attempted to unite around the *Encyclopédie* project, theater became the focal point of a major controversy amongst the leading figures of the *philosophes*. In the 1750s, a quarrel broke out between Rousseau and d’Alembert over the latter’s *Encyclopédie* article “Geneva.” In the article, d’Alembert claimed that the Genevans no longer adhered to Calvinistic values and criticized the city for not having any theaters: “Le séjour de cette ville, que bien des François regardent comme triste par la privation des spectacles, deviendrait alors [if theaters were allowed] le séjour des plaisirs honnêtes, comme il est celui de la Philosophie & de la liberté.”⁶⁷ While the first portion of d’Alembert’s criticism outraged Geneva’s ministers, Rousseau severely criticized d’Alembert in his *Lettre à d’Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758) for suggesting that Geneva needed theater. The letter not only played a partial role in d’Alembert’s abandonment of the *Encyclopédie* project, but it also included an attack on Diderot in the preface.⁶⁸ In return, along with d’Alembert’s own response to Rousseau, *philosophes* such as Voltaire and Jean-François

⁶⁷ “Genève.” *Encyclopédie*.

⁶⁸ For an exact quote of the passage in question see Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1999), 419. It also includes a note attached to it by Rousseau which, according to Marmontel, leaves no doubt that Diderot was the target although Rousseau does not mention him by name.

Marmontel also refuted Rousseau's attacks in their own writings, thus confirming the Genevan writer's definitive exclusion from the philosophical camp.⁶⁹ Rousseau's virulent letter also indirectly criticized Diderot's suggested model of theater. It comes as no surprise that disagreements on topics central to theater resulted in not only the rupture between a major contributor to the *Encyclopédie* project and the other leading *philosophe* figures, but also, as Robert Niklaus notes, in Rousseau's passage to the enemy camp: "C'est sur cette question [the social utility of theater] qui resta longtemps à l'ordre du jour, que Rousseau décida de prendre position contre les philosophes, et narguant tout ensemble d'Alembert, Voltaire et Diderot, de signifier publiquement qu'il passait dans le camp ennemi" (156).

Just a few years earlier in 1752, Duclos, one of the leading figures in the philosophical camp that Paul Meister calls "le chef incontesté des gens de lettres," drew attention to this type of quarrel among *gens de lettres*.⁷⁰ In his *Les Considérations sur les mœurs de ce siècle*, Duclos warned his fellow writers that lack of respect for each other and quarrels incited by jealousy would only serve as an opportunity for those "idiot" writers opposing them to express their hatred under the guise of contempt.⁷¹ Thus, at a time when the *philosophes* needed most to unite in their efforts against their enemies, they suffered a major setback with Rousseau's highly publicized exit. Needless to say, with the conflict's main protagonists being the widely

⁶⁹ Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Lettre de d'Alembert à M. J.-J. Rousseau sur l'article Genève* (Amsterdam, 1759). Marmontel wrote over 150 pages worth of articles to refute Rousseau in the *Mercure* during 1758-59, Marmontel, *Memoires*, 800, note 18. For Voltaire's involvement in the conflict, see Robert Niklaus, "Diderot et Rousseau: Pour et contre le théâtre," *Diderot Studies*, vol. 4, (1963), 155. For more information on the history of the conflict between Rousseau and the *philosophes* in the 1750s, see Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 35-40. For a detailed analysis of the controversy, see Bruno Bernardi, "Rousseau lecteur de ses lecteurs. La controverse de 1758 sur les 'cercles'," *Annales Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, n. 47, 2007, 347-363.

⁷⁰ Cited in Michel Gaulin, *Le Concept d'homme de lettres, en France, à l'époque de l'Encyclopédie* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 37-38. The author uses the French word "sot."

recognized Rousseau, d'Alembert, and Diderot, and theater situated at the heart of the conflict, the French devoured any news surrounding the event. As the marquis de Castries wrote, news of Rousseau and Diderot penetrated every level of French society: "Cela est incroyable; on ne parle que de ces gens-là, gens sans état, qui n'ont point de maison, logés dans un grenier: on ne s'accoutume point à cela."⁷²

In the 1750s, theater was also going through stylistic changes. Aiming to innovate the theater and transform the theatrical experience, Diderot theorized the *drame bourgeois*, which proposed that theater should place on the stage characters with whom the spectators could identify.⁷³ The *drame bourgeois* also sought to stage a different type of protagonist who belonged most likely to the bourgeoisie, did not descend from a privileged blood line, worked for a living, and progressively built a personal philosophy based on life-related experiences rather than on readings or education. The family's comfort would act as the primary source of his or her happiness. Personal virtues often conflicted with the obligations imposed by the community, and the hero of the *drame bourgeois* often faced decisions that pitted his reason against his passions.

The *drame bourgeois* soon came to be regarded as the *philosophes'* preferred theatrical genre. In the *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, Pierre Frantz notes that "the *drame* itself was very much part of [the] conflict" between the *philosophe* and the anti-*philosophes*: "Charles Palissot and Fréron, in particular, raged against the new genre, while, in the other camp, the entire clan of Encyclopedists rallied around their leader [Diderot]."⁷⁴ As Jean Goldzink notes, "la conception diderotienne du drame bourgeois" favored them and renewed the rapport between

⁷² Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort, *Maximes, pensées, caractères et anecdotes*, (London: T. Baylis, 1796), 237.

⁷³ In this paragraph, I merely give a brief outline of the *drame bourgeois*. For more details on the genre, see "Diderot et le théâtre," Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien, précédé des Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1981).

⁷⁴ "Drama," *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Michel Delon (New York: Rutledge, 2013), 396.

theater and *philosophie*: “Pour la première fois, une théorie théâtrale se trouve liée publiquement à un ‘parti’ dit ‘philosophique.’ Les Lumières rêvent par là de rénover le théâtre en réconciliant la scène avec la philosophie.”⁷⁵ He also adds that the *drame bourgeois* not only reconciles the *philosophe* figure with the public, but also enhances its esteem in the eyes of the public:

la théorie du drame, en postulant que la scène peut et doit fournir une image presque mimétique du monde, afin que le spectateur s’y reconnaisse et s’y implique assez pour faire retour sur lui-même au lieu de s’aliéner dans la tragique ou le comique traditionnels, offre un cadre tout à fait propice à la valorisation d’une telle figure dramatique. (269)

As Jean-Pierre Perchellet affirms, Diderot believed that “l’art peut – et doit – servir à préparer l’opinion publique à un changement social et politique [...] Désormais, le théâtre doit servir à réformer les mœurs.”⁷⁶

The fact that the *drame bourgeois* was becoming a channel through which their enemies were disseminating their ideas did not escape the attention of the anti-*philosophes*, notably that of their leader Fréron. Robert L. Myers, in his study of Fréron’s critique of the genre, notes that the journalist looked favorably to the genre during its early years, but that he “preferred to consider the *drame* as a direct descendant of the French *tragie-comédie* of the early seventeenth century.”⁷⁷ However, as Fréron began to realize that the *philosophes* intended to “use the *drame* as a means of propagating their revolutionary ideas,” his tone changed from one of cautionary appreciation to rejection of the genre (39). During the late 1760s and the early 1770s, Balcou says that Fréron’s critique of the genre can be categorized as a “véritable réquisitoire.”⁷⁸ He adds

⁷⁵ *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L’image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815*, ed. Pierre Hartman, 268.

⁷⁶ Jean-Pierre Perchelet, “La Philosophie en scène face à la critique, de Fréron au Groupe de Coppet,” *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L’image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, ed. Pierre Hartman, 2003), 329-38. The particular quote is on page 330.

⁷⁷ Robert L. Myers, “Fréron and the Drame Bourgeois,” *The French Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Oct., 1957), 35.

that the journalist harshly criticized writers such as Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, Charles-Georges Fenouillot de Falbaire, and Louis-Sebastien Mercier (despite Mercier's often adversarial stance against the *philosophes*), on their sympathetic views of the genre and did not hesitate to classify them "sous la bannière de Diderot."⁷⁹ In 1770, he went as far as, quite intentionally, associating the genre with the *philosophes*: "on représente maintenant presque tous les jours d'ennuyeux Drame Philosophiques qui font la honte de la Nation, tandis qu'on néglige les chefs-d'œuvre des *Molières* et des *Regnards*."⁸⁰ For his part, Sedaine formed a connection between *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* and the divide between the two camps by explicitly stating his intention to reconcile the image of the *philosophe* with the public in the aftermath of Palissot's play, and introducing his protagonist as a *philosophe*. While ensuring his play's adherence to the basic elements of Diderot's genre, Sedaine sought, through the play's main character Monsieur Vanderk, to reconcile the term *philosophe* with the public in his *Le philosophe sans le savoir*.

Around the same time that Diderot was challenging theatrical conventions with his new genre, theater production was going through a major change in its infrastructure. The day that saw the performances of Sedaine's two *opéra-comiques*, *Blaise le savetier* (1759) and *On ne s'avise jamais de tout* (1761), marked a turning point in stage performance: the Comédie-Italienne and the Opéra-Comique merged together under the name Comédie-Italienne (or

⁷⁸ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 385.

⁷⁹ Ibid. As the case of Mercier shows, it should be noted that the line between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* was not always clearly demarcated in terms of how each side viewed the *drame*. For example, Claude-Henri de Fusée de Voisenon (l'abbé) was a friend and protégé of Voltaire, yet he launched a virulent attack (that Fréron praised in his *L'Année littéraire*) against the genre during the nomination of Prince de Beauvau at the Académie française in 1771, Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 385.

⁸⁰ Élie-Catherine Fréron. *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 2, Lettre 1, *HathiTrust Digital Library*, (Paris: Delalain, 1770), 34.

Théâtre-Italien) and established the Hôtel de Bourgogne as their joint theater.⁸¹ As a result, the *opéra-comique* genre that Ledbury describes as “the most significant dramatic development of the mid-[eighteenth] century [...] reaching new heights of popularity” also gained prestige and attracted more writers.⁸² Sedaine established himself as a major contributor to the genre’s success, to the point where later critics would label him as the creator of the *opéra-comique*.⁸³ Along with the Comédie française, Parisians now enjoyed stage productions by two major theaters. Sedaine, having already gained fame in the *opéra-comique* genre in the urban fairs, would later produce *Le Roi et le fermier*, a three-act modern *opéra-comique* written in prose, better suited for the newly-formed Comédie-Italienne and staged for the first time on November 2, 1762 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Sedaine excelled in two of the most popular theatrical genres of the century, the *opéra-comique* first and the drama a few years later.

Rousseau’s falling out with the philosophical camp, Diderot’s introduction of the *drame bourgeois*, the high-profile staging of the *philosophes*’ conflict with the *anti-philosophes* in 1760 through the performances of *Les Philosophes* and *Le Caffé ou L’Écossaise*, and the fusion of the Opéra-Comique and Comédie-Italienne, only served to further inflame the public’s fascination with theater from the late 1750s to early 1760s. Regardless of one’s position in relation to the

⁸¹ Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Opéra-comique: A Source Book* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), introduction xiv, 1. Sedaine claims that the fusion of the two establishments on February 3, 1762, took place to accommodate his *opéra-comique*, *On ne s’avise jamais de tout* (1761), “Quelques réflexions inédites de Sedaine sur l’Opéra-comique,” *Théâtre choisi de G. de Pixérécourt*, 506. Ledbury, while admitting that at first that it seems like a “wild and arrogant claim” by the author, later deems it possible in *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 98-99.

⁸² Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze and the Boundaries of Genre*, 58. See pages 58-62 for a comprehensive presentation of the state of the genre in the eighteenth century.

⁸³ David Lévy Alvarés, *Esquisses littéraires ou Précis méthodique de l’histoire ancienne et moderne des littératures européennes et orientales, destiné à la jeunesse et aux gens du monde*, (Paris: 1843), 313, HathiTrust Digital Library. Henri de Curzon, *La Vie artistique: La musique, textes choisis et commentés*, (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1914), 189. Georges Cucuël, throughout his *Les Créateurs de l’opéra-comique français* also underlines the numerous contributions of Sedaine to the genre’s creation and expansion (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1914), HathiTrust Digital Library.

philosophe vs. anti-*philosophe* divide, there was no doubt among *gens de lettres* that theater was, as Connors contends, “France’s most visible and popular means for disseminating information” (111). For a writer, theater essentially represented the way to achieve recognition in the eyes of the public.⁸⁴ Sedaine was anything but an outsider to the conflict when his *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* was performed for the first time in 1765, and he was certainly familiar with theatrical production. As Ledbury confirms, Sedaine’s motivation to write the play originated from his awareness that if he intended to set himself up as a major writer in drama, he needed to aim to have a play staged at the Comédie française:

Firstly, for any dramatic writer of any aspiration, the performance of a play at the Comédie-Française was still the pinnacle of achievement. Sedaine’s increasing ambition, and the complexity and success of his [*opéra-comique*] productions of the early 1760s, together with the newly official status of his genre [at the Théâtre Italien], would have led him to think of a prose drama as a logical next step. (104)

The timing was perfect for Sedaine to take that step with *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* which was to become not only the capstone of the *drame bourgeois*, but also one of the most widely-known plays of the century.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Daniel Roche confirms that “to become an author,” a man of letters must “change register, set himself forth on the theater, where the public is the judge of success or failure,” cited in Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Introduction, p. 25-26, note 24.

⁸⁵ Jean Goldzink refers to it as “le drame le plus fameux” and as “le drame bourgeois le plus réussi” in his article “Le philosophe dans le drame bourgeois” in the collection *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L’image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, ed. Pierre Hartman, 2003), 269, 276. Sara Maza calls it “the most successful play of this genre” in her article “Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 69, no. 2, (June 1997), 225. Ira Wade calls *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* “one of the most discussed of the eighteenth-century plays” in his article “The Title of Sedaine’s *Le Philosophe Sans le Savoir*,” 1026. Wade also calls Sedaine’s play “of all the eighteenth-century *dramas*, the most successful [one]” in “Middle-Class Philosophes, Middle-Class Philosophy, in the Drama of the Eighteenth Century,” *Modern Philology*, vol. 26, no. 2, (Nov. 1928), 215. Ladislav Günther calls it “une exception dans la production du XVIII^e siècle” in his *L’Œuvre dramatique de Sedaine*, Diss., U Paris, (Paris: Émile Larose, 1908), 215. Gustave Lanson, calls it “Le meilleur modèle du genre sérieux,” cited in “Jugements sur ‘Le Philosophe sans le savoir,’” Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Paris: Larousse, 1954), 82. In an article that appeared in *Le Figaro* on September 15, 1875, Jules Prével calls the play “un des chefs d’œuvre du Théâtre-Français,” cited in the first of the “Appendices” in Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Théâtre*, ed. George d’Heylli, 1877 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 364.

When Sedaine affirmed that he specifically created the play to take up the defense of the *philosophes*, he also said that he knew the *philosophes* denigrated in Palissot's play only from their writings.⁸⁶ However, his relationship with Diderot shows that his claim was not entirely accurate. Robert Garapon affirms that Sedaine may have already formed a friendship with Diderot before 1760.⁸⁷ Furthermore, as discussed previously, he had already formed strong enough ties with the philosophical camp to undertake, in 1760, what Wade terms "the lead advance guard of the philosophic army" when he organized a group of *philosophe* friends to applaud the first representation of Voltaire's *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise* in the *parterre* of the Comédie française.⁸⁸ In any case, the success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* established Sedaine's reputation as an accomplished playwright and guaranteed him an important place in the Republic of Letters that he could not have obtained had he limited his literary production to the *opéra-comique*.⁸⁹ As Ledbury notes, despite the genre's increasing popularity, the Opéra-Comique was still an "institution that was frowned upon by academies, administrators, critics, and intellectuals of all persuasions."⁹⁰ Sedaine's play cemented his allegiance to the *philosophes*'

⁸⁶ In the quote in question (see note 51), Sedaine referred to *philosophes* as "honnêtes hommes de lettres que je ne connaissais que par leurs écrits." For more on Sedaine's early collaborations with the *philosophes*, see Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, chapter three.

⁸⁷ "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, xiii.

⁸⁸ Ira Wade, "The Title of Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*," 1031 ; Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze and the Boundaries of Genre*, 95.

⁸⁹ Brown explains in detail why "the Opera offered much less of an opportunity for aspiring writers to achieve the status of men of letters" in *A Field of Honor*, ch.1, p.12.

⁹⁰ Ledbury, *Sedaine, Greuze and the Boundaries of Genre*, 58. Ledbury argues further that it was not so much the genre, but rather the Opéra-Comique's increasing "popularity among all classes" that irritated its opponents and led them to adopt a condescending tone to the genre (61).

camp. The play's adherence to the *drame bourgeois*, and its close parallels to *Le Fils naturel* and *Le Père de famille* showed Sedaine's familiarity with Diderot's writings.⁹¹

The success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* produced the type of results envied by most ambitious writers of the mid-eighteenth century. While he never produced any literary work that came close to the success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, Sedaine significantly prospered as a writer after 1765.⁹² The play confirmed his allegiance to the *philosophes*, who rapidly gained ground and influence against their opponents throughout the 1760s and 1770s.⁹³ It also propelled Sedaine's reputation to that of an established man of letters. In 1768, he became *secrétaire de l'Académie d'Architecture*, a position which earned him a substantial pension and provided him with an apartment in the Louvre.⁹⁴ He played a key role in the formation of the Société des Auteurs dramatiques (SAD) in the mid-to-late 1770s.⁹⁵ Later, Catherine II of Russia became his protector, and finally in 1786, Sedaine was elected to the Académie française.⁹⁶ In the next section, I will tackle selected passages from *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* to determine in what ways the play helped Sedaine situate himself in relation to the conflict between the two camps.

⁹¹ In his review, Louis Petit de Bachaumont, calls the play "dans le goût du *Père de famille*, et du *Fils naturel*," cited in "Jugements sur 'Le Philosophe sans le savoir,'" Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 76.

⁹² Despite the tremendous success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, Sedaine wrote only three other *dramas* for the remainder of his literary career, with only one, *La Gageure Imprévue* (1768), receiving modest accolades.

⁹³ Both McMahon and Connors confirm that 1760s and 1770s represented the most significant period for the *philosophes* as they consistently gained influence over their opponents in established institutions. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 6-7, 19-26; Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 218.

⁹⁴ "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, viii.

⁹⁵ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Intermission, p.3. According to Brown, during the formative years of SAD, the Duke de Duras, the First Gentleman primarily responsible for overseeing the Comédie française, first asks Marmontel, Joseph Saurin, and Sedaine to assemble a group of *honnêtes* writers to make suggestions on author-theater relations.

⁹⁶ "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* ed. Garapon, viii.

2.3 *LE PHILOSOPHE SANS LE SAVOIR* AND THE POLEMICS OF THE DIVIDE

Most studies of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* agree that it is the most successful *drame bourgeois* in the eighteenth century and one of the most important plays in the history of French drama.⁹⁷ Some scholars such as Niklaus and Goldzink point to the play's close adherence to Diderot's theorization of the *drame bourgeois*, while others such as Elizabeth Guibert-Sledziewski, Sarah Maza, and Wade center their studies on social and class politics. Wade also retraces, along with Georges d'Heylli and Garapon, the genesis of the play and the controversy surrounding its title. Ledbury argues that the play owed its success less to how well it adhered to Diderot's *drame bourgeois* than to a mixture of Sedaine's expertise and background in the *opéra-comique*, as well as the *philosophes*' appropriation of the *drame bourgeois* genre. While these studies make important contributions to the existing scholarship on the play, they do not read the play in the context of the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. While Sedaine said that he sought to reconcile the public with the idea of the word "*philosophe*" through a play in 1760, it is impossible to pinpoint exactly when he actually wrote it. Sources show that he wrote the play sometime between late 1760 and the second half of 1764.⁹⁸ Olivier Ferret's study shows that those are the peak years of the conflict between the *philosophes* and their adversaries in theatrical production.⁹⁹ During this period, numerous playwrights situated their plays around the

⁹⁷ See note 85.

⁹⁸ "Quelques réflexions inédites de Sedaine sur l'Opéra-comique," *Théâtre choisi de G. de Pixérécourt*, 509. Sedaine says it took an entire year to get the play past the censors, which dates the writing of the play to before 1764. See also the section "La Genèse et les sources d'inspiration" in the "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, xvii-xviii. Ledbury gives the most exhaustive account of the play's genesis and shows that a draft of the play was ready by 1763 and probably revised by Diderot, Grimm, and Préville, an important actor at the Comédie française, *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 105-06.

⁹⁹ Ferret, "Mises en scène satirique des Encyclopédistes," *Le Philosophe sur les planches*, 113-128.

quarrel sparked by Palissot's *Les Philosophes*. According to Connors, the Parisians were growing tired of the battle between the two camps by the end of 1760, and the staging of the conflict was coming to a conclusion by 1765 (158-59, 226). Yet, as Paul Souday notes in the *Revue de Paris* (1928), the play's influence extended beyond the theater:

Le Philosophe sans le savoir conserve donc au moins un intérêt historique, et même à un double titre: d'abord par le genre et la facture; ensuite par les tendances morales. C'est une des premières pièces réalistes... et c'est aussi un document sur les idées de l'époque. Cette année 1765 marquait le triomphe des philosophes et encyclopédistes... La cabale de Palissot mordait la poussière. Les jésuites étaient expulsés. Le *Traité de la tolérance* et le *Dictionnaire philosophique* de Voltaire venaient de paraître, ainsi que le *Contrat social*, et cette même année avait vu la réhabilitation de Calas.¹⁰⁰

Thus, considering Sedaine's play against the backdrop of the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* provides valuable insight on two levels. First, how did Sedaine orient his play's engagement in the polemics surrounding the conflict? Second, how did his goal of reconciling the term *philosophe* with the public fit into his play's engagement in the divide? In the following pages, I will seek answers to these questions through the study of selected passages.

2.3.1 The plot, the censorship proceedings, and Sedaine's fruitful persistence

Le Philosophe sans le savoir focuses on a family led by M. Vanderk, a successful middle-class merchant who values "la droiture, l'honneur, la probité" in a man, regardless of his social class, heritage, and title.¹⁰¹ The first two acts introduce the main characters that comprise the Vanderk

¹⁰⁰ Cited in "Jugements sur 'Le Philosophe sans le savoir,'" Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 83.

¹⁰¹ Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Œuvres choisies de Sedaine*, (Paris: Librairie de la Hachette et Cie, 1865), 10. This edition's text is the modified version, in other words, the censored version that was represented in theaters until 1875 at which date the original version was restituted. It is this text that was used when the play was staged in 1765. All quotes from Sedaine's plays will come from this edition unless noted otherwise.

household. M. Vanderk has a loyal valet named Antoine whose daughter Victorine secretly harbors affection for the young Vanderk, who in turn appears deeply troubled by something. M. Vanderk also has a sister who lives on another estate and who, unlike her brother, adheres to aristocratic values. Meanwhile, the family is preparing for the daughter Sophie's upcoming marriage to a certain *homme de robe*. In the third act, M. Vanderk is devastated to learn that his son, following an altercation at a local café earlier, has challenged another officer to a duel that is scheduled to take place the next day (19). From that point forward, the play focuses on the struggles of M. Vanderk as he attempts to deal with several pressing issues at the same time. He learns the next morning that his son left the house without his knowledge to attend the duel on time, and sends his valet Antoine to keep him apprised of the developments while he hides the truth from the rest of the family to spare them the emotional torment on the day of Sophie's wedding. Throughout the day, he attempts to tend to his sister's petty needs and tries not to worry his wife by appearing happy. In the meantime, he continues his duties as a merchant by accepting to give a loan to the desperate Monsieur Desparville, a retired officer, despite learning that the latter's son is the one opposing his son in the duel (30). Fortunately, the two sons reconcile moments before the duel takes place, and the play finishes with the young Vanderk arriving at the house alive and well, accompanied by M. Desparville and his son. M. Desparville recognizes M. Vanderk's magnanimity in agreeing to loan him money despite the knowledge of their sons' duel, and everyone happily joins Sophie's wedding celebrations.

Diderot published *Le Fils naturel*, his first *drame bourgeois*, in 1757. He defined the particularities of the genre, which he named "le genre sérieux," in *Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, in three conversations between *moi* and Dorval.¹⁰² In the third conversation, Dorval speaks about

¹⁰² Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, 80.

the difference between the traditional Greek and Roman tragedies and the proposed genre (91-92). According to Dorval, a play that has a family-based tragedy in its plot will have “un sublime qui lui sera propre” (92). Although Dorval does not give a concrete description of how he defines *sublime*, he repeats two quotes by two different fathers to their sons, and subsequently claims that he can *feel* the *sublime* in their words. The second quote is of particular interest to Sedaine’s *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*: “Dites toujours la vérité. Ne promettez rien à personne que vous ne vouliez tenir. Je vous en conjure par ces pieds que je réchauffais dans mes mains, quand vous étiez au berceau” (92). The 1762 dictionary of the Académie française specifically defines the word “sublime” in the narrow context of morality and wit: “Haut, relevé. Il n'est d'usage que dans les choses morales, ou qui regardent l'esprit.”¹⁰³ Following the *Dictionnaire*’s definition, the first in-sentence example shows its common usage to indicate individual merit: “C'est un homme d'un mérite sublime.” Through Dorval’s remark, Diderot clearly shows that he considers being truthful and honoring engagements as two of the highest requirements of what he terms *sublime*. In one of the pivotal moments from the original and uncensored version of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, Sedaine draws closely on Diderot’s idea of the *sublime*.¹⁰⁴ Once aware of his son’s commitment to a duel, M. Vanderk resigns himself to his son’s intention to keep his promise: “Je suis bien loin de vous détourner de ce que vous avez à faire. [...] quand on a pris un engagement vis-à-vis du public, on doit le tenir quoi qu’il en coûte à la raison, & même à la nature” (Slatkine 63). This quote closely resembles Diderot’s second *sublime* quote above, both originating from the two fathers in the respective plays. Diderot ultimately holds the

¹⁰³ “Sublime.” *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, Quatrième édition, 1762*, (The University of Chicago: The ARTFL Project, Dictionnaires d'autrefois).

¹⁰⁴ Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Theâtre*, ed. Georges d'Heylli, (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970). All quotes referring to the original manuscript of Sedaine’s play “tel qu’il le présenta aux comédiens français et avant l’examen du censeur” will come from this edition (Avertissement xxxix). In further in-text citations or endnotes, I will designate this edition by “Slatkine.”

keeping of a promise as the indispensable trait of a sublime *esprit*. Similarly, M. Vanderk does not derail his son's plans to engage in the duel despite the possibility of his death and the resulting chagrin to his family, because doing so would force his son to break a promise. He must allow his son to uphold the engagement, or else he would not be a sublime father figure. Accordingly, M. Vanderk reluctantly agrees to let his son proceed with the duel, and even prepares letters for him to carry, in case he wins and must flee to England in effort to avoid prosecution (Slatkine 69-70).

The father's allegiance to honoring past promises to the detriment of his son figured not only to be one of the plot's central elements in *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, but also caused a controversy with the authorities. The controversy ultimately resulted in Sedaine facing the difficult choice of either obeying the authorities and eliminating certain portions from his original text, or resisting the censors, and in the process, risking the performance of the play and his future. Sedaine's decisions throughout the censorship process proved to be one of the major turning points in the negotiation of his literary identity. At first, the censors vehemently opposed the passage when they initially read the manuscript. Edicts passed by Louis XIII and Louis XIV forbidding the duel were still in effect and the censor, François-Louis Claude Marin, required Sedaine to change or eliminate several sentences referring to the duel. Of particular concern to Marin were the sentences in which M. Vanderk did not try to persuade his son not to attend the duel. According to M. Vanderk, his son must honor the commitment. That M. Vanderk would not even attempt to divert his son from a possible encounter with death appeared morally unacceptable to the censors.¹⁰⁵ Left without a choice, Sedaine removed the above-mentioned *sublime* quote from the text along with a few others, and modified several scenes to appease the

¹⁰⁵ There is an account of Sedaine's dealings with the censors in the "Notice sur Sedaine" in Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Œuvres choisies de Sedaine*, iii.

censors.¹⁰⁶ These changes must have deeply bothered Sedaine who did not take lightly to having his hero's intentions and words altered. In an article that appeared in *Le Figaro* on September 15, 1875, Jules Prével reveals a document from Sedaine's dealings with the censors in which he comments on the forced modifications:

Les considérations les plus sages m'ont forcé de changer la situation et d'affaiblir mon caractère principal [...] si cet ouvrage a le bonheur d'être représenté dans les pays étrangers [...] je crois que le caractère de mon Philosophe, tel qu'il était, aura plus de ressort et le personnage plus de feu [...] Ce n'est pas que le public n'ait bien vu et bien décidé. J'avais diminué la force, le nerf, la vigueur de mon athlète, et je lui laissai le même fardeau à porter: les proportions étaient ôtées.¹⁰⁷

The above quote illustrates Sedaine's strong attachment to his protagonist. His repeated use of the first-person possessive adjective when referring to M. Vanderk echoes the great amount of care that he put into creating his character. Sedaine did not wait long to inform the public of what had occurred. The first two editions of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, published a few months after the first performance, contained the modified parts as "variantes" preceded by Sedaine's notes and commentary on the changes imposed by the censors.¹⁰⁸

The above modifications did not however bring Sedaine's ordeal with the censors to a conclusion. Sedaine also needed to modify that same scene's ending to transform M. Vanderk from a father who writes letters of protection on behalf of his son, in case the latter survives the duel and has to escape the country, to one who scolds him for attempting to kill another. In the censored version, M. Vanderk orders his son to go to his room while he ponders a solution that does not include proceeding with the duel. The final changes to the text were so drastic that

¹⁰⁶ See page xli, in the "Avertissement" of the Slatkine edition for the reduction in the number of scenes in each Act. Amongst other major changes, the pivotal conversation between the father and the son, that took place in Act III, Scene 8 in the original version, moved to Act III, scene 5 in the subsequent version.

¹⁰⁷ Cited in "Appendice 1," (Slatkine) 360-61.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 359-60.

certain critical reviews of the play could only refer to the staged version or to the uncensored one, because certain parts of the versions did not correspond at all.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to the uncensored version where M. Vanderk gathers letters for his son in case of an exile, in the censored version, M. Vanderk condemns the duel and sends him to his room (20). The young Vanderk has to furtively leave the house early the next morning in order to make the duel on time (21).

Even after these significant alterations, a commission composed of the Lieutenant General of Police Antoine de Sartines, the criminal lieutenant M. Testard du Lys, and the King's prosecutor of Châtelet demanded to first see a private performance of the play in order to approve its public staging.¹¹⁰ Sedaine's efforts since the late 1750s to form close ties with the *philosophes'* leading figures finally began to yield results. Diderot and Grimm severely criticized the censors, mockingly speculating that if Marin had lived over a century ago, Richelieu would not have had to worry about Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*, because its staging would have been denied.¹¹¹ Unlikely to agree to any further modifications, Sedaine knew that this last hurdle would determine whether his play would see the stage or not.¹¹² This was a critical turning point in Sedaine's career. His *opéra-comique* works had already garnered success, but having a drama

¹⁰⁹ For example, in his favorable review, corresponding to the uncensored version, the literary critic Jules Janin called *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* a masterpiece based on M. Vanderk's acceptance of his son's engagement in a duel: "le grand art de ce drame, ce qui est bien rare à toutes les époques, c'est l'absence complète de toute déclamation [...] le drame est tellement préparé qu'il faut absolument que le fils se batte en duel et que le père y pousse son fils [...] c'est un drame sérieux et triste où il est démontré que, dans certaines positions de la vie, le duel n'est pas seulement une nécessité, mais qu'il est un devoir." Jules Janin, *Histoire de la littérature dramatique*, t.4, (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1854), 50.

¹¹⁰ "Appendice 1," (Slatkine), 358.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 357.

¹¹² Ibid., 360-61. Sedaine's disappointment in the forced changes is evident in his quotes. He talks of his play "[qui] ne remplit pas son titre" after the changes, and of "affaiblir mon caractère principal," and finishes the passage with "Je desire que la représentation, en quelque lieu qu'elle se fasse, assure la justesse de ma réflexion."

performed in Paris, especially at the Comédie française, was the highest accomplishment possible for a playwright.¹¹³ Resolute to make no further changes, Sedaine contrived a brilliant way to win the commission members' support. He convinced them to invite their wives to the private performance. His goal was simple: he wanted to win over the members' wives, who would judge the play with only their hearts and no concern for legislation and bureaucracy. He counted on their emotional reaction to the play to have a positive bearing on their husbands' decision, and as a consequence, the proceeding's outcome. In fact, according to Grimm, when M. de Sartines warned Sedaine that the wives would not understand the legislative part of the process, Sedaine's reply confirmed his intention: "N'importe [...] elles jugeront le reste."¹¹⁴ Sedaine's brilliant idea worked, as Grimm reports in the *Correspondance littéraire*:

M. Sedaine a de l'esprit; sans cette précaution, nous n'aurions peut-être jamais eu la satisfaction de voir sa pièce. Madame de Sartines est fort aimable; madame la lieutenant-criminelle a de fort beaux yeux, sans compter un naturel charmant. Les beaux yeux de ces dames ont fondu en larmes pendant toute la répétition. La sévérité des magistrats n'a pu tenir contre de beaux yeux en larmes.¹¹⁵

The commission's private performance took place on November 29, 1765. Sedaine's plan bore fruit as *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* took the stage on December 2, 1765, three days after the private performance for the commission. The theatergoers' interest rapidly increased, and twenty-eight performances followed in less than two months.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Brown explains why the Comédie française offered the possibility of a passage to an "elite" status for a writer and tells in detail why "the Opera offered much less of an opportunity for aspiring writers to achieve the status of men of letters" in *A Field of Honor*, ch.1, p.11-12.

¹¹⁴ Cited in "Notice sur Sedaine," *Œuvres choisies de Sedaine*, iii.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Also, according to Ledbury, Grimm viewed Sedaine as a playwright whose "plays are chiefly to be appreciated for their ability to provoke emotional response," *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 119-20.

¹¹⁶ "Appendice 1," (Slatkine), 359. The article also reports that the first two months receipts for the play equaled an average of over "2000 livres," in other words, "un immense succès – en 1766." For a full list of the play's number of representations up to the year 1928, see "Annexe IV," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, 135-36.

The play's approval and staging did more than help Sedaine cement his position as a partisan and friend of the *philosophes*. As noted earlier, Sedaine's timing proved impeccable because during the period of the 1760s to the 1770s, the *philosophes* gained the upper hand in the conflict against their enemies (Connors 218; McMahon 6-7 and 19-26). The play confirmed Sedaine's adherence to the status of elite men of letters. Even though Sedaine wrote *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* as a reaction to Palissot's play, he did not target the anti-*philosophes* like Voltaire did with his *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise*. To that end, he also set his play apart from the abundant number of other plays that explicitly took part in the *philosophe*, anti-*philosophe* divide.¹¹⁷ The following sections will explore how he accomplished those goals, starting with how he fashioned his play's style through elements of theatrical production in order to create the perfect Diderotian *drame bourgeois*.¹¹⁸

2.3.2 Sedaine's *drame*: décor, monologues, intimate scenes, *circonstance*, and *condition*

As Grimm notes in the December 15, 1765 issue of the *Correspondance littéraire*, Diderot loved the play, helping to solidify his friendship with Sedaine: "Avant de faire représenter sa pièce, Sedaine avait voulu la soumettre à Diderot. Lorsque la lecture fut finie, celui-ci, se levant avec véhémence du sentiment qui lui était naturelle, se précipita dans les bras de Sedaine en s'écriant,

¹¹⁷ *Les philosophes manqués* by André-Charles Cailleau, *Le Philosophe soi-disant* by Jean-François Marmontel, *Le Petit Philosophe* by Antoine-Alexandre-Henri Poinsinet, *Les Philosophes de bois* by Louis Poinsinet de Sivry, *Le Philosophe ami de tout le monde* by Charles-Pierre Coste d'Arnobat, are some examples of plays inscribed in the staging of the conflict between the *philosophes* and their adversaries. Ferret also offers an analysis of a few plays that generated from Palissot's play and Voltaire's riposte, in "Mises en scène satirique," *Le Philosophe sur les planches*, 113-128.

¹¹⁸ Robert Niklaus calls *Le philosophe sans le savoir* "le chef-d'œuvre du drame tel qu'il [Diderot] le conçoit" in his article "Diderot et Rousseau," 174.

‘Oui, mon ami, si tu n’étais pas si vieux, je te donnerais ma fille.’”¹¹⁹ Diderot’s reaction to Grimm after seeing the first performance of Sedaine’s play is equally ardent: “Oui, mon ami, oui, voilà le vrai goût, voilà la vérité domestique, voilà la chambre, voilà les actions et les propos des honnêtes gens, voilà la comédie.”¹²⁰ Diderot’s response may appear exaggerated, but it must have given Sedaine great satisfaction to receive such praise from one of the top figures in the *philosophe* camp. In this segment, I will examine, through the example of one particular scene, how Sedaine crafted his own *drame bourgeois* that impressed the inventor of the genre so much.

As the fifth and final act begins in *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, Victorine, the daughter of Monsieur Vanderk’s loyal servant and confidant Antoine, and the *sœur de lait* of M. Vanderk’s children, is filled with sorrow as she observes the wedding ceremony at the house: “Cette cérémonie que je croyais si gaie, grands Dieux! comme elle est triste!” (27). Unbeknownst to everyone in the ceremony, except Victorine, Antoine, and M. Vanderk, the young Vanderk has left the house early in the morning to take part in the duel. This scene reveals Sedaine’s methods for provoking a unique emotional reaction from the audience by coherently combining the elements of décor, monologues and intimate dialogues, with the dynamics of “circonstance” and “condition.” As La Harpe notes, these elements contribute to the plot’s central conflict: “L’intérêt de la pièce est d’ailleurs fondé sur le péril du fils, péril que l’auteur a jeté avec art au milieu de la joie et des fêtes d’une noce.”¹²¹ They accentuate its potentially

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique de Grimm et de Diderot* (Paris: Furne, 1829), Tome IV (1764-1765), 461, note 1. Ledbury also notes the close collaboration between Sedaine, Diderot, and Grimm, and retraces their meetings through the first half of the 1760s in *Sedaine, Greuze, and the Boundaries of Genre*, 104-06.

¹²⁰ Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, 461, note 1.

¹²¹ Cited in “Jugements sur ‘Le Philosophe sans le savoir’” Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 80.

disastrous consequences on the household by foregrounding its effect on M. Vanderk, Victorine, and Antoine during a day of celebration.

Victorine's intimate monologue amplifies her heartbreak and calls for the spectator's sympathy during her brief escape from the ceremony crowd. Garapon affirms that Sedaine not only respected the unities of time and place in his play as Diderot envisioned them in the *drame*, but deliberately used them to contribute to the emotional response generated by the play.¹²² He explains that through the use of décor and the small number of characters, the play succeeds in avoiding noisy and crowded scenes although the action takes place during a day of celebration in the Vanderk household. Drama critic Francisque Sarcey writes that Sedaine "avait l'instinct du théâtre à un degré prodigieux; que toutes les qualités en sont scéniques que littéraires."¹²³ Most scenes take place in intimate surroundings and feature, for the most part, monologues or two-person dialogues, drawing attention to the characters' emotions.¹²⁴ For example, in the scene described above, the stage direction first signals Victorine's awareness of a nearby large crowd, "se tournant vers la coulisse d'où elle sort," then her observations confirm the crowd's presence, "tout le monde demande M. Antoine [...] Jamais ici il n'y a eu tant de monde," and yet for a brief moment, she finds herself alone enough to manifest in complete intimacy the emotions running through her mind (27). Although Victorine plays a secondary role, Sedaine was aware of the fact that her character would resonate with the public and add to the play's success. The nineteenth-century literary critic Saint-Marc Girardin, in his *Cours de littérature dramatique* (1843-1868), notes the importance of Victorine to the eighteenth-century audience:

¹²² Garapon, "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, xxii.

¹²³ Cited in "Jugements sur 'Le Philosophe sans le savoir,'" Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 81.

¹²⁴ Garapon. "Introduction, xxiii. According to Garapon, monologues and dialogues with two persons make up more than seventy percent of the text.

Peindre un sentiment qui commence à naître, et le peindre dans sa première fleur, montrer ce que c'est qu'une amitié de jeune fille et laisser à cette amitié la pureté et la douceur qu'elle perdrait à devenir de l'amour, voilà le mérite de Sedaine dans Victorine [...] Telle qu'elle est dans Sedaine, Victorine est une esquisse charmante de l'amour ingénue et qui fait honneur au XVIII^e siècle.¹²⁵

Another emblematic example of Sedaine's efficient use of staging occurs when M. Vanderk and M. Desparville are talking about the loan that the former will make to the latter. M. Vanderk first learns that the man sitting across the desk is the father of his son's enemy. Then, three knocks on the door of the cabinet inform him (mistakenly as it will turn out) that his son has just been killed by the young Desparville (30). A conversation that began as a business transaction quickly turns into one where only a table separates M. Vanderk from the father of his son's murderer, a door from the bearer of the news that his son died, and another door from a crowded celebration. The scene involves a major turning point in the story with three active participants; yet the sequence happens in the intimate surroundings of M. Vanderk's *cabinet* with only two characters on stage. This careful arrangement allows the audience to concentrate on M. Vanderk's reactions as he encounters two devastating revelations within moments of each other. Sedaine's stage direction further emphasizes the tension by having M. Vanderk collapse on his seat in agony at the end of the third knock, followed immediately by his brief monologue as he despairs over the loss of his son (30). Sedaine's use of theatrical space plays an instrumental role in orienting the theatergoers' emotional reactions as they watch the scene end with M. Vanderk left alone in anguish.

Sedaine's use of monologues and intimate dialogues differs from other *dramas bourgeois* of the period. As the preceding example shows, Sedaine carefully builds distinct portraits of the

¹²⁵ Cited in "Jugements sur 'Le Philosophe sans le savoir,'" Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 80. The character of Victorine also intrigued George Sand to the point of writing a play, *Le Mariage de Victorine* (1861), based on the unexplored love between her and the young Vanderk in Sedaine's play.

play's main characters by according each one at least a monologue or an extended scene with another. The spectator knows in detail every member of the Vanderk family household and their personalities by the end of the first act. Act II further serves to develop them before the action picks up pace early in the third act. Even M. Desparville, who enters the stage for the first time early in the fifth act, still gets two lengthy scenes with only one other character in each and a monologue in between. In one analysis of Diderot's use of dialogues, Peter France points to the "multiplicity of voices" emerging as distinct sounds at times, and merged together at others.¹²⁶ France claims that when the voices merge together, it becomes "hard, unless one is keeping a close watch on the stage directions, to know quite who is talking," and attributes the failure of Diderot's two dramas to this factor (25). *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* succeeds precisely where Diderot's plays fail because of Sedaine's ability to depict each character in detail. George Sand argues that it is in the characters that *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* finds its "grandeur" with the French public:

Où est-elle? dans la forme? – Non, car il n'y a pour ainsi dire pas de forme [...] Dans la couleur? – Non, la couleur est bonne sans être belle précisément. La grandeur est dans les types. Ces types ne sont pas des types flamands, j'en demande pardon aux critiques: ils sont Français, et bien Français. Ce sont les derniers bons Français du XVIII^e siècle.¹²⁷

By underlining their human qualities and exposing their inadequacies in intimate scenes, Sedaine avoids the cacophony of several voices merging together. For example, unlike the five acts in Diderot's *Le père de famille*, where each scene averages approximately three characters, in *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, the average number of characters per scene remains low,

¹²⁶ Peter France, *Diderot*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 20-26.

¹²⁷ Cited in "Jugements sur 'Le Philosophe sans le savoir,'" Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, (Larousse), 80.

especially once Act III begins and the narrative gains momentum.¹²⁸ This allows the spectator to focus on fewer numbers of characters and to identify personally with their emotional reactions. As the scenes become more intimate and the action intensifies, the monologues also turn into more than simple reflections on the situation. Unlike the monologist in *Le père de famille* who rarely gets interrupted, has the time to complete his reflections, reaches conclusions based on them, and accordingly decides on a plan of action, the monologist in *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* has very little time to reflect and often gets interrupted, as is the case with Victorine in the scene above (27-28). At the end of the Act II in *Le Père de famille*, in an extensive monologue, Germeuil takes his time reflecting on the intentions of Saint-Albin and Cécile, and concocts a plan for further action.¹²⁹ In a similar instance of personal reflection in Sedaine's play, Victorine can neither resolve her inner conflict, "Cette cérémonie que je croyais si gaie, grands Dieux! comme elle est triste! Mais lui, ne s'être pas trouvé au mariage de sa sœur; et d'un autre côté....," nor finish her monologue, "Où est-il allé? Je....," before M. Desparville abruptly walks in (27-28). M. Vanderk falls prey to the same feeling of helplessness after his son's departure to the duel when his monologue filled with desperate utterances concerning his family's fate is interrupted by the marquise: "Je voyais devant moi toutes les misères humaines... Je m'y tenois préparé. La mort même... Mais ceci.... Eh! Que dire... Ah! ciel!..." (22). In short, the monologist in Sedaine's play does not have the luxury of reflection; she agonizes, suffers, and stirs the feelings of the theatergoers, or the readers, who often find themselves attached to her inner turmoil.

¹²⁸ "Introduction," Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, xxiii. Garapon notes that the average number of personages in the five acts of the play are 2.8, 3.4, 1.8, 2, and 3.4. In my analysis, Diderot's *Le Père de famille* averages through the five acts 2.5, 2.9, 3.0, 2.9, and 3.6 personages per scene.

¹²⁹ Denis Diderot, *Le père de famille : comédie en 5 actes et en prose ; avec un Discours sur la poésie dramatique*, (Amsterdam: 1758), 107-08.

The duel's circumstances frustrate Sedaine's main characters to the point where they not only feel forced to submit to those circumstances, but they also feel too stupefied to get past them. Victorine's frustration originates from the irony that the young Vanderk is engaged in a duel while a wedding celebration takes place in his family's house, and that his possible death could instantly ruin such a day of happiness for the family. At first, her interpretation seems to fulfill one of the requirements of the *drame bourgeois* as Diderot intended it: the actual events and the circumstances that they create, and the consequences of these events on the characters' state of mind, must drive their "passions" and "déclamations": "il ne faut point donner d'esprit à ses personnages, mais savoir les placer dans des circonstances qui leur en donnent..."¹³⁰ However, I would argue that Sedaine rather uniquely reverses the effect in Victorine's scene above. The circumstances in which she finds herself do not give her any *esprit*; instead, they paralyze her. She is essentially stuck in time, unable to get past the conundrum in her head, which originates in the incongruity between her prior conception of a wedding ceremony as a happy event and the actual sadness that she feels during her *sœur de lait*'s wedding ceremony. M. Vanderk, the young Vanderk, Antoine, and Victorine are the only characters with the knowledge of the imminent duel. Therefore, Victorine's characterization of the ceremony as "triste" should neither apply to the guests in the house, nor to Madame Vanderk, Sophie, and the marquise who naively believe that the young Vanderk is simply late. Victorine's exclamatory remark surrounded by several short sentences and utterances that compose her monologue underline her inability to balance the ceremony's *gaie* mood with her inquietude resulting from circumstances beyond her control.

¹³⁰ Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), 47. The quote and the notes 44, 46, 47, and 48 refer to *Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, which covers pages 23-116 in the book.

The other characters that are aware of the duel also experience moments during which they feel as powerless as Victorine. In the first conversation between M. Vanderk and his son, prior to the aunt's arrival, unaware that a few hours earlier his son has committed to a duel, M. Vanderk informs him that "lorsqu'un homme entre dans le monde, il est le jouet des circonstances" (9). Ironically, at that very moment, the young Vanderk has already turned himself and his father, into "jouet[s] des circonstances" by committing to the duel. For the rest of the play, the guilt of having unintentionally caused pain to his family torments the young Vanderk. As to M. Vanderk, he attempts to maintain an emotional balance for the next several hours while various circumstances require his attention on his daughter's wedding day and force him to face intensely desperate moments more than once. Finally, Antoine is also at the mercy of circumstances as his mood swings throughout the play from confusion to agitation, then to desperation, and finally to astonishment when he sees the young Vanderk alive and well in the last scene of the play. He even suffers a nervous breakdown and loses coherence shortly after he realizes that the young Vanderk had already departed for the duel (25-26). The young Vanderk's engagement in the duel carries consequences that have turned the play's four main characters into "jouet[s] des circonstances" but not necessarily given them *esprit*, contrary to what Diderot suggests should happen in a *drame*. Especially from Act III on, the duel's presence and its direct influence on moods and actions progressively intensifies. The consequences of the duel create circumstances that leave the characters, such as Victorine in the scene described above, bewildered. In *Le Père de famille*, although the conflict gets resolved at the end thanks to an unlikely turn of events, most of the personages already had plans for what to do next. In contrast to them, Sedaine's M. Vanderk, the young Vanderk, Antoine, and Victorine are tormented by the circumstances to the point of essentially being stuck in time, without any plans because they

seem incapable of looking past the duel's outcome.¹³¹ Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* shows that writing a good *drame* consists of more than simply adhering to a certain set of rules. Louis Petit de Julleville, the nineteenth-century literary historian, notes that the play “n'est rien autre en réalité que le *Père de famille* de Diderot refait par un homme qui a su mettre en pratique, en les corrigeant, les theories de l'auteur du *Fils naturel*.”¹³² Émile Faguet, in his *Histoire de la littérature française* (1903-1910), adds that the play “était précisément ce drame bourgeois [...] qui était dans le goût de tout le monde, que tout le monde avait essayé et que personne n'avait fait.”¹³³

The duel provides the backdrop for Victorine's remarks, as well as for the other monologues in the play. An insult that evokes the importance of social status, “la condition,” gives birth to this particular duel. According to the young Vanderk, he hears the young Desparville call merchants “fripons” and “misérables” in a café (19). These verbal attacks on his father's social status and profession motivate the young Vanderk to challenge the young Desparville to a duel. According to Diderot, “la condition,” not the personalities, must constitute the play's driving force. Moreover, Diderot insists on the complete reversal of the two for the *drame bourgeois*: “Que ce ne sont plus, à proprement parler, les caractères qu'il faut mettre sur la scène, mais les conditions. Jusqu'à présent, dans la comédie, le caractère a été l'objet principal, et la condition n'a été que l'accessoire; il faut que la condition devienne aujourd'hui

¹³¹ The Garapon edition of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* shows that, if the appendices later added by Sedaine are taken into account, M. Vanderk makes plans for his son to escape in case he wins the duel in the original version of the play, p. 76. But he is at a loss on how to handle his family if his son dies. However, in the censored version, M. Vanderk is unable to plan past the duel regardless of the outcome.

¹³² Ibid., 80.

¹³³ Ibid., 82.

l'objet principal, et que le caractère ne soit que l'accessoire.”¹³⁴ The main characters in *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* appear to be obsessed with social status. Thus, an insult to it triggers a series of events to which they remain accessories. In this case, one such insult results in the two young men's hasty engagement in a duel.¹³⁵

Finally, according to one of the play's variants, provided by Sedaine in the appendices, despite the initial shock of learning his son's upcoming duel, M. Vanderk quickly shows concern for status in relation to his son's choice of pistol over sword: “Vos pistolets? L'arme d'un gentilhomme est son épée!”¹³⁶ Diderot's use of *condition* in the *drame bourgeois* includes family ties as one of its indispensable components in addition to social status: “Ajoutez à cela, toutes les relations: le père de famille, l'époux, la sœur, les frères.”¹³⁷ Social status and family define the *condition* that replaces *caractère* as the principal element of a *drame*: “Les conditions! Combien de détails importants, d'actions publiques et domestiques, de vérités inconnues, de situations nouvelles à tirer de ce fonds!”¹³⁸ For M. Vanderk, the duties and responsibilities associated with his status as a merchant, father, husband, and brother combine to exert greater influence on his decision-making than does his personality. Sedaine essentially built the plot of his most successful literary work on a contradiction deriving from an insult to a particular *condition*, and surrounded that plot with characters equally motivated by their own *conditions*.

¹³⁴ Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, 96.

¹³⁵ In the uncensored version, M. Vanderk alludes to the tight connection between *condition* and obligations: “Vous êtes militaire, & quand on a pris un engagement vis-à-vis du public, on doit le tenir quoi qu'il en coûte à la raison, & même à la nature” (Slatkine 63).

¹³⁶ Sedaine, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, ed. Garapon, 71. Also for more on the variantes, see Slatkine, 359-60.

¹³⁷ Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, 97.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

2.3.3 Avoiding the polemics of the divide

While creating the perfect *drame bourgeois*, Sedaine also employed a set of tactics to distance his play from the two works that epitomized the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. He refused to inscribe his play in the polemics of the divide as it played out on stage through Palissot's *Les Philosophes* and Voltaire's *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise* in 1760, and other plays that revolved around the quarrel in the following few years. In this section, I will show how Sedaine maintained the delicate position of not appearing as the enemy of the anti-*philosophes* while manifesting his allegiance to his *philosophe* friends.

Although Sedaine admitted to writing his play as a response to *Les Philosophes*, the strategy of his response greatly differed from that of Voltaire who chose to retaliate against Palissot with his own malicious play.¹³⁹ *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* remained clear of the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* that resonated throughout many plays in the early part of the 1760s, instigated by *Les Philosophes* and *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise*.¹⁴⁰ Sedaine circumvented the conflict by avoiding four important characteristics that defined polemical plays and other texts that both sides abundantly produced during their campaigns: personal attacks on the adversarial camp, the reductionist approach of both camps in portraying the other side in their propaganda, the pitting of *raison* against *sentiments*, and the setting of the play within the limited context of the quarrel resulting from Palissot's *Les Philosophes*. In doing

¹³⁹ Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 143-50. Connors shows how Voltaire modified the original text of his play that was written before 1760, once he decided to stage it in response to Palissot's *Les Philosophes*.

¹⁴⁰ For an excellent analysis of why the clash of the two plays, *Les Philosophes* and *Le Caffé ou L'Écossaise*, represents the most pivotal theatrical period in the conflict between the two camps, see Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 38-49.

so, Sedaine set *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* apart from other plays that the quarrel of *Les Philosophes* had inspired.

Sedaine's first tactic consisted of not letting his goal of reconciling the image of the *philosophe* transform *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* into an assault against the members of Palissot's camp. The plays of Voltaire and Palissot relied on personal attacks. Each author explicitly targeted the members of the opposing camp through the use of nasty insults and violent satires. Just as Palissot targeted Diderot, Helvétius, and Rousseau, through the easily identifiable characters of Dortidius, Valère, and Crispin, Voltaire ridiculed the anti-*philosophe* journalist and Palissot's close ally, Fréron, through the character of Frélon.¹⁴¹ As a result, both plays faced criticism, notably by l'abbé Coyer who warned Parisians about the dangers of having too many "comédies personnelles" staged in too short a time frame, and insisted that if theater intended to "corriger les vices, il ne doit employer que des traits généraux."¹⁴² In contrast, *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* remained devoid of the type of defamation that l'abbé Coyer criticized: "La diffamation sur le théâtre [...] est la plus publique, la plus grande et la plus criminelle de toutes."¹⁴³ Sedaine's play neither engaged in petty criticism of an existing personality nor maliciously targeted a specific group. Outside the comical representation of the aristocratic sister of M. Vanderk, Sedaine's characters in the play strongly believe in virtues such as love, respect, loyalty, honor, and magnanimity. Even through the marquise, Sedaine attacks social prejudices rather than the nobility. In describing his sister to his son, M. Vanderk presents her as someone with a good heart, but corrupted by prejudices: "elle est cependant la meilleure de toutes les

¹⁴¹ For an analysis of why Voltaire chose to attack Fréron rather than Palissot, see Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 64-66.

¹⁴² Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, 158 ; cited in Ferret, "Mises en scène satirique," *Le Philosophe sur les planches*, 122.

¹⁴³ Cited in Ferret, "Mises en scène satirique," *Le Philosophe sur les planches*, ed. Hartman, 126.

femmes: mais voilà comme un honneur de préjugé étouffe les sentiments de la nature et de la reconnaissance” (12). In essence, throughout *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, Sedaine replaces the defamation of character found in *Les Philosophes* and *Le Caffé ou L’Écossaise* with the critique of prejudice. Thus he aligns himself with the philosophical camp’s leaders such as Voltaire, Diderot, and D’Holbach who dedicated an important portion of their writings to vilifying prejudices without resorting to personal attacks on the leading members of the anti-*philosophes*.¹⁴⁴

Sedaine insists on showing that prejudice can influence not just the noble, but also anyone else obsessed by rank and status.¹⁴⁵ He ascribes certain prejudices to the play’s likeable characters, notably to the ones that value honesty and honor, such as the Desparville and the Vanderk father-son duos. The young Desparville instigates the initial dispute with the young Vanderk in the café by characterizing merchants as “fripons” and “misérables,” most likely because of their indifference to his father’s financial problems (19); M. Desparville arrives at his meeting with M. Vanderk expecting his request to fall on deaf ears, because the merchants that he previously visited for help tried to take advantage of his desperation (28-29); throughout Act II, scene 4, M. Vanderk attempts to convince his son that prejudices regarding social status, title, and rank are unfounded (8-10); and finally, even after allowing his son to participate in the duel, in a monologue, M. Vanderk admits his own costly penchant for honoring an engagement

¹⁴⁴ Voltaire’s *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* (1756), *Candide ou L’Optimisme* (1759), and *Le traité sur la tolérance* (1763), D’Holbach’s *La Contagion sacrée* (1768) and *Essai sur les préjugés* (1770), Diderot’s *Lettre sur les aveugles à l’usage de ceux qui voient* (1749), and *Le Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772) are some of the notable publications of the three *philosophes* that manifest considerable criticism of prejudices.

¹⁴⁵ In Act II, scene 6, M. Vanderk informs his son that his sister “ne pardonnera jamais l’état que j’ai pris” (11-12). Three scenes later, the marquise makes her entrance to the play and her vocabulary in scene 9 confirms her obsession with *état*: “condition,” “sang noble,” “rang,” “robe,” “air noble” (13-14).

regardless of the consequences.¹⁴⁶ An insult motivated by prejudice ultimately makes the Vanderk household's future hang in the balance of a duel's outcome: "n'est-ce pas [mon fils] qui fonde dans l'avenir tout le Bonheur de ma vieillesse? Et ma femme [...] sa santé faible; mais c'est sans remède: le préjugé qui afflige notre nation rend son malheur inevitable" (25). M. Vanderk refers to the prejudice that only a person without honor would breach his promise to a duel. It was the young Desparville's pejorative remark about the merchant class that provoked the young Vanderk into an altercation with him. Through several emotionally charged dialogues involving M. Vanderk, his son, M. Desparville, Antoine, and Victorine, Sedaine's play repeatedly reminds the readers and theatergoers that succumbing to prejudice carries grave consequences.

In discussing Sedaine's second tactic, I intend to underline how Sedaine presents, through M. Vanderk, the figure of the *philosophe* in comparison to the Encyclopedic one. Why does he make his *philosophe* devoid of *savoir*? How does the play's genre and title function together to pave the way for a broader definition of a *philosophe*? M. Vanderk diverges from the encyclopedic *philosophe* in more than one aspect. In *Entretiens sur le fils naturel*, maintaining that family relations must be an integral part of the *drame*, Diderot calls the genre "tragique domestique et bourgeois."¹⁴⁷ M. Vanderk is first and foremost a family man. However, the divergence deserves more analysis than just its attribution to the genre. Pierre Saint-Amand argues that the article "Philosophe" in the *Encyclopédie* paints the individual *philosophe* as a "supercitizen" who is motivated by "the idea of the social" and love for his country: "his passion

¹⁴⁶ Slatkine, 67. Although M. Vanderk's quote is in both editions, I am using the Slatkine edition as a reference for this particular one since it represents M. Vanderk's feelings of regret from making no attempt to stop his son from honoring the duel.

¹⁴⁷ Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, 95.

is the social relation; the object of his adoration is society. The *philosophe*'s passion for sociability, it might be said, is a reasoned passion; he is both reasonable and right to love his country. He worships society: this is his new religion."¹⁴⁸ On the one hand, the article "Philosophe" contains several terms dear to M. Vanderk such as "honneur" and "probité," along with "justesse" that echoes "droiture."¹⁴⁹ On the other hand, within the article's long and detailed description of the *philosophe*, there is not a single mention of family. This does not mean that *philosophes* were not family men. In fact, Diderot's dramas have protagonists that are as passionate about their family as M. Vanderk is about his. Nonetheless, while the *Encyclopédie* describes in detail the model *philosophe*'s disposition, including how he should act toward other members of society, and what values he should uphold, the fact that there are no indications about the significance of family and its value to the *philosophe* does show that family ties play a secondary role to the above. It must also be noted that Herbert Dieckmann's meticulous research points to Voltaire, the leader of the *philosophe* clan, as the true author of the article "Philosophe," and not to the grammarian César Chéneaux Du Marsais as noted in the *Encyclopédie*.¹⁵⁰ With d'Alembert and Diderot as editors, and Voltaire as its author, the long and detailed description of the *philosophe* in the article, and the complete lack of any reference to family in it, cannot be taken lightly.

¹⁴⁸ Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility: Politics, Violence, and the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 110-11. Saint-Amand further shows the *philosophe*'s attachment to civil society, his country, but in accordance with the article, makes no mention of his attachment to family.

¹⁴⁹ "Philosophe," *Encyclopédie*.

¹⁵⁰ Herbert Dieckmann retraces the origins of the article and its evolution until its final version in his *Le Philosophe, texts and interpretation* (St. Louis: Washington University, 1948), but a summary of Dieckmann's painstaking *parcours* of the text can be found in Martine Groult's presentation of "Le Philosophe" on ARTFL: University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project.

Another divergence from the article “Philosophe” occurs in a critical passage that did not make it to stage in the eighteenth century due to censorship. In the version that Sedaine initially presented to the censors, M. Vanderk manifests his inability to put reason ahead of prejudice when he does not object to his son’s participation in the duel, maintaining that one must honor an engagement in it at any cost (Slatkine 63). Considering that the duel is a crime according to the laws, and that its consequences could devastate the family to whose protection and happiness M. Vanderk is dedicated, his decision not to interfere with his son’s plan to attend the duel represents a moment where Sedaine’s *philosophe* ignores reason and diverges from the Encyclopedic ideal of the *philosophe*. These deviations distance Sedaine’s figure of the *philosophe* from the one that the anti-*philosophes* target and allow him to redefine it in a way that is not bound to the polemics of the conflict.

The play’s title explicitly states a second divergence: Sedaine paints the portrait of a *philosophe* without any *savoir*. While today *Le Petit Robert* defines the noun “savoir” as general knowledge or expertise, the *Dictionnaire académique* of 1762 offers a more elaborate definition, adding that good manners, display of wit, knowledge of secret affairs, or an in-depth knowledge of a certain art, science or profession, and other elements, also play a role in defining *savoir*.¹⁵¹ The title affirms that he lacks one or more of these qualities. As I will show in the upcoming pages, the anti-*philosophes* looked to portray their enemies as irrational individuals who claimed magical abilities and manifested an air of superiority over others.¹⁵² Sedaine resisted such polemics by painting his *philosophe* as a flawed individual who benefits from his qualities at

¹⁵¹ “Savoir.” *Le Petit Robert*. 2013. The word is defined as “ensemble de connaissances plus ou moins systématisées, acquises par une activité mentale suivie.” “Savoir.” *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française*, 1762.

¹⁵² For example, the anti-*philosophe* historian and writer Moreau accuses the *philosophes* of adopting an “air railleur” and a “ton de supériorité.” *Nouveau Mémoire pour servir à l’histoire des Cacouacs*, (Amsterdam: 1757), 53.

times and suffers from his shortcomings at others. Goldzink draws attention to the play's title and describes Sedaine's *philosophe*:

Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe sans le savoir? Un homme sans prétention intellectuelle, sans référence dogmatique abstraite, bref, sans *système* [...] Un homme qui se conduit *philosophiquement* parce qu'il met en pratique des vertus chères aux Lumières, [...] qui donn[e] à voir de la philosophie en action, une philosophie toute de conscience, mais sans science.¹⁵³ (276)

"Conscience" defines one's inherent moral values and thus influences that individual's ability to judge people or situations based on the intrinsic sense of good and bad founded on those values. M. Vanderk's philosophy is entirely of "conscience" when he chooses to hide his grief to avoid worrying his loved ones. During the sequence in the beginning of Act IV where he talks to Victorine and then to his sister, he tries to appear as calm as possible to avoid upsetting them. But the transitional and brief monologue between the two dialogues points to the far more violent emotions overwhelming him: "Je voyais devant moi toutes les misères humaines.... Je m'y tenais préparé. La mort même.... Mais ceci.... Eh! que dire?... Ah! ciel!..." (22). His philosophy is entirely of "conscience" at the precise moment he hears the third knock on the door which signals his son's death at the hands of the young Desparville, because he still proceeds to grant a loan in good faith to M. Desparville (30). His philosophy is entirely of "conscience" because, while worrying about his son's life and his daughter's wedding ceremony, he astutely forbids Victorine from talking to his wife, aware that the young servant's tearful eyes may alert his wife to the crisis at hand and consequently ruin her happiness (31).

The striking aspect of M. Vanderk is that, as he confronts one delicate situation after another during a day involving his son's duel and his daughter's wedding, he does not necessarily succeed in hiding his passions. For example, he gets angry with the young Vanderk

¹⁵³ Goldzink, "Le philosophe dans le drame bourgeois," *Le Philosophe sur les planches*, ed. Hartman.

to the point where his son gets intimidated and retires to his room at the end of Act III, scene 5. M. Desparville realizes that there is something wrong with M. Vanderk after the three knocks in Act V, scene 4. In short, Sedaine's *philosophe* occasionally lacks composure and reason, the latter being the Encyclopedic *philosophe*'s central feature as noted earlier. Without reason, he succumbs easier to his passions: "Plus vous trouverez de raison dans un homme, plus vous trouverez en lui de probité. Au contraire où règne le fanatisme & la superstition, règnent les passions et l'emportement."¹⁵⁴ M. Vanderk also lacks the ability to draw lessons from past experiences.¹⁵⁵ D'Holbach points out in his *Essai sur les préjugés* that for an experienced *philosophe* "savoir, c'est connaître les bornes où l'on doit s'arrêter; mais pour connaître ces limites, il faut avoir souvent parcouru un grand espace" (153). M. Vanderk was in the same exact dilemma as his son during his youth and suffered the bitter consequences of going through with the duel – exile, a long period of hardship, and the loss his family's honorable status.¹⁵⁶ Yet in the uncensored version, when faced with the knowledge of his son's engagement in an upcoming duel, despite his own past experience, M. Vanderk does not stop his son from going through with it. In fact, he even plans to assist his son in escaping the country if he wins the duel. The only two outcomes that M. Vanderk considers are his son's death or his escape as a criminal, rather than forbidding him to take part in the duel.¹⁵⁷

Stripping M. Vanderk of *savoir* also ensures that the play remains outside the type of rhetoric, in which *savoir* was a key component, used by the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*

¹⁵⁴ "Philosophe." *Encyclopédie*.

¹⁵⁵ This would only be valid for the uncensored version in which M. Vanderk lets his son go to the duel.

¹⁵⁶ See Act II, scene 4 for M. Vanderk's story of his younger years (8-10). In the Slatkine version, 29-35. No major variations between these two scenes.

¹⁵⁷ See Act III, scenes 8 and 11 (Slatkine 59-66, 69-70) in the uncensored version.

in their diatribes. Sedaine removes his protagonist's vulnerability to the defamation of the figure of the *philosophe* as so often employed in the anti-*philosophe* propaganda, thus resisting the staging of the polemics between the two camps. As noted earlier, M. Vanderk values integrity and honor, and seeks to make his family happy through those qualities and not through *savoir*. The anti-*philosophe* criticism could not possibly include Sedaine's main *philosophe* figure in its usual lambasting of the *philosophes* on the grounds of pretentiousness or false appearances. Sedaine depicted a *philosophe* that precluded any anti-*philosophe* criticism by preemptively underlining in the title that his hero lacked one of the main characteristics of the encyclopedic *philosophe* figure that the anti-*philosophe* discourse targeted. As Masseau has shown, the anti-*philosophes* used all the means available to them to paint an extremely pejorative portrait of their enemies (42-57). According to the anti-*philosophe* propaganda, the *philosophes* corrupted society with their poisonous ideas, sought to oppress anyone who did not support their ideas, and hypocritically refused to show any tolerance for their opponents despite having themselves championed that same notion for so long. More importantly, the anti-*philosophes* argued that the *philosophes* were impostors who pretended to have superior intellects (48). Masseau emphasizes that this image served to portray the *philosophe* as an individual who deliberately exaggerated "le champs de ses compétences" and adds that "le Philosophe s'attribuerait un pouvoir démesuré, qui dépasserait les capacités de l'esprit humain" (50). The anti-*philosophes* reversed the roles as they claimed to possess *savoir* and presented themselves as figures of the "érudit défendant la propriété d'un savoir contre les intrusions intempestives de l'intellectuel touche-à-tout" (50). In his virulent pamphlet *Nouveau Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire des Cacouacs* (1757), Moreau mockingly names the *philosophes* "Cacouacs" and describes them as seductive magicians who can trick others into believing that they are superior beings: "Les Cacouacs [...] ont beaucoup

d'esprit, de la politesse, [...] possèdent même dans un degré supérieur celui des enchantemens. Leur origine, si on les en croit, remonte jusqu'aux Titans qui voulurent escalader le Ciel." (3-4); "Ils sont grands parleurs: leur langage a quelque chose de sublime & d'inintelligible qui inspire le respect & entretient l'admiration" (17). At one point, moments after an older Cacouac blows powder in the narrator's eyes, the narrator regains his sight and notices his own excellence and grandeur: "Je fusse cru élevé au-dessus de l'Humanité même" (61). The Cacouac then teaches the narrator how to convince everyone else to believe his new image: "Ne t'informe point si cette grandeur est réelle ou imaginaire; il suffit pour ton bonheur que tu te croyes grand, & pour ta gloire que les autres ayent de toi la même opinion" (63). The recurring theme in Moreau's pamphlet is that the *philosophes* pretend to know everything and suffer from delusions of grandeur. Florence Lotterie notes that the anti-*philosophe* Palissot portrays the *philosophe* as a "Tartuffe laïcisé" when he describes him as "l'homme déplacé, l'homme fin, dont la finesse éclate toujours contre la naïveté d'un homme simple; le faux philosophe [...] le tartuffe de société, comme on a fait celui de religion."¹⁵⁸ Jean-Christophe Vaysette shows how Palissot intended to expose the *philosophes* to whom he refers as "prétendus beaux Esprits" when he proposes the play *Le Cercle* for the inauguration of the Nancy theater in 1755.¹⁵⁹

The anti-*philosophes* repeatedly portray their adversaries as illusionists and deceivers, question their self-proclaimed *savoir*, and attack the pretentiousness of their claim to enlighten humanity. In an effort to warn against the diffusion of dangerous ideas, Moreau parodies the

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Florence Lotterie, "'Usurper un titre respectable' – Autour des adaptations du *Philosophe soi-disant de Marmontel*," in the collection *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L'image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, ed. Pierre Hartman, 2003), 151. The first expression "Tartuffe laïcisé" is Lotterie's own.

¹⁵⁹ Jean-Christophe Vaysette, "Une tentative de mystification des philosophes en 1755: *Le Cercle* de Charles Palissot de Montenoy," *Le Philosophe sur les planches: L'image du philosophe dans le théâtre des Lumières: 1680-1815* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, ed. Pierre Hartman, 2003), 95.

philosophes in a passage where the narrator describes the Cacouacs in their tent that alludes to the Parisian salons, as they reflect on how to “éclairer l’univers” (48). In the first scene of Palissot’s *Les Philosophes*, the housemaid Marton describes how Cidalise, the mother, has fallen under the spell of her new *philosophe* friends when she affirms that Cidalise’s soul is “Quelque fois étourdie, enjouée à l’excès.”¹⁶⁰ She later accuses the *philosophes* of conspiring to ruin her intelligence – “gâter sa cervelle” (17). One major method for Valère and his friends to beguile the credulous Cidalise is to excessively flatter her newly finished book and praise her intellect and knowledge. For example, early in Act II, Carondas says to Cidalise, “Votre livre est nourri d’un *savoir* (italics mine) si profond” (50). The *philosophes* in the play are aware of *savoir*’s importance to the point of using it as a tool to seduce Cidalise. Palissot connects the *philosophes*’ deceptive ways with the value they attribute to *savoir*. When it is a matter of deceiving another, Palissot portrays Valère and his friends as experts possessing a great amount of *savoir*. Palissot’s target is far from Sedaine’s version of the *philosophe* without *savoir* and a built-in “conscience.”

Sedaine’s third tactic was to steer clear of the reason-sentiment dichotomy around which *philosophes* and anti-*philosophes* framed their polemics. It comes as no surprise that the satirical representation of the *philosophes* in Palissot’s play resonated favorably with the anti-*philosophes*. Palissot was only one of many writers on both sides of the divide pitting *raison* against *sentiment*.¹⁶¹ In *Les Philosophes*, the mother Cydalise listens to her *philosophe* friends

¹⁶⁰ Charles Palissot de Montenoy, *Œuvres de M. Palissot, lecteur de S.A.S. M.gr le duc d’Orléans. Nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée*, Tome II, *Gallica*, (Paris: 1788), 14. Although the play is not in prose, I will be using page numbers in parenthesis since the original reproduction of the play in Palissot’s book on the Gallica web site does not have line numbers.

¹⁶¹ Marmontel, a friend of the *Philosophes*, pits *raison* against *amour* more than once in his *Contes Moraux*. In *Tout ou rien*, Cécile chooses the pompous Floricourt over Eraste who loves her. When she realizes that Eraste still remains in love with her, she says “je ne puis concilier tant d’amour avec tant de raison”; and again, in *Le Philosophe soi-disant*, Doris feigns surprise when she sees Madame de Ponval spend so much time with the so-called *philosophe* Ariste: “Est-il possible que la présidente [...] ait pu soutenir pendant une heure le tête-à-tête d’un

who advise her on the future of her daughter Rosalie, who in turn seeks happiness by following her heart. Rosalie loves Damis, but in order to unite, they need Cydalise's permission. Unfortunately for the two lovers, Cydalise's friends, the shallow and egotistical *philosophes*, have corrupted her with their rhetoric founded on reason and convinced her that she should marry her daughter to their friend Valère. The play essentially opposes the young Rosalie's loyalty to "la voix de la nature," "cœur," and "sentiments," to her duped mother Cydalise's appeal to "raison."¹⁶² Early in Act II, Marton insists that the heartbroken Damis and Rosalie can only obtain Cidalise's permission to marry each other if they work to soften her heart (22). She explains that philosophy has hardened her heart, "la philosophie endurecit," and that manifesting their passion for each other in her presence would bring her around (22). For the *philosophes*, it is through the "lumières naturelles de sa raison" that man can discern truth from falsity. Reason is therefore the essential faculty for guiding him through life: "La raison est à l'égard du philosophe, ce que la grâce est à l'égard du chrétien. La grâce détermine le chrétien à agir; la raison détermine le philosophe. [...] Le philosophe est donc un honnête homme qui agit en tout par raison."¹⁶³ In his analysis of the figure of the *philosophe* in the *drame bourgeois*, Goldzink describes in similar fashion the priorities of such an individual:

Est Philosophe est celui qui aspire à l'idéal philosophique. De quoi s'agit-il? De maîtriser ses passions, de faire face sereinement aux coups du sort, aux émotions qui emportent le vulgaire incapable d'asseoir sa conduite sur une règle raisonnable ou raisonnée. La passion philosophique serait alors la soumission des passions à la raison. Mais comme la philosophie est aussi production d'idées, de raisonnements, et de systèmes, qu'elle s'enseigne à l'école et fait école, on voit que le philosophe ouvre à la fois au théâtre le champ des idées et celui d'une passion hostile aux passions. (267)

philosophe, elle qui baille dès qu'on lui parle raison?" In reality, Madame de Ponval fakes being a passionate woman who is searching for a husband. She then seduces Ariste and gets him to denounce reason, just to expose him for what he is, a fake philosophe. *Œuvres Complètes de Marmontel*, Tome III, (Paris: Verdrière, 1818), 221, 246.

¹⁶² Ferret, "Mises en scène satirique," *Les philosophes sur les planches*, 114-15.

¹⁶³ "Philosophe." *Encyclopédie*.

The anti-*philosophes*, by contrast, targeted reason in their attacks against their adversaries.¹⁶⁴ For example, as McMahon notes, they argued that “sentiment, emotion, and feeling were wellsprings of faith [...] that heart had reasons that reason knows not, [and] that when left to themselves our rational faculties left us lifeless and cold.”¹⁶⁵ They enjoyed citing Rousseau’s work in particular since he had been so closely associated with the *philosophes*. Rousseau often exalted the merits of the human heart at the expense of reason: “je ne sais si l’illusion d’un cœur véritablement humain, à qui son zèle rend tout facile, n’est pas en cela préférable à cette âpre et repoussante raison, qui trouve toujours dans son indifférence pour le bien public le premier obstacle à tout ce qui peut le favoriser.”¹⁶⁶ In his *Catéchisme et décisions de cas de conscience, à l’usage des Cacouacs* (1757), Saint-Cyr, using Moreau’s term “Cacouacs,” mocked the *philosophes* for being grand geniuses who acted as “Restaurateurs de Raison” and spread the “sources de Sagesse.”¹⁶⁷

Sedaine’s *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* avoids the ubiquitous *raison-passion* opposition in two distinct ways. First, as I have previously noted, Sedaine’s main character M. Vanderk fits neither the negative portrait of the *philosophe* that the anti-*philosophes* paint of their adversaries nor the exalted image of the *philosophe* found in the *Encyclopédie*. Nevertheless, Sedaine depicts

¹⁶⁴ The insufficiency of *raison* for the anti-*philosophes* is a recurring theme in Masseur’s *Les Ennemis des philosophes*. He dedicates pages 57-63 solely to “le rôle de la raison” in the conflict between the *philosophes* and their adversaries.

¹⁶⁵ McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 35. Like Masseur, McMahon also shows, in a section entitled “Anti-Philosophes Discourse,” the anti-*philosophes*’ rejection of reason, *ibid.*, 32-42.

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Principes du droit de la guerre; Écrits sur la paix perpétuelle*, (Paris : Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2008), 87.

¹⁶⁷ Saint-Cyr, “Discours du patriarche des Cacouacs pour la réception d’un nouveau disciple,” *Catéchisme et décisions de cas de conscience, à l’usage des Cacouacs*, xv. Moreau first used the term “Cacouacs” in 1757 in an “avis utile” published in *Mercure*, and later in the same year, separately published *Nouveau Mémoire pour servir à l’histoire des Cacouacs*.

M. Vanderk as a man who relies on his reason, even if he may not always prove capable of following it. For example, when M. Vanderk reveals their noble family background to his son in Act II, he assures him that the family's reputation would not suffer from him being a merchant: "dans un siècle aussi éclairé que celui-ci, ce qui peut donner la noblesse n'est pas capable de l'ôter" (9-10). Unconvinced of his father's reassurance, the young Vanderk renews his concerns about how society views his occupation. M. Vanderk's next reply echoes the emblematic fight led by the *philosophes* against prejudice: "un tel préjugé n'est rien aux yeux de la raison" (10). In his monologue after he learns of the duel, M. Vanderk blames the prejudice that started the altercation at the café on the French's preoccupation with vanity rather than reason: "Fouler aux pieds de la raison, la nature, et les lois! Préjugé funeste! Abus cruel du point d'honneur! [...] tu ne pouvais subsister qu'au milieu d'une nation vaine et pleine d'elle-même" (21). After the departure of the young Vanderk for the duel in Act IV, when Antoine appears to be emotionally compromised and vows to sacrifice himself to save his master's son, M. Vanderk appeals to Antoine's reason to help him recover his senses: "Antoine, vous manquez de raison [...] Écoutez-moi vous dis-je, rappelez toute votre présence d'esprit" (25).

M. Vanderk's *raison* does not necessarily trump his passions. On the contrary, M. Vanderk, more often than not, proves unable to surmount them. For example, the news of the duel triggers his burst of anger toward his son: "dans quelle peine jettiez-vous aujourd'hui votre mère et moi!" (19). The feeling of despair overwhelms him following his son's departure (22). When he tries to calm Antoine down, he expresses that his confidant's emotional outbursts break his heart – "[lui] brise le cœur" (25). At the denouement of the play, the emotional roller coaster overwhelms him when he sees his son and the young Desparville arrive together alive, having agreed to a truce: "Ah! messieurs qu'il est difficile de passer d'un grand chagrin à une grande

joie” (32). Again, in the denouement, he shows no reserve in vividly expressing his emotions: “Ah! messieurs! ah! mes enfants! je suis dans l’ivresse de la plus grande joie” (33). Through M. Vanderk, Sedaine offers a reconciliation of *raison* and *sentiment* rather than their opposition. Throughout the play, M. Vanderk seems to strike the right balance between his reason and passions, and according to Goldzink, this is one of the reasons why he is the perfect character to reconcile the *philosophe* figure with the public: “Vanderk père, chez Sedaine, est philosophe parce que, ni fanatique de la raison philosophique, ni esclave de sa tendresse, il sait faire un juste depart, aussi douloureux soit-il, entre la nature, la loi, et le préjugé” (277).

Sedaine’s fourth tactic involved targeting the eighteenth century’s larger societal problems rather than the personalities or the limited context of the quarrel surrounding Palissot’s play. As a member of the noble class, M. Vanderk’s sister holds merchants in low esteem. Through her, Sedaine not only attacks the absurdity of prejudices and categorizations based on social class, but also highlights how obsolete they have become at the time of the play’s first representation. Sedaine’s *philosophe* M. Vanderk manifests an acute awareness of society’s contemporary values (10). In contrast, Sedaine paints a caricatural portrait of the marquise as a noble whose beliefs belong to a bygone era. By the second half of the century, the nobility and the *commerçants* shared so many characteristics that even the most astute observer could not easily distinguish the members of one class from those of the other. Despite her obsession with these types of distinctions, the marquise proves inept at recognizing which young man descends from the robe and which one does not when her brother introduces her to his son and the bridegroom (13-14).

Upon arriving at her brother’s house, she complains “Ah! [...] point d’ordre sur les routes [...] soyez de condition, n’en soyez pas, une duchesse, une financière, c’est égal; des chevaux

terribles, mes femmes ont eu des peurs” (13). According to the marquise, commerce has infected her brother to the point of forgetting that the notions of nobility and commerce are mutually exclusive: “Vous, mon frère, vous avez perdu toute l’idée de noblesse, de grandeur; le commerce rétrécit l’âme, mon frère” (13, 24). Yet, as Colin Lucas writes, “The middle class of the late Ancien Régime displayed no significant functional differences from the nobility, no significant difference in accepted values and above all no consciousness of belonging to a class whose economic and social characteristics were antithetical to those of the nobility.”¹⁶⁸ Lucas further argues that “in the upper reaches of French society, the great articulation was not between noble and commoner [...] it was between those who traded and those who did not” (93). Around the time that Sedaine’s play took stage at the Comédie française, if a *commerçant* like M. Vanderk amassed considerable wealth through trade, his family gained along with him access to the same privileges that the nobles enjoyed, and even earned the title of nobility in France’s major cities (93).

When Sedaine wrote *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*, merchants were already sharing many qualities with the nobles. Ennoblement by purchasing offices proliferated throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century. As John Shovlin notes, “by the latter part of the eighteenth century, a great many ‘nobles’ had only tax-farmers, financiers, or merchants for ancestors, and many had not grown up in noble families at all.”¹⁶⁹ Franklin Ford shows that in Paris’ Cour des Aides and in provincial archives, letters of ennoblement record thousands of financial transactions initiated by wealthy bourgeois, showing their desire to benefit from the privileges

¹⁶⁸ Colin Lucas, “Nobles, Bourgeois and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *Past and Present*, no. 60, (August 1973), 91.

¹⁶⁹ John Shovlin, “Toward a Reinterpretation of Revolutionary Antinobility: The Political Economy of Honor in the Old Regime,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 72, No.1, New Work on the Old Regime: A Special Issue in Honor of François Furet, (March 2000), 48.

and the prestige that accompany such entitlement.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, Ford points out that the frequent use of fraudulent methods to acquire ennoblement led the authorities to search for ways to enforce the investigation of such activities (209). The first half of the eighteenth century also saw an increase in the number of rich bourgeois marrying into noble families and a willingness to accept such alliances by both sides (Ford 142-45). Mathilde Cortey notes that the robe family welcomed the financial resources and the potential for additional income in the future that accompanied the alliance with merchant families; in return, the rich bourgeois attained the security that accompanied the noble status that included most importantly the exemption from taxes.¹⁷¹ Ford brings up the Duke of Saint-Simon's outburst upon hearing the news of his brother-in-law's pending marriage to the daughter of a *Président* from the *parlement*, and adds that the Duke's fears about his fortune being depleted were "distinctly anachronistic" and "the old expression of 'manuring one's land with bourgeois gold' appear[ed] almost not at all after 1715 with reference to high robe-épée marriages" (144). When the marquise mistakenly identifies the young Vanderk as her niece's future husband at their first meeting, she displays a similarly outdated attitude. She gets disappointed upon learning that he does not hold a noble rank although she sees his sword, and asks in astonishment "pourquoi porte-t-il l'épée?" (13). When M. Vanderk replies that he is a "président," she realizes that she made an error and expresses great relief which then turns to joy upon discovering that the real groom is a descendant of the robe. For the marquise, the distinction of nobility remains the driving force

¹⁷⁰ Franklin Ford, *Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of French Aristocracy after Louis XIV*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 208.

¹⁷¹ Mathilde Cortey, L'œuvre dans l'histoire, *Manon Lescaut* by Abbé Prévost, (Paris: Hatier, 2002), 171. Aside from calling the exemption from taxes "le plus important" privilege that accompanies "annoblissement," Cortey also emphasizes the increasing power of the financiers and how the alliance between a noble and a financier reveals an important part of the "transformations qui affectent en profondeur la société d'Ancien Régime dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle" (169-71).

behind her approach to alliances: “(Au gendre.) Je vous fais, monsieur, mon compliment, je suis charmée de vous voir uni à une famille [...] à laquelle je prends le plus vif intérêt” (13).

2.3.4 Sedaine’s post-1765 career

The success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* ensured Sedaine’s entry into the circle of major theatrical writers in the eighteenth century. This entry signified a pivotal moment in the advancement of Sedaine’s literary career that first began as a humble poet in 1752, would later last until the post-revolutionary years, and finally included the permanent position of *secrétaire* of the Académie royale d'architecture, as well as his acceptance to the Académie française. The concept of reconciliation on which Sedaine built his play was the central component of its success. Yet as this chapter highlighted, the concept became of interest to Sedaine when he decided to write *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*. As previously noted, the positive outcome of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* was largely due to Sedaine’s craftiness in manipulating the theatrical space and stage direction, and in representing social class issues that resonated with the public, without delving into diatribes against a specific person or a group of people. Sedaine’s play represents a striking example of how a writer can develop a certain idea, put it into practice, and ultimately draw its benefits in terms of career and success.

A compelling passage from the May 1786 issue of the *Correspondance littéraire*, written shortly after Sedaine’s acceptance into the Académie française, highlights the success of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*. Grimm begins his review of Sedaine’s acceptance speech with a reference to the idea of reconciliation: “On était également curieux de savoir comment s’y prendrait M. Sedaine pour se réconcilier avec le style académique, et comment son ami, M. Lemierre, le saurait louer dignement sans déroger aux Principes de la Compagnie, qu’il avait ce

jour-là l'honneur de présider.”¹⁷² Grimm gives a mixed review of the speech, criticizing Sedaine's literary style at times, giving credit to Sedaine's *esprit* at others. For example, he credits Sedaine for his ability to “désarmer la critique” by keeping his speech modest and simple (96). However, Grimm did not have to look far to see how Sedaine reconciled with “le style académique.” The presiding Antoine-Marin Lemierre, a fellow playwright and poet who was charged that day with giving the response to Sedaine's discourse, summed up his colleague's accomplishments, emphasizing the positive consequences of his play:

Vous avez senti combien il était plus flatteur d'exciter des sensations au théâtre et d'intéresser les hommes rassemblés; vous avez possédé cette heureuse magie, sur-tout dans un des premiers ouvrages donné sous le nom de drame au théâtre de la Nation, le seul ouvrage peut-être propre à réconcilier avec ce genre ses ennemis les plus déclarés. Quel intérêt puissant dans le Philosophe sans le savoir!¹⁷³

Sedaine's play transcended his initial intention to reconcile the *philosophe* with the public in the aftermath of Palissot's *Les Philosophes*. It additionally reconciled the *drame bourgeois* with its enemies.

As this chapter has shown, Sedaine maximized his personal and social resources, and exceeded everyone's expectations, including those of his friend Lemierre who, earlier in his response, evoked the unexpected nature of Sedaine's success: “La carrière des lettres ne paroissoit pas d'abord celle où vous deviez entrer.” Most importantly, Sedaine's career proves that during a tumultuous literary period animated by a contentious conflict between two major factions, the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*, chances for a successful career still remained available for those upcoming writers with a keen eye for changing social dynamics. In the next

¹⁷² Fredrich Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique de Grimm et de Diderot* (Paris: Furne, 1830), Tome XIII (1786-1787), 95-96.

¹⁷³ Antoine-Marin Lemierre, “Réponse au discours de réception de Michel-Jean Sedaine,” *Académie française*.

chapter, I will examine the case of the journalist Élie Fréron who joined the opposite side. His case will show a writer who also entered the literary arena as belonging to neither camp, but shifted to one of the camps not necessarily because it was his strategy from the beginning of his career, but rather because circumstances rendered him unable to resist the easy designations created by the two opposing camps.

3.0 ÉLIE FRÉRON: IN THE HEART OF THE DIVIDE

In her book entitled *Grands Zhéros de l'Histoire de France* (2010), the journalist and historian Clémentine Portier-Kaltenbach examines several French historical figures that she considers to have fallen into obscurity. She points to their mediocre talent or bad character as the reasons for their downfall. According to her, these big “z’héros” have either caused catastrophic events in the history of France or deceived those who had placed high hopes in them. One such group among these “nuls” are those who made it their mission to ruin “de vrais génies” with the little talent they possess.¹⁷⁴ Portier-Kaltenbach includes Élie-Catherine Fréron and his mentor Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines (l’abbé Desfontaines) in this category. The implication is that these *zeros* did nothing but maliciously attack Voltaire, the *hero*, at every opportunity. Her book is only one example of how Fréron’s status in French literature has gradually, and unjustly, been reduced to simplistic slogans over the last two centuries. The nineteenth-century historian Charles Barthélemy, in his preface to one of the rare studies on Fréron, had warned about the dangers of such categorical simplifications: “Un siècle tel que celui qui produisit Voltaire et Rousseau n’est certes pas une époque ordinaire; mais, en regard et pour rétablir l’équilibre, il faut mettre Fréron, Guénée, Bergier.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Clémentine Portier-Kaltenbach, *Grands Zhéros de l'Histoire de France* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 2010), 19.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Barthélemy, *Les Confessions de Fréron (1719-1776): sa vie, souvenirs intimes et anecdotes, ses pensées, recueillis et annotés*, (Paris: Charpentier, 1876), viii.

Fréron was arguably the most influential anti-*philosophe* of the eighteenth century. Most *philosophes* considered him one of their most redoubtable enemies. His literary career spanned four decades, from the 1740s to the 1770s. He published around 200 volumes of 360 pages each.¹⁷⁶ Scholars of the eighteenth century consider *L'Année littéraire* among the most important periodicals of the Enlightenment period, along with *Le Mercure*, *Le Journal de Trévoux*, *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, and *Le Journal encyclopédique*. For example, Mornet identifies *L'année littéraire*, *le Mercure*, and *Le Journal encyclopédique*, as the three most important journals during the period of 1748-1770.¹⁷⁷ Fréron had numerous quarrels with *philosophes* over the years. According to Charles Monselet, Voltaire viewed him as his primary literary antagonist: “Entre tous ses ennemis, Fréron est l’élú de son choix.”¹⁷⁸ He considered Fréron a formidable enough opponent to publish two works, *Le Caffé ou l’Écossaise* (1760) and the definitive version of his *Anecdotes* (1770), with the intention of tarnishing Fréron’s reputation.¹⁷⁹ References to Fréron appeared frequently throughout correspondences and memoirs of major writers during the eighteenth century.¹⁸⁰ Authors like Palissot, the abbé François Arnaud, and La

¹⁷⁶ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 1.

¹⁷⁷ Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française*, 160.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Monselet, *Fréron, ou L'illustre critique: sa vie, ses écrits, sa correspondance, sa famille, etc.*, (Paris: R. Pincebourde, 1864), 14.

¹⁷⁹ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ See later in the chapter for several examples of references to Fréron in Voltaire’s correspondence. Rousseau mentions him in his *Confessions*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964), 135; Jean-François Marmontel shows his contempt for him more than once in his *Mémoires*, (Paris: Mercure de France 1999), 220, 530. His name also appears numerous times in the *Correspondance littéraire* of Grimm.

Harpe saw Fréron's periodical as important enough to submit to it their own works for publication.¹⁸¹

Many writers such as Palissot, La Harpe, and Jean-François Marmontel were cognizant of the stakes involved in this contentious milieu. They joined one camp or another in a strategic attempt to secure their literary fame. In contrast, the progress of Fréron's career towards the anti-*philosophe* camp followed a more complicated trajectory. His writings in the late 1740s and early 1750s did not necessarily reflect the image of an anti-*philosophe*. For example, he wrote several favorable reviews of works by the *philosophes*, including some works by Voltaire with whom he frequently clashed. Balcou, the most recent Fréron scholar, argues that his writing is "impregné de l'esprit des lumières."¹⁸² Mornet notes the presence of "l'esprit philosophique" in Fréron's ideas (168-69). Yet, as Balcou, Jacqueline Biard-Millériuox and Mornet point out, he is perceived by many historians as a mere "bête noire" of the *philosophes* or of Voltaire.¹⁸³ Portier-Kaltenbach considers him as one of the "grands losers de l'histoire de France" (18). Challenging this reductionist view of Fréron, I will argue that Fréron's allegiance to the anti-*philosophes* was the inevitable result of unforeseen circumstances arising from the conflict between the two camps. Unlike in Sedaine's case, it was not a planned strategic maneuver to advance his career. He faced a remarkable front led by the most important writers of his time who were uniting around the *Encyclopédie* project. The conservatives and traditionalists could only sympathize with his reactions to the increasing hostilities led by Voltaire and the encyclopedists in the early

¹⁸¹ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 151. Robert Lancelot Myers, *The Dramatic Theories of Élie-Catherine Fréron*, (Paris: Minard, 1962), 25.

¹⁸² Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 471.

¹⁸³ Even Monselet, in his extremely favorable work on Fréron, refers to him as "la bête noire des philosophes," *Fréron, ou L'illustre critique*, 47.

1750s. I will trace Fréron's trajectory towards the anti-*philosophe* camp in function of the polarization between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*. In doing so, I will mostly rely on his *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps* (1749-1754) and his correspondence during its publication.

3.1 FRÉRON'S PATH TO JOURNALISM (1718-1749)

Fréron was born in Quimper, in the Brittany region of France, on January 18, 1718.¹⁸⁴ He developed an early inclination toward critical and polemical writing. As a child, he attended the *Collège des Jésuites* where his teachers emphasized Latin and French over Greek. As a teenager, he moved to Paris in 1734, to study rhetoric at the prestigious *Collège de Louis-le-Grand*.¹⁸⁵ His instructors soon recognized his talent for literature. In 1737, at the age of nineteen, they sent him to Caen to teach at the *Collège Royal*. He published his first work that year, a poem called "Ad Bellonam" (20). At the end of 1737, he returned to Louis le Grand for two more years of education. According to Cornou, Fréron angered his instructors during these two years in Paris by neglecting his religious duties in favor of literature.¹⁸⁶ Fréron admitted years later that literature was already his "passion dominante" during that period.¹⁸⁷ Upon receiving the news that he had gone to the theater one evening dressed "en habits laïques," his instructors decided to

¹⁸⁴ Biard-Millérioux, *L'Esthétique d'Élie Catherine Fréron (1739-1776)*, 19. The biographical notes of Fréron's early life will come from this book unless otherwise noted. See also Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 11-13.

¹⁸⁵ Among famous writers that attended Collège de Louis-le-Grand over the centuries: Molière, Cyrano de Bergerac, Voltaire, Diderot, Cyrano de Beaudelaire, Hugo, Sade, Butor, Sartre. "Historique." *Lycée Louis le Grand depuis 1563*.

¹⁸⁶ Cornou, *Trente années de luttes*, 18.

¹⁸⁷ Élie Fréron, *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 8 (Paris: Le Jay, 1773), 117.

teach him a lesson by sending him to the small provincial town of Alençon, far from the French capital.¹⁸⁸ While in Alençon, Fréron, determined not stay away too long from the capital, abandoned his education with the Jesuits and pursued a literary career.

The incident with the “habits laïques” was only one of many historical notes that contradict the perceived image of Fréron as a religious man. It was nonetheless understandable why some may consider Fréron religious. He spent six years of his apprenticeship with l’abbé Desfontaines whose goal, as Monselet describes, was to “réagir contre les philosophes au nom de la religion et de la monarchie” (9). He later earned a reputation as the leader of the anti-*philosophes*, which garnered the support of the religious front. The devout Stanislas Leszczynski, the King of Poland and Duke of Lorraine, and his daughter Marie, the Queen of France, offered him their protection. These developments resulted in the assumption by a number of critics that Fréron was an ardent defender of religion. For example, Barthélemy, in his effort to rehabilitate Fréron, referred to him as an “écrivain religieux” and claimed that one of his periodical’s goals was to “défendre la religion.”¹⁸⁹ He also wrote that Fréron’s philosophy was founded on Jesuitism, the “ordre où il avait puisé les saines doctrines et le goût du beau et du vrai” (71). To support this, Barthélémy cited Fréron’s *Discours de réception à l’Académie de Nancy* (1753), during which the journalist thanked his old Jesuit masters. However, while expressing his gratitude to his “ancient confrères” for his early education, Fréron said nothing about a religious

¹⁸⁸ Cornou, *Trente années de lutttes*, 18-19. Fréron, well aware of the fact that successful careers in literature mostly originate in Paris, will insist on staying in Paris at all costs throughout the 1740s: “il ne veut à aucun prix s’écloigner de la capitale. Paris le fixe, l’éblouit avec ses théâtres, ses cafés, son intense bouillonnement, » Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 35.

¹⁸⁹ Barthélemy, *Les Confessions de Fréron*, Preface xv, 60.

doctrine guiding him.¹⁹⁰ Barthélemy's analysis was more than likely influenced by his own strong religious ties.¹⁹¹

Fréron neither praised nor attacked a work based on its religious content. For the most part, his commentary consisted of literary criticism. It should not go unnoticed that Fréron joined the freemasons in 1743. He became the first member in the history of French freemasonry to sing during his acceptance speech, and was thus referred to as the “grand orateur de la Grande Loge” in 1744.¹⁹² According to Balcou, joining a masonic lodge was a perfect fit for the journalist's disposition: “Libertin respectueux du dogme, traditionaliste éclairé, il a tout pour devenir franc-maçon.”¹⁹³ His Jesuitical education, for its part, was no different than that of his archenemy Voltaire. In fact, one of Fréron's most esteemed masters at Louis le Grand, le Père Porée, was also Voltaire's master during his education (Biard-Millérioux 19).

Once back in Paris, Fréron was introduced to the seasoned journalist l'abbé Desfontaines by another native of Quimper, l'abbé de Boismorand. Desfontaines was publishing his journal *Observations sur les écrits modernes* (1735-1743). The meeting marked the beginning of a six-year-long collaboration that included three different journals. It ended with Desfontaines's death in 1745. Fréron's time with the abbé largely defined his philosophy: “Au contact de Desfontaines, Fréron élargit le champ de sa culture, ouvre grands les yeux sur le monde de son

¹⁹⁰ Cited in Barthélemy, *Les Confessions de Fréron*, 71-72.

¹⁹¹ Barthélemy was a member of the Catholic Academy of Rome and his writings received the endorsement of Pope Pius IX, Philippe Hourcade, “Les *Mémoires* de Saint-Simon au XIX^e siècle: L'Accueil des politiques et des historiens,” *La réception des Mémoires d'Ancien Régime: discours historique, critique, littéraire*, ed. Jean-Jacques Tatin-Gourier, (Paris: Le Manuscrit, 2009), 270 (note 18).

¹⁹² Archives of manuscripts at the *Bibliothèque nationale*, under *fonds maçonniques*, cited in Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 23.

¹⁹³ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 24.

temps.”¹⁹⁴ When Fréron began to work for Desfontaines, his mentor was in the middle of a bitter quarrel with Voltaire (Biard-Millérioux 20-21). In 1738, Voltaire published *Le Préservatif ou Critique des Observations sur les écrits modernes* in which he criticized Desfontaines’ *Observations*. Desfontaines struck back with his own *La Voltairomanie* (1738) and *Le Médiateur* (1739). Thus, the journalistic career of Fréron took its start in the camp opposing Voltaire and his allies. Desfontaines often wrote favorably about Fréron’s literary talent and his contributions to the *Observations*. Following the *Observations*’ suspension in 1743, Desfontaines began publishing the *Jugements sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux* (1744-1746). At this point, Fréron had already begun exploring the possibility of launching his own career.

Fréron wrote historical works, polemical essays and odes in the early 1740s. He then published the *Lettres à Madame de la Comtesse de... sur quelques écrits modernes* (1745-1746), his first periodical.¹⁹⁵ It signaled Fréron’s return to the polemical genre that he cherished during his time at the *Observations*. Voltaire was already a frequent target of Fréron in his *Lettres à Madame*.¹⁹⁶ Fréron also criticized other writers, including François Joachim de Pierre de Bernis who happened to be one of Madame de Pompadour’s protégés. This particular attack resulted in his periodical’s suspension and his subsequent incarceration in Vincennes.¹⁹⁷ Although the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 18. Fréron will never forget the role that l’abbé Desfontaines played in his future success and will continuously express his gratitude to the abbé in his writings.

¹⁹⁵ During this period, some of the works that Fréron published are *l’Histoire de Marie Stuart, Reine d’Écosse* (1742), two pamphlets named *la Lettre sur l’oraison funèbre du Cardinal de Fleury* and *la Lettre sur les discours académiques* in 1743, and poems called “les Conquêtes du Roi” and “Sur la Convalescence du Roi” in 1744, and “La Journée de Fontenoy” in 1745.

¹⁹⁶ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 29.

¹⁹⁷ For more details on the cause of Fréron’s imprisonment, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les Philosophes*, 30-31; Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 61-63; Gustave Desnoireterres, *Voltaire et la société française au XVIII^e siècle*, Vol. 1, (Paris: Didier et C^{ie}, 1871), 385-86.

Lettres à Madame existed for only five months, Fréron increased his readership, mainly because he was offering a unique critical perspective on works published every day:

Que leur proposaient-on? Non pas une revue insipide et exhaustive de tous les livres nouveaux avec des extraits de romans, des ‘squelettes’ de pièces de théâtre et un ‘ramassis de vers arrivés en poste de la province,’ mais un choix judicieux parmi les productions contemporaines, une sélection reposant sur un jugement [...] La gageure de Fréron est de maintenir plausible le personnage de la Comtesse en évitant d’être trop léger afin d’offrir une critique judicieuse qui mérite de retenir l’attention du public cultivé. (Biard-Millérioux 42)

Fréron’s interest essentially lay in seducing the cultivated public that sought audacious criticism. Unlike his mentor Desfontaines, who had a traditional understanding of literary criticism (“la description du plus beau jardin de l’univers sera toujours une description froide et ennuyeuse”), Fréron had a looser understanding of it and abundantly used satire in his reviews.¹⁹⁸ According to Biard-Millérioux, he aimed to appeal to the salon crowd, the affluent, the *gens de lettres*, and the court: “Aux gens du monde, il offre une sélection d’œuvres qui plairont à la bonne société et feront du bruit. Ainsi les lecteurs de la Comtesse seront-ils au fait et susceptibles de participer, voire d’animer les conversations entre gens d’esprit. Ils trouveront dans les *Lettres* le ton libre et spirituel des salons (42).”

After two months of prison and three months of exile in Bar-sur-Seine, Fréron returned to Paris at the end of June 1746. He was under strict orders not to publish without official approval or he would face ten years of imprisonment (Cornou 66). However, Fréron had no intention of remaining on the sidelines of the literary scene. His imprisonment taught him a lesson and he needed to avoid the type of setbacks that doomed the ill-fated *Lettres à Madame*. Realizing that he needed protectors if he wanted to relaunch his career as a journalist, he spent the next three

¹⁹⁸ Pierre François Guyot Desfontaines, *Jugemens sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux*, Tome X, (Avignon: Pierre Girou, 1745), 34. Biard-Millérioux adds Fréron’s style of critique was more modern at the time than all the other critical reviews found at the time (47).

years building a network of influential friends.¹⁹⁹ He was already experienced in networking with high-profile individuals from his time as a freemason in the early 1740s:

Quoi de plus clair que les motivations de notre ambitieux journaliste? Ayant quitté les Jésuites tout en traînant encore avec le petit collet le titre d'abbé, voulant percer dans le monde tout en vivant chez Desfontaines [...], Fréron ne songe qu'à se procurer de solides appuis. Il croit donc les trouver dans cette société secrète où se nouent les plus prometteuses relations. [...] si l'on veut être à la mode, il faut absolument faire partie de la confrérie.²⁰⁰

Fréron took advantage of his access to the Masonic Lodge led by the *Vénérable Frère* Procope, the brother Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli who founded the Café Procope in Paris.²⁰¹ Fréron fostered relationships with powerful individuals such as the “Secrétaire d’État” Louis Phélypeaux de Saint-Florentin, and Louis de Bourbon, le Comte de Clermont. Le Comte was the head of all the masonic lodges in France, a future member (1753) of the Académie française, and a friend of Madame de Pompadour. More importantly, he became friends with Louis-Élisabeth de la Vergne, le Comte de Tressan, who later played a crucial role in one of Voltaire’s attempts to ruin the journalist. He facilitated the communication between Fréron and “son illustre protecteur Stanislas, le duc de Lorraine,” leading to the latter’s timely intervention on behalf of the journalist.²⁰² The debacle of the *Lettres à Madame* taught Fréron the importance of expanding his circle of friends in order to survive as a journalist. The relationships that he cultivated in the 1740s would all come in handy in the years to come.

¹⁹⁹ Most of the information in the next paragraph, on this little known period of Fréron’s life, comes from Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 33-36.

²⁰⁰ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 23-24.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 22.

²⁰² However, le comte de Tressan who was also friends with prominent *philosophes* such as Voltaire, Buffon, and d’Alembert, would turn around two years later and attempt to double cross Fréron by scheming with the *philosophes*. This episode will be discussed in detail in the upcoming pages.

In Paris, Fréron maintained his relationships with writers from his native region. Desfontaines was from Rouen. The mathematician Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis and the physician Julien Offray de La Mettrie, both close friends of Fréron throughout the 1740s, were from St. Malo, Brittany. He also spent time with Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix, an established author from Rennes and a well-known socialite in the literary circles of Paris.²⁰³ He thanked Maurice de Claris, the president of Montpellier's Finance Court and a fan of Fréron's writings, for having helped him get out of Vincennes. As for his Parisian connections, Fréron frequented the Café Procope where he befriended a number of *gens de lettres*, as well as actors and actresses from the Parisian stage. It was also there that he socialized with l'abbé Lattaissant, a prominent name within the clergy, yet known as a libertine writer, and with Nicolas-Claude Thieriot, a lifelong friend of Fréron's nemesis Voltaire. In the late 1740s, he regularly visited Françoise de Graffigny's salon in Paris where he was "même un conseiller écouté."²⁰⁴ There, he befriended le duc d'Estouteville, the grandson of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, with whom he collaborated on several translations. He began a long-lasting friendship with Jacques Triboudet, mayor of Bourges and *conseiller du roi*. Fréron's first letter to Triboudet in 1748 illustrated how he expected more than just friendship when he allied himself with people in positions of power.²⁰⁵ Two years after his return to Paris from his exile, still not allowed to publish, Fréron was desperately seeking ways to have the ban lifted. Knowing that Triboudet was an avid fan of literature, he first offered his opinion on a few works that had recently come out.²⁰⁶ At the end of the letter, he let his influential friend know that he would appreciate his help: "Entretenez-vous

²⁰³ Saint-Foix and his writings will be studied in detail in the next chapter.

²⁰⁴ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 36.

²⁰⁵ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 24-25.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 24.

quelquefois de ce pauvre Fréron et concertez ensemble les moyens de le rendre heureux. Il en a furieusement envie.”²⁰⁷

While there is nothing unique about Fréron’s strategy of allying himself with well-known figures, the variety of friendships that he formed throughout the 1740s was remarkable. Some were sympathizers of the *philosophes*, others were from the anti-*philosophe* circles. Fréron sought allies in salons, freemasonry, academies, clergy, and royal courts. Among them were people close to the King, descendants of affluent families, and even friends of Voltaire. Some were traditionalists, royalists, and religious, while others were radicals, libertines, or atheists. Fréron did not pick and choose his friends in terms of their allegiance to one camp or the other. At that time, he only had two prominent enemies among *gens de lettres*, Voltaire and Charles Pinot Duclos. He attacked Duclos in a pamphlet titled *Réponse du public à l’auteur d’Acajou* (1744). Balcou even considers the possibility that Fréron may have had relations with Diderot during the 1740s, because they met each other when a young Diderot was also working at the *Observations* under Desfontaines.²⁰⁸ Although the two belonged to the opposite camps by the time *L’Année littéraire* began its long run in 1754, during the five-year period of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, Fréron never criticized Diderot or his writings. In the initial years of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Fréron was far more concerned with his career than the growing hostility between the *philosophes* and their enemies.

At the beginning of 1749, Fréron had gathered a powerful enough entourage to gain the favors of le Comte d’Argenson, then the *Directeur de la Librairie* and a friend of Voltaire. He also managed to obtain, from the police lieutenant Nicolas René Berryer, verbal permission to

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 25.

²⁰⁸ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 35.

begin publishing again, despite the formal ban that had been imposed on him in 1746. He was therefore ready to begin publishing his first major journal. In April 1749, the first *cahier* of *Lettres sur quelques écrits* appeared. It marked the beginning of Fréron's transition from a literary critic to a full-blown anti-*philosophe* polemicist.

3.2 FRÉRON'S CONCEPT OF "LA CRITIQUE"

In this section, I will examine Fréron's understanding of the concept of literary criticism to pinpoint what separated Fréron from other anti-*philosophes* with whom historians tend to group him. The anti-*philosophes* are often portrayed as traditionalists, religious, or conservatives. In 1749, Fréron was none of those. It is for this reason that the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* is important to this chapter. It represents the years during which Fréron's anti-*philosophe* identity emerged. Fréron was an anti-*philosophe* writer when the last issue of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* appeared in January 1754. I argue however that his quarrels with Voltaire and Marmontel, and his subsequent attacks against the encyclopedic clan, caused the eighteenth-century public, and subsequent scholars, to view him solely as an anti-*philosophe* and to overlook the full scope of his intellectual output. Throughout its publication, the perception of *Lettres sur quelques écrits* changed from that of a literary journal to a periodical that championed a partisan cause. This perception influenced the opinions of future readers of Fréron. While the antagonism between Fréron and the *philosophes* increased as time moved on, he never abandoned his principles of literary criticism. His reviews still showed that he belonged very much to the century of the Enlightenment.

In 1749, the bitter experience of the *Lettres à Madame* was still fresh in Fréron's mind. He realized that he needed to exercise a certain amount of restraint in his critique. He knew that the tacit permission to publish his journal was revocable at any time. He had gathered several allies, but he was far from being untouchable. He also garnered a few powerful enemies, some knowingly, like Voltaire, and some involuntarily, like Madame de Pompadour. "La nécessité de la retenue" meant that Fréron's articles could not contain passages that might be viewed as personal provocations (Biard-Millérioux 58). He needed to convince the authorities that he intended to write only literary criticism. He often inserted sentences or paragraphs in his journal that reiterated his determination to remain modest in his criticism. One example was his response to the letter by the poet Pierre-Charles Roy. Roy admired the journalist's self-restraint: "Je vous félicite Monsieur, de la liberté rendue à votre plume, et des ménagemens que vous voulez vous imposer. Vous allez donc remplir votre mission en toute benignité, sans que la vérité perde rien de ses droits."²⁰⁹ Fréron published both the poet's letter and his response to it in their entirety. It presented him with an opportunity to reaffirm his stance on self-restraint: "Oui, Monsieur, la modération, la politesse, la *bénignité*, puisque vous le voulez, caractériseront ces feuilles nouvelles. Ce ne sera donc pas le sabre à la main comme *Mahomet*, que je remplirai ma *Mission*" (52). He promised to Roy, and to his readers, that he would practice a strict level of self-moderation: "Je vous promets, Monsieur, que [...] je m'interdirai tout trait dur, toute raillerie piquante, toute allusion personnelle" (53).

²⁰⁹ Élie Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, Tome 1, 173-201, Vol I (1749-52), (Geneva: Slatkine, 1966), 49-56. The first tome and page numbers correspond to the original issues of Fréron's *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. The volume number refers to the 1966 Slatkine Editions' compilation of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. The edition consists of two volumes, with the second one comprising the years 1753-54. From this point forward, to facilitate research for the reader who desires to refer to the original work without having to go through the Slatkine edition, I will only use the page numbers of Fréron's original tomes. Except in a few rare cases, I will respect Fréron's original spelling, unless it hinders its understandability. The ampersand symbol, "&," very common in eighteenth-century texts, will be changed to "et."

What was Fréron's "mission" in *Lettres sur quelques écrits*? For Fréron, "La Critique" was an underestimated talent in the literary arena. He first and foremost intended to establish its vital role as the ultimate authority on the *Belles-lettres*:

La Critique m'apparut dernièrement en songe, environnée d'une foule de Poètes, d'Orateurs, d'Historiens et de Romanciers. J'aperçus dans une de ses mains un faisceau de dards, dans l'autre quelques branches de laurier. Son aspect, loin d'imprimer la crainte, inspirait la confiance aux plus ignares amans des sçavantes sœurs. Ils osaient l'envisager d'un œil fixe et semblaient défier son courroux. La Déesse indignée faisait pleuvoir sur eux une grêle de traits. Quelques Ecrivains, dont la modestie rehaussait les talens, obtenaient des couronnes: plusieurs recevaient à la fois des récompenses et des châtimens.

Cette vision, Monsieur, m'a fourni l'idée de ces lettres, où l'éloge et la censure seront également dispensés.²¹⁰

Literary criticism, according to Fréron, deserved to be regarded as highly as a Greek muse. While writers should respect and fear it, they should also seek guidance from it. However, its status was undermined by the works of mediocre critics. Fréron was most likely motivated by the lack of a journal that provided comprehensive coverage and impartial reviews of all works produced at that time. He did have a point. From his return to Paris from exile in 1746 to the first issue of *Lettres sur quelques écrits* in April of 1749, there was not a single journal that appealed to the general public, and the few that existed only targeted limited audiences. The *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques* championed the Jansenists, the *Journal de Trévoux* favored the works of the religious while refusing to review novels and plays, and the *Journal des savants* was mostly concerned with scientific texts, delving very little into other types of literature, and completely ignoring theater.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Ibid., Tome 1, 3-4.

²¹¹ There were a few more journals with lesser statures, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 2-3.

Unlike his contemporaries, Fréron reviewed works from all genres, including some foreign works (Biard-Millérioux 53, 64). Fréron's open-mindedness led him to value the neglected genres such as *romans*, and to consider works from unknown, young writers who sought success in the world of *Belles-Lettres*.²¹² Critiquing the works of younger, unknown writers in his journal was consistent with Fréron's vision of "La Critique," which was responsible, to his mind, for increasing the public's awareness of all literary output and not only that of renowned authors. As Biard-Millérioux notes, in Fréron's understanding, "tout homme qui publie s'expose au jugement public et doit l'affronter" (59). The work must first endure "La Critique" which functions as a guide for the reader. Each writer must present his work to its "tribunal": "*La Critique est odieuse: aux Auteurs critiqués; cela va sans dire. Les loix sont odieuses aux coupables. Mais tous les honnêtes gens respectent et chérissent les Magistrats proposés pour les maintenir; tous les esprits raisonnables aiment aussi la critique, dont le but est de faire observer les loix du goût.*"²¹³ Presenting "La Critique" as the tenth muse or as the final authority on the quality of published works does not imply that Fréron had an exaggerated view of his position as a journalist. While he believed that the critic should possess a greater understanding of literature than most writers, its role was simply to guide the public. It did not replace the public as the ultimate judge of published works. For example, when Fréron reviewed an essay written by a young poet that had left an "impression favorable" on him ("J'y ai trouvé du naturel, des graces, de la délicatesse, une heureuse facilité"), he immediately added the following caveat: "Mais mon goût n'est point une Loi. C'est au Public à juger souverainement de

²¹² For more on Fréron's view toward the *roman*, see Nicolas Brucker, "Élie Fréron, promoteur du roman anti-philosophique," Jean Balcou, Sophie Barthélemy, and André Carious, eds., *Élie Fréron: polémiste et critique d'art*, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001), 87-96.

²¹³ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 3, 155. He later uses the term "tribunal" to say that the literary critic is the authority to whose tribunal writers must present their work, 157.

cet Essai, dont je vais mettre quelques échantillons sous les yeux.”²¹⁴ Fréron sought to set high standards not only for his colleagues but also for the readers. He condemned those who chose to ignore works by lesser-known writers because of their extreme attachment to well-known authors:

Telle est, Monsieur, l'idolâtrie de certains Lecteurs, que lorsqu'ils ont une fois prodigué leur encens à un petit nombre d'écrivains qui se font signalés dans un genre, ils regardent avec indifférence, pour ne pas dire avec mépris, tous ceux qui courent la même carrière. Leur amour propre souffrirait peut-être trop de multiplier les hommages. [...] L'admiration poussée à l'excès décourage les talents, et retarde peut-être encore plus le progrès des Arts que la critique outrée.²¹⁵

In short, Fréron had to strike the right balance between practicing critical self-restraint in order to ensure the continued existence of his journal and having the highest standards as a self-designated representative of “La Critique.” He had to guide the public while defending the *bon goût* that he defined in the following terms in his *Discours de réception à l'Académie de Nancy* in 1753: “Mais qu'est-ce donc que ce goût dont on parle sans cesse, et sur lequel on a tant écrit ? Est-ce un sentiment de l'âme? Est-ce une lumière de l'esprit? Je croirais Messieurs, c'est l'un et l'autre tout ensemble; que c'est à la fois un discernement et une sensation délicate. Si j'osais, je dirais que c'est le cœur éclairé.”²¹⁶

Unlike his mentor Desfontaines and many other critics of his time, who based their critical reviews on the guidelines set by the seventeenth century's *Grand* writers such as Corneille, Racine, and Boileau, Fréron included *sensibilité* in his reviews. He aimed to attach “sentiment à la connaissance.”²¹⁷ According to Fréron's principles of literary criticism, this *goût*

²¹⁴ Ibid., Tome 7, 213.

²¹⁵ Ibid., Tome 2, 209.

²¹⁶ Cited in Biard-Millérioux, *L'Esthétique d'Élie Catherine Fréron*, 90.

was to be protected at all costs. In his review of the poet François-Augustin de Paradis de Moncrif's essay "De l'esprit critique," Fréron made it clear that if works were detrimental to the *goût*, they deserved no mercy from "La Critique":

L'Ecrivain aura beau dire que ses ouvrages sont *sa Terre, son Château*. On peut sans crime ravager une *Terre*, qui ne produit que des ronces, des épines et des herbes venimeuses. On abat un *Château* qui menace ruine, et dont la chute pourrait écraser les passans. Les mauvais ouvrages tendent à la ruine du bon goût; il est donc nécessaire de les détruire.²¹⁸

However, how would he proceed in "destroying" works that he deemed mediocre in his critical reviews, without sounding combative? Fréron often resorted to satire (referring to it as "ironie," "plaisanterie," or "moquerie") and explicitly endorsed its use in writing critical reviews. For example, in his critique of Moncrif's essay, Fréron explained why the art of "moquerie" held an important place in literary criticism:

L'Auteur prétend que *le ton de moquerie est inutile à la perfection des Lettres, et par conséquent de l'esprit*. Cette maxime est contraire à celle d'Horace :

*Ridiculum acri
Fortius ac melius magnas plerumque fecat
Res*

C'est avec ce ton *Despréaux* a contribué au progrès du goût sous Louis XIV. Un trait de bonne plaisanterie fait plus d'effet que les Dissertations les plus judicieuses [...] Le ridicule ne peut et ne doit être corrigé que par le ridicule.²¹⁹

Thus, Fréron believed that he had the right to use satire. For him, maintaining a reasonable balance between the amount of satire in his reviews and the acceptable limits of the

²¹⁷ This is a recurring theme in the few publications that focused on the scholarship on Fréron such as Biard-Millérioux, *L'Esthétique d'Élie Catherine Fréron*; Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*; Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*; and Masseau *Les ennemis des philosophes*.

²¹⁸ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 6, 211-12.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 212. Horace's quote translates as "ridicule often settles matters of importance better and with more effect than severity."

self-imposed *retenue*, was another matter. Voltaire would repeatedly be the target of choice for Fréron's sarcastic reviews.

Fréron would often excessively praise Voltaire, imitating his zealous admirers. He would yet leave no doubt, by deliberately turning a phrase or two, that he meant exactly the opposite. One such review filled the pages of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* a mere six months following the initial *cahier*, when Fréron commented on the *Connaissance des beautés et des défauts de la poésie et de l'éloquence dans la langue française* (1749).²²⁰ Although the text is now attributed to Voltaire, it was published anonymously in 1749 by a certain M. D**** in London, a self-proclaimed professor who wanted to offer advice to young writers interested in French literature. He intended to guide them, through the essay, in the right direction, which meant following Voltaire's example.²²¹ Fréron, who had an excellent knowledge of Voltaire's style, was not duped.²²² He knew that the *Connaissance des beautés* was an example of how the writer promoted himself. He planned to push Voltaire into a corner by claiming that a "grand homme" like Voltaire, with a "réputation si décidée que la sienne" would surely not need "ces secours étrangers" to secure his place in history.²²³ Fréron began by affirming Voltaire's well-deserved reputation: "Monsieur de Voltaire est à juste titre, Monsieur, le Poète favori d'un grand nombre de Lecteurs" (262). Then, Fréron slowly began to reveal his intention, which was to expose

²²⁰ Ibid., Tome 1, 262-83.

²²¹ Voltaire, *Connaissance des beautés et des défauts de la poésie et de l'éloquence dans la langue française*, in *Œuvres de Voltaire*, Tome 9 (Paris : Firmin Didot Frères, 1855), 132-70. The writer introduces himself in such manner in the first few pages of the work, starting with this first sentence: "Ayant accompagné en France plusieurs jeunes étrangers, j'ai toujours taché de leur inspirer le bon goût, qui est si cultivé dans notre nation, et de leur faire lire avec fruit les meilleurs auteurs » (132). The editors of Kehl had a notice inserted in this edition saying that it "seems to them" that it was a young protégé of Voltaire who wrote the text "sous les yeux" of Voltaire (ibid).

²²² "Fidèle à son rôle de critique littéraire, Fréron rend compte de tous les ouvrages que Voltaire donne au public." Jin Lu, "*Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe?*": éléments d'une enquête sur l'usage d'un mot au siècle des Lumières, (Québec: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2005), 223.

²²³ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 1, 262.

Voltaire's scheme of glorifying himself: "La Renommée prête ses cent voix à des zélateurs ardens, qui semblent n'avoir d'autre employ dans la vie que celui d'exalter le mérite de ce grand homme." The implication was that Voltaire was either writing as someone else in order to praise himself, or getting one of his admirers to write in favor of him. From this point forward, sentences filled with sarcasm multiplied. Even before naming the work, he wondered what Voltaire would think of such writings that placed him above of all "génies que la France a produits." Fréron knew that Voltaire could not admit that he had written it under a pseudonym. The journalist set his trap by affirming that if Voltaire were to read the work, he would, and should, not reject such exaggerated praise. Fréron implied that the work's deification of Voltaire was unparalleled:

Je regarde cet ouvrage comme une espèce de Statue Equestre. J'y vois *M. de Voltaire*, seul monté sur le cheval Pegase: Apollon lui-même met une couronne sur sa tête; les Corneilles, les Racines, les Boileaux, les Molières, les La Fontaines, les Rousseaux, les Crébillons, les Fontenelles sont enchainés à ses pieds, comme des Rivaux qu'il a domptés par la force de son génie. (262-63)

At this point, the tone was far different than the review's first sentence. Any reader familiar with Fréron's writings, and Voltaire counted among them, would have picked up on his sarcasm, because the authors mentioned in this sentence were continuously lauded by Fréron. Next, Fréron introduced the essay and stated that its author was someone who "announces himself as a professor of *goût* and literature" (263). Fréron's most severe blow, the implied accusation that Voltaire wrote the work, deserves to be quoted in full:

Je ne suis point de ceux qui pensent que tout ceci n'est qu'une malice concertée; que l'Auteur de cette brochure n'affecte l'orthographe particulière à *M. de Voltaire*, et n'imité quelquefois son style, que pour le charger de l'ouvrage même: imputation très indécente, et peu vraisemblable. Quelqu'un pourra-t-il s'imaginer qu'un Ecrivain connu veuille se louer lui-même d'une façon si arrogante si grossière? On sçait assez quelle est la retenue et la modestie de ce grand Poète, et sa franchise est incapable de pareils détours. Il connoit les vrais chemins qui conduisent à la réputation; et je suis persuadé qu'il

désavouera hautement le Précepteur de la jeunesse étrangère, dont inutilement on lui donne ici le masque. (263-64)

Fréron hinted that he recognized Voltaire's style and words, and that he was not fooled. Later on in the review, he cited specific passages and compared them to Voltaire's earlier works in order to further support his accusation.

The more important point remained that Fréron put his adversary on the spot: Voltaire would confirm his modesty and decency as a great poet *only* if he denounced this work and others like it: "Si j'étais à sa place, je ferais tous mes efforts pour découvrir l'Auteur séditieux d'un Libelle, où il est si mal encensé; et j'emploierais, pour le faire punir, le crédit dont il s'est quelquefois servi avec succès pour faire châtier les Colporteurs des écrits, où l'on avait audace de le censurer. Sa gloire et celle de la Nation y sont intéressées."²²⁴ Of course, Fréron knew Voltaire was not going to do so, since that would have meant condemning his own text. Then, Fréron reproached the text's author for doing a disservice to Voltaire by his "imprudente amitié," because, "la louange excessive dégrade un Héros plutôt qu'elle ne l'élève: on la prend pour ironie" (265). It also confirmed that Fréron himself, who used "louange excessive" for Voltaire earlier in his review, was in fact degrading him. The use of irony allowed Fréron to circumvent any accusation of harsh criticism, in case Voltaire and his circle of friends denounced him to the authorities. It left Voltaire with little choice but to absorb the blows dealt by Fréron, unless he wanted to publicly denounce the journalist and attract more attention to the article. Furthermore, Fréron could plausibly deny his aversion to Voltaire. He had, after all, expressed favorable

²²⁴ Ibid., 283.

opinions on the writer's previous works such as *Zaïre* (1732) and *Mérope* (1743), and would later do so for others such as *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755) and *Rome sauvée* (1756).²²⁵

Voltaire had not responded to Fréron's attacks since 1744, but the journalist was no longer the minor nuisance that he once had been.²²⁶ He had garnered allies, his fame had spread, and his *Lettres sur quelques écrits* entertained a wide audience. Voltaire could no longer sit by and let the "serpent" bite him at will.²²⁷ Fréron, for his part, may have underestimated how resourceful Voltaire could be and how quickly he could rally his forces against the journalist. As Balcou notes, Fréron was unlike Voltaire's other enemies who disappeared after short periods of hostility. The journalist not only continued to harass him through the years, but also had a powerful tool, a widely read periodical, through which he could influence the public's opinion. Voltaire was going to have to use all the arms at his disposal to discredit Fréron.²²⁸ Unfortunately for Fréron, whose attacks remained within the confines of the literary domain, Voltaire did not hesitate to resort to smear tactics and a number of schemes designed to ruin the journalist's livelihood. The animosity between them was about to grow into one of the major components of the conflict between the *philosophes* and the *anti-philosophes*.

²²⁵ Ibid., 40-41. Haydn Mason, "Le Voltaire de Fréron... et de Diderot," Balcou, Barthélemy, and Carious, eds., *Élie Fréron: polémiste et critique d'art*, 111.

²²⁶ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 29, 32.

²²⁷ Voltaire circulated the following famous epigram in 1763: "L'autre jour au fond d'un vallon / Un serpent mordit Jean Fréron. / Devinez ce qu'il arriva? / Ce fut le serpent qui creva." He also likened Fréron to a wasp in his 1760 play *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise*.

²²⁸ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 5.

3.3 LETTRES SUR QUELQUES ÉCRITS: TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

In the late 1750s, when Fréron had left his *Lettres sur quelques écrits* behind and moved on to his famous periodical *L'Année littéraire* (1754-1776), he had many powerful protectors. His periodical was widely read throughout France and parts of Europe. He was also an established anti-*philosophe*. As Balcou notes, “entraîné dans la [*philosophes-anti-philosophes*] bataille, poussé par le vent de l’histoire,” Fréron had already become one of the leaders of the anti-*philosophe* cause, but had not left behind “les idées qui sont sa vie.”²²⁹ It was not until the 1760s that the journalist’s commentary became more and more “émotionnelle, impressionniste.”²³⁰ There is no doubt that Voltaire played a role in this shift, especially considering his denigrating portrait of Fréron as the journalist Frélon in *Le Caffé ou l’Écossaise*, staged in 1760.²³¹ Until then, the two enemies even enjoyed a period of truce from 1754 to 1759. It was partly because *L'Année littéraire* and Voltaire shared the same publishing editor, Michel Lambert, who did not want to see a public clash between two lucrative clients, and partly because Fréron, weary of the six suspensions that *Lettres sur quelques écrits* had endured, wanted his new journal’s success to grow uninterrupted.²³² Nonetheless, Fréron’s quarrels with the *philosophes* kept him busy. He now had to confront what he called a “clique” composed of “fanatiques et des gens odieux” in

²²⁹ Ibid., 4.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ *Le Caffé ou l’Écossaise* was Voltaire’s riposte to Palissot’s *Les Philosophes*, both staged in 1760. For more information on the crucial role of Palissot’s and Voltaire’s plays in the *philosophe* vs. anti-*philosophe* conflict, see my previous chapter. Also see, Connors, *Dramatic Battles*, chapters 2-5.

²³² On the 1754-1759 period of calmness between Voltaire and Fréron, see Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 211-14; Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 95-96, 171-76. For details on Fréron’s move from Duchesne to Lambert, thus the name change from *Lettres sur quelques écrits* to *L'Année littéraire*, see Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 91-94.

his letter to Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the *Directeur de la Librairie*, in 1754:

Je vous supplie d'ailleurs, Monsieur, de considérer que depuis mes feuilles sur Jean-Jacques, sur Diderot et sur Duclos, je suis très mal avec cette clique, et que je le serai probablement longtemps, mon projet n'étant pas de me raccommodez ni de vivre avec des enthousiastes, des fanatiques et des gens odieux au gouvernement et à la société. Au reste, ce que j'ai dit de Grimm est très vrai et c'est ce qui l'offense lui et sa cabale.²³³

Fréron knew the faces of his enemies. Other than the four mentioned in this passage, Voltaire was obviously one since the beginning of Fréron's career, and he had d'Alembert on his side. The "clique" also enjoyed the protection of Madame de Pompadour. Malesherbes, was much more sympathetic to their cause than to that of the anti-*philosophes*. The above letter was written shortly after the initial *cahier* of *L'Année littéraire*. Five years earlier, Fréron was still a literary critic and not an anti-*philosophe*. In other words, the shift from the Voltaire-Fréron enmity to a comprehensive conflict between the "anti-*philosophe* Fréron" and the *philosophes* occurred, for the most part, during the publication of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. A number of developments during the period of 1749-1754, and during the first year of *L'Année littéraire* in 1755, caused that shift. They were more often than not instigated by Fréron's enemies, and had consequences that inexorably drove Fréron, less by choice than by necessity, to adopt the anti-*philosophe* identity.

Balcou notes that around 1750, there were signs of a "clan voltairien" mainly consisting of Duclos, Marmontel, and Voltaire's protectors.²³⁴ There was also a group of writers forming around the *Encyclopédie* project, encouraged by the "trois privilèges obtenus successivement par

²³³ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 143.

²³⁴ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 78.

ses éditeurs, en avril 1745, janvier 1746 et avril 1748.”²³⁵ Rousseau had recently joined d’Alembert and Diderot and was about to gain considerable fame thanks to his *Discours sur les arts et les sciences* (1750), honored by the Academy of Dijon. Groups of intellectuals were beginning to form, but for the most part, “à cette heure où les partisans se cherchent encore,” a unified *clique* of encyclopedists, in the sense that Fréron described in 1754, had not yet emerged.²³⁶ At this point, Fréron had not yet reviewed any works by Rousseau, d’Alembert or Diderot. In fact, noting several writers’ desire to be referred to as a “philosophe” during that period, Balcou affirms that Fréron also aspired to be a *philosophe* himself: “Il est donc normal qu’à ce moment du siècle où tout le monde se sent et se veut philosophe, Fréron qui a l’esprit et le style de l’époque, se sente et se veuille comme tout le monde.”²³⁷ Balcou and Lu have examined Fréron’s texts and showed that Fréron’s thoughts closely resembled the intellectual described in César Chesneau Dumarsais’s dissertation *Le Philosophe* (1743), which was to later become the foundation of the article “Philosophe” in the *Encyclopédie* analyzed in the previous chapter.²³⁸ Paul Benhamou, in his extensive analysis of Fréron’s articles on the *Encyclopédie*, also exposed the inaccuracy of Fréron’s reputation as the “adversaire le plus acharné de l’*Encyclopédie*.”²³⁹ He concluded that Fréron referred to the work favorably more than once in

²³⁵ Roger Chartier, *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française*, (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 65.

²³⁶ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 78.

²³⁷ Ibid., 75.

²³⁸ Ibid., 73-79. Lu, “*Qu’est-ce qu’un philosophe?*”: *éléments d’une enquête*, 184-86. For more on how the final version of the article “Philosophe” found in the *Encyclopédie* was formed, see Herbert Dieckmann, *Le Philosophe, texts and interpretation* (Saint Louis: Washington University, 1948). Dieckmann’s meticulous research shows that the final version of the article was redacted by Voltaire.

²³⁹ Paul Benhamou, “Fréron et l’*Encyclopédie* (1751-1757),” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest*, Tome 83, n.4, (1976), 695.

his *Lettres sur quelques écrits* and argued that Fréron's critique was "bien plus favorable qu'on aurait pu le croire, à n'écouter que les plaints d'un Alembert par exemple" (696).

3.3.1 Confrontation with Marmontel in 1749: prelude to larger conflicts

Fréron's review of the *Connaissance des beautés* was only one example of how he could still be harsh in his criticism, despite his promise to exercise restraint in his reviews. Most writers hoped that either he liked their work or that he sympathized with them enough to spare them the negative publicity that his review would generate. The twenty-six-year-old Marmontel did not belong to either of these categories. Furthermore, he was a disciple of Voltaire. The tension between Fréron and Marmontel soared in 1749.²⁴⁰ The journalist severely criticized Marmontel's *Denys le Tyran* (1748) in the first *cahier* of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*.²⁴¹ A seething Marmontel lambasted Fréron's review in the only letter ever written to the journalist by a partisan of Voltaire (Barthélemy 26-27). Marmontel was aware of the fragile existence of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. The tacit permission meant that it would not take much to stifle the journalist's voice, and Marmontel did not hesitate to remind Fréron of that:

La Littérature a besoin d'un ouvrage tel que vous l'avez conçu [...] Je ne doute pas que le Ministère ne tolérât un Censeur, qui aurait fait les preuves de gout, de probité et de lumières, et vous me paraissez capable de remplir ces conditions. Mais permettez-moi de vous dire que votre Essai, d'ailleurs bien écrit et plein de traits ingénieux, nous laisse encore quelque chose à désirer.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the antagonism between Fréron and Marmontel in 1749, see Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 69-76.

²⁴¹ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 1, 30-58. It was the third work reviewed overall in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*.

²⁴² Published in Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 1, 104. The tacit permission stipulated that Fréron's journal will be allowed to go on as long as the journalist acts as his own censor (Marmontel's "Censeur" reference is in fact Fréron himself), and moderates his comments.

The “bruit” that Fréron’s first *cahier* caused resulted in a three-month-long suspension of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*.²⁴³ Although I have not found any detailed information on how this first suspension was executed, Voltaire’s role in it was almost undeniable. He had a close relationship with Marmontel and regularly corresponded with people in positions of authority such as Nicolas René Berryer, the police lieutenant. He also wrote a number of times in his private correspondence that the magistrates should pursue Fréron. His July 1749 letter to Charles-Augustin de Ferriol, le Comte d’Argental, shows how deeply Voltaire resented the fact that Fréron was allowed to write and publish again: “Pourquoi permet-on que ce coquin de Fréron succède à ce maraud de Desfontaines? Pourquoi souffrir Raffiat après Cartouche? Est-ce que Bicêtre est plein?”²⁴⁴ A month earlier, he wrote a letter of consolation to Marmontel, in which he insulted the journalist and his now-deceased mentor l’abbé Desfontaines. He also expressed his desire to see Fréron punished for his “cruelty” to Marmontel:

N’y a-t-il pas d’ailleurs une cruauté révoltante à vouloir décourager un jeune homme [Marmontel] qui consacre ses talents, et de très grands talents, au public, et qui n’attend sa fortune que d’un travail très pénible, et souvent très mal récompensé? C’est vouloir lui ôter ses ressources, c’est vouloir le perdre; c’est un procédé lâche et méchant que les magistrats devraient réprimer.²⁴⁵

During the next couple of years, Voltaire would lead the effort to do to Fréron precisely what he accused the journalist of doing to Marmontel in the above quote. Unlike Fréron who attacked literary works, Voltaire would aim for the journalist’s career and personal life.

²⁴³ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 48. For a timeline of the six suspensions during the five-year run of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, see the figure on page 46.

²⁴⁴ Voltaire, “À M. le Comte d’Argental, le 24 juillet 1749,” *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Tome 46, (Paris: H. Perronneau, 1821), 428. Raffiat was an assassin who was caught and executed in 1742.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., “À Marmontel, le 16 juin 1749,” 421-23.

When Fréron began publishing again three months later, he got back at Marmontel by publishing the writer's letter in his journal, along with his own response to it.²⁴⁶ He later dealt another blow to Marmontel by devoting almost the entire last issue of *Lettres sur quelques écrits* in 1749 to a disparaging review of *Aristomène*, staged in the same year.²⁴⁷ Marmontel, realizing that it was not wise for him to quarrel with Fréron through letters, never responded. He did, however, attempt to get his revenge in a physical confrontation. According to this note of *l'inspecteur de police* Joseph d'Hémery, Marmontel confronted Fréron at the Comédie française on November 5th:

Étant tous deux dans le foyer, Marmontel vint insulter Fréron, en lui disant qu'il voulait avoir raison des plaisanteries qu'il faisait continuellement de lui dans ses feuilles. Fréron lui répondit tout bas, que ce n'était pas là la place pour discuter. Ils sortirent sur-le-champ, et furent mettre l'épée à la main à la porte de la Comédie-française.

Comme ils n'avaient pas envie de se faire grand mal, ils furent bientôt séparé. Le marquis de Roullay et le marquis de Chimène emmenèrent Marmontel; et Fréron, qui aurait sûrement battu son adversaire, fut souper chez *Morand*, chirurgien. En rentrant chez lui, il trouva un garde des maréchaux de France qui se mit en garde auprès de lui. Marmontel en trouva un aussi. Le lendemain matin ils furent conduits à Suresne, chez M. le maréchal d'*Isenguien*, qui les renvoya *comme gibier de police*.²⁴⁸

Fréron waited a little over a month before publishing his review of Marmontel's play *Aristomène*. The long and humiliating article began with the following sentence: "La critique attaque, Monsieur, un dangereux ennemi; c'est l'amour propre, capable des plus grands emportemens, lorsqu'il est irrité. Les faiseurs de vers ressemblent aux dévots: un rien allume leur

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 102-25.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., Tome 2, 289-353. The first few lines of Fréron's review clearly show that the journalist is well aware of the effects of his reviews on Marmontel's "amour propre."

²⁴⁸ Joseph Delort, *Histoire de la détention des philosophes et des gens de lettres à la Bastille et à Vincennes*, Tome 2, (Paris: Firmin Didot Père et Fils, 1829), 169-70.

courroux.”²⁴⁹ Fréron continued to criticize Marmontel’s works throughout his career. Although Marmontel belonged to the camp that ultimately prevailed in the major conflict of the century, his hatred of Fréron never diminished. He struck back at the journalist anytime the opportunity presented itself: “de tous ses [Marmontel’s] ennemis, celui qui eut le plus à souffrir de ses démarches est Fréron: Marmontel intervint auprès de Mme de Pompadour pour le faire emprisonner, et tous deux un jour tirèrent l’épée au foyer de la Comédie-française [...] Il n’est pas très étonnant qu’il soit maltraité dans ces *Mémoires*.”²⁵⁰ The year 1749 spelled success for Fréron. Despite the suspension, his journal’s exposure increased. Fréron, for his part, came out on top in a highly visible quarrel against one of Voltaire’s preferred disciples. Voltaire was going to have to take the reins himself in order to halt Fréron’s progress.

3.3.2 1750: Voltaire confronts Fréron

In January of 1750, Fréron decided to settle an old score. Two years earlier, Voltaire had added a libel called *Mensonges imprimés* to the end of the printed edition of his play *Sémiramis*.²⁵¹ In the libel, he attacked journalists and denigrated many other works that he considered inaccurate and malicious. In the passage that particularly bothered Fréron, Voltaire first expressed his well-known dislike for critics: “Une autre partie considérable du papier imprimé est celle des livres qu’on a appelés polémiques, par excellence, c’est-à-dire, de ceux dans lesquels on dit des injures

²⁴⁹ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 2, 289.

²⁵⁰ Jean-Pierre Guicciardi, Gilles Thierriat, “Introduction,” Marmontel, *Mémoires*, 37.

²⁵¹ Voltaire, *Mensonges imprimés* in the *Œuvres de Voltaire*, Tome 24, ed. Charles Palissot de Montenois, (Paris : Servière, 1792), 377-503.

à son prochain pour gagner de l'argent" (386). Then, Voltaire explicitly attacked l'abbé Desfontaines who had died three years earlier:

J'ai été tenté par beaucoup de vanité, quand j'ai vu que nos grands écrivains en usaient avec moi comme on en avait agi avec Pope. Je puis dire que j'ai valu des honoraires assez passables à plus d'un auteur. J'avais, je ne sais comment, rendu à l'illustre abbé Desfontaines un léger service; mais comme ce service ne lui donnait pas de quoi vivre, il se mit d'abord un peu à son aise, au sortir de la maison dont je l'avais tiré, par une douzaine de libelles contre moi. (388)

Voltaire stated that having reputable names like his, or Pope's, appear in a work increased its sales and helped its author get rich. People like Fréron and Desfontaines took advantage of this for their own personal gain. Voltaire later claimed that he had a letter from Desfontaines in his possession, in which l'abbé had threatened to publish a libel against him unless he sent "400 livres." Only then, Voltaire said, l'abbé would send him all four hundred "exemplaires fidèlement" (388).

As expected, Fréron did not let Voltaire's remarks go unanswered. He was deeply attached to Desfontaines and was not going to allow anyone to ruin his reputation after his death. In his article dated January 15th, he first reminded his readers that he always praised Voltaire and gave him "le tribut d'estime qu'il est en droit d'exiger" when the writer published works that deserved it.²⁵² Then, Fréron accused his detractors of only rehashing his negative criticisms of Voltaire. At this point, Fréron already knew Voltaire's forces were uniting against him. He claimed that "ses partisans outrés" worked relentlessly to make him appear malicious to Voltaire.²⁵³ Although he kept addressing these detractors, Fréron was at the same time answering Voltaire's accusations in the *Mensonges imprimés*: "Mais ignorent-ils que c'est précisément

²⁵² Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 3, 43.

²⁵³ Ibid.

parce qu'un Poëte est fameux, que l'on doit s'attacher à faire connaître ce qu'il y a de répréhensible dans ses Ouvrages? Ses erreurs sont contagieuses, et peuvent égarer la jeunesse séduite par la réputation."²⁵⁴ It was not, as Voltaire thought, solely for profit that Fréron reviewed the writer's works. As a literary critic, Fréron's allegiance was to the younger generation of writers, not to Voltaire. This also tied into one of the overall narratives of the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*: the desire by both camps to persuade young talents to join their side.²⁵⁵

Having explained why Voltaire had appeared so often in his reviews, Fréron now intended to ridicule Voltaire's pretentiousness in the *Mensonges imprimés*: "Je serais sans doute le plus téméraire et le plus insensé des hommes, si je me proposais de flétrir la gloire de ce Héros: ses lauriers le garantissent de la foudre."²⁵⁶ Fréron multiplied the exaggerations. Voltaire was a lot more than a hero:

C'est un Monarque affermi sur le Trône. Tous les projets de l'en faire descendre ont échoué; toutes les conjurations ont été dissipées. Je n'entre point dans les noirs complots de quelques citoyens séditieux du Pindé, qui le regardent toujours comme un Usurpateur. [...] Je lui demande seulement pardon d'avoir osé de tems en tems lever jusqu'à lui mes faibles regards, et contempler sa splendeur d'un œil fixe.

Après avoir observé cet Astre avec le télescope de la critique, me sera-t-il permis de décrire son diamètre et ses mouvemens. Il est d'une grandeur prodigieuse; il attire tout dans son tourbillon. Il est entouré d'un nombre infini de Satellites.²⁵⁷

This type of rhetoric was precisely why Fréron was a formidable opponent. He could inflict great damage on his adversary's pride, without ever using insults. Using metaphors,

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 44.

²⁵⁵ Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 80-81, 100.

²⁵⁶ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 3, 44.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 45-46.

Fréron was once again meaning exactly the opposite of what he was saying. In the first part, he targeted Voltaire's pompousness and implied that he usurped his reputation.²⁵⁸ In the second part, Fréron affirmed that his "critical telescope," meaning his *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, was going to strip the "Astre" bare. Even Voltaire's cronies ("satellites") that constantly swirled around him ("tourbillon"), could not protect him from his journal. There was a good reason for Fréron to set the stage in this manner. For the rest of the article, he proceeded to meticulously refute the arguments found in the *Mensonges imprimés*. He defended l'abbé Desfontaines by attacking Voltaire's arrogance: "[Voltaire] se met lui-même sur les rangs après Pope, et ne peut s'empêcher d'évoquer les mânes de l'Abbé *Desfontaines*, qu'il appelle *Illustre* par dérision, mais qu'il l'est en effet."²⁵⁹ Then, Fréron reproduced the passage (see above) from *Mensonges imprimés* in which Voltaire accused Desfontaines of threatening him with a libel. Fréron reminded his readers that he needed to protect "la mémoire d'un Critique judicieux, métamorphosé par l'auteur des *Mensonges* en faiseur de Libelles."²⁶⁰

Fréron gave the full account of the events between the two men that included far more wrongdoings on Voltaire's part than Desfontaines's. Before the animosity started in 1735, the two men were friends.²⁶¹ That year, Voltaire wrote an angry letter to the abbé in response to the negative review of his *La Mort de César* in Desfontaines's journal. Although the abbé initially attempted to make amends with Voltaire, it fell on deaf ears. Since then, Voltaire never stopped

²⁵⁸ Fréron often accused Voltaire of plagiarism. For one example, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 59

²⁵⁹ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 3, 62.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 63.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

pursuing Desfontaines, “vivant ou mort.”²⁶² In 1738, an anonymous author attacked Desfontaines and his journal in a “brochure” entitled *Le Préservatif, ou Critique des Observations sur les écrits modernes*: “On attribua cet affreux Libelle à M. de Voltaire,” said Fréron, although he did not believe that it was him.²⁶³ Desfontaines countered with his own *La Voltairomanie* (1738). Fréron argued that Voltaire was a hypocrite, a hateful man who could not satiate his desire for revenge:

La vengeance fait plus de tort à celui qui s’y livre qu’à celui qui en est l’objet. Exercée au-delà du tombeau, elle est encore plus odieuse.

Que M. de Voltaire cesse enfin de troubler le repos d’un homme qui a eu l’avantage passager d’être son ami, et qui ne s’est exhalé qu’une seule fois en injures contre lui, après avoir été le premier offensé. Si ce grand homme voulait se rappeler ce qu’il a dit lui-même dans une Lettre [...] il serait plus porté à pardonner aux Écrivains qui ont la témérité de censurer ses Ouvrages. Voici ses propres paroles: *Tous les honnêtes gens qui pensent sont Critiques*.²⁶⁴

Fréron’s message was loud and clear. If Voltaire wanted to go after the abbé, he would have to go through him. The journalist finished his article by warning Voltaire that he was planning to closely scrutinize his works and that he was going to attack the writer’s *amour propre*: “Un Poète aussi célèbre devrait se montrer plus indifférent sur les remarques qu’on peut faire au sujet de ses Ecrits. L’excès de sa sensibilité ne peut tourner qu’à l’encouragement des censures Littéraires.”²⁶⁵ In the twenty-three-page article, Fréron mocked Voltaire’s pretentiousness, refuted much of the content of the *Mensonges imprimés*, cleared his mentor’s name, and made Voltaire appear like a liar. As Monselet notes, Fréron’s use of irony and

²⁶² Ibid., 64.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 65. It should also be pointed out that Fréron’s enemies Marmontel, Grimm, and Diderot also practiced journalism, Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 16.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 66.

sarcasm continuously tormented Voltaire: “c’est justement ce ton de courtoisie qui exaspère Voltaire; c’est ce sang froid constant qui le met hors de lui” (20). Fréron’s rhetorical skills meant that Voltaire needed to, in addition to publications and libels, explore other means to defeat Fréron. Challenging Fréron in public only seemed to solidify the journalist’s legitimacy as a literary critic and help him garner more partisans.

The above article and an injurious epigram written by Fréron a few weeks later, triggered Voltaire’s retaliation.²⁶⁶ Although Fréron had new admirers and increased readership, the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* still lacked a formal permission. The tacit one was revocable at any time, at the whim of an influential figure. If the journal were suspended, it would take time before his protectors could come to his rescue. Even if they did, he could not continue to ask for their help, in case it happened repeatedly. Voltaire was well aware of the journal’s precarious status. He began his campaign by denouncing Fréron to Berryer, the police lieutenant, in a letter dated March 15, 1750: “L’abbé Raynal, attaqué comme moi, est venu avec moi, Monsieur, pour vous supplier de supprimer ces scandales dont tous les honnêtes gens sont indignés. Ayez la bonté, monsieur, d’en conférer avec M. d’Argenson.”²⁶⁷ One week later, Voltaire wrote to Jean-Jacques d’Ortous de Mairan, a well-respected academician and the editor of *Journal des savants*. He asked him to contact Henri François d’Auguesseau, the chancellor of France, on his behalf.²⁶⁸ Fréron was publishing his *feuilles* without permission, and yet, he was continuously causing

²⁶⁶ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 57. Ironically, the epigram alludes to an incident that involves Voltaire contacting authorities at the detriment of another.

²⁶⁷ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Ed. Georges Avenel, Tome 8, (Paris: Journal le Siècle 1870), 4. Over the years, Voltaire had a habit of denouncing to Berryer people that he considered fraudulent or criminal. Another example among many can be found in his letter dated August 30, 1755, *ibid.*, 173.

²⁶⁸ “[Voltaire] écrivait quelques jours plus tard à M. de Mairan, qui avait l’oreille du chancelier, et que l’on supposait fort influent auprès du chef de la magistrature,” Gustave Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la société française au XVIII^e siècle*, Vol. 1, (Paris: Didier et C^{ie}, 1871), 390.

scandals and inciting quarrels: “il est sans doute de l’équité de M. le chancelier de réprimer une telle licence, et de sa prudence d’en prévenir les suites.”²⁶⁹ Voltaire’s campaign against Fréron succeeded when le chancelier d’Auguesseau ordered the suspension of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. Voltaire, however, sought to harm Fréron on more than one front.

Voltaire had heard that Frederick II was considering Fréron for the position of his chief literary correspondent in Paris. Voltaire knew how beneficial this appointment would be for Fréron: “Le poste était plus honorable que lucratif. Mais il eût apporté à Fréron plus d’autorités et quelques ressources.”²⁷⁰ Alarmed that Fréron could become the confidant of one of his own most powerful protectors, Voltaire wrote a letter to the King two days after he denounced Fréron to Berryer:

On m’a dit qu’on avait proposé un nommé Fréron. Permettez-moi, je vous en conjure, de représenter à Votre Majesté qu’il faut, pour une telle correspondance, des hommes qui aient l’approbation du public. Il s’en faut beaucoup qu’on regarde Fréron comme digne d’un tel honneur. C’est un homme qui est dans un décri et dans un mépris général, tout sortant de la prison, où il a été mis pour des choses assez vilaines. Je vous avouerai encore, Sire, qu’il est mon ennemi déclaré, et qu’il se déchaîne contre moi dans de mauvaises feuilles périodiques, uniquement parce que je n’ai pas voulu avoir la bassesse de lui faire donner deux louis d’or, qu’il a eu la bassesse de demander à mes gens, pour dire du bien de mes ouvrages. Je ne crois pas assurément que Votre Majesté puisse choisir un tel homme.²⁷¹

According to Voltaire, Fréron was corrupt, an extorter and a blackmailer. Although Voltaire made it sound like Fréron recently came out of prison, he must have referred to the

²⁶⁹ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Ed. Georges Avenel, Tome 8, 4.

²⁷⁰ Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 85.

²⁷¹ Cited in Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la société*, 391.

imprisonment of five years earlier.²⁷² Voltaire requested that the King consider his friend l'abbé Raynal for the position instead of Fréron.

A month passed and the King had yet to make a final decision on the matter. Voltaire remained resolved. He wrote to Darget, Frederick II's secretary, telling him that he had informed the King of Fréron's "friponneries."²⁷³ He claimed that Fréron, who had faced punishment before, allegedly tried to sell his books in Germany at three times their original value. People of rank and reputation, he felt, needed to keep their distance from such a crook. L'abbé Raynal, Voltaire added, was "un homme d'un âge mûr, très sage, très instruit, d'une probité reconnue, et qui est bien venu partout."²⁷⁴ Raynal would never try to sell books at higher prices: "Soyez persuadé qu'il était de l'honneur de ceux qui approchent votre respectable maître de ne pas être en liaison avec un homme aussi publiquement deshonoré que Fréron."²⁷⁵ After all, that was precisely how Voltaire treated Fréron: "Je ne lui ai fait fermer ma porte que par les raisons qui doivent l'exclure de votre correspondance."²⁷⁶ Voltaire also succeeded on this front. Fréron was never offered the position. He was already silenced in Paris, and now, he was denied entry into the Prussian court.

Fréron painfully accepted the suspension, but did not remain inactive. He managed to circulate the following epigram, partially in response to his friends who were advising him to either retract his article on the *Mensonges imprimés* or praise *Oreste* (1750), Voltaire's latest play:

²⁷² This was when Fréron was incarcerated because he criticized a work by Bernis, Pompadour's protégé.

²⁷³ Ibid., 392.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

Si Voltaire étouffait cette haine funeste
Dont il daigne poursuivre un petit Scaliger;
Si, pour me donner place au royaume céleste,
Sa main me tirait de l'Enfer,
Il me faudrait louer *Oreste*;
Mon salut coûterait trop cher.²⁷⁷

The suspension of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* lasted nine months. Fréron knew that he was facing a growing number of Voltaire partisans such as Raynal, Duclos, and Marmontel. More importantly, he learned in 1750 that he and Voltaire had different concepts of how to challenge another man of letters. As the nineteenth-century historian Gustave Desnoiresterres notes, Voltaire was ruthless in his methods: “il se tenait prêt à repousser le nouvel assaillant avec toutes les armes à sa disposition [...] si vous voulez la bataille, si vous lancez le premier javelot, attendez-vous à tout.”²⁷⁸ In contrast, Fréron considered his pen as his only weapon. It was on December 7, 1750, about a month after the suspension ended, that he decided to write directly to Voltaire.²⁷⁹

Mutual hatred had stopped them from communicating in the past, and the physical distance between them only made it worse. Voltaire, who left the Royal Court disgraced a few months earlier, was now living in Prussia. He regularly had contact with two of Fréron's friends, Maupertuis and La Mettrie, who were also living there. He had to rely on his Parisian contacts to keep abreast of the developments in Paris and the back-and-forth communication took time. Both Fréron and Voltaire were staying informed about each other's activities through their correspondence or through hearsay. It was in this atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust that

²⁷⁷ Cited in Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 84.

²⁷⁸ Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la société*, 382.

²⁷⁹ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 29-31.

Fréron wrote the letter to Voltaire. It concerned a complicated matter that needed to be resolved. At the center of it was the poet François-Thomas-Marie de Baculard d'Arnaud who had come to Prussia in March. He had been a partisan of Voltaire since 1740, but much to the latter's dismay, he was slowly defecting to Fréron's camp.²⁸⁰ A new edition of Voltaire's works was about to appear and Baculard d'Arnaud had written its preface.²⁸¹ When he realized that his text had been modified without his consent, he contacted Fréron. He asked Fréron to publish in his journal an official repudiation of the text in which he informed the public of the alterations that had been made to his preface, denying their authorship.

Voltaire offered a slightly different version of what had occurred. According to Voltaire's friends, Baculard d'Arnaud had accused him of altering the preface himself, and had thus asked Fréron to publish his *désaveu*. Around the same time, Baculard d'Arnaud was disgraced and had to leave Prussia, leading to his definitive rupture with Voltaire.²⁸² Voltaire, who was under the impression that Fréron had already published Baculard d'Arnaud's *désaveu*, contacted le Comte d'Argental and the lieutenant Berryer to complain. He expressed his deep hatred for the "scélérat de Fréron" in a letter to Thieriot: "il sera chassé, si mieux n'est; et peut-être, tout Prussien que je suis, je trouverai au moins le secret de faire taire ce dogue."²⁸³ Fréron only learned of Voltaire's anger when his friend Sauveur-François Morand, the famous surgeon who was also in correspondence with Voltaire, showed him a letter that Voltaire had written to him on the matter.

²⁸⁰ For more on Voltaire's nascent dislike of Baculard d'Arnaud at the end the 1740s and 1750, see Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 88-89.

²⁸¹ The information in the rest of this paragraph comes from Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 57- 58.

²⁸² According to Cornou, Voltaire, used the letter from le Comte d'Argental to discredit Baculard d'Arnaud in the eyes of the King of Prussia, and eventually caused the poet's disgrace, *Trente années de lutte*, 89.

²⁸³ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaires*, Ed. Georges Avenel, Tome 8, 20.

Voltaire denounced both Baculard d'Arnaud and Fréron in the letter. He counted on Morand to share the letter with Fréron. Fréron should know, he wrote, how hateful it was, to make use of one's "esprit" for the sole purposes of ruining others and to entertain "un public malin de querelles misérables." He also warned Fréron that by doing so, "on se ferme toutes les portes [...] on se prepare des repentirs bien cuisants."²⁸⁴

Aware of Voltaire's implied threat, Fréron wrote to him in an effort to avoid further animosity. First, Fréron reminded Voltaire of his accusations and went on to set the record straight.²⁸⁵ Next, he assured Voltaire that Baculard d'Arnaud did ask him to publish a *désaveu* regarding the preface, but did not say anything about Voltaire altering it. Fréron wrote verbatim Baculard d'Arnaud's request:

Je vous avertis d'une chose en passant: il paraît une édition des œuvres de Mr. de Voltaire avec une préface sous mon nom, laquelle préface est corrompue et altérée. Je ne reconnais plus mon ouvrage. On a ajouté des choses qui ne sont point dans l'original. Lorsque vos feuilles paraîtront, je vous recommande cher ami, d'insérer ce *désaveu qui est d'une très grande conséquence pour moi*, et dire que c'est sans doute la faute de quelque éditeur. M. de Voltaire a mon manuscrit de ma main, il n'a qu'à le montrer.²⁸⁶

Then, Fréron speculated that some people who had seen the *désaveu* may have tried too hard to look for a meaning behind the words that Baculard d'Arnaud had italicized. Perhaps, they drew their own conclusions "sur lesquelles l'imagination échappée de ceux qui vous ont écrit, sans rien approfondir, aura bâti le ridicule roman qu'ils vous ont envoyé." Fréron said that he had diligently tried to tell everyone that the rumors about Baculard d'Arnaud's letter were false. Nevertheless, who could stop "le torrent des sots bruits de Paris?" Fréron asked.²⁸⁷ Voltaire,

²⁸⁴ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 29.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

Baculard d'Arnaud, and Fréron were victims of nasty rumors started by their enemies: "Croyez monsieur, que cette absurde imposture est l'ouvrage de vos ennemis, de ceux de d'Arnaud, et des miens." Fréron claimed that if Voltaire knew him better, he would not have portrayed him as a "calomniateur" like he did in the letter to Morand: "Je n'ai jamais eu la basse malignité de vouloir nuire à qui ce soit"; "j'applaudis sincèrement à tous les succès." Fréron told Voltaire that he was aware of the fact that his work had created enemies, but that Voltaire should not see him as one: "Ayez, monsieur une assez bonne opinion des hommes, pour croire qu'un critique qui ne chercherait qu'à nuire ses compatriotes, qu'à divertir un public malin, qu'à déshonorer les lettres et ceux qui les cultivent, serait peu lu, encore moins protégé."²⁸⁸

Fréron's letter represented a pivotal moment in the conflict between the two men. There was little doubt that Voltaire's unrelenting overt and covert attacks on Fréron had taken their toll on him by the end of 1750. His letter was a clear attempt to reach out to one of France's leading writers and make amends.²⁸⁹ As opposed to the sarcasm and ridicule that dominated the way Fréron publicly treated Voltaire in his journal, a genuine and contrite sincerity marked his letter. In it, he attempted to clear up a misunderstanding, castigated third parties for creating the animosity between them, and expressed his honest desire to be on friendly terms with Voltaire. However, Voltaire never responded and the opportunity for reconciliation was lost forever. Fréron's letter remained the only one ever written between the two men. Instead, their hatred grew in intensity and would eventually play, as Balcou affirms, a central role in the conflict between the *philosophes* and *anti-philosophes*: "L'opposition [anti-*philosophes*] disposait d'un

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 31

²⁸⁹ Balcou sees a sign of audacity in one part of the letter, and a malicious challenge in the last sentence that I quoted above, interpreting as if it was Fréron implying that Voltaire risked losing protection, but I disagree. Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 59.

extraordinaire moyen: un périodique à succès. [...] Le drame est que les philosophes n'ont pas de presse à eux. Mais ils auront Voltaire. Impossible donc, et indispensable, de se limiter au duel Fréron-Voltaire, lequel s'inscrit, par la force des choses, dans la grande bataille du siècle.”²⁹⁰

3.3.3 1751-1752: More conflicts, more consequences

During the period between the letter to Voltaire in December 1750 and April 1752, two developments took place that would have future consequences for Fréron. First, Malesherbes replaced d'Argenson as the *Directeur de la librairie*. Fréron had a favorable relationship with d'Argenson. Building one with the new *Directeur*, however, was going to be problematic. Malesherbes was, along with d'Alembert, a member of l'Académie des sciences and deeply sympathized with the cause of the Encyclopedists.²⁹¹ He also had a low opinion of periodicals, which showed in his treatment of Fréron's journals as compared to that of the *philosophes'* publications, throughout his thirteen-year tenure.²⁹² According to the nineteenth-century literary critic Ferdinand Brunetière, Malesherbes had an aversion to Fréron's *feuilles*: “Il refuse constamment un privilège à Fréron; c'est qu'il veut le tenir plus immédiatement sous sa main. Il lui donne des censeurs de choix [...] qui, tous, uniformément, se gouvernent d'après un principe

²⁹⁰ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 5.

²⁹¹ There are several publications mentioning Malesherbes's favoritism of the Encyclopedists and the *philosophes* over Fréron and the anti-*philosophes*. For how deeply he was attached to the *Encyclopédie* project, to the point of abusing the power of his position, see *Revue des deux mondes*, Tome 49, (Paris: La Revue, 1882), 595. For a short biography of Malesherbes and how he favored the *philosophes*, see Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 90-91, and 135-36. The current official website of the Académie française describes Malesherbes as “l'ami des encyclopédistes qu'il favorisa dans maintes circonstances,” *Académie française*, (SDV Plurimédia, n.d.).

²⁹² Masseau, *Les ennemis des Philosophes*, 106; Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 61; Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 91.

bien simple: c'est que tout est permis contre Fréron, mais rien n'est permis à Fréron.”²⁹³ During his first year as the *Directeur de la Librairie*, Malesherbes showed little tolerance for Fréron's journal. *Lettres sur quelques écrits* was suspended three different times in 1751. Fréron, apparently unbothered, used that time to put his personal and financial matters in order.²⁹⁴ For example, it was during one of the suspensions that Fréron negotiated a more lucrative deal with his publisher, using his journal's increasing readership as leverage.

The second important development was Fréron's review of Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) that appeared in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, in October 1751.²⁹⁵ Fréron acknowledged the ruckus that Rousseau's work had caused in the literary circles of Paris.²⁹⁶ People were baffled by Rousseau's argument, which went against what everyone thought to be a basic truth: “Jugez de leur scandale, lorsqu'ils virent la palme entre les mains d'un athlète qui avait combattu pour la négative.”²⁹⁷

Fréron began his review by expressing his admiration for Rousseau's style. He praised the amount of effort and intellectual deliberation that went into the work. He rejected, however, Rousseau's argument: “Mais en applaudissant aux traits heureux de son pinceau, il me permettra de ne pas déférer à son sentiment.”²⁹⁸ For the next fourteen pages, Fréron cited several

²⁹³ Ferdinand Brunetière, *Études critiques sur l'histoire de la littérature française : deuxième série. Les Précieuses — Bossuet et Fénelon — Mabillon — Marivaux — La Direction de la librairie sous Malesherbes — Galiani — Diderot — Le théâtre de la Révolution*, (Paris: Hachette, 1913), 207.

²⁹⁴ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 60.

²⁹⁵ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 5, 73-99.

²⁹⁶ “Il règne depuis quelque tems, Monsieur, sur notre Parnasse une dispute singulière, à laquelle l'Académie de Dijon a donné lieu,” *ibid.*, 73.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

passages of Rousseau's work, commented on them, and presented his counterargument: "Bien loin que les Arts et les Sciences contribuent à corrompre les mœurs, ils sont l'unique remède pour empêcher la corruption générale."²⁹⁹ Fréron later refuted other arguments in the work before finally announcing his verdict of it: "c'est à regret que je me vois obligé de ne regarder ce beau discours que comme une déclamation vague, appuyée sur une métaphysique fausse, et sur des applications des faits historiques, qui se détruisent par mille faits contraires."³⁰⁰ Not only did Fréron write a negative overall review, but he also occasionally mocked Rousseau:

Si l'Auteur n'eût donné à cet ouvrage que comme un jeu d'esprit, on y aurait applaudi, en souhaitant néanmoins qu'il y eût mis plus d'ordre et de méthode. Mais il soutient très sérieusement la these; et ce paradoxe est pour lui une démonstration. *O fureur de se distinguer*, dit M. Rousseau lui-même, *que ne pouvez-vous point?*³⁰¹

Fréron believed that it was rather "les mœurs qui corrompent les Arts et les Sciences, et non les Arts et les Sciences qui corrompent les mœurs," and that he could easily turn Rousseau's arguments against him: "il ne sera pas difficile de détruire les arguments de M. Rousseau, et de tourner même à l'avantage de mon opinion, une partie des choses qu'il dit pour appuyer la sienne."³⁰² Fréron took one last shot at the writer as he concluded his article. Rousseau was nothing more than one of those "Philosophes chagrins" who had looked upon arts and sciences with distaste.³⁰³ He was simply another link in the long chain of bitter writers who were susceptible to vice:

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 79-80.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 97.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid., 79-80, 82-83.

³⁰³ Ibid., 98.

En effet, à la honte de l'humanité, on ne voit, parmi les Auteurs, que trop de haine, trop d'outrages, trop de soupçons, trop de frivoles disputes, trop d'emportemens, trop de guerres implacables, trop de jalousies, trop d'ambition. Mais ce n'est point aux Sciences qu'il faut imputer les défauts des Sçavans. Si la fortune les eût placés dans d'autres emplois, ils eussent eu plus de vices. Parce que tel Poète est dur dans la société, insolent dans l'éclat du succès et même dans l'opprobre de la chute, est-ce à dire que la Poésie inspire l'orgueil et la rudesse? Point du tout: si ce Poète faisait un autre métier, il serait encore plus impudent et plus féroce.³⁰⁴

Fréron's criticism did not go unnoticed by Rousseau who was, at that time, nursing his close friend Grimm back to health.³⁰⁵ Rousseau did not respond publicly to Fréron. His private correspondence shows that he held literary critics like Fréron in low esteem because they produced "petites feuilles critiques faites pour l'amusement des jeunes gens."³⁰⁶ The review simply ensured that Rousseau joined the ranks of Fréron's enemies.

The anti-Fréron circle was expanding among the *philosophes* and in the salons. At the end of 1750, Fréron lauded Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois* in his review in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*.³⁰⁷ Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin ran a famous Parisian salon that hosted the *philosophes*. Upon hearing that Montesquieu intended to thank Fréron for the positive review, Geoffrin wrote a letter to the *philosophe* on October 22, 1751, advising against any contact with the journalist:

Pour ce qui est de M. Fréron, je n'ai pas voulu me presser de lui faire vos remerciements; je veux que vous y pensiez encore. Comme sûrement il se vantera de votre remerciement et que, d'ailleurs, ce n'est pas un homme fort estimé, j'avais peur qu'on ne trouvât votre reconnaissance au-dessus du bienfait. Si après une seconde réflexion vous êtes toujours d'avis de remerciement, il l'aura, très bien conditionné.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 99. Both Cornou and Balcou see a hidden reference to Voltaire in the last sentence of this passage, *Trente années de lutte, 92; Fréron contre les philosophes*, 60.

³⁰⁵ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 68.

³⁰⁶ Cited in *ibid.*

³⁰⁷ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 4, 145-57.

³⁰⁸ Balcou, *Le dossier Fréron*, 35.

In essence, when the year 1752 arrived, Fréron had two groups of enemies that were growing in numbers: *le clan voltairien* and the Encyclopedists who just published the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*. At the same time, there was another conflict brewing between Voltaire and Fréron.

As Cornou notes, Fréron had been anxiously waiting for the right time to take revenge on Voltaire. He never got over Voltaire's letter to Thieriot, during the Baculard d'Arnaud ordeal, in which the *philosophe* referred to him as a "dogue."³⁰⁹ Fréron also knew, through his friends La Mettrie and Maupertuis, that Voltaire had been disparaging him in Frederick II's royal court. This was no surprise, as Voltaire's correspondence throughout 1751 also had a number of derogatory remarks about Fréron.³¹⁰ Voltaire had not bothered to reply to his direct letter. Fréron could no longer wait to get back at him. He renewed his attack in the first two articles of the April 15, 1752 issue of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*.

The *cahier* opened up with a one-sentence-long paragraph that gave the profile of an author, without giving his name. Fréron placed it in the introduction to his review of a book written by Antoine Bret. It is possible that Fréron used this method to protect himself, but there was little doubt as to who that profile represented:

S'il y avait parmi nous, Monsieur, un Auteur, qui aimât passionément la gloire, et qui se trompât souvent sur les moyens de l'acquérir; sublime dans quelques-uns de ses écrits, rampant dans toutes ses démarches; quelques fois heureux à peindre les grandes passions, toujours occupé de petites; qui sans cesse recommandât l'union et l'égalité entre les gens de Lettres, et qui, ambitionnant la souveraineté du Parnasse, ne souffrît pas plus que le

³⁰⁹ Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 92-93.

³¹⁰ Especially in his letters to the Comte d'Argental, Voltaire refers to Fréron in disparaging terms. For example, in his letter dated March 13th, he criticizes his former protégé Baculard d'Arnaud for having become friends with "un Rozemberg, mauvais comédien souffert à Berlin, avec les Frérons soufferts à Paris," Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaires*, Ed. Georges Avenel, Tome 8, 29.

Turc, qu'aucun de ses frères partageât son trône; dont la plume ne respirât que la candeur et la probité, et qui sans cesse tendît des pièges à la bonne foi; qui changeât de dogme, selon les tems et les lieux, Indépendant à Londres, Dévot en Austrasie, Tolérant en Allemagne: si, dis-je, la Patrie avait produit un Ecrivain de ce caractère, je suis persuadé qu'en faveur de ses talens on ferait grâce aux travers de son esprit et aux vices de son cœur.³¹¹

As if Fréron did not denigrate Voltaire enough in this profile, he directly named him in a separate article, at the end of the second *cahier*, and accused him of plagiarism.³¹² Reproducing the pertinent lines from two madrigals, one by Voltaire, the other by Antoine Houdar de la Motte, Fréron claimed that Voltaire had stolen several lines from de la Motte's work.

Voltaire's entourage quickly came to his aid. His niece Marie-Louise Mignon, known as Madame Denis, and the rest of the *clan voltairien* urged Malesherbes to take action against Fréron.³¹³ As a result, the *directeur* executed an order to suspend indefinitely the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. It was not until almost seven months later, in October, that Fréron began publishing his journal again. Just as Voltaire had proven to Fréron how much clout his name carried, the suspension period gave Fréron an opportunity to show in return, how much he had expanded his circle of influential friends.

This suspension initially worried Fréron. He truly believed in the possibility that the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* would never reappear.³¹⁴ He needed to fight for his livelihood. First, he had to show Malesherbes that this time, he would not silently accept this suspension. Malesherbes needed to be made aware of the letter that Voltaire had written to Thieriot. Fréron

³¹¹ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 6, 3-4. "Austrasie" refers the Cour de Lorraine.

³¹² Ibid., 40-42.

³¹³ Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 93-94.

³¹⁴ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 41.

kept it as evidence showing that it was Voltaire who had instigated the conflict.³¹⁵ He directly wrote to Malesherbes on May 5, 1752, pleading with the *Directeur* to consider his side of the story: “Si vous sçaviez, Monsieur, tout le mal que Voltaire m’a fait, tout celui qu’il m’a voulu faire, peut-etre me pardonneriez-vous ce qui m’est échappé à mon sujet.”³¹⁶ Fréron went on to affirm that he had many copies of “lettres infames” that Voltaire had written about him. He was convinced that if Malesherbes read them, he would find him “moins coupable.” Fréron nonetheless admitted that he was at fault for going beyond literary criticism in his attack on Voltaire, but added that he deserved some leniency: “C’est la première fois que j’en ai passé les bornes, depuis que vous m’avez permis de faire mes feuilles. Une première faute se pardonne.”³¹⁷ Fréron later promised that he would not disappoint the *Directeur* if he allowed him to continue his publication. He assured Malesherbes that he was ready to accept “le censeur le plus sévère” that the *directeur* could appoint to monitor his writings. In addition, he was in dire need of income: “j’ai écrit à mon père et à ma mère qui sont dans une extrême vieillesse et dans une aussi grande pauvreté de venir à Paris pour partager avec moi le peu que me rapporte mon ouvrage.”³¹⁸

Fréron was aware of how pitiful the letter made him look and hoped that Malesherbes would sympathize with him: “Je ne rougis point, Monsieur, d’entrer dans ces détails; ils ne sont point déplacés vis à vis un cœur sensible.”³¹⁹ While Fréron sounded contrite in his letter, other

³¹⁵ Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 94-95.

³¹⁶ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 36-37.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 37.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

correspondence from a number of his affluent admirers was more threatening. Étienne-François le Comte de Stainville (the future French Foreign minister duc de Choiseul) and his circle of aristocratic friends that included Anne-Marie de Montmorency-Luxembourg, la princesse de Robecq, and Marie Anne Françoise de Noailles, la Comtesse de la Marck, (both Louis XV's *favorites*), put pressure on Malesherbes to pardon Fréron.³²⁰ The *Directeur* found out in September 1752 that Fréron even enjoyed the protection of the highest order.

When Stanislas Leszczynski, le duc de Lorraine and the King of Poland, and his daughter Marie, the queen of France, long-time admirers of Fréron's journal, met the journalist in the Royal Court of France, they offered him their protection.³²¹ They immediately engaged their people to act on Fréron's behalf. Jacques Hulin, the minister of the King in the Court of France, informed Malesherbes that the King was behind Fréron to the point of having offered him the freedom to print his journal in Nancy. He added that Fréron declined the King's offer only because he did not dare to "décliner votre [Malesherbes's] tribunal."³²² Hulin warned Malesherbes that he should reconsider his decision to suspend Fréron's journal: "[Sa Majesté] m'a ordonné de vous écrire qu'Elle s'intéresse énormément à M. Fréron, et qu'Elle désire que vous lui rendiez la liberté de faire imprimer ses feuilles à Paris."³²³ The King also asked le Comte de Tressan to "solliciter vivement pour le rétablissement des feuilles périodiques de Mr Fréron." He explained to Malesherbes how important Fréron's periodical was to the Court of

³²⁰ Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 99.

³²¹ *XCVI-CV Journal de l'inspecteur d'Hémery, 1750-1769. Journal en partie autographe, avec intercalation de pièces diverses sur les affaires du temps. Bulletins sur les livres nouveaux et sur les auteurs et les libraires. XCVII Années 1752*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, fr. 22157, 28 sept. 1752, folio 172v.

³²² Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 39.

³²³ *Ibid.*

Lorraine: “Sa Majesté les a toujours lues avec grand Plaisir et les a toujours demandées avec empressement.”³²⁴ Tressan added that French literature was in dire need of a “critique éclairé” and that such a critic “fait honneur au siècle, à la nation, et au protecteur né de la littérature, vous êtes né Monsieur pour l’enrichir et pour protéger ceux qui montrent autant de génie que Mr. Fréron.”³²⁵ Tressan admitted two years later that he was also pressured by Madame de Graffigny to act on behalf of Fréron.³²⁶

When Fréron resumed the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Voltaire and his circle of friends were deeply disappointed.³²⁷ It seemed that each suspension only served to galvanize Fréron’s supporters. This time, he also had an improved team of writers including two experienced critics, l’abbé Joseph de la Porte and Duport Dutertre.³²⁸ More importantly, Fréron’s enemies learned that he was now a legitimate force in the literary world. They were going to have to wait two years to get their chance to get back at him. In the meantime, the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* showed signs of a shift in Fréron’s ideology throughout 1752 and 1753. That will be the focus of the next section.

3.3.4 1752-1753: The last build-up before the definite rupture

As noted earlier, Fréron was not a religious writer. There were only five articles related to matters of religion published in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* during the five years of its

³²⁴ Ibid., 40.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid., 146.

³²⁷ Cornou calls it “une cruelle déception,” *Trente années de lutte*, 101.

³²⁸ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 39.

existence: “il ne sera jamais un dévot: son épicurisme, sa conception du monde le lui interdisent. [...] pour Fréron ne comptait que la vie intellectuelle où la vie spirituelle n’avait rien à voir.”³²⁹ Fréron did not seem partial to religious writers either. He reserved one of his most pejorative reviews for a work by Nicolas-Charles-Joseph, l’abbé Trublet, who was a declared enemy of Voltaire and the *philosophes*.³³⁰ In one of his earliest reviews in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, he savaged the work of Jacques Maboul, the ex-bishop of Alet, calling it inferior to all other works published in the *oraisons funèbres* genre.³³¹ In another, he mocked what he considered to be the exaggerated characteristics of a saintly life established by the bishop of Noyon.³³² In his study of the French Press during the Enlightenment, Jack Censer separates the anti-*philosophe* journals within the “literary-philosophical press” into two groups. There was one group of journals, such as the *Journal de Trévoux*, whose content “focused on the defense of religion,” and then, there was a second group “mainly defined by a rabid hostility to the *philosophes*.” Censer defines this second group, in which he includes Fréron’s journals, as a “relatively secular, anti-philosophic” one.³³³

It is for this reason that a few passages in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* in 1752 may appear odd at first glance. They make Fréron sound like he had a religious reawakening that year, but in fact, Fréron was simply seeking a wider audience for a different purpose. The first passage comes from his review of an *oraison funèbre* about le duc d’Orléans, delivered by le

³²⁹ Ibid., 76.

³³⁰ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 3, 145-67.

³³¹ Ibid., Tome 1, 62-63.

³³² Ibid., Tome 6, 303-11.

³³³ Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 101.

Père Bernard at the Royal Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève.³³⁴ Fréron quoted Bernard on how d'Orléans disliked the “génies superficiels” whose only talent was an “imagination fouguese.”³³⁵ Fréron considered these writers faithless and dangerous:

Jamais siècle n'a été plus fertile que le nôtre en Ecrivains séditieux qui, à l'exemple du Poète *Linière*, n'ont d'esprit que contre Dieu [...] Ce méprisable acharnement contre la religion marque d'ailleurs plus de faiblesse que de force dans l'esprit. On ne parlerait, on n'écrirait pas tant contre elle, si on ne la redoutait intérieurement.³³⁶

This review was written before the suspension in April. Balcou and Cornou argue that, in these articles, Fréron was simply trying to ingratiate himself with his fervent and very devout protectors at the Cour de Lorraine.³³⁷

Fréron must have also had in mind the *Encyclopédie*'s suppression in February, which was precipitated by the scandal that erupted over the abbé Jean-Martin de Prades dissertation at the Sorbonne. It turned out that the committee from the faculty of theology that accepted the dissertation overlooked several impious passage.³³⁸ When the *parlement*, at the urging of certain religious factions hostile to the Sorbonne, investigated the matter further, they discovered Prades's connection to the Encyclopedists. As a result, the *Conseil du Roi* swiftly ordered the suppression of the *Encyclopédie*'s first two volumes. I believe that Fréron shifted his tone in order to gain more supporters and offset the increasing number of enemies seeking to sabotage his journal. The above article appeared before he met the duc de Lorraine and his daughter, the Queen of France. Fréron did not suddenly decide to defend God and religion because he wanted

³³⁴ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, 54-72. Also see, Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 79.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 79. Also see, Cornou, *trente années de lutte*, 103-04.

³³⁸ For more details on the scandal of l'abbé Prades, see Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 116-120.

to please them. He was rather appealing to the conservative group of readers that were rallying against the *Encyclopédie*, galvanized by the news of its recent suppression. The suspension of Fréron's journal following the April issue only reinforced his need for more support.

In the issues following the seven-month-long suspension, Fréron included few more articles that defended religion. For example, in the conclusion to a review on October 30, 1752, he defended the traditional ecclesiasticism: "tous ces argumens vagues contre la certitude de la tradition Ecclésiastique, ne sont que des répétitions de ce que les Ministres de la Religion Protestante ont osé soutenir, et que nos Controversistes ont si solidement réfuté."³³⁹ Fréron, once again, was trying to please the Cour de Lorraine, which had been instrumental in having the suspension lifted. Throughout 1753, he either published articles in favor of his protectors or wrote directly to them to express his gratitude.³⁴⁰ Even after this period, Fréron rarely ventured into religious matters. Censer's examination of Fréron's *l'Année littéraire* confirms that the journalist's loyalty to literary criticism never wavered, although there were more frequent personal attacks against the *philosophes* (106-110). In any case, religious groups had plenty of other reasons to support Fréron. Most importantly, he was in conflict with the Encyclopedists. Voltaire was his enemy. L'abbé de la Porte, known for his strong Jesuit ties, was now a member of his writing team. The rare articles defending religion and God only served to further please Fréron's conservative supporters.

Fréron benefited from King Stanislas' support in several ways. Other than offering his protection when needed, he also played a central role in Fréron's acceptance in 1753 to the Académie de Nancy that he had founded in 1750. Starting with Tome 9, Fréron added this title to

³³⁹ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 6, 159.

³⁴⁰ One example in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* is a poem written in honor of the King of Poland, Tome 9, 271-73. An example of such correspondence is Fréron's letter to Madame de Graffigny, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 43.

the cover of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. The support of the duc de Lorraine and his daughter, the Queen of France, for Fréron, sharply contrasted with the support given to the Encyclopedists by the *clan voltairien* and Madame de Pompadour. It led one publication at the time to declare that the Queen and the King Stanislas have engaged Fréron to “combattre la secte des philosophes qui commençait à prendre conscience.”³⁴¹ Fréron did indeed quarrel with one high-profile *philosophe* in April 1753.

Focusing his sights once again on Rousseau, Fréron wrote a scathing review of his play *Narcisse ou l'Amant de lui-même* (1753) and its preface.³⁴² First, he likened Rousseau to an immature child:

Vous vous flattiez, Monsieur, d'être enfin délivré de l'importune dispute, si les Sciences et les Arts ont contribué à épurer les mœurs. Vous ne connaissez donc pas le caractère de la plupart des Ecrivains. Semblable aux enfans qui prennent querelle, ils ne veulent jamais céder, et c'est à qui portera le dernier coup.³⁴³

Rousseau's immaturity was a recurring theme throughout the article: “A l'égard de la Comédie, [Rousseau] nous apprend qu'il l'a faite à l'âge de dix-huit ans: il n'avait pas besoin de le dire.”³⁴⁴ According to Fréron, it seemed as if Rousseau published the work solely “pour avoir occasion de répéter dans une longue Préface ce qu'il a déjà dit tant de fois.”³⁴⁵ Fréron's growing dislike of the *philosophes* and their *philosophie*, visible throughout the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* after 1752 and *L'Année littéraire*, was noticeable in his criticism of Rousseau:

³⁴¹ Cited in Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 79.

³⁴² Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 9, 64-70.

³⁴³ Ibid., 64.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 68.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 64.

Il s'attend à *se voir attaqué avec des plaisanteries*; ce qui prouve sa grande pénétration, comme le trait suivant annonce sa misanthropie: *En travaillant à mériter ma propre estime, j'ai appris à me passer de celle des autres*. Voilà donc à quoi la Philosophie a conduit M. *Rousseau*, à s'estimer lui-même! Bien des gens sans Philosophie sont tout aussi avancés que lui. [...] Mais comment un Philosophe qui se passe si bien de l'estime des autres, peut-il s'embarasser qu'on ait droit ou qu'on ne l'ait pas de mal penser sur son compte? Sa propre estime doit lui suffire.³⁴⁶

Balcou provides several examples of passages in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* in which Fréron used the terms “philosophe” and “philosophie” pejoratively throughout 1753.³⁴⁷ Biard-Millérioux, for her part, considers two reviews of Rousseau's *Narcisse* and *Le Devin du village* as the outbreak of the journalist's “esprit de polémique contre le clan des philosophes” (168). Fréron's review mostly focused on the work's preface. He dedicated only one page at the end to the play itself. Its preface, he mocked, only revealed Rousseau's intention in writing it: “La passion de M. *Rousseau* n'est pas d'être applaudi, mais d'être sifflé.”³⁴⁸ *Narcisse* was not the only work of Rousseau that Fréron targeted in 1753.

Two months later, he reviewed *Le Devin du village* (1752).³⁴⁹ As was the case with the Preface of *Narcisse*, Fréron seemed more fascinated by the *Avertissement* of *Le Devin* than the opera itself. For example, he noted that Rousseau, against the advice of others, decided not to modify the play. Rousseau explained that it was his play and should only reflect his ideas even if he knew that the modifications could have improved it. Fréron mocked the writer's reasoning: “Quelle grandeur d'ame! Quelle noblesse de sentimens! Quel mépris généreux de la gloire! M. *Rousseau* aimerait mieux donner de mauvais ouvrages sans consulter, que d'en donner de bons

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 65.

³⁴⁷ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 80.

³⁴⁸ Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 9, 68-69.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 325-31.

en consultant.”³⁵⁰ He reiterated that the *Avertissement* fitted Rousseau’s *philosophie*: “Cet Acte [...] est précédé d’un *Avertissement*, où la philosophique indifférence de M. *Rousseau* éclate à chaque mot.”³⁵¹ He was no less sarcastic in the article’s conclusion:

[Rousseau] a daigné enrichir anciennement le *Mercure de France* d’un grand nombre de pieces de Poésie, imprimées sous son nom, auxquelles le Public, insensible aux bonnes choses, n’a pas fait la plus petite attention. M. *Rousseau* n’en est pas moins un très-grand Poët comique et lyrique, un très-grand musicien, un très grand Orateur, un très grand Philosophe, etc. Il est bien certain que tout ce que je dis ici ne plaira pas à M. *Rousseau*; car son ambition est d’être sifflé.³⁵²

Rousseau’s name reappeared two more times, in 1753, in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. Fréron’s assault on him continued.

In the September review of an essay written in response to Rousseau’s first *Discours* by the academician Charles Bordes, Fréron mockingly referred to Rousseau as the “sublime Philosophe de Genève,” and later, as the “Citoyen de Genève” with “la modestie philosophique.”³⁵³ He concluded that “sans les erreurs du grand Philosophe de Genève, nous n’aurions pas ce discours excellent” by Bordes.³⁵⁴ Finally, in the November review of René de Bonneval’s *Lettre d’un Hermite*, in which Bonneval, according to Fréron, compared Rousseau “ingénieusement” to a woman “qui ayant passé quatre ou cinq heures à sa toilette, n’ayant rien négligé de ce que son art peut ajouter à ses grâces, dirait en se contemplant à son miroir: Je suis

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 325.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid., 331.

³⁵³ Ibid., Tome 11, 119, 203.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 211.

contente de moi, je me plais.”³⁵⁵ These attacks on Rousseau devastated him. He expressed his anger in a letter to Fréron at the end of 1753 that he ended up never sending.³⁵⁶

It was a letter written in response to Fréron’s article on Bonneval’s work: “Puisque vous jugez, Monsieur, de faire cause commune avec l’auteur de la Lettre d’un Hermite [...].”³⁵⁷ He criticized Fréron’s knowledge: “je ne m’attends pas que ce soit vous qui trouviez mauvais qu’on décide le plus hautement des choses que l’on connaît moins.”³⁵⁸ He claimed that being attacked by Fréron actually boosted his pride because “comment ne pas un peu s’en faire accroire en recevant les mêmes honneurs que les Voltaire, les Montesquieu, et tous les hommes illustres du Siècle, dont vos Satyres font l’éloge.”³⁵⁹ Rousseau affirmed that such illustrious writers would not fit the agenda of people like Fréron anyway: “Mais trouvez bon qu’en vous laissant les rieurs je réclame les amis de la raison: aussi bien que feriez-vous de ces gens-là dans votre parti?”³⁶⁰ As to science helping humankind, Rousseau pointed to people like Fréron as the reason for which that project would inevitably fail:

Si tous les hommes étaient des Montesquieux, des Bouffons, des Duclos, etc.. je désirerais ardemment qu’ils cultivassent tous les Sciences afin que le genre humain ne fut qu’une Société de Sages: Mais vous, Monsieur, qui sans doute êtes si modeste, puisque vous me reprochez tant mon orgueil, vous conviendrez volontiers, je m’assure, que si tous les hommes étaient des Frérons, leurs livres n’offriraient pas des instructions fort utiles, ni leur caractère une société fort aimable.³⁶¹

³⁵⁵ Ibid., Tome 12, 134.

³⁵⁶ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 44-48. The letter is dated July 21, 1753, but Balcou adds in brackets “lisez ‘fin 1753.’” It makes sense because the letter refers for the most part to Fréron’s latest attack in November, in his review of Bonneval’s *Lettre d’un Hermite*.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 45.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 46.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 46-47.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 47.

In Rousseau's view, Fréron had become an anti-*philosophe*. On one side there were men like Voltaire, Duclos, Montesquieu, Bouffon, and himself who received accolades. On the other side, there were their detractors, like Fréron, who would, implied Rousseau, never amount to anything in their literary career: "Ne manquez pas, Monsieur, je vous prie, quand vôtre Pièce aura remporté le prix, de faire entrer ces petits éclaircissements dans la Préface. En attendant, je vous souhaite bien des Lauriers."³⁶²

Rousseau was accurate in his description of the opposition between Fréron and the *philosophes*. Marmontel, in his *Mémoires*, described the early 1750s as a time of comradery among the Encyclopedists and Voltaire, under the protection of Madame de Pompadour.³⁶³ It was a period during which they worked in unison for a common cause, and galvanized a significant number of elite *gens de lettres* behind the "esprit philosophique":

Les années que je passai à Versailles étaient celles où l'esprit philosophique avait le plus d'activité. D'Alembert et Diderot en avaient arboré l'enseigne dans l'immense atelier de l'*Encyclopédie*, et tout ce qu'il y avait de plus distingué parmi les gens de lettres s'y était rallié autour d'eux. Voltaire, de retour de Berlin, d'où il avait fait chasser le malheureux d'Arnaud et où il n'avait pu tenir lui-même, s'était retiré à Genève, et, de là, il soufflait cet esprit de liberté, d'innovation, d'indépendance, qui a fait depuis tant de progrès. [...] Je dois ce témoignage à Mme de Pompadour que c'était malgré elle qu'il était exilé. Elle s'intéressait à lui, elle m'en demandait quelquesfois des nouvelles. [...] C'était donc de Genève que Voltaire animait les coopérateurs de l'*Encyclopédie*. J'étais du nombre, et mon plus grand Plaisir, toutes les fois que j'allais à Paris, était de me trouver réuni avec eux. D'Alembert et Diderot étaient contents de mon travail. (276-77)

There were many other reputable names helping the *Encyclopédie* project outside of Diderot, d'Alembert, Rousseau, Voltaire, Duclos, Montesquieu, and Marmontel. Charles Marie

³⁶² Ibid., 48.

³⁶³ Madame de Pompadour played a major role in 1752 in the government's decision to discreetly authorize the *Encyclopédie* project to resume, "General Chronology of the *Encyclopédie*," *University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project*.

de La Condamine, François Quesnay, Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, l'abbé Claude Yvon, Charles Morellet, and Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, among others, also collaborated with the project. The likes of Fréron and Baculard d'Arnaud had no place in this picture of unity among the *philosophes*. Fréron's constant attacks on Voltaire, Rousseau and Marmontel, his favorite targets in the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, had by default moved him to the opposite camp by the time 1754 arrived. It was to be the year during which this united force that Marmontel described above, mounted the largest assault until then on Fréron. It would define the divide between the two camps.

3.4 *L'ANNÉE LITTÉRAIRE: FRÉRON, THE ANTI-PHILOSOPHE*

During 1753, while Fréron was accepting the honors in Nancy and spending time with King Stanislas, the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*'s editor Duchesne published *Opuscules de M. F...*, compiling several of Fréron's earlier writings. The work angered Fréron because it included several texts that he had not authored. Fréron, already unhappy with the publisher's general treatment of his periodical, left Duchesne in the beginning of 1754. He joined the Lambert publishing house under a more lucrative contract.³⁶⁴ He wrote the last *cahier* of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* on January 26, 1754, and began publishing his new periodical *L'Année littéraire* one week later.

³⁶⁴ For more details on Fréron's transition from Duchesne and *Lettres sur quelques écrits* to Lambert and *L'Année littéraire*, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 43-44, 92-96.

3.4.1 1754: New periodical, more quarrels

L'Année littéraire was a major enterprise. In its first year, its output already surpassed that of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. Fréron, supported by his protectors and read by the public more than ever, now held an indispensable position in the Parisian literary milieu. As Barthélémy notes, for the next twenty-two years, until his death in 1776, Fréron managed the periodical through suspensions, battles with authorities, and numerous quarrels with the *philosophes*: “Si toute la réputation littéraire de Fréron fut établie pendant sa vie, et reste attachée, après sa mort, à *l'Année littéraire*, il faut avouer qu’il paya sa gloire bien cher, par vingt-trois ans d’ennuis.”³⁶⁵ Unlike the five years of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* during which his identity as a literary critic defined his work, Fréron carried the anti-*philosophe* identity for the entire duration of *L'Année littéraire*. Its success, as Balcou affirms, has led historians to identify Fréron, somewhat reductively, as “l’homme du contre.” Balcou even questions the wisdom of his own choice for the title of his scholarly work *Fréron contre les philosophes*.³⁶⁶ For the most part, he transformed into an anti-*philosophe* during the years of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. The events that took place during the first year of *L'Année littéraire* only finalized the inevitable.

In 1754, Fréron took on two major *philosophes*, Rousseau and Diderot, who were at the center of controversies because of their *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753) and *Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature* (1753). These works and the controversies they caused have already

³⁶⁵ Barthélémy, *Les Confessions de Fréron*, 81. For an overall look at what a vast enterprise *L'Année littéraire* represented for Fréron, see Biard-Millérioux, *L’Esthétique d’Élie Catherine Fréron*, 90-99.

³⁶⁶ “Introduction,” Balcou, Barthélémy, and Carious, eds., *Élie Fréron: polémiste et critique d’art*, 17-19.

been meticulously explored by other scholars.³⁶⁷ I will instead summarize the parts in Fréron's articles that showed his attitude toward the *philosophes*. While readers had come to expect Fréron to attack Rousseau, the journalist, prior to 1754, had never commented on Diderot's writings. His critique of *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* (1753) was the article that welcomed the inaugural edition of *L'Année littéraire*. Fréron, now the voice of the anti-*philosophes*, did not spare Diderot in his criticism.

There were four pejorative references to "philosophe" and "philosophie" in the first page of *L'Année littéraire*.³⁶⁸ Even before announcing the name of the work being reviewed, Fréron promoted himself as the defender of "la belle littérature" against the *philosophes*: "l'étude de la Philosophie commence parmi nous à prévaloir sur la belle littérature; le plus mince écrivain veut passer pour Philosophe; c'est la maladie, ou, pour mieux dire, la folie du jour."³⁶⁹ He described the symptoms of this "maladie," and finally introduced Diderot's work as the emblematic example of such folly.³⁷⁰ Fréron essentially claimed that the purpose of Diderot's work was to promote the *philosophes'* doctrines. As to the passage in the *Pensées sur l'interprétation* in which Diderot denounced the detractors of honorable names such as Duclos, d'Alembert, and Rousseau, Fréron saw in it the signs of an organized conspiracy: "Ces Puissances Philosophiques ont conclu entre elles une ligue offensive et défensive."³⁷¹

³⁶⁷ For Fréron's position the "Querelle des Bouffons" and Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique française*, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 83-89; Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 118-24. For the one against Diderot and *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature*, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 101-03.

³⁶⁸ Élie Fréron, *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 1, (Paris: Lambert, 1754), 1.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 11-14.

Fréron already targeted Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753) in the last issues of his *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. He continued his ripostes to Rousseau's essay in *L'Année littéraire*. Fréron declared himself to be the defender of his nation's honor against Rousseau and others like him. They valued the music of a foreign nation over their own. A foreign language could only be, Fréron had previously argued, a less-than-perfect "interprète du sentimens national."³⁷² Fréron did not neglect to take another shot at the *secte*: "j'ose avancer que les juges les moins compétens, les derniers à consulter, sur des matières de goût, sont les Philosophes, qui Presque tous ont l'esprit sec et le cœur froid."³⁷³

L'Année littéraire's first year included other reviews of the *philosophes*' works, such as Duclos's *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (1754) in March, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's *Traité des sensations* (1754) and d'Alembert's *Essai sur les gens de lettres* (1753), both in December.³⁷⁴ He also commented on d'Alembert's reception at the Académie française.³⁷⁵ However, an organized assault by the *philosophes* against Fréron took place behind closed doors. I will conclude the chapter with the discussion of how the *philosophes* conspired against the journalist.

³⁷² Fréron, *Lettres sur quelques écrits*, Tome 12, 321-22.

³⁷³ Ibid., 342.

³⁷⁴ For the article on Duclos's *Grammaire générale et raisonnée*, see *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 1, (Paris: Lambert 1754), 194-215; for the one on Condillac's *Traité des sensations*, see *ibid.*, Tome 7, 289-98; for d'Alembert's reception to the Académie and his *Essais sur les gens de lettres*, see *ibid.*, 353-58.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 349-53.

3.4.2 1754-1755: The schemes of the anti-Fréron *philosophes*

Fréron had not lost any of his protectors since the events of 1752 and continued to write scathing reviews of the *philosophes*' works.³⁷⁶ While the animosity with Voltaire had become less prominent, their mutual hatred never diminished. Fréron still targeted writers in Voltaire's entourage. Voltaire kept insulting "ce manant de Fréron" and warned others about the dangers of "les torche-culs de Fréron."³⁷⁷ Fréron's increasing number of enemies sought ways to silence him. They knew that decrying his articles or having his journal suspended were no longer sufficient. They needed to tarnish his reputation, sap his income, and drive a wedge between him and his protectors.

In 1754, Frederick II considered accepting Fréron to the Académie de Berlin. The *philosophes* immediately reacted. On January 27, 1758, Fréron wrote to Malesherbes that he knew about the *philosophes*' actions to block his entrance: "Il y a quatre ans que le Roi de Prusse m'avait agréé pour être de son Académie de Berlin. Lorsque Diderot et d'Alembert le surent, ils signifièrent à M. de Maupertuis qu'ils renverraient leur patente, si j'étais reçu."³⁷⁸ Le Comte de Tressan's letter to d'Alembert on July 21, 1754, confirmed Fréron's suspicions: "Notre ami Maupertuis m'a dit quelle est la juste indignation des gens que je respecte aime et admire, contre F. et que vous étiez déterminés à renvoyer le diplôme de l'Académie de Berlin, s'il avait la facilité d'y faire recevoir F."³⁷⁹ Four years earlier, Voltaire had succeeded in stopping Fréron

³⁷⁶ Fréron even named his newly born son Stanislas in 1754, as a tribute to the King of Poland, Barthélemy, *Les Confessions de Fréron*, 101-03.

³⁷⁷ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Ed. Georges Avenel, Tome 8, 169, 143.

³⁷⁸ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 238.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

from becoming Frederick II's Parisian correspondent, and now, the *philosophes* managed to block his entrance to the Académie de Berlin. Next, they planned to discredit Fréron in the eyes of his most powerful protector, King Stanislas. To accomplish this, they solicited the services of le Comte de Tressan who found himself in a delicate position.

As discussed earlier, in 1752, he intervened on behalf of Fréron at the request of King Stanislas, playing an instrumental role in lifting the suspension of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits*. Like Fréron, he was an active member of the Académie de Nancy, and the grand maréchal of the King at the court of Lorraine. Fréron had considered him a friend and praised him in his articles. Yet, Tressan also admired Voltaire and shared membership with d'Alembert in the Académie des Sciences. He openly expressed his respect for the *philosophes*. D'Alembert tried to persuade Tressan to turn on Fréron. He wanted to take advantage of le Comte's position at the Cour de Lorraine to undermine the journalist's reputation from the inside.³⁸⁰ Tressan's response to d'Alembert showed that the *philosophes'* scheme was working. In an effort to get on their good side, Tressan first expressed his regret for having helped Fréron in 1752.³⁸¹ He claimed that he did not know Fréron before then, and that it was Madame de Graffigny who had told him to inform King Stanislas of the suspension. He explained that he had contacted Malesherbes and intervened on Fréron's behalf because King Stanislas had told him to do so: "j'eus la faiblesse de le faire; les Feuilles furent rendues, et Fréron publia, déclara une reconnaissance pour moi, sentiment trop étranger à son cœur pour qu'il fût sincère."³⁸² Since then, Fréron's relationship with the King had gotten stronger, causing Tressan to further regret his action: "Depuis ce tems,

³⁸⁰ See Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 108-09.

³⁸¹ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 145-46.

³⁸² Ibid., 146.

j'ai vu avec la plus vive douleur l'abus qu'il a fait de ses Feuilles. [...] Jugez, mon cher illustre Confrère, si j'ai pu balancer un instant entre un polisson qui n'a d'existence que par sa méchanceté, et les plus beaux Génies de l'Europe. En vérité je ne mérite pas d'en être soupçonné.”³⁸³ Tressan concluded the letter by expressing his allegiance to the *philosophes*:

J'ai en moi de quoi haïr et mépriser F. et un peu de ce qui est nécessaire pour connaître et adorer des d'A. et les D. et les B.³⁸⁴ Je vous supplie de communiquer ma Lettre à votre illustre ami, au cher Duclos et à S. Lambert; ils me connaissent trop pour ne pas vous répondre de moi.

Pardonnez-moi cette longue Lettre, mon cœur me pressait de m'expliquer avec vous, et je me regarderais comme déshonoré dans l'esprit de ceux dont je désire le plus l'amitié.³⁸⁵

Unfortunately for Tressan, not only did the King's support for Fréron not waver, but also, his letter to d'Alembert was published in 1756 in Alexandre Deleyre's *La Revue des feuilles de Mr. Fréron*, a pamphlet aiming to refute Fréron's periodical. Once exposed, Tressan was, according to Fréron in 1758, deeply ashamed and apologized to him one year earlier:

Au mois de septembre dernier que le roi de Pologne étoit à Versailles, j'allai lui faire ma cour, et j'y trouvai M. de Tressan qui vint le premier à moi, m'embrassa et me demanda pardon devant M. de La Galaisière, M. Hulin et M. le marquis de Bonnac, de cette lettre abominable; il m'avoua qu'il avait été indignement trompé par ces Messieurs, et qu'il ne se pardonnerait jamais d'être entré dans les vues de leur ressentiment.³⁸⁶

Fréron said to Malesherbes that it was d'Alembert who had exposed Tressan. It was meant as a payback for having failed his mission. Deleyre, the author of *Les Revues des feuilles de Mr. Fréron*, was a well-known ally of the *philosophes*, so it would have been easy for d'Alembert to convince him to add Tressan's letter to the pamphlet. *Les Revues* was one of many

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ D'Alembert, Diderot, and Buffon.

³⁸⁵ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 147.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 238. Fréron also says to Malesherbes that d'Alembert “a fait imprimer” this letter. Deleyre, the author of *Les Revues des feuilles de Mr. Fréron* was an ally of the *philosophes*.

pamphlets and libels against Fréron that the *philosophes* had others publish during the 1754-1756 period.³⁸⁷ Similarly, Tressan was not the only one of Fréron's allies that the *philosophes* solicited for help.

D'Alembert targeted the surgeon Morand, Fréron's close friend, for the next plot against him. Morand was d'Alembert's *confrère* at the Académie des Sciences, a collaborator to the *Encyclopédie*, and a royal censor. Fréron wrote his article on d'Alembert's reception to the Académie and his *Essai sur les gens de lettres* at the end of 1754. Morand was responsible for censoring *L'Année littéraire* at the time and received the issue in the afternoon, on Friday, January 10, 1755.³⁸⁸ Morand never responded to Lambert, which led the editor to believe that the distribution could move ahead the next morning, at the usual scheduled time. Instead, Morand informed Malesherbes late on Friday evening of his decision not to allow the article on d'Alembert's reception. He told the *Directeur* "d'en ordonner ce qu'il vous plaira. Je crois devoir cette délicatesse à ma qualité de membre de l'Académie des Sciences et à mon amitié pour M.

³⁸⁷ For more details on Deleyre's engagement with the *philosophes* and his pamphlet, as well as other pamphlets published to attack Fréron, see Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 116-19.

³⁸⁸ This account of Morand receiving the article Friday, and communicating his disapproval to Malesherbes that night, without giving any notice to Lambert and Fréron, which prevented them from modifying the text, thus resulting in Malesherbes's decision to suspend *L'Année littéraire*, is provided in more detail by both Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 110, and Cornou, *Trente années de lutte*, 169-70. The letters pertaining to the whole affair can be read in Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 150-65. However, there are discrepancies about the dates. Both Balcou and Cornou say that the *cahier* was received by Morand on Friday, December 27, then move on to say that Morand only gave notice to Malesherbes "le lendemain" (in Cornou's case), or "le samedi" (in Balcou's case). Yet, the letters composed by Morand and Lambert show clearly that they were written on Friday January 10, 1755, and the next day. Another discrepancy: Fréron dated his article "A Paris, ce 28. Décembre 1754." Hence, Morand could not have received the issue on December 27th. I assume, therefore, that both Balcou and Cornou must have meant January 10th, when they said December 27th. Furthermore, Balcou also says, earlier in his text, that the perfect time to sabotage the subscriptions would have been in January, to underline the effects of the scheme by d'Alembert and Morand (*Fréron contre les philosophes*, 110). In any case, the date discrepancies do not have an effect on the fact that Morand had an agenda in failing to notify Lambert prior to contacting Malesherbes, as Fréron himself attests in his letter to Malesherbes, few days later: "je ne me serais pas attendu à un pareil procédé de sa part," Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 153-54.

d’Alembert.”³⁸⁹ Lambert only received the “interdiction” from Morand at noon, well after the issue had gone out for distribution. Morand was well aware of the nine o’clock distribution time. His late interdiction made it look like Lambert and Fréron had defied censorship. The plot worked; Malesherbes immediately suspended *L’Année littéraire*.

Fréron knew that he had to fight once again for the survival of his periodical. The timing was devastating to Lambert and *L’Année littéraire*, because it coincided with the renewal of subscriptions at the beginning of the year.³⁹⁰ They risked losing unhappy subscribers because of the suspension. Fréron wrote a long letter to Malesherbes, claiming his innocence and blamed the *philosophes*.³⁹¹ He divided the letter in two parts. First, he provided a detailed account of what happened on January 10th and 11th to demonstrate that Morand had acted in bad faith to compromise Lambert and Fréron:

Un censeur que je n’aurais jamais connu aurait eu la politesse de prévenir de bonne heure mon libraire ou moi-même, afin de prendre arrangemens pour suspendre cette feuille, pour y faire les cartons que vous aviez jugés nécessaire. [...] M. Morand, qui se dit mon ami, et qui paraît en être flatté depuis cinq ans, ne me donne aucun signe de vie, et ne me fait rien savoir. Un véritable ami aurait couru chez moi dès le vendredi au soir, ou du moins m’aurait écrit. Mais lui va directement chez vous, Monsieur, sans me prévenir le moins du monde; et quand y va-t-il encore? lorsqu’il sait que la distribution est faite; il attend que vous soyez à l’Académie des Sciences pour vous remettre mon épreuve. Je ne reconnais point à ce trait sa politesse, encore moins sa prétendue amitié.³⁹²

Next, Fréron told Malesherbes that the review was moderate, unlike the ones for which his periodical was suspended in the past. He claimed that he even held back, because it would

³⁸⁹ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 150.

³⁹⁰ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 110.

³⁹¹ Fréron gives the details of what happened on those two days in his letter to Malesherbes, Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 153-55. Cornou, unlike Balcou and Fréron himself who consider Morand to be a collaborator in d’Alembert’s scheme, sees the censor as a man whose “situation, entre les deux antagonistes [Fréron and d’Alembert] ne lassait pas d’être délicate” (169).

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 153.

have been easy for him to “couvrir M. d’Alembert d’un ridicule complet.”³⁹³ He defended his article some more before finally identifying the conspirators: “Je suis perdu sans ressource, Monsieur, si vous écoutez la passion des Encyclopédistes et de quelques Académiciens, des Duclos, des Moncrifs, des Diderots et des d’Alemberts. Ils ne se cachent pas des mauvais dessins qu’ils ont contre moi.”³⁹⁴ Fréron warned Malesherbes that the suspension would only make d’Alembert look hateful in the eyes of the public who was still on his side: “je suis aimé du public, j’ose le dire, de toute la France, de l’Europe même entier où mes feuilles se répandent, parce qu’on y trouve ce ton de vérité sans aigreur.”³⁹⁵

Fréron could not afford a long suspension of his journal, so he mobilized all the resources at his disposal to try to put a quick end to it. In the next few days, Malesherbes received letters from numerous powerful people, demanding the return of *L’Année littéraire*. La Comtesse de la Marck, who also supported Fréron in 1752, was one of them. Louis-Anne Lavirotte, another royal censor, described Lambert and Fréron as victims of circumstances. Le marquis de La Font de Saint-Yenne, the widely acclaimed art critique, saw in Fréron a national hero: “J’espère, Monsieur, de votre bonté, de votre justice, et de votre amour pour l’avancement des lettres et la gloire de la nation, que vous mettrez bientôt en liberté notre seul citoyen littéraire.”³⁹⁶ Malesherbes succumbed to pressure and canceled the suspension. *L’Année littéraire*’s next issue came out on February 10th. Fréron knew that he was going to face more schemes by the *philosophes* in the years to come. Their actions caused his periodical to get suspended several

³⁹³ Ibid., 154.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. Fréron’s description of how popular *L’Année littéraire* had become was accurate. For an example of a letter from the countryside demanding the return of *L’Année littéraire* from suspension, see Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 161.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 163.

more times, and him to get incarcerated in 1757.³⁹⁷ Marmontel wrote the article “Critique” in the *Encyclopédie* with Fréron in mind as the model for “le critique ignorant,” the worst kind of critic. Voltaire, five years later, staged *Le Caffé ou l’Écossaise* whose main villain represented Fréron. Sébastien Mercier and La Harpe were two of many writers who continued to attack him even after his death in 1776.³⁹⁸

3.5 CONCLUSION

By 1755, the opposing camps were clearly defined. The *philosophes* and their supporters harassed Fréron at every opportunity. Fréron, for his part, throughout the publication of *L’Année littéraire*, orchestrated the anti-*philosophe* front, “nul ne s’y trompe,” against the *philosophes*.³⁹⁹ The details and consequences of each round of the conflict have been studied by Cornou, Balcou, and Biard-Millérioux, and go beyond the scope of my chapter. Suffice it to say that the twenty-two-year period of *L’Année littéraire* defined Fréron’s place in the history of French literature. Harvey Chisick, in his detailed study of other leading eighteenth-century periodicals, discovered that Fréron’s contemporaries judged him based on his conflicts with the *philosophes*, and not so much on his literary skills:

[G]énéralement l’on voit en Fréron moins un écrivain et un critique plus ou moins doué, qu’un meneur de faction littéraire – la faction anti-philosophique, bien entendu. Il s’ensuit que l’évaluation contemporaine de sa compétence professionnelle est Presque

³⁹⁷ After his imprisonment in the Bastille in 1757, Fréron summarizes in a letter to Malesherbes all his sufferings at the hands of “des gens qui n’ont cherché et qui ne cherchent encore qu’à me nuire,” *ibid.*, 195. The episode of *Le Caffé ou l’Écossaise* was still three years away.

³⁹⁸ For the Bercier and de La Harpe episodes, see Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 309-11, 319.

³⁹⁹ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 134.

toujours faussée par une vision subjective de son rôle supposé dans les combats littéraires de l'époque.⁴⁰⁰

Chisick summarizes the general impression that I sought to modify in this chapter. Scholars have repeatedly used *L'Année littéraire* to determine Fréron's literary identity.⁴⁰¹ This tendency has created the general impression that he had always been an anti-*philosophe*, neglecting to take into account his earlier years with the *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*. Fréron's beginnings in the 1740s, and at the conflicts with Voltaire and a few other writers during the years of the *Lettres sur quelques écrits* should not be overlooked. They foreground the origins of Fréron's inclinations, which were not necessarily guided by the antiphilosophical doctrines. Circumstances, often beyond Fréron's control, set him on a path to inevitably join the anti-*philosophe* camp.

He launched his literary career with a mentor who was in the middle of a heated conflict with Voltaire. He remained loyal to his mentor which made him Voltaire's enemy. Jin Lu, adds that he became Voltaire's nemesis "par sa critique littéraire et non pour des questions exclusivement philosophiques" and refers to him as "anti-philosophe malgré lui."⁴⁰² He was a talented journalist who succeeded as a critic, except that the genre was not highly regarded and made writers weary of his kind. His quarrels with Voltaire, Marmontel, and Duclos opposed him to the Encyclopedists in his early years. While his criticism was confined to the pages of his journal, his adversaries attacked him behind closed doors. He targeted literary works while his enemies targeted his reputation and his income. He had to specifically seek protectors to confront

⁴⁰⁰ Harvey Chisick, "La Réputation de Fréron parmi ses confrères," *Balcou, Barthélemy, and Carious, eds., Élie Fréron: polémiste et critique d'art*, 97.

⁴⁰¹ For example, *Élie Fréron: Polémiste et critique d'art*, the latest publication on Fréron containing a collection of essays by scholars of Fréron and the eighteenth century, does not contain any essay focusing on the pre-1754 career of the writer.

⁴⁰² Lu, "*Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe?*": éléments d'une enquête, 10.

them. His favorable ties with the Queen of France and his quarrels with the *philosophes* made him by default the enemy of Madame de Pompadour.⁴⁰³ The birth of his career as a journalist coincided with the period during which the *Encyclopédie* project was gaining traction. In short, Fréron involuntarily found himself caught in the divide pitting the *philosophes* against the anti *philosophes*. In explaining the unusual appearance of a few religious passages in his articles in 1752, Balcou perhaps summarized Fréron's overall literary career in a short sentence: "Les circonstances commandent."⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ The Queen of France favored "le Party des Dévots, c'est-à-dire celui de la Reine, en opposition avec celui de la Pompadour." Alice Laborde, *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, (Saratoga: Anna Libri, 1984), 9.

⁴⁰⁴ Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 79.

4.0 ECTO-PHILOSOPHES

In chapters two and three, I examined the cases of two writers whose careers blossomed as they joined, for different reasons, the two opposing camps. Although Fréron and Sedaine began as minor writers with ambiguous positions in relation to the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*, their literary identities progressively took shape against the backdrops of the two camps to which they belonged at the height of their careers. In this chapter, I will examine a group of writers who managed to remain non-adherents in the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes*, and thus circumvented being labeled as a member of one camp or the other during their literary career. I call these writers “Ecto-*Philosophes*.” Their texts resist being classified in one camp or the other, yet they do not necessarily remain detached from them. The ambiguity that resonates from such a position puts these writers on the outer edges of the conflict – thus the prefix “ecto” – making their literature unclassifiable according to the strict taxonomies surrounding the divide. Although they received little, if any, critical attention in subsequent centuries, they were widely read by their contemporaries. As Yves Citton affirms in his *Zazirocratie*, the increasing conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* did not leave space for writers that remained outside the dichotomy or belonged to neither of the two categories.⁴⁰⁵ For example, in the case of one such writer, Charles-François Tiphaigne de La

⁴⁰⁵ Yves Citton, *Zazirocratie: Très curieuse introduction à la biopolitique et à la critique de la croissance*, (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2011), 66-69.

Roche, Citton argues that a number of critics steered away from Tiphaigne's texts because they deemed them *inclassables*.⁴⁰⁶

ce sont sans doute les clichés polarisant la vie intellectuelle des Lumières autour d'une opposition binaire entre Philosophes (progressistes) et Anti-Philosophes (passéistes) qui ont empêché des générations de lecteurs de mesurer l'originalité de l'œuvre de Tiphaigne. (*Zazirocratie* 66-67)

I will indeed examine Tiphaigne as an *ecto-philosophe* writer in this chapter, along with Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix. I will then concentrate on women writers who were *ecto-philosophes*, focusing on Marie-Geneviève-Charlotte Thiroux d'Arconville and Madeleine d'Arsant de Puisieux.

Coining new terms in order to identify a group of writers is a delicate task. In the case of the *ecto-philosophes*, it can even appear as self-defeating because it poses a conundrum. Which category is large enough to account for the diversity in genres, styles, and topics that mark the position of the *ecto-philosophe*, and furthermore, does so in ways that work beyond the binary opposition of *philosophe-anti-philosophe*? The *philosophes* rallied around the *Encyclopédie* project and had a tightly knit network of protectors in the royal court. The *anti-philosophes* forged their reactionary identity from their opposition to the *philosophes* and by promoting the works of their allies.⁴⁰⁷ There were also other groups, such as the Jansenists and the *dévots*, who pursued common interests. However, the *ecto-philosophes* seem to have had little in common.

As noted earlier, the *ecto-philosophes'* texts are characterized primarily by their resistance to easy designations, but the imposition of a new term that accompanies a set of parameters would seem to contradict that characterization. The introduction of a new term by

⁴⁰⁶ "Inclassable" is a term that recent studies on Tiphaigne use frequently when describing the nature of the author's body of works.

⁴⁰⁷ For more on the parameters of the anti-philosophical discourse, see McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 32-41.

which to designate these writers undeniably brings about a certain amount of categorization, assumes the existence of a common interest for them, and furthermore, implies that they form a unified group. In the case of these “neither-nor” writers, there is no concrete evidence of adherence to a common cause. For instance, in his study of the “Super-Enlightenment,” Dan Edelstein focuses on a group of scholars in the eighteenth century and asks “what made it possible [...] for such scholars and philosophers to conceive of and present themselves as bona fide members of the Enlightenment?”⁴⁰⁸ The question implies the existence of a common goal or vision for the members of that group. It also points to a set of strategies with which the group can attain its designated goal.⁴⁰⁹ However, the *ecto-philosophes* neither had a unified agenda nor pursued a common goal. They were never compelled to provide justifications for any common philosophical positions. For the most part, they never even met, or corresponded with, each other. The lack of any evidence of communication between the few *ecto-philosophes* studied in this chapter only confirms the fact that these writers were not a coherent group. It is impossible to tell if they were even aware of each other’s works. In fact, what makes the writers in this study “*ecto-philosophes*” is precisely their “outcast” or status in relation to the influential forces or groups at play in the literary arena. The task seems not only delicate, but impossible if the conceptual framework assumes a common ideology among these writers. Each writer may contribute in his or her own unique way to mid-eighteenth-century literary production, and his or her texts may create space for that writer during this period of polarization, but the *ecto-philosophes* do not contribute anything to it as a group. Thus, rather than analyzing them as a

⁴⁰⁸ Dan Edelstein, “Introduction to Super-Enlightenment,” *The Super-Enlightenment: Daring to Know Too Much*, ed. Dan Edelstein, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010).

⁴⁰⁹ In a later passage, Edelstein alludes to these writers’ “urge to provide greater justification for philosophical positions” that he claims could push them “beyond the limits of empirical knowledge into the Super-Enlightenment of mythical authority” (17).

coherent group or movement, I will explore commonalities in their literary practices, as well as in the way they form relationships with other *gens de lettres*.

Ecto-*philosophe* discourse corresponds neither to that of the *philosophes* nor to that of their adversaries although it may at times champion, or criticize at others, a number of the positions held by the two camps. If this were the only criterion, a writer such as the Abbé Claude Yvon could qualify as an ecto-*philosophe* writer, considering that he was a well-known devout, yet a friend of Diderot and the author of several articles in the *Encyclopédie*. In his *Histoire de la religion où l'on accorde la philosophie avec le christianisme* (1785), he argued for the reconciliation of religion with science, an idea that both sides deemed highly unlikely. It could also be argued that a writer like Jacques Cazotte was an ecto-*philosophe* because in his most famous work *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772), he defended the tradition of Christian values, yet he was a member of the Illuminati.⁴¹⁰ Finally, pushing the category's boundaries further, even the works of a canonical writer such as Rousseau could be viewed as "ecto-philosophical," because his position within the divide fluctuated. He was an ally of the *philosophes* in the early 1750s and contributed to the *Encyclopedie*, but he turned against them throughout the later years of his career. During the second part of the eighteenth century, Rousseau's ideas were at times championed by several leading *philosophes* and severely criticized by their adversaries. At other times, the anti-*philosophes* used his texts in their efforts to refute the ideas of the *philosophes*, who in turn did not hesitate to decry Rousseau.⁴¹¹ However, the ecto-*philosophes* never adhered to one camp or the other at any point during their literary careers, and it is an established fact that

⁴¹⁰ If we were to take Jean-François de La Harpe at his word, Cazotte also practiced prophesizing other people's destinies. According to de La Harpe, Cazotte predicted accurately the destinies of several important figures at a dinner gathering in 1788, *La Prophétie de Cazotte*. Paris: G. Govone, 1927. Dan Edelstein, in his "Introduction to the Super-Enlightenment" in *The Super-Enlightenment* situates Cazotte as a member of the Super-Enlightenment and refers to him as a "'visionary' philosopher," 9.

⁴¹¹ For more on Rousseau's ambiguous status, see Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes*, 368-75.

Rousseau emerged as a *philosophe* in the early years of his career. Once this “neither-nor” criterion is satisfied, a few other distinctions must follow before a writer is considered as an ecto-*philosophe*.

Although he ultimately does not qualify as one, the case of Rousseau as a possible ecto-*philosophe* shows that the ecto-*philosophes* were not necessarily comprised of only minor or unknown writers. Robert Darnton’s research on readership during prerevolutionary France shows that “minor authors and major best sellers get inevitably lost in the shuffle” when building a literary history that he views as an “artificial construct, passed on and reworked from generation to generation.”⁴¹² There have already been a few studies done on “minor” writers in literature such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (1996); the colloquium directed by Anne Friedman, *Les genres mineures: genres de document et le document comme genre* (2008); and the collection *Œuvres majeures, œuvres mineures?* (2004), edited by Catherine Volpilhac-Augier. *Écrire en mineur au XVIIIe siècle* (2009), a collection of texts edited by Christelle Bahier-Porte and Régine Jomand-Baudry, was the first comprehensive publication that focused solely on the minor writers of the eighteenth century. In the “Introduction,” Bahier-Porte and Jomand-Baudry stress that studies on minor writers situate their frame of analysis in contrast to major writers: “De fait, l’écrivain qui choisit d’écrire sur le mode mineur se positionne nécessairement par rapport à un mode d’écriture qu’il considère comme majeur ou ‘officiel’” (20). As the title of the collection suggests, this work focuses on the “intentionnalité” of writing in the *mineur* mode rather than the state of being a minor author (14). This deliberate writing “en mineur” can have several useful purposes, one of which is to challenge the established order in literature:

⁴¹² Robert Darnton. “The Forbidden Bestsellers of Prerevolutionary France.” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*. v43.n1 (Oct. 1989), 19.

C'est par le petit, l'insignifiant, le conte, la bagatelle, la traduction, les feuilles volantes, la parodie que l'on met en question les hiérarchies instituées et les 'valeurs' que les œuvres dites 'majeures' représentent de toute leur superbe'. Au-delà du *topos* de l'*excusatio* et de la modestie, qui, de Dulaurens à Rousseau, reste l'indice rhétorique de la minoration, le choix d'une écriture mineure rend compte d'une mise en question de la notion d'autorité. Les œuvres qui se disent mineures revendiquent souvent un statut de contre-modèle, opposant les valeurs du 'petit' à celles du 'grand.' (17-18)

Yet, the *ecto-philosophes* did not categorically oppose the canonical writers. Moreover, their works were not necessarily unknown, nor were they unequivocally considered minor writers by their contemporaries. In the introduction to *Imagination scientifique et littérature merveilleuse: Charles Tiphaigne de La Roche*, Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent explain why Tiphaigne "n'était nullement un inconnu dans le monde des Lettres du milieu du XVIII^e siècle."⁴¹³ Saint-Foix wrote a play that was staged over two hundred times over the course of the century, and received favorable reviews by most major critics and periodicals of the epoch.⁴¹⁴ Thiroux d'Arconville was referred to during her lifetime as "une des femmes les plus instruites," who deserved "un rang distingué par les femmes célèbres de son siècle" by the librarian and bibliographer Antoine-Alexandre Barbier.⁴¹⁵ More recently, Patrice Bret lauded Thiroux d'Arconville as a woman who holds "une place non-négligeable dans la République des Lettres de l'Europe des Lumières."⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Yves Citton, Marianne Dubacq, and Philippe Vincent ed., *Imagination scientifique et littérature merveilleuse: Charles Tiphaigne de La Roche*, (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2014), 29.

⁴¹⁴ The play is entitled *L'Oracle*. See 3.2 for a detailed analysis of the play.

⁴¹⁵ Antoine-Alexandre Barbier, *Examen critique et complément des dictionnaires historiques les plus répandus, depuis le dictionnaire de Moréri, jusqu'à la biographie universelle inclusivement*, Tome 1, (Paris: Chez Rey et Gravier, 1820), 39, 40. Barbier lived until 1825 and published most of his works after Thiroux d'Arconville's death in 1805. However, they were well acquainted with each other.

⁴¹⁶ Patrice Bret, "La face cachée des Lumières: à la découverte de Madame d'Arconville," *Madame d'Arconville, une femme de lettres et de science au siècle des Lumières*, (Paris: Hermann, 2011), 14.

Another characteristic of the *ecto-philosophes* is the fact that they began their literary careers, or at least wrote the majority of their works, during the 1745-1765 period that corresponded to the height of the conflict between the *philosophes* and the *anti-philosophes*. They also published works in a variety of genres, thus not creating their literary identity, and building a reputation, around a single one. For instance, Thiroux d'Arconville wrote plays, essays, memoirs, novels, translations, and scientific treatises. Other writers, such as Marie-Antoinette Fagnan, who wrote a few fairy tales in the 1750s, did remain outside the conflict mainly because they wrote in a single genre and their texts failed to reach a wide audience.

The *ecto-philosophes*, despite having published works in different genres, did maintain intellectual coherence throughout their corpus of texts, including when they chose to publish them anonymously. Although easily detectable in the works of Thiroux d'Arconville, this characteristic is most striking in Tiphaigne's writings, and thus, it will constitute the central component of my analysis of Tiphaigne's *ecto-philosophe* identity in the second part of this chapter. This section will bring to light the ways in which Tiphaigne introduces a problem in one work that finds its solution in another. It will include a close reading of his work *Sanfrein ou Mon dernier séjour à la campagne* (1765) in order to show that, despite its unique genre and style in relation to his other texts, the work emerges as the culmination of the author's intellectual development.

Another characteristic that unites the *ecto-philosophes* is a general disregard for becoming famous. For the most part, they do not seek critical approval and at times, they seem to manifest a certain degree of indifference to how others situate their literary output in comparison to that of other *gens de lettres*. Contrary to the examples of Sedaine and Fréron that I examined in chapters two and three, these writers, when faced with opportunities to advance their literary

careers or to earn the protection of influential figures, demonstrated little desire to network and little, if any, need for accolades or celebrity.⁴¹⁷

Last but not the least, the *ecto-philosophe* writer must possess all these characteristics at once. If a writer published works in many different genres, maintained intellectual coherence throughout all of them, and showed little concern for potential critical reception, it does not necessarily mean that the writer was an *ecto-philosophe*. The author would only qualify as one if, in addition to the previous characteristics, he or she also fulfilled the remaining criteria by never having become allies with a powerful figure for the purpose of advancing one's career, and never having joined the members of one camp or the other at any point during his or her career. The writers included in this chapter meet the criteria described above, beginning with Tiphaigne whom I examine next.

4.1 CULTIVATING AN INTELLECT: TIPHAIGNE'S TRAJECTORY FROM *AMILEC TO SANFREIN*

4.1.1 In search of coherence

Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche's work can be categorized as "ecto-philosophical" in that it resists easy designations within the context of the conflict pitting the *philosophes* against the anti-*philosophes*. Citton argues that the analysis of Tiphaigne's writings should go beyond the scope of the divide between the two camps: "ce n'est pas à travers le filtre polarisateur de

⁴¹⁷ For the way families of royal lineage protected writers based on their philosophical and antiphilosophical views, see Chapter 1 in this study, and Balcou, *Fréron contre les philosophes*, 90-91; 107-119.

l'antagonisme entre 'Philosophes' et 'Anti-Philosophes' qu'il faudra apprendre à lire l'œuvre de Tiphaigne, si l'on veut [...] en tirer quelque chose de pertinent" (*Zazirocratie* 68). Citton goes on to explain how Tiphaigne's works echo in many ways the biopolitical powers of the modern world. I will focus on the author's 1765 novel *Sanfrein ou Mon dernier séjour à la campagne*. I will uncover the ways in which it draws on the author's earlier imaginary tales, frames his ideas within the space of a realistic novel, and as a result, emerges as the culmination of his intellectual development. Tiphaigne uses his texts to map out not only his ideas with regard to contemporary scientific, social, and ontological debates of his century, but also to maintain a written account of his own progress,⁴¹⁸ as he accumulates knowledge, and his intellect matures. This ongoing process finds coherence (a necessary characteristic within the *ecto-philosophe's* ensemble of texts) and reaches a crescendo with *Sanfrein*, thus making it, for me, his most important work. Finding coherence in Tiphaigne's body of work presents perhaps the biggest challenge to scholars who have ventured into reading his writings. In the conclusion to one of the rare book-length studies on Tiphaigne's literary production, Jacques Marx points to what he perceives as the major flaw in the author's texts: "Son défaut majeur, c'est le désordre: il a jeté pêle-mêle dans ses livres les réminiscences de ses lectures et les intuitions géniales ou fantasques qu'elles lui ont suggérées. Il en résulte une impression d'inégalité, de fatras, qu'il n'est pas toujours facile de débrouiller."⁴¹⁹ Marx's characterization of Tiphaigne's literature as a medley of disorderly ideas encapsulates the ambivalence surrounding the author's corpus of texts.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ For example, he calls *Sanfrein* his "journal," and his 1761 book *L'Empire des Zaziris* his "brochure."

⁴¹⁹ Jacques Marx, *Tiphaigne de la Roche: modèles de l'imaginaire au XVIIIe siècle* (Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1981), 92.

⁴²⁰ Throughout my study, I will refer to Charles Tiphaigne de la Roche as "Tiphaigne," thus follow the standard set by scholars and historians as early as George Mancel in his *Tiphaigne de La Roche, étude bibliographique* (Caen: A. Hardel, 1845), and as recent as Philippe Vincent in *Amilec*, ed. Vincent.

Recent scholarship on Tiphaigne has investigated the rather disjointed body of his texts in search of a common theme, a thread that would unite rather dissimilar collection of works. Inspired by Michel Foucault, Citton draws parallels between Tiphaigne's *merveilleux* tales of *Giphantie* (1760) and *l'Empire des Zaziris sur les humains, ou la Zazirocratie* (1761), and the modern concept of *biopolitique*.⁴²¹ In another work, he proposes that Tiphaigne is a model of an eighteenth-century "alter-modern" author whose ideas can offer valuable insight into our modern world.⁴²² In a close reading of *Bigarrures philosophiques* (1759), Jean-François Perrin analyzes Tiphaigne's skepticism, and points to a pseudo-Rousseauist attitude that emerges from Tiphaigne's anti-philosophical ideas.⁴²³ Aurélia Gaillard shows that Tiphaigne's texts not only dismantle the science-magic dichotomy by reconciling the two, but also render the two dependent on each other, if only to stimulate human progress.⁴²⁴

If there are indeed common themes as these authors have shown, in what ways do they contribute to Tiphaigne's auctorial authority in his works even though he publishes them anonymously? Is it possible to detect the birth of a new idea (or the development of an existing one) through these common thematic explorations, and if so, in which ways does the idea's progress relate to the development of Tiphaigne's intellect? As a few of the scholars mentioned above have repeatedly affirmed, Tiphaigne's texts prove challenging in that, if not read carefully,

⁴²¹ Citton, *Zazirocratie*.

⁴²² Yves Citton, "Merveille et altermodernité," Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent eds., *Imagination scientifique*, 319-353. The term "Altermodernité" comes from modern-day philosophers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt who introduced the term in their 2009 book *Commonwealth*.

⁴²³ Jean-François Perrin, "Occulter les Lumières? Les *Bigarrures philosophiques* de Tiphaigne de La Roche," Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent eds., *Imagination scientifique*, 155-172.

⁴²⁴ Aurélia Gaillard, "Ni fable, ni système: le pacte de merveilleux scientifique chez Tiphaigne de La Roche," Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent eds., *Imagination scientifique*, 175-191.

they emit a cacophony of multiplicities: multiple voices, theories, themes, and characters from all walks of life. The elemental spirits in the fairy tale *Giphantie* and in the supernatural treatise *L'Empire des Zaziris* address topics that closely concern the behavior of the masses and that of the individual. In *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes* (1753), the genii create a laboratory above the clouds to experiment and find solutions to scientific questions of great concern in the eighteenth century. In *Amilec* and *L'Amour dévoilé ou le système des sympathistes* (1749), a treatise on love and sympathy, Tiphaigne introduces narrators who challenge the savants. In *L'Histoire des Galligènes ou Mémoires de Duncan* (1765), a journeyman goes on a utopian voyage and questions the hierarchical mechanisms of policy-makers and their followers. In *Sanfrein* (1765) a botanist contrasts the nature of city dwellers with that of country people. In *L'Amour dévoilé*, Tiphaigne returns to a thesis that he defended two years earlier and sharpens it to ambitiously refute the systems set forth by previously revered thinkers. Tiphaigne's texts point to everyone, yet no one in particular.⁴²⁵ Organisms exist in a constant state of flux. For example in *Amilec*, genii manipulate human seeds, and in *L'Empire des Zaziris*, elemental spirits manipulate humans who in turn experiment with animals and plants all within the same space. Tiphaigne delves into the scientific debates of his century, yet this state of constant flux reminds the modern reader of the twenty-first century's globalization.⁴²⁶ He reconciles the real with the imaginary, and mixes satire with scientific treatises. Thus, while common themes are present and ripe for debate in Tiphaigne's texts, his intellectual coherence remains opaque.

⁴²⁵ *Sanfrein* ends with the following two sentences: "J'oubliais de dire que Sanfrein avait un fond de physionomie si ordinaire, que ceux qui l'ont connu croient encore le rencontrer à chaque instant. Pour moi, je ne vois Presque personne qui ne me fasse penser à lui." (186)

⁴²⁶ Citton discusses in detail the flux-and-globalisation relationship in relation to Tiphaigne's texts in his *Zazirocratie*, 75-86.

We have returned full-circle to the pressing issue that began the above paragraph: how to discern auctorial coherence, if there is one, in Tiphaigne's corpus of texts, and in which ways does the imaginary assist Tiphaigne in developing his understanding of the masses, society, and individuals? Are there any passages in his texts that give clues about his overall intellectual approach to these issues? Philippe Vincent has made the most targeted attempt at cracking the coherence riddle.⁴²⁷ By focusing on three characters picked from three different texts, he assembles the most common motifs that point to a network of signposts throughout Tiphaigne's texts. While recognizing the benefits of such intense examination in order to expose the hidden similarities in Tiphaigne's works, I tackle the conundrum of coherence in his texts differently. I will show that although *Sanfrein* differs from the rest of Tiphaigne's works in genre and style, it plays a central role in understanding not only Tiphaigne's auctorial authority, but also in representing the culmination of the development of his intellect. While *Sanfrein* remains to this day his least explored work, I argue that it sheds light on the continuous growth of Tiphaigne's knowledge and ideas, and therefore makes a key contribution to the existing scholarship on him. The author's intellectual development emerges through *Sanfrein*'s contents, and as my later analysis will show, the work's singular genre and style in comparison to his other texts play an important role in this process. It is necessary to read the majority, if not all, of Tiphaigne's works in order to discern *Sanfrein*'s paramount role. My examination of *Sanfrein* will therefore be preceded by a close reading of *Amilec*, Tiphaigne's first fiction in the form of a philosophical dream, followed by a brief outline of his works published between *Amilec* and *Sanfrein*. This

⁴²⁷ Philippe Vincent, "Charles Tiphaigne, bigarrures et cohérence d'une œuvre," Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent eds., *Imagination scientifique*, 87-103. Citton also analyzes the coherence of Tiphaigne's narrative aspects and bases his findings on Deleuzian reading of the author's texts, "Des parties du puzzle au tout de la durée: Les fantômes de Tiphaigne de La Roche," Marc Escola, Jan Herman, Lucia Omacini, Paul Pelckmans, Jean-Paul Sermain ed., *La partie et le tout: La composition du roman, de l'âge baroque au tournant des Lumières*, (Paris: Édition Peeters, 2011), 229-40.

transition is essential, as *Sanfrein*, if read alone, amounts to little more than a fanciful story, a “brochure,” as Fréron called it.⁴²⁸ To this end, I use *Amilec* as the departing point of my analysis in order to emphasize the ways in which, true to an ecto-*philosophe*, Tiphaigne maintains coherence and develops his ideas while remaining fully invested in the scientific and social debates, as well as in the study of human anatomy and physiology, that marked his century. Putting *Amilec* and *Sanfrein* in dialogue will also illustrate Tiphaigne’s reconciliation of science and *merveilleux*, to which several recent studies have also alluded. As Vincent notes, science and literature are closely tied in the eighteenth century, and one feeds off the other to gain clarity in the former’s case, style in the latter’s.⁴²⁹ Drawing from passages found in the writings of Buffon, Charles Bonnet, and Benjamin Franklin, Vincent adds that “tout système ne peut être qu’une rêverie ou un roman. L’observation et l’expérience sont seul capables de faire progresser la science.”⁴³⁰ Through the philosophical dream *Amilec*, Tiphaigne explores the concept of human generation, and in *Sanfrein* he will champion observation and experimentation.

The surprisingly modern-day views that Tiphaigne adopted two-and-a-half centuries ago, and the reputation he garnered after his lifetime as the anticipator of future technological discoveries, have already distinguished his writings and thus challenged the canonical discourses of the Enlightenment.⁴³¹ In addition, his characters’ enthusiasm for learning, his own ability to

⁴²⁸ Élie Fréron uses the term twice in his review of *Sanfrein* in *L’Année littéraire*, Tome 4 (1765), *HathiTrust Digital Library*, (Amsterdam: Pancoucke, 1765), 145, 175.

⁴²⁹ Vincent also notes that Tiphaigne is not the first writer to make use of philosophical dreams. He does point out however that Tiphaigne uses it as a tool to alert the reader that, while he is a physician, his work belongs to literature although it may contain scientific pretenses. “Introduction,” *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 33-35.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴³¹ These characteristics have been featured in several studies such as Emmanuelle Sempère’s “Tiphaigne de La Roche entre science et merveille,” *Féeries*, n.6 (2009): 117-30, Citton’s *Zazirocratie*, Marx’s *Tiphaigne de la Roche*, and Carmen Ramirez’s “Merveilleux mélancolique et éloge de la curiosité dans *l’Amour dévoilé* de Charles

reevaluate his position on a number of debates, and the manifestation of his intellectual development through a realistic short novel that reassembles the information collected from his previous magical tales, have also made Tiphaigne's body of work a case study as an ecto-*philosophe*.

Tiphaigne's early works tackle the study of human constitution beginning with *L'Amour dévoilé*,⁴³² and continuing with an investigation of human generation in *Amilec*.⁴³³ Vincent points out that the study of "génération," which he roughly explains as "la genèse de la vie, la formation d'un individu," preoccupied a great deal of writers in the eighteenth century.⁴³⁴ These thinkers centered their efforts on the concepts of fertilization, reproduction, diffusion of living organisms and beings. Although Tiphaigne's first two works followed this trend, they differed in that, with *Amilec*, the author delved into the *merveilleux* where he remained in his future works to further explore human constitution. To this end, Tiphaigne used philosophical dreams and utopian voyages, and adorned his plots with complex notions that carry supernatural overtones, such as elemental spirits that control and agitate human emotions, and genii that determine the makeup of the human body.

Tiphaigne," in *Imagination scientifique*, 265-87. Specifically for Tiphaigne's premonitions of future inventions, thus his "precursor" or anticipator" reputation, see Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 63-65.

⁴³² "L'Amour dévoilé" translates roughly to "Love Uncovered" or "Sympathy Uncovered."

⁴³³ These two terms, "constitution" and "generation," can each have several meanings to the modern reader, and due to their importance to Tiphaigne's works, as well as to this chapter, it is worthy to provide the equivalent meaning of the way Tiphaigne used the term in the eighteenth century term, in today's modern English. Out of the three definitions of "constitution" that Merriam-Webster offers, the second one (that has two parts within itself) applies best to *L'Amour dévoilé*: "the physical makeup of the individual especially with respect to the health, strength, and appearance of the body" (a); "the structure, composition, physical makeup, or nature of something" (b), "Constitution," Merriam-Webster.com, Merriam-Webster. *The American Heritage Dictionary's* equivalent definition is "the physical makeup of a person," 4th edition, 2004. Out of the modern definitions of "generation," the three-part second meaning corresponds best to how Tiphaigne uses the term in *Amilec*: "the action or process of producing offspring" (a), "the process of coming or bringing into being" (b), and "origination by a generating process" (c). "Generation," Merriam-Webster.com, Merriam-Webster.

⁴³⁴ "Introduction," *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 40. For more on theories on generation, see the section entitled "Les théories sur la generation" 40-46.

Tiphaigne's choice of scientific exploration through the *merveilleux*, as well as the lack of biographical sources or correspondence about the author, play significant roles in the difficulties that scholars face in deciphering his body of works. According to Florence Boulerie, "loufoque"⁴³⁵ would be the adjective that may cross the minds of Tiphaigne's readers: "Tiphaigne nous amène dans un monde bizarre et souvent farfelu, prévue d'une imagination débridée qui nous entraîne du côté de l'invisible."⁴³⁶ In a recent collective volume, Marx refers to the multitude of ideas as "atomisée" and "éparpillée" while Carmen Ramirez notes that Tiphaigne is "contesté parfois comme un écrivain possédant une imagination débordante au service du saugrenu."⁴³⁷ Emmanuelle Sempère points to the anagrammatic writing style and the alternating comical and serious tones, as possible causes of the difficulty of understanding Tiphaigne's works, and underlines how critics may interpret the same text differently depending on their interests and backgrounds. The comparison of the variety of interpretations of *Amilec* leads Sempère to conclude that "le 'détail' du texte résiste à l'interprétation, en imposant au lecteur de paradoxales associations d'idées et de termes" (118). Sempère also argues that the ambiguities surrounding Tiphaigne's life only serve to exacerbate the ambivalence of his writings (117). As Vincent notes, when scholars show interest in an author such as Tiphaigne, who has largely been ignored for two centuries, they face the daunting task of searching through scarce or missing documentation, and furthermore, have access to only a limited number of

⁴³⁵ *Larousse* uses a number of adjectives to translate "loufoque" depending on the context: crazy, daft, and screwy for a person; weird, bizarre, and freaky for a story; and zany for a film. Boulerie uses it to describe the noun "idées," – the title of her essay is "Tiphaigne et les idées loufoques." Any of the adjectives above, especially bizarre or zany, would fit the context of her use of the word.

⁴³⁶ Florence Boulerie, "Tiphaigne et les idées loufoques," Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent ed., *Imagination scientifique*, 121.

⁴³⁷ Jacques Marx, "De la tradition à l'anticipation: la culture scientifique de Tiphaigne de La Roche," 49, and Carmen Ramirez's "Merveilleux mélancolique et éloge de la curiosité dans *l'Amour dévoilé* de Charles Tiphaigne," 265, Citton, Dubacq, and Vincent ed., *Imagination scientifique*.

sources to find any useful biographical data.⁴³⁸ In fact, one frequently finds terms such as “ambivalent,” “inclassable,” or “obscur,” when reading scholarly research on his writings.⁴³⁹ The lack of biographical information only serves to reinforce the obscurity in which the writer from Normandy remains.⁴⁴⁰

Sanfrein is the only fictional story by Tiphaigne whose plot features human characters from everyday eighteenth-century French society and remains devoid of any elements of his previous imaginary tales.⁴⁴¹ The contrasts between *Sanfrein* and *Amilec* underline the protagonists’ increasing awareness of self and others. The behaviors and emotions of the main characters, such as the narrator and Soulange, resemble those manifested by the characters in *Amilec*, yet the former understand better the philosophical and scientific questions facing humankind, and use a more analytical approach in tackling them. During this transition from *Amilec* to *Sanfrein*, the ecto-*philosophe* Tiphaigne strives to detect and uncover the peculiarities

⁴³⁸ Vincent, “Biographie de Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche,” *Amilec*, 151-52.

⁴³⁹ References are too many to list; however, it will suffice to read the introductory chapters of Citton’s *Zazirocratie*, Marx’s, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, and Vincent’s preface and introduction in *Amilec ou la graine d’hommes*, ed. Philippe Vincent (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2012). See also Sempère, “Tiphaigne de La Roche entre science et merveille,” 128.

⁴⁴⁰ Vincent presents the most detailed and exhaustive biography of Tiphaigne to date in his edition of *Amilec*: “Biographie de Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche,” *Amilec ou la graine d’hommes*. Born in 1722 in Montébourg, France, Tiphaigne studied medicine and defended his dissertation on how the affects of the human soul can originate in the perspiration matter in 1747 (the dissertation in Latin is reproduced in its entirety in figures 28-34). One year later, he obtained his license to practice medicine, and he began his literary career in 1749 with *L’Amour dévoilé ou le système des sympathistes*, an expanded version of his dissertation. Over the next sixteen years, he published eight other works, and a number of reedited and augmented versions. The last two works appeared within four weeks of each other in May of 1765, first *Sanfrein, ou Mon dernier séjour à la campagne*, and then *L’Histoire des Galligènes ou Mémoires de Duncan*. He lived for a short period of time in Paris in the middle of the 1750s during which Malesherbes, the director of the Library, solicited him for a book on the history of fishing. Otherwise, he lived in Normandy for most of his life, until his death in 1774. He remained single throughout his life and never had children.

⁴⁴¹ Tiphaigne also wrote agricultural essays “Mémoire sur la culture des vignes en Normandie” published in *Mémoire de l’Académie des Arts et Belles-Lettres de Caen* (1758) and *Questions relatives à l’agriculture et à la nature des plantes* (1759). For more on these two essays, see Vincent, “Biographie de Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche,” *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 170-72. Citton refers to these works as « traités (pseudo-)scientifiques,” *Zazirocratie*, 22.

of the human constitution without taking sides in the eighteenth-century's much-debated issues such as divine power, reason, prejudices, governance, or social class structure. He takes one or more of them into account in a number of his analyses, yet they do not act as justification for a pre-determined agenda. Intellectual expansion preoccupies Tiphaigne more than reaching conclusions.

4.1.2 Choice of texts, *Amilec* and *Sanfrein*

In order to understand the development of Tiphaigne's thoughts, we need to begin by analyzing his first work, *L'Amour dévoilé*, published in 1749.⁴⁴² The author examines the passions of sympathy and love by revisiting previous texts on the subject by writers such as Aristotle and Descartes, refuting them, and then building his own system on the topic.⁴⁴³ He presents himself as no more than an "amant méditatif" who is interested in the origins of love: "à faire l'analyse de ce feu, à examiner sa nature, à déterminer son origine" (3-4). However, in *L'Amour dévoilé*, Tiphaigne is far removed from philosophical dreams and systems featuring genii and elemental spirits that will deeply influence much of his later literary output.⁴⁴⁴ Four years later, Tiphaigne published *Amilec*, his second literary work, yet his "premier songe philosophique."⁴⁴⁵ It begins with the narrator sitting in his cabinet, immersed in endless hours of reading books that grapple with systems of nature and the origins of humanity. Despite having read volumes on related

⁴⁴² For an in-depth discussion of *L'Amour dévoilé*, see Marx, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 25-39.

⁴⁴³ Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche, *L'Amour dévoilé*, Préface vii.

⁴⁴⁴ George Mancel calls *L'Amour dévoilé* an "ouvrage médico-philosophique" in *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 37.

⁴⁴⁵ Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche, *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes*, (Montpellier: Éditions Grèges, 2001), preface "Aux savants," 9. I will use this edition for further citations from *Amilec* unless otherwise noted. According to the editors, Tiphaigne's use of capitalization has been conserved but typography and spelling have been modernized (113).

topics, his thirst for knowledge remains unquenched. Frustrated and exhausted, the narrator falls asleep on top of the books and starts dreaming. In the beginning of his dream, he meets Amilec, the master genie who presides over the human regeneration process. From that point forward, Amilec educates the keen narrator on how he and his band of genii collect germs and seeds that escape the human body through the pores in the skin, and how they store and combine them in regenerating humans.⁴⁴⁶

I choose to compare *Amilec* with *Sanfrein* for two reasons. First, it allows for greater analysis of Tiphaigne's evolving views on human nature because both works, although written twelve years apart, grapple primarily with human constitution. Second, the stark contrast in the physical setting of the two stories provides valuable insight into Tiphaigne's earlier explorations of human behavior and their later application to society. *Amilec* is a philosophical dream with supernatural characters that takes place for the most part above the clouds, whereas *Sanfrein* takes place in the realistic setting of French society, yet both works center on understanding human behavior. In short, *Amilec* poses as the theory, while *Sanfrein* as the praxis. *Amilec* has gone through three editions. The first edition was published in 1753; the second and third editions, both published in 1754, contained considerable alterations and additions. Because of the possibility that Tiphaigne's modifications to the text in the two later editions resulted from various criticisms of the initial edition, I have decided to use as my point of reference the first edition which would most likely correspond to Tiphaigne's original intent.⁴⁴⁷ Throughout my

⁴⁴⁶ Tiphaigne uses the French expression "troupe de Génies" that I translated as "band of genii," 19. The use of titles, and subordination of a "troupe de Génies" who work for Amilec in his "magasin" point to a hierarchized society of genii: "on m'a subordonné nombre de Génies qui, sous mes orders, travaillent à la [graine] recueillir."

⁴⁴⁷ For more details on the modifications in the second and third editions, see Marx, 39-50. For the most recent and extensive description of each edition, see Vincent, "Choix du texte et principes d'édition" in *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 71-83.

project I will refer to the third printing of the first edition, the only version of *Amilec* with Tiphaigne's name included on the cover.⁴⁴⁸

When examining a piece of *songe* literature, Diderot's *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* undoubtedly comes to mind as it did with Marx, Vincent, and Guilhem Armand, in their studies of *songes* and *Amilec*.⁴⁴⁹ The striking parallels between the two texts cannot be ignored and have led Vincent to speculate that it is nothing less than possible that Diderot had read *Amilec* prior to writing *Le Rêve* in 1769, and to cite a passage from Diderot's text that he believes was inspired by *Amilec*.⁴⁵⁰ However, Armand, in his study of Diderot's work, *L'Autre Monde* de Cyrano de Bergerac, and Tiphaigne's dream tales, warns against the temptation to put *Amilec* in dialog with those texts:

L'Autre Monde de Cyrano de Bergerac et le *Rêve de d'Alembert* de Diderot présentent une différence notable avec *Amilec* et la plupart des œuvres de Tiphaigne: dès le début, leurs auteurs exposent une thèse qui sera l'objet d'une démonstration – plus ou moins fantaisiste – celle, galiléenne, de la pluralité des mondes chez Cyrano, et celle de la théorie de la sensibilité de la matière chez Diderot. La vocation scientifique de ces fictions est posée dans les premières pages. Les héros de Tiphaigne, au contraire, découvrent des théories scientifiques au cours de leurs voyages ou de leurs songes, c'est *a posteriori* que se révèle, dans certains textes, une vocation scientifique de l'œuvre qui peut en quelques sorte en justifier la publication par le narrateur. [...] plutôt que de montrer la vocation scientifique de la fiction, à l'instar de Cyrano ou Diderot, Tiphaigne déploie la vocation fantaisiste de la science. (194-95)

⁴⁴⁸ Although the editors call it the "second tirage de la première édition [...] seul ouvrage de Tiphaigne à avoir porté son nom" (109-110), Vincent's recent extensive research on the editions shows that the printing that had Tiphaigne's name on the cover was indeed the third printing of the first edition, and not the second, "Choix du texte," *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 73-74.

⁴⁴⁹ Marx, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 40. Vincent, *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 31-33. Guilhem Armand, "Tiphaigne ou la vocation fantaisiste de la science," *Imagination scientifique*, 193-95, 201. Also, to see how Tiphaigne's approach to *songes* is situated in dream literature of the eighteenth century, see Perrin, "Occulter les Lumières? *Bigarrures philosophiques* de Tiphaigne de La Roche," *Imagination scientifique*, 157-61.

⁴⁵⁰ In original French: "Rien moins que possible," Vincent, *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 32. Armand also notes the same passage's similarity to *Amilec*, "Tiphaigne ou la vocation," *Imagination scientifique*, 201, note 19.

For his part, Marx also notes that what motivated Diderot to use dreams in *Le Rêve* was his frustration with the slowness of scientific developments. To overcome this obstacle, he resorted to *songes* in order to quickly grasp knowledge to which he could not have had access through existing means of experimentation of his time (40). Readings of Tiphaigne's philosophical dreams do feature characters that appear eager to learn; however, there are no indications that the speed with which they desire to acquire knowledge has any significance to the characters. In fact, in *Amilec*, the story takes place in a dream, and the narrator's learning process moves at the pace of Amilec's discourse. In contrast, *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* is composed of three separate dialogues between Diderot, D'Alembert, Dr. Bordeu, and Julie de Lespinasse, who contemplate d'Alembert's dream at their own pace. Tiphaigne's dream serves to explore and learn, but not necessarily to settle new theories and conclusions, at least not yet. The story ends when the narrator wakes up and despairs at having lost Amilec forever. There are no philosophical post-dream commentaries with regard to his dream, or anyone with whom to hold a dialog.

4.1.3 *Amilec's* Preface "Aux savants"

Amilec's preface picks up where *L'Amour dévoilé* left off. Tiphaigne continues to attack the systems of renowned thinkers, except that now, he directly addresses "savants" and urges them to consider the value of his philosophical dream (7-9). I believe this need for approval by established thinkers represents a moment of uncertainty in the early development of the author's intellect. He has just discovered the benefits of dreaming philosophically – "premier songe philosophique" – and although he seeks their approval, he also realizes that his journey to knowledge may not need assistance from others: "Que ne l'ai-je su plutôt? que pour faire des

Systèmes et des Découvertes, il ne s’agissait que de rêver philosophiquement!” (8). Tiphaigne’s later nonchalance with regard to approval in *Sanfrein* hints at the progress of an intellectual maturation. He becomes more of an ecto-*philosophe* over time in the sense that his concern with previous systems, and about what others think of him, diminish, as he begins to establish his own theories on humanity. *Sanfrein* is entirely devoid of any attacks on older systems and of any mention of previous philosophers, which had been nothing less than a trademark of his earlier works.

As the title “Aux savants” indicates, Tiphaigne begins the preface by directly addressing the savants of his time. The first paragraph is a combination of past and imperfect tenses, implying that Tiphaigne desired to join their ranks in the past, but not anymore: “Vous savez que j’ai toujours eu pour vous tout le respect possible; c’est dire trop peu, mes sentiments à votre égard ont été de la plus haute admiration. Toute mon ambition était de pouvoir un jour avoir un rang parmi vous; je ne voyais rien au-delà de cet honneur” (7). Now that he has discovered the method of dreaming philosophically (“rêver philosophiquement”), his intellectual exploration has become self-sufficient: “Aujourd’hui je me tranquillise, je dors, je rêve et je deviens savant” (8). While the title and the second person narrative seem to explicitly identify the preface’s intended target audience at first glance, its interpretations reveal a range of ambiguities and encapsulate the cryptic nature of Tiphaigne’s writings.⁴⁵¹ Who are exactly these *savants*?⁴⁵² In his detailed analysis of the notion of *homme de lettres* during the middle of the eighteenth century, Michel Gaulin points to a shift in the meaning of the word *philosophe* throughout the

⁴⁵¹ Sempère calls the preface “d’une ironie acide” ‘acid-like irony’ (125); Marx notes in it a “fausse ingénuité,” ‘a fake gullibility’ (40).

⁴⁵² As further analysis will show, the title’s translation can be anything from “To the Savants” or “To the Philosophes” to “To the Scholars.” The 1753 translation uses “To the Learned.”

1750s in relation to the terms *gens de lettres* and *tenants des sciences exactes*.⁴⁵³ Gaulin points out that in two texts by d'Alembert written within two years of each other, *Discours Préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie* (1751) and *Essai sur les gens de lettres et des grands* (1753), the author first designates the scientists by the term “philosophe” in *Discours*, whereas in *Essai*, he designates them by the term “savant.” Considering that *Amilec* was published in 1753, the same year as *Essai*, and that Tiphaigne had a background in science, it is likely that the preface addresses either the scientists or a certain group of scholars, or a combination of both.⁴⁵⁴ However, Vincent notes that Tiphaigne possibly began writing *Amilec* in 1750 or 1751.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, it is equally plausible that Tiphaigne addresses one or more from a number of groups such as the *philosophes*, men of letters, exact science experts, and physicians, among others. This brief analysis shows that in *Amilec*'s case, the task of deciphering the ambiguities already begins with the text's first two words. On the one hand, Tiphaigne unequivocally directs the preface toward an erudite group, on the other hand, it proves impossible to determine their identities beyond that description with any degree of certainty.

In the next paragraph, Tiphaigne complains about the long hours wasted in his study reading volumes of works, while presenting himself as a hopeful future *savant*: “Enfin pour fruit de tous ces travaux, il m'était resté dans l'esprit que vous et moi nous tendions à des connaissances, auxquelles il n'est pas donné à l'homme de parvenir” (7-8). While Tiphaigne naively thought that he was collaborating with the *savants* in the quest for knowledge, they kept a secret from him that would have otherwise led him to the “sanctuaire de la Nature” (8). Now

⁴⁵³ Michel Gaulin, *Le Concept d'homme de lettres, en France, à l'époque de l'Encyclopédie*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 56-57. Gaulin uses the French terms “gens de lettres” and “tenants des sciences exactes.”

⁴⁵⁴ Tiphaigne earned a degree in medicine from the University of Caen in 1744, thus obtaining the title of Doctor.

⁴⁵⁵ Vincent, “Introduction,” *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes*, ed. Vincent, 71-72.

that he has discovered philosophical dreams, he will often resort to this method to explore scientific discoveries, political systems, or different aspects of human nature.⁴⁵⁶ Next, he legitimizes his attack on the *savants* by equating his own potential for intellectual discovery to the previous systems that well-known thinkers have presented in the past:

Pourquoi, MESSIEURS, m'avez-vous caché cet important mystère [rêver philosophiquement]? La République des Lettres y perd, pour le moins, une demi-douzaine d'Hypothèses, et je ne doute nullement que je n'eusse déjà fait mon petit Monde, comme Épicure, Descartes et quelques autres, ont fait chacun le leur. (8)

Tiphaigne had already targeted Descartes in *L'Amour Dévoilé*; furthermore, discrediting the systems or theories of earlier thinkers to legitimize his own led by genii and spirits is a recurring theme, or rather a “need” as Citton calls it, in his texts.⁴⁵⁷ For example, throughout *L'Empire des Zaziris*, Tiphaigne repeatedly defends his system of elemental spirits who agitate humans at will, through elements such as air, fire, and germs, often for purposes of observation and entertainment. As Marx notes, Tiphaigne normalizes the Zaziris by equating them to the humans who use animals for their own entertainment: “dans l'échelle des êtres, les *Zaziris* n'ont aucune raison de nous placer plus haut que nous ne plaçons les animaux” (69). Tiphaigne further attempts to legitimize his system by affirming that every nation had considered the existence of spirits, long before he introduced his Zaziris: “Ce n'est donc pas un rêve de notre part, si, après le témoignage de tant d'hommes célèbres, nous venons proposer le système des Génies. Qu'on fasse taire tout préjugé, et l'on verra que notre manière de l'expliquer est bien plus satisfaisante et bien plus raisonnable” (98).

⁴⁵⁶ Notably in *Bigarrures philosophiques* (1759), *Giphantie* (1760), *L'Empire des Zaziris sur les humains ou la Zazirocratie* (1761), and *L'Histoire des Galligènes* (1765).

⁴⁵⁷ Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 336-341. The title of the sub-section is “Le besoin de systèmes à dicréditer.”

Tiphaigne often uses the format of a narrator guided by the genii and the elemental spirits. Neither the former in *Amilec* nor the latter in *L'Empire des Zaziris* play roles similar to the supernatural spirits or characters that do so in other fairy tales in the eighteenth-century literature.⁴⁵⁸ *Amilec* and the elemental spirits do not merely provide spiritual guidance or recount metaphorical fairy tales. They represent the driving forces of the author's intellectual exploration in his pursuit of knowledge, and as my analysis of *Sanfrein* will show, they assist in his plans to draw accurate and realistic portraits of the societies in which they live.⁴⁵⁹ This is also one of the ways that Tiphaigne reconciles the *merveilleux* with science thus contributing to the ambivalence in his discourse and enhancing its ectophilosophical nature in terms of its categorization.⁴⁶⁰

There is one more important aspect of *Amilec's* preface that needs attention: the distinction between its first-person narrator and that of the story *Amilec*. This distinction will be a relevant point of discussion when I examine later in the chapter the first person narrator ("je") in *Sanfrein* and the one in the preface, and compare them to the first-person narrators in *Amilec* and its preface. I will ultimately use that comparison in investigating the auctorial coherence in Tiphaigne's works and his intellectual development. At first, Tiphaigne in the preface of *Amilec* and the narrator in the story seem to be the same person. In the preface, Tiphaigne claims to fall asleep and dream in his dark study after reading volumes of works for long hours, precisely in the same manner that the narrator does in the latter: "Il y avait sept heures que j'étais enfermé

⁴⁵⁸ For a list of notable eighteenth-century works, in dialogue with the genres that relate to *Amilec*, see "Introduction," *Amilec*, ed. Vincent.

⁴⁵⁹ For more on how Tiphaigne uses the *merveilleux* in his magical tales and philosophical dreams, see *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 11-12, and Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 325-31.

⁴⁶⁰ It is worth noting that a colloquium held in France in 2010 had the title "Tiphaigne de La Roche et les ambivalences du merveilleux moderne" and resulted in the 2014 publishing of a book composed of a collection of essays – from which I cite often in this study – that dedicates the major part of its content to the study of the "ambivalence" with regard to Tiphaigne's use of magic and fairy-tale aspects in his writings, *Imagination scientifique*, 175-353.

dans mon Cabinet”; “ma tête appesantie tomba sur un tas de volumes in-folios [...] je m’endormis; je fis plus, je revai” (13, 14). However, the “je” in the story differs from that of the preface.

As the title of the preface suggests, Tiphaigne uniquely addresses the “savants.” At the moment of writing, Tiphaigne is a doctor and has already begun his literary career.⁴⁶¹ Therefore, the title suggests that his fellow scientists and writers represent his target audience. In contrast, *Amilec*’s beginning does not present the narrator as someone who holds any titles. His only activity consists of reading volumes on the subject of generation (13). There is no indication that he belongs to any of the selected groups that he addresses: “me voilà invectiver contre tout ce qui s’appelle Physicien, Naturaliste, Médecin, Philosophe, etc.” (13). His severe tone suggests that he assumes an adversarial position in relation to those groups. Unlike Tiphaigne, the narrator is not a *savant* and his primary concern simply consists of learning by reading books. Having read a number of publications by scientists and *gens de lettres*, he finds himself frustrated for still not having learned anything: “Rébuté de ce pénible exercice, aussi ignorant que je l’étais auparavant, je jetai là le volume” (13). In “Aux savants,” Tiphaigne mocks his fellow men because the systems that he discovers through philosophical dreams hold no lesser value than those discovered by others. Yet in the story, the narrator has not discovered anything and his interest specifically lies in the topic of human generation. In “Aux savants,” Tiphaigne takes comfort in knowing that he has discovered the method of dreaming philosophically and openly states that he looks forward to using it. By contrast, when *Amilec*’s narrator falls asleep, he possesses no knowledge of philosophical dreams. Hence, when *Amilec* appears to the narrator and offers to

⁴⁶¹ Tiphaigne has already gotten his degree in medicine from the University of Caen in 1744, thus obtaining the title of Doctor. In the same year, he earned literary distinction with his *Ode sur la maison de Pindare* that earned him the “Prix du miroir.” Finally in 1749, he published his first book *L’Amour dévoilé* (*Amilec* 107).

enlighten him on the concept of “multiplication des hommes,” the narrator is completely surprised, as well as elated: “Je voulus lui marquer toute la reconnaissance que je devais à tant de bonté. Soit étonnement ou maladresse, je m’embarquai dans un assez mauvais compliment, qu’heureusement il ne me donna pas le temps d’achever” (15). At first, it could be argued that Tiphaigne in the preface has discovered the method of philosophical dreams, precisely because he experienced it for the first time through the dream in the story that he is telling, and that this is why the “je” in the story has yet to make a discovery. However, the story’s ending does not leave room for this possibility. In fact, it further reinforces the distinction between the preface’s “je” and the story’s “je.” When the narrator wakes up from his dream, he immediately despairs of never having a similar dream again: “Amilec, m’écriai-je, savant Génie, généreux Amilec, pourquoi m’abandonnez-vous? Mais je l’appelais en vain; les Génies Moissonneurs, les Génies Éplucheurs, le Grand-Maître Amilec, tout avait disparu, tout était perdu pour moi” (106). He does not consider the possibility of applying what he has learned in the dream to reality. Thus, he loses hope because Amilec represents his only source of enlightenment. He has not discovered a system through the dream and still remains desperate to learn. In contrast, Tiphaigne’s philosophical dreaming has just begun with *Amilec*, and “Aux savants” echoes Tiphaigne’s enthusiasm toward his future explorations using that very method. I will return to this distinction later when I tackle the first-person narrator in *Sanfrein*.

4.1.4 Representations of human shortcomings in *Amilec*

Tiphaigne points to the shortcomings of human beings throughout *Amilec*, starting with the narrator and the lunar population. A tone of pessimism emanates from the text. Even the master genie Amilec struggles to find answers to the decay of human nature. In contrast, the two

characters in *Sanfrein* that correspond to Amilec and the narrator in *Amilec*, Soulangue and the narrator, express no anxiety. However, in order to clarify *Sanfrein*'s role in Tiphaigne's intellectual development, the above-mentioned distinctions in *Amilec* deserve a closer look.

As noted earlier, in *L'Empire des Zaziris*, Tiphaigne draws a parallel between the elemental spirits' ability to agitate and motivate humans, and that of humans to do the same to animals. In *Amilec*, the genii manipulate germs to create humans. Tiphaigne forms a similar connection, this time with plants instead of animals. Amilec says to the narrator that he and the other genii represent to humans what humans represent to plants: "vous semez, vous cultivez, vous recueillez des fruits; [...] nous semons, nous cultivons, nous recueillons les grains d'hommes" (19). The references to animals and plants, in Tiphaigne's proposed systems in *Amilec* and *L'Empire des Zaziris*, serve as reminders of the insignificance of humans. These references do not aim to make the setting more realistic because the events in the story ensure that the reader never forgets its fairy-tale setting: the genie and the narrator converse while flying through the air, the moon is populated, and a ceremony for the election of the royal seed takes place on clouds that are arranged for a spectacle (25, 49, 84). Again, Tiphaigne perhaps warns the readers not to take everything seriously. These references to the circular relationship between animals, plants, humans, and the genii (or the elemental spirits) do, however, foreground issues related to the shortcomings and vices of human beings, and how their mundane and frivolous activities lead to the decay of the societies in which they live.

Amilec portrays humans as being prone to regression and corruption. Among the seeds that the genii collect to regenerate humans, bad seeds progressively outnumber the good ones. Moreover, a human being's constitution is so fragile that even a single seed can irritate it, just like the seed of the "Flatteur" does when it hovers too closely to the unaware narrator (102-03).

It causes him to sneeze and the resulting quick expulsion of air disrupts the pattern of the seeds that were swirling nearby (102). The chain reaction also demonstrates the power possessed by a single, corrupt seed. The flatterer's seed has ultimately caused a commotion reminiscent of multiple world wars because each disrupted vortex is itself comprised of a large number of seeds including those of powerful human beings: "Tantôt un Duché se heurtait contre un Électorat, et tantôt une République contre un Royaume. Peu s'en fallut même que mon [narrateur] dernier éternuement ne culbutât totalement l'Empire de la Sublime Porte."⁴⁶² The turmoil caused by his sneeze clearly annoys the narrator, even after Amilec assures him that the blame falls on the flatterer's seed. The genie further clarifies that a single seed can thus corrupt people, cause wars, illnesses, happiness or sadness, depending on "la disposition de celles [personnes] sur lesquelles ils se trouvent à portée d'agir" (103). In this instance, Tiphaigne accentuates the frailty of the narrator's disposition and reminds his audience to stay vigilant against corruption and to recognize the pretenders who seek to instigate it.

Despite proving worthy enough to earn Amilec's sympathy, the narrator's character flaws resurface repeatedly.⁴⁶³ While Amilec reads a letter from one of his lieutenants named Zamar, whose assignment is to supervise the moon's population, the courier who brought the letter notices the narrator and claims to have seen him on the moon. Although the courier turns out to be wrong, he concludes that it must be the narrator's son, because he heard that "apparemment [the narrator] est du nombre de ces gens dont la graine légère s'élève et va se développer à la

⁴⁶² *Amilec*, 102. "La Sublime Porte" (which literally translates to 'Sublime Door') refers to the Turkish word "Babiali" indicating the "official name of the gate giving access to the block of buildings in Constantinople, or Istanbul, that housed the principal state departments." "Sublime Porte," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013).

⁴⁶³ After introducing himself in the beginning of the dream, Amilec says to the narrator: "J'ai remarqué les embarras où tu viens de te trouver au sujet de la generation; j'ai eu pitié de ta peine, et j'offre de te donner sur ce point tous les éclaircissements que tu peux souhaiter" 'I noticed the frustration that you feel concerning the topic of generation; I felt pity for your suffering, and I offer to give you all the explanations that you wish to seek' (15).

Lune.”⁴⁶⁴ Since absentmindedness and lack of intelligence characterize the moon’s population, this piece of news humiliates the narrator and causes him to reconsider his own constitution.

The reader learns through Zamar’s letter that the origins of the moon’s population date back to the time when the seeds of “Étourdi[s]” that lack consistence and weigh less than the volume of air that they occupy, rose from the earth to reach the moon.⁴⁶⁵ Currently on the moon, plants, animals, and humans are sterile, thoughtlessness is encouraged, and schools of “Folies et d’Étourderie” serve as educational institutions (49). Instead of seeking knowledge and striving to expand the human mind, the lunar society aims for the opposite: “On est malheureux sur la Terre, parce qu’on n’est pas assez sage: on est malheureux à la Lune, (car la félicité ne se trouve nulle part) parce qu’on n’est pas assez fou” (50). This mirror-image environment makes Zamar’s letter one of the most intriguing passages in *Amilec*. While the moon’s inhabitants possess characteristics that are opposed to those of earthly humans, Tiphaigne depicts both societies as having the same type of concerns. Both are wary of love; earthly humans perceive it as a danger to wisdom, the lunar population, to absentmindedness: “Dès qu’un Étourdi aime, son imagination se fixe, et il commence à penser, peut-être pour la première fois” (51). Both societies feature hierarchies; authorities in both places condemn publications deemed dangerous to society and pursue their authors (57-58). The shortcomings of humanity exist in both places even if the populations and their values are polar opposites of each other. The contrast seems to suggest that humanity is doomed to fail. However, Tiphaigne does not seem too intent on simply spelling doomsday. For instance, he mentions the depth of the lunar fathers’ love for their children even

⁴⁶⁴ *Amilec*, 62. The French term “légère” translates commonly as “light.” However, in this context, its sense approaches more the term “weak” or “trivial.” Zamar, in his letter, says that the seed of a scatterbrain is lighter than the volume of air that it occupies (45).

⁴⁶⁵ *Amilec*, 45-47. “Absentminded,” “scatterbrain,” “thoughtless” are few possible translations of “Étourdi.” I use each one depending on the context.

though the latter are adopted.⁴⁶⁶ The lunar physicians and *philosophes* also remain busy exploring plants and systems respectively, although they direct their efforts towards minute and inconsequential details instead of seeking universal solutions (51-57). According to Vincent, this passage about the history of lunar physics in Zamar's letter serves as a vehicle for Tiphaigne to deliver his criticism: "C'est l'occasion pour l'auteur de critiquer les différentes démarches scientifiques utilisées au cours de l'histoire par les hommes."⁴⁶⁷ I would add that, through the physicians on the moon, Tiphaigne also reiterates humans' natural enthusiasm for learning. Even after having exhausted every option and failed repeatedly, the lunar physicians still choose to continue exploring: "Au milieu de toutes ces difficultés, la dernière résolution des Physiciens Lunaires a été de continuer à faire des Expériences" (57). Although the future of humanity looks bleak in *Amilec*, Tiphaigne scatters, throughout his text, passages that counter this pessimism with the recognition of humanity's constant pursuit of knowledge. Beyond the depiction of an overwhelmingly somber future and a petty society, *Amilec* also offers subtle glimmers of hope. Part of the ambiguity within the text originates in the fact that a reader too invested in its pessimistic narrative faces the danger of not noticing Tiphaigne's praise for humankind's enthusiasm to learn.

Echoing the lunar courier's suspicion that the narrator belongs to the moon, Tiphaigne portrays the narrator as a flawed individual with a penchant for corruption. When Amilec reflects on Zamar's letter and comments on the moon's population, the narrator struggles to absorb Amilec's astute observations. As a result, he either asks more questions, or simply gets bored and sleepy: "Je l'écoutai, je m'ennuyai, je bâillai" (64). Moreover, when given the chance, the

⁴⁶⁶ *Amilec*, 48. As previously noted, all living beings on the moon are sterile.

⁴⁶⁷ Vincent, "Introduction," *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 36.

narrator shows no hesitation in entertaining himself at the expense of the seeds. In one notable episode, Amilec uses a cello as a tool to determine which passions dominate a particular seed (69). Each chord of the cello corresponds to a passion and when it is struck, the seed ruled by that particular passion becomes agitated and shakes. The narrator decides to play the cello to make the seeds perform a *contredanse* so that he can indulge his desire to “faire trémousser en mesure tous ces petits sauteurs” (70). He takes pleasure in watching the ball (“le bal”) that he creates by playing the cello and agitating the seeds: “Ce spectacle me réjouissait infiniment; et je ne puis vous dire avec quel plaisir je voyais que d’un coup d’archer, je mettais en branle des Nations entières” (71). It seems that, if given the power, the narrator would create a spectacle for himself regardless of the consequences to nations and kingdoms. Finally, when Amilec elaborates on the *contredanse* of the seeds, the narrator simply notes that Amilec sees a deeper meaning in “tout cela,” one that the narrator himself seems unable to process (71). He then gets tired of the spectacle and puts down the cello. Tiphaigne criticizes the human intellect’s limited capacity: what the genie Amilec sees as the comprehensive image of human society represents nothing more than a temporary diversion to the narrator. Yet, the despair that the narrator expresses at the end of the book, when he wakes up from his dream, confirms that Amilec’s efforts to instruct him have not entirely been in vain. It is not so much Amilec’s disappearance that causes the narrator’s anguish, but rather the fact that he now has to return to reading volumes to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, instead of learning through Amilec’s teachings. Just as the physicians on the moon, as thoughtless as they may be, remain resolved to relentlessly experiment, the narrator also, as flawed as he may be, relentlessly seeks answers.

Collecting seeds, detecting their qualities, selecting which ones to use, and supervising the formation of vortexes are delicate tasks that even the “Grand Master” Amilec and his genii

find exhausting.⁴⁶⁸ For example, the genie responsible for harvesting judges has grown tired and frustrated from his futile efforts to find seeds of honorable judges and complains to Amilec for assigning him such a hard task (32). Amilec feels overwhelmed by the difficulty of shielding the good seeds from corruption. He expresses his disappointment in a key passage, when he tells the narrator how his efforts to regenerate improved humans through the use of quality seeds yield depressing results:

J'ai semé de la tendresse, et il m'est venu de la galanterie; j'ai semé de la confiance, et il m'est venu l'opiniâtreté; j'ai semé du bon sens, et il m'est venu de l'esprit, souvent quelque chose de pire. Il ne faut compter sur rien, encore moins sur la graine humaine, que sur toute autre chose. Actuellement que je te parle, j'ai du Philosophe parfait, du Métaphysicien admirable, du Théologien à l'épreuve, de l'Orateur assez pour peupler des régions entières; je sèmerai tout cela, et il ne me viendra peut-être que des gens à Systèmes, des Esprits forts, des Sectaires, et de beaux Diseurs. On dirait que la Nature s'épuise. (66)

Amilec's commentary carries clout because he is the principal genie who presides over the process of "manufacturing men."⁴⁶⁹ Yet, he appears to have lost hope for the very future of humanity. However, as later analysis will show, through the sage Soulangue who fulfills a similarly didactic role in *Sanfrein*, Tiphaigne will champion the possibility for the advancement of humanity and offset Amilec's pessimism.

As noted earlier, once fully awake from his dream and no longer able to contact Amilec, the narrator's dismay rapidly turns to despondency, because he realizes that he had placed too much hope in books (106). Volumes of treatises that other savants had written have proven insufficient, which leads him to treat all pretension towards science as self-deception. Yet, it should be noted that the ending monologue also attests to his desire to learn despite his obvious despair. *Amilec* offers less a concrete solution than a multitude of criticisms, and Tiphaigne

⁴⁶⁸ Amilec is referred to as the "Grand Maître" more than once, notably by Zamar and the narrator, 45, 106.

⁴⁶⁹ "Grand Maître de la Manufacture des Hommes," 45.

focuses less on the end result than on the methods with which humankind can most efficiently seek knowledge. The point is that using such methods – in this case, a philosophical dream featuring genii responsible of generating humans – proves to be as productive as any other system proposed by previous savants.

4.1.5 After *Amilec*, before *Sanfrein*

Before examining *Sanfrein*, it is useful to recapitulate Tiphaigne's other works of magical exploration, because they possess notable variations from *Amilec*, thus confirming that Tiphaigne adjusts, tweaks, and modifies the elements of his *merveilleux*, in search of a better understanding of human nature.⁴⁷⁰ This makes *Sanfrein*'s role all the more important because it emphasizes the crucial role that the work plays in the application of the knowledge that Tiphaigne accumulated in his supernatural tales. Prior to writing *Sanfrein*, Tiphaigne sought to make use of every available avenue that the imaginary represented to him in order to gather as much information as possible on human behavior. Although this section briefly outlines two of his works published between 1753 and 1765, *Giphantie* and *L'Empire des Zaziris*, each of Tiphaigne's works during this period plays a distinct role in his intellectual development before its culmination in *Sanfrein*.

In *Giphantie*, a hurricane takes the narrator to an isolated island frequented by elemental spirits. Upon his arrival, he meets one of them in the form of an "ombre bienfaisante" who acts as the prefect of the island.⁴⁷¹ The spirit sympathizes with the traveling narrator in the same way that Amilec sympathized with the dreaming narrator: "Ton penchant pour la Philosophie m'a

⁴⁷⁰ In the "Epitre" entitled "Aux habitants des planètes" in *L'Empire des Zaziris*, Tiphaigne says "je dois m'élancer au-delà des brouillards et des nuages, pour découvrir des Personnes qui veulent et qui sachent penser," *L'Empire des Zaziris sur les humains, ou La zaziocratie*, (Pekin: Dsmgtlfpqxz, 1761), iv.

⁴⁷¹ *Giphantie I*, Bibliothèque nationale de France: Gallica bibliothèque numérique, (Babylone: 1760), 17.

prévenu en ta faveur [...] je t'ai défendu contre l'ouragan. Je veux maintenant te faire voir les raretés qui se trouvent ici."⁴⁷² Elemental spirits come to the island of Giphantie to take a break from their activities of overseeing humans, once again emphasizing the exhausting nature of any work involving the supervision of such high-maintenance beings. A major difference between *Giphantie* and *Amilec* lies in the fact that Tiphaigne directly targets Parisians – “Babyloniens” as he calls them – and their vices in *Giphantie*. The text describes Babylon as the cursed capital of corruption and vices.⁴⁷³ There, appearances, referred to as “surfaces,” are held in the highest esteem:

[les surfaces] sont comme des masques qui les [hommes] font paroître tout autre qu'ils ne sont. [...] À Babylone surtout, les simulacres sont singulièrement en estime: tout y vise à l'apparence. Un Babylonien aimeroit mieux n'être rien et paroître tout, que d'être tout et ne paroître rien. Aussi vous ne voyez que surfaces de toutes parts, et dans tous les genres. (*Giphantie I*, 39-40)

Giphantie also takes on a darker tone compared not only to *Amilec*, but also, as Marx notes, to the ensemble of Tiphaigne's previous works: “*Giphantie* n'est pas une utopie. C'est un voyage en pays d'absurdité dominé par une vision foncièrement pessimiste du contexte social. Le récit est en général tendu; il a une gravité plus pesante que dans les œuvres précédentes [...] plus d'âpreté dans la dénonciation des tares d'une société” (67).

In *Amilec*, the discovery of the Duc de Bourgogne's seed affirms that there are still some seeds left to generate virtuous human beings.⁴⁷⁴ In *Giphantie* however, the elemental spirits seem to have given up on regenerating and improving the human constitution. Instead, they are simply looking to save the humans from themselves: “Hélas! Notre pouvoir ne s'étend pas si loin: nous

⁴⁷² Ibid., 17-18.

⁴⁷³ “la ville maudite, la capital des vices [...] siège de toutes les corruptions,” Marx, *Tiphaigne de la Roche*, 63.

⁴⁷⁴ *Amilec*, 106.

ne pouvons vous mettre entièrement à couvert de maux qui vous environnent: nous empêchons seulement qu'ils ne vous accablent" (*Giphantie I*, 19-20). Similar to what happened to the genii in *Amilec*, human failures continue to negate the elemental spirits' benevolent efforts in *Giphantie*.

L'Empire des Zaziris, Tiphaigne's next work, further develops the system of elemental spirits with three noticeable differences in contrast to *Giphantie*. First, it is a treatise on a proposed system of elemental spirits that Tiphaigne rigorously defends. The "je" in the text represents the author. There is no *Grand-Maître* or *préfet* to accompany him; this is Tiphaigne's own system, thus his pugnacious rhetoric in defending it.⁴⁷⁵ Second, Tiphaigne equates animals to humans in the eyes of the Zaziris: "dans les guerres qui nous enflamment et qui nous épuisent, les Génies n'apperçoivent rien que des [animaux] qui se déchirent et qui se tuent, uniquement pour se tuer."⁴⁷⁶ Third, there are no sympathetic spirits such as *Giphantie*'s prefect. The elemental spirits appear to use humans to entertain themselves: "C'est une tragi-comédie qu'ils ont préparée pour les amuser [...] Car d'où naîtroient ces batailles si inutiles [...] si ce n'est pas de la part des Esprits Elémentaires, qui s'amuse à nos dépens?" (43-44). Gone are *Amilec* and his band of genii who work tirelessly to generate virtuous humans, as well as the elemental spirits of *Giphantie* who attempt to save humans from themselves through natural elements such as water, fire, and wind. *Giphantie* and *L'Empire des Zaziris* represent two examples of works that Tiphaigne published between *Amilec* and *Sanfrein* in which he explores variations of systems within the *merveilleux* in order to gain a better understanding of human behavior.

⁴⁷⁵ See page 7 of this paper for more on Tiphaigne's preemptive attacks on those who may potentially denounce his system. In *L'Empire des Zaziris*, other than in the preface, Tiphaigne defends the validity of his system several more times in the text, notably in the following pages: 3, 11, 24, 62-64, 94, and 98.

⁴⁷⁶ *L'Empire des Zaziris*, 43. For more on the circular inter-relationships of plants, animals, and humans, read the excellent analysis of Citton's *Zazirocratie*, chapter five: Pluralité et Croissance des mondes, 75-86

4.1.6 *Sanfrein ou Mon dernier séjour à la campagne*

The next few sections will first demonstrate that a subtle enthusiasm for knowledge inhabits *Sanfrein* and counters the increasing amount of pessimism that characterizes his previous works. It will tie the signs of enthusiasm to the more pessimistic passages previously discussed in *Amilec* in order to bring to light the development of Tiphaigne's ideas. The auctorial coherence that characterizes the *ecto-philosophe* discourse resurfaces in *Sanfrein* through a series of references seeking to apply to an earthly and realistic environment the scientific, ontological, and social issues with which Tiphaigne grappled in his earlier fairy-tale voyages and philosophical dreams. The characters' disposition and the society's dynamics in *Sanfrein* reflect Tiphaigne's desire to investigate further his earlier theories. As will be discussed below, Soulange's presentation as a *sage philosophe* and his rapport with the narrator, who acts as his willing audience, provide stark contrasts to the dynamics between *Amilec* and the narrator in Tiphaigne's philosophical dream thirteen years earlier.

Sanfrein rarely figures in critical studies on Tiphaigne. Even in his pioneering scholarly book on Tiphaigne, Marx only devotes three paragraphs to the book.⁴⁷⁷ In fact, outside of Citton's recent and impressive study on Tiphaigne's entire body of work, in which he also affirms that *Sanfrein* is "presque totalement négligé par la critique jusqu'à ce jour" and dedicates a chapter to it, critics have either ignored it or barely acknowledged its publication.⁴⁷⁸ In order to

⁴⁷⁷ Furthermore, Marx does not include *Sanfrein* in his bibliographical list of Tiphaigne's works at the end of his book, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 93-95.

⁴⁷⁸ Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 275-88, the quote is on page 275. In the most recent and complete biography of Tiphaigne, Vincent only mentions *Sanfrein*'s title and publication date in one sentence while adding some or extensive commentary to all his other works: "Biographie de Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche," *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 177. In the latest publication, third devoted entirely to Tiphaigne since Marx's pioneering book in 1981, none of the essays in the collection center on *Sanfrein*, except that Sempère's essay takes into consideration the figure of

illustrate how little critics have delved into *Sanfrein*, it is worth mentioning that to this day, *Sanfrein* has been erroneously assumed to be Tiphaigne's last work, when in fact, it was published almost a month earlier than *L'Histoire des Galligènes*, which makes it his next-to-last book.⁴⁷⁹ Notices and reviews that appeared in a few eighteenth-century periodicals at the time of publication contain less critical commentary than reproductions of the text's passages. Fréron published the only lengthy review in his *L'Année littéraire*, which is largely composed of lengthy passages from *Sanfrein*, with a few sentences intermittently scattered for the purposes of summarizing the story, and one paragraph at the end describing his opinion of the book.⁴⁸⁰ The other two notices are less than a page each, briefly informing the reader of the contents of the book.⁴⁸¹

Post-eighteenth-century scholars, including those who focus on Tiphaigne's works, offer very little on *Sanfrein* beyond brief characterizations of its literary genre. In a rare nineteenth-century study on Tiphaigne, historian George Mancel first refers to *Sanfrein* as a "roman de

Soulange as a Rousseauist heros, "Le végétal chez Tiphaigne, image(s) ou modèle(s)?" *Imagination scientifique*, 220.

⁴⁷⁹ Marx calls it "dernier livre de Tiphaigne," *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 91. Citton calls it "le dernier ouvrage," *Zazirocratie*, 275. According to the journal kept by the inspector of the library Joseph d'Héméry, *Sanfrein* was published on May 2 (folio 183), and *L'Histoire des Galligènes* on May 30 (folio 189) which reverses the assumption made until now by most scholars that *Sanfrein* was the last publication of Tiphaigne. *Collection Anisson-Duperron sur la Librairie et l'Imprimerie. XCVI-CV Journal de l'inspecteur d'Héméry, 1750-1769. Journal en partie autographe, avec intercalation de pièces diverses sur les affaires du temps. Bulletins sur les livres nouveaux et sur les auteurs et les libraires. CIII Années 1763-1765*. It must nevertheless be noted that the books are published only 28 days apart, and that the dates of Tiphaigne's actual writing of the text are unknown. The chronologically correct order of publication will be reflected in the upcoming modern edition of Tiphaigne's complete works under the direction of Jacques Marx, to be published by Classiques Garnier in 2015, on which I collaborate for the critical edition of *Sanfrein*.

⁴⁸⁰ Élie Fréron, *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 4, Lettre 7, (Amsterdam: Pancoucke, 1765), 145-75. A reproduction of Fréron's review is published in "Extraits des journaux" in *Journal des Sçavans*, Tome 12, (Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey, 1765), 488-513.

⁴⁸¹ "Affiches, annonces, et avis divers," May 22, 1765, *Journal général de France*, (Paris: Bureau des affiches, 1765), 83. *L'Avant-coureur* 5, 29 Jan. 1770, (Paris: Lambert, 1770), 80. *Journal des Sçavans* also reproduces Fréron's review in its entirety, "Extraits des journaux," *Journal des Sçavans*, Tome 12, (Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey, 1765), 488-513.

mœurs,” and then, as a “roman de caractère.”⁴⁸² In a short biography of Tiphaigne published in the middle of the twentieth century, Marie-Josèphe Le Cacheux sees it as a “fine comédie.”⁴⁸³ In 1972, Guy Marcy sees a variation of an autobiography in *Sanfrein* and in a number of passages from other works of Tiphaigne.⁴⁸⁴ Nine years later, Marx labels it a “conte moral” at first, and then refers to it, like Mancel, as a “roman de caractère.”⁴⁸⁵ Citton also views *Sanfrein* as a “conte moral.”⁴⁸⁶ These thumbnail characterizations, as well as the lack of in-depth analysis of the work, show how enigmatic *Sanfrein* remains in critical studies. At the same time, they point to the uniqueness of *Sanfrein* in the context of the author’s corpus of texts. Unlike the rest of Tiphaigne’s fiction, the story contains no elements of the *merveilleux*; there are no lunar or planetary travels, utopian voyages, dreams, genii, or elemental spirits. There is also no commentary on any systems proposed by previous thinkers.

I believe that the lack of critical attention to *Sanfrein* stems from its singular status in Tiphaigne’s literary production.⁴⁸⁷ The text’s unique narrative model contributes to its ambivalence. *Sanfrein* begins with several chapters covering the background story of the

⁴⁸² Mancel, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 29.

⁴⁸³ Marie-Josèphe Le Cacheux, *Un médecin philosophe au XVIIIe siècle: le Normand Tiphaigne de La Roche*, (Rouen: Lainé, 1952), 14.

⁴⁸⁴ As Citton notes, Guy Marcy engages in a highly speculative reading of Tiphaigne’s works, without any historical sources on which to rest, *Zazirocratie*, 56. For example, Marcy says that Tiphaigne had a sister and wonders if Cécile could be her name: “peut-être s’appelaient-elle Cécile? C’est elle sans doute, que Tiphaigne évoque sous ce nom par la bouche de Sanfrein,” *Tiphaigne de La Roche : magicien de la raison*, (Montpellier: Le Méridien, 1972), 34. Vincent notes that that Tiphaigne’s sister’s name was Jeanne-Catherine, *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 154. Marie Josèphe Le Cacheux did warn against drawing parallels between *Sanfrein* and Tiphaigne’s life twenty years before Marcy published his book: “ce que nous savons de la vie de Tiphaigne ne s’accorde pas avec toutes les données de la vie de ‘Sanfrein,’” *Un médecin philosophe*, 14.

⁴⁸⁵ Marx, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 91, 92.

⁴⁸⁶ Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 275.

⁴⁸⁷ Once again, Citton remains the only exception to this generalization since he dedicated a chapter to *Sanfrein* in the context of his analytical frame.

protagonist in Paris and continues with chapters alternating between the developments in the village and the philosophical dialogues between the narrator and Soulangue that are unrelated to the story. In addition to its unique genre and style, *Sanfrein* does indeed seem to pose a number of other critical challenges in relation to the author's overall body of work. On first glance, it seems to be the least thought-provoking, the most inconsequential – whose protagonist “fut l'inconséquence mesme” according to the new title of its second edition in 1770 –, and the most out-of-place text in Tiphaigne's body of work.⁴⁸⁸ For instance, the presence of a first-person narrator initially seems to be the only common point between *Sanfrein* and *Amilec*. In his otherwise favorable review, Fréron calls the work a “bagatelle” and regrets that Tiphaigne did not dwell more on such a promising project.⁴⁸⁹ In *Sanfrein*'s preface, Tiphaigne appears to contribute himself to the trivial image of his work when he refers to it as an “espèce de Journal” and “petit Ouvrage,” and expresses his hope that it will amuse the reader (iii-iv).

Sanfrein recounts the observations of the first-person narrator who has recently spent several months in the countryside as the guest of his uncle M. de la Prime-heure. The unnamed narrator meets *Sanfrein* whose disposition fascinates him; thus, he makes *Sanfrein*'s “memorable life” the central piece of his narrative.⁴⁹⁰ The protagonist's main trait consists of desiring that which he does not possess and instantly losing interest in it once he obtains it. His impulsive behavior provides a stark contrast with another character – the older and wiser Soulangue – with

⁴⁸⁸ Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche, *La girouette ou Sanfrein: histoire dont le héros fut l'inconséquence mesme*, (Genève: Humaire, 1770). For instance, Marx agrees with Le Cacheux that *Sanfrein* “occupe une place à part dans l'œuvre de Tiphaigne,” Marx, *Tiphaigne de La Roche*, 92 ; Marie-Josèphe Le Cacheux, *Un médecin philosophe*, 14.

⁴⁸⁹ Fréron, *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 4, Lettre 7, 175.

⁴⁹⁰ Tiphaigne's quote in French: “le récit de sa vie mémorable,” Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche, *Sanfrein ou Mon dernier séjour à la campagne*, (Amsterdam: 1765), Bibliothèque nationale de France: Gallica bibliothèque numérique, Web, 6. All future quotes for *Sanfrein* will come from this edition.

whom the narrator enjoys having intellectual discussions. Soulangue offers astute insights on human behavior, drawing from his scientific experiments with plant propagations and his social interactions with humans. In the meantime, the protagonist Sanfrein parades through various walks of life. The story speaks of his experiences as a student, a pious person, an ecclesiastic, a gambler, a libertine, and a love-stricken man, none of which seems to halt his path to early self-destruction due to his excessive desires. The narrator occasionally reflects and comments not only on Sanfrein but also on society. In doing so, he names the characters according to their natural inclinations. The impetuous uncle's name is M. de la Prime-heure, the wealthy and libertine Italian's name is "Senior" Libertini, and the main character's name is an alteration of the expression "sans frein" which means "without restraint."

The comical names underline one of the author's central concerns in *Sanfrein*, which is to paint the portrait of contemporary society through these characters' personalities and flaws. Tiphaigne thus places the temperaments of the main characters ahead of their physical traits when describing them. Just like the seeds in *Amilec*, most of *Sanfrein*'s main characters remain in a state of flux, constantly changing their minds from one extreme to the next, in other words, oscillating from one disposition to another like "girouettes."⁴⁹¹ Their seeds are not stable and they reflect the concerns that Amilec expressed in a passage analyzed earlier in which the genie showed his dismay about mixing a certain group of seeds with the intention to regenerate virtuous individuals, and yet, still ending up with unstable or corrupt ones. For example, the narrator in *Sanfrein* introduces M. de la Prime-heure as a man with good intentions who sometimes has a tendency to make hasty decisions: "homme débonnaire, mais singulièrement vif

⁴⁹¹ As noted earlier, *La girouette ou Sanfrein*, was the title of the book's second edition (with identical texts otherwise) that was published in 1770. "Girouette" in the 1762 *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* has roughly the same meaning as its modern version, and translates to "weathercock" in English, which figuratively signifies "a person or a thing that changes readily and often." *Merriam-Webster*.

et précipité dans tout ce qu'il faisait" (5-6). Later in the story, the narrator underlines the "girouette" aspect of M. de la Prime-heure's nature:

il est inoui que, dans le premier abord, rien ait jamais déplu à mon Oncle; cela entraînait dans son caractère. Il avait été successivement Ecclésiastique, Magistrat, Militaire, toujours disant, dans les commencemens: 'c'est précisément l'état qu'il me fallait,' et toujours s'en ennuyant dans la suite. À la fin il avait pris le parti de n'être rien, et s'en tint à celui-là [...] Quand il fut question de se marier, toutes les filles lui paraissaient charmantes, et de semaine en semaine il faisait un choix dans lequel il persistait huit jours. (64-65)

Tiphaigne puts M. de la Prime-heure's unstable nature on display as the latter switches positions quickly from approving Sanfrein's marriage to his daughter, to opposing it shortly thereafter: "son zèle pour Sanfrein se refroidit en assez peu de temps, et, dès qu'il vint à le considérer avec quelque attention, son estime commença de baisser considérablement" (123). Throughout his *girouetterie*, M. de la Prime-heure takes into consideration his own desires, while disregarding his wife's wishes and his daughter's happiness. Tiphaigne follows the same pattern with his wife. At first, he introduces her as a woman who "avait justement ce qu'il faut de mérite pour s'en croire infiniment" (6). As opposed to her husband who likes everything at first sight, Madame de la Prime-heure approaches everything and everyone with great caution, only to garner sympathy toward them later:

Autant que la nouveauté et tout commencement, plaisaient à Monsieur, autant ils déplaisaient à Madame. Elle avait une sagacité singulière pour saisir, au premier coup d'œil, toutes les imperfections de qui que ce fût ; elle ne voyait que cela, et commençait toujours par ne pouvoir souffrir personne. Dans la suite, venant à discerner peu à peu les bonnes qualités que chacun pouvait avoir, elle perdait aussi peu à peu le souvenir de ses défauts, et finissait par l'estimer, autant qu'elle l'avait déprisé d'abord. (118)

Each main character has moved from the city to the countryside and back, some of them more than once. Thus, the instability of each character causes disorder in their movements, decisions, and the consequences of their actions, very much like the seed of the flatterer caused a commotion in *Amilec*. Everyone seems connected, and nobody seems to be in control of their

actions.⁴⁹² Monsieur and Madame de la Prime-heure argue twice over Sanfrein, only because they have opposite temperaments, or in *Amilec*'s terms, opposite compositions of seeds.⁴⁹³ The narrator is visiting his uncle because some affair, which he wishes not to discuss, forced him to leave Paris and spend some time in the countryside (5). Sanfrein has moved to the village to escape punishment in the city, because he could not resist the temptation to eat at Libertini's house, and broke his fast on a Good Friday (41-42). Dinville and Cécile have to separate because Durieul, Dinville's father, inherits money which causes him to view his family's status as higher than that of the Prime-heures. As a consequence, he refuses to allow his son to marry Cécile (81-82). Dinville and Cécile end up getting married nevertheless, only because Durieul dies from a stroke (161-64). Sanfrein cannot gain his health back because his nature does not allow him to follow doctor's orders and leads him to reject anything that he perceives to be an obligation. Environmental forces in *Sanfrein* act in the same way as the spirits did in *L'Empire des Zaziris* and the genii did in *Amilec*. Humans are toys in the hands of the Zaziris, "l'homme se joue du singe, et les Zaziris s'amuse de l'homme," in the same way that the seeds are in the cabinet of Amilec, lilies and tulips are in Soulangé's gardens, and Sanfrein is in the corruptive house of Libertini.⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, this provides an example of how *Sanfrein*, read without any knowledge of the rest of Tiphaigne's works, could appear as nothing more than a short story written for amusement.

Tiphaigne's ecto-philosophical identity emerges in two distinct ways. First, he mobilizes through *Sanfrein*, the major debates of his century that also preoccupied the *philosophes* and

⁴⁹² Citton sees a model of the modern-day "biopouvoir" 'biopower' struggles in these details in *Sanfrein*, as well as in Tiphaigne's overall work, *Zazirocratie* 275-88.

⁴⁹³ *Sanfrein*, chapters 14 and 19.

⁴⁹⁴ *L'Empire des Zaziris*, 2.

their adversaries such as money, the corrupt manners of the Parisians versus the simplicity of the people in the countryside, religion, marriage, gambling, *le monde des gens de lettres*, and libertinism, as well as the scientific culture regarding plant and seed development. For example, he attacks the parasitical figures in the salons, the Parisians' obsession with gambling, and the pretentiousness of some *gens de lettres*. He also decries prejudices based on social class (for example, Durieul's sudden change of heart about Cécile) and religion (through the figures of the "Grand-Pénitencier" in Paris and the curé in the village).⁴⁹⁵ Second, Tiphaigne weaves a tight connection with the theories that he developed in his earlier *merveilleux* tales and the contemporary society that he describes in *Sanfrein*. Soulangue's experiments on plants remind the reader of *Amilec*'s experiments with human seeds. The parasitical behavior of Sanfrein's entourage, their false flatteries when he returns to *la société* following his brother's death, and the ease with which they corrupt him, echo the disruption that the seed of the flatterer caused to the vortex of seeds in Amilec's cabinet.⁴⁹⁶ Vincent interprets Tiphaigne's use of the *songe philosophique* as the author's warning to his readers not to take the science in his philosophical dreams at face value.⁴⁹⁷ Vincent also reminds us that "le rêve autorise toutes les audaces intellectuelles. Il permet de se protéger des critiques et de la censure."⁴⁹⁸ The absence of supernatural elements in *Sanfrein*, and the story's contemporary and realistic setting do the opposite: Tiphaigne wants *Sanfrein* to be taken seriously. Apparently, he seems to have succeeded, at least in his attempt at realism and credibility, according to some critics. Mancel confirms the verisimilitude of the main character: "c'est un portrait ressemblant dont nous

⁴⁹⁵ *Sanfrein*, 27, 181-85.

⁴⁹⁶ *Amilec*, 102-03. *Sanfrein*, 15-21.

⁴⁹⁷ *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 34-35.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

rencontrons tous les jours l'original et dans lequel, à la rigueur, chacun de nous en s'examinant bien, pourrait reconnaître quelqu'un de ses traits" (31). The *Journal général de France* interprets Sanfrein as a fictitious character formed from a combination of traits that Tiphaigne recognized in real-life acquaintances.⁴⁹⁹ Tiphaigne's contemporary Fréron says that *Sanfrein* represents "le portrait de beaucoup de Lecteurs qui ne s'y reconnaîtront pas."⁵⁰⁰ Following years of developing theories through magical tales with philosophical overtones, he depicts in *Sanfrein* the society that best represents his findings, reinforcing the auctorial coherence by tightening the network of ideas in his works.

4.1.7 Sanfrein's narrator

In an earlier analysis of the two "je"s in *Amilec*, I discussed the distinction between the first-person narrator of the preface "Aux savants" and that of the story. Unlike in *Amilec*, *Sanfrein*'s preface and story leave no doubt that the first-person narrator in both parts represents the same person. In the preface, the narrator informs the reader from the start that he used his idle time during his stay in the countryside to write his "petit Ouvrage" in which he recounts his observations and his involvement with the locals: "J'ai employé quelques momens à jeter sur le papier, ce qui se passoit autour de moi; c'est cette espèce de Journal que je publie aujourd'hui. J'eus quelques entretiens qui peuvent passer pour économiques, moraux, physiques; je rendrai compte de tout cela."⁵⁰¹ The fact that *Sanfrein* is the only text in Tiphaigne's body of works in

⁴⁹⁹ "Affiches, annonces, et avis divers," May 22, 1765, *Journal général de France*, 83.

⁵⁰⁰ *L'Année littéraire*, Tome 4, Lettre 7, (1765), 175.

⁵⁰¹ "Préface," *Sanfrein*, iii. In quoting passages from *Sanfrein*, I will keep the original spelling of the 1765 edition.

which he chooses a realistic milieu, further confirms his intention of approaching verisimilitude. In the preface, the narrator announces neither a philosophical dream, nor a magical voyage. He neither converses with friendly spirits in the story, nor learns from a genie on top of a cloud. Instead, he socializes with his uncle's family and the village people that he meets.

I believe the shift from the two different first person narrators in *Amilec*'s preface and story, to the "je" representing the same person in *Sanfrein*'s preface and story, is directly related to the author's intellectual development. As established earlier, the narrator's despair in the closing sentence of *Amilec* was because he had not spent enough time with Amilec and his genii helpers to quench his thirst for knowledge on humanity and society. By contrast, the closing two sentences of *Sanfrein* display the casual commentary of the narrator-author: "j'oubliais de dire que, Sanfrein avait un fond de physionomie si ordinaire, que ceux qui l'ont connu croient encore le rencontrer à chaque instant. Pour moi, je ne vois presque personne qui ne me fasse penser à lui" (186). In *Sanfrein*, the narrator seems to emanate an air of serenity, and deliberately asserts his views on the actions of the characters. While Tiphaigne was still in the process of honing his theories and experimenting with the method of philosophical dreaming in *Amilec*, twelve years later in *Sanfrein*, he has studied and concretized his findings. The observations made by *Sanfrein*'s "je" on his surroundings, as well as his comments to Soulangue during their conversations, reflect Tiphaigne's developed views, unlike *Amilec*'s "je" who depended on the genie's guidance. *Sanfrein*'s significance in Tiphaigne's corpus of texts materializes in that the story first draws from Tiphaigne's intellectual explorations in his previous magical tales, and then embodies in a realistic setting the salient characteristics of his views on human constitution.

In *Amilec*, *Giphantie*, and most of his other texts, Tiphaigne studies the societies from above, in masses. Part of the ambiguity of his body of works stems from the fact that he

discusses a variety of issues debated in eighteenth-century circles, such as political systems, human systems, scientific advances, and genetic manipulations in plants, using the same tone with which he narrates his fairy tales of lunar voyages and elemental spirits that prick humans to agitate their emotions.⁵⁰² For example, when Voltaire writes about the imaginary voyages of Candide, often traveling from one part of the world to another in the blink of an eye, escaping impossible situations, the reader has no doubt that Voltaire is engaged in this tall tale to refer to an unrelated, but parallel, contemporary, and realistic event. Although Tiphaigne occasionally uses satire, his primary concern remains studying and learning – through the narrators – with the genii and the elemental spirits as his guides. Unlike Candide, his travelers do not go around the world, forming links between the events in each place and the pertinent debates of eighteenth-century France. Tiphaigne's travelers go to one place and observe in detail the structure of that location. Observing, experimenting, and learning, supercede the caricaturization of what is happening back home. In *Sanfrein*, other than eliminating all traces of magical elements, Tiphaigne also territorializes his point of view by focusing on several single-human perspectives instead of analyzing the masses. Then, he populates his story with virtuous people as well as unethical ones. Finally, he reveals with subtle hints that, unlike in the increasingly pessimistic view of humanity from above in *Amilec*, *Giphantie*, or *L'Empire des Zaziris*, human beings in *Sanfrein* manifest the capacity to evolve. Although the enthusiasm for knowledge remains intact throughout Tiphaigne's body of works, in *Sanfrein*, learning by observing moves to the background. Experimentation (Soulange and his plants) and application of what he has learned through magical voyages and philosophical dreams take center stage.

⁵⁰² See Citton, *Zazirocratie*, 12. Citton also mentions how Tiphaigne is often mentioned as the precursor of photography due to his description of a machine's operations in *Giphantie* which closely resemble those of a photographic camera half a century before the invention of photography.

4.1.8 *Girouette Sanfrein*

The 1770 title, *La Girouette, ou Sans Frein, histoire dont le héros fut l'inconséquence mesme*, can be misleading if taken at face value.⁵⁰³ The significance of Sanfrein revolves less around what the character adds to the plot than his function in completing the portrait of the French society that Tiphaigne seeks to depict: “Jamais [Sanfrein] ne fut si fou, que quand il se proposa fermement d’être sage; et jamais il ne fut si sage que quand il se proposa d’être si fou. Il était ainsi fait, et bien des gens lui rassemblent” (18). The ambiguity of what Tiphaigne means by the protagonist of the story being inconsequential requires a closer analysis.

Sanfrein is quick to move on to the pursuit of the next “unavailable” thing as soon as he obtains what he desires: “Les hommes [...] inclinent toujours à ce qui leur est defendu, et s’éloignent naturellement de ce qui leur est prescript: Sanfrein avoit ce défaut supérieurement” (6). During Sanfrein’s journey prior to arriving at the village, as he moves *sans frein* from one pursuit to the next in Paris, Tiphaigne provides the portraits of the various personas that the protagonist assumes. The first chapter features a young Sanfrein who receives his education from a calm and patient “maître.” The teacher recognizes the young student’s unique disposition. Thus, instead of imposing his authority on Sanfrein, he relaxes the youngster’s scholarly duties and chooses to make him “faire par inclination ce qu’il n’eût jamais fait par devoir” (7). Sanfrein consequently shows progress and succeeds in school. Sadly for him, it will remain the only time he ever succeeds in any occupation because nobody will understand him as his school master did, and all future occupations will implicate some degree of obligation. As Sanfrein gets ready

⁵⁰³ See Marx, *Tiphaigne de la Roche*, 91, and Vincent, “Biographie de Charles-François Tiphaigne de La Roche,” *Amilec*, ed. Vincent, 178. Neither writer provides an explanation for the change in the title. Also, in the definition of “héros” in the 1762 edition of *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française* one of the definitions relates to the main character of a literary work.

to enter into *le monde*, his master gives him a crucial piece of advice that Sanfrein will prove incapable of following. He reminds the young man that “[la société] exige encore qu’on se soumette à des règles de décence, de moderation et de sagesse” (8). He emphasizes the importance of these rules by adding that they exist for the common good as well as to protect individuals from excessive self-indulgence due to their penchant for the satisfaction of their desires: “Songez que sortir de ces bornes, c’est manquer à la société [...] c’est s’exposer à jeter de l’amertume sur tout le cours de sa vie” (9). The rest of *Sanfrein* shows that the master’s warning fell on deaf ears. As soon as Sanfrein enters society, the mere presence of rules to follow and forbidden paths constantly tempts him to break the former and pursue the latter.

At first, Sanfrein heeds his master’s warning and becomes an abbot. However, once he earns enough money from church-related activities, his true nature resurfaces:

Dès qu’il fut pourvu de son bénéfice, il fit une réflexion très-sensée, c’est qu’il fallait prendre des plaisirs, pour pouvoir y mettre cette modération et cette décence qu’il se proposait de garder en toute rigueur. “[...] je ne crois pas qu’on puisse être plus affermi que moi dans les principes de la saine Morale. Entrons enfin dans le monde, voyons ce que j’ai à combattre, et essayons nos forces.” (10-11)

This passage also demonstrates how Sanfrein repeatedly justifies why he desires what he does not possess. He first goes to a spectacle which gives him the desire to see a play, which in turn causes him to develop a “goût singulier pour la Comédie” (11). He then begins frequenting an actress who rapidly drains his money, prior to adding gambling and wine to the list of his new habits (12). He wants to keep his “modéré et Presque Philosophe” image despite living luxuriously, which motivates him to hide his true nature by paying attention to his appearance and mannerism, similar to the way in which the Babylonians pay attention to “surfaces” and “masques” in *Giphantie*.⁵⁰⁴ Sanfrein genuinely metamorphoses into what the second chapter’s

⁵⁰⁴ See 4.1.5 for a discussion of Parisians (Babylonians) and their mannerisms (“surfaces”).

title suggests: “*Sanfrein, Libertin*.” The next chapter entitled “*Sanfrein, Dévot*” concentrates on how the *abbé libertin* turns into a religious devotee. His days of *libertinage* reach their end when his older brother dies and Sanfrein inherits the family fortune (15). He initially gives in to the temptation of leading a hedonistic lifestyle: “Je veux vivre à ma guise, et donner un libre cours à mes fantaisies” (17-18). Once the pleasures that he seeks become readily available, he no longer desires them, and his fantasies erode. To explain Sanfrein’s frame of mind, Tiphaigne often uses the strategy of first stating his character’s emotional state, “l’extrême liberté avec laquelle il alloit en jouir, en avoit émoussé tout le piquant,” followed by a satirical comment: “Autrefois Abbé libertin qui s’amusoit de tout; aujourd’hui Laïque sensé qui s’ennuie” (17, 18). The fact that Sanfrein keeps shifting from one disposition to the next like a *girouette* is a recurring theme throughout *Sanfrein* as the protagonist goes from “Abbé” to “libertin,” to “Laïque,” to “Dévot,” to “Protecteur,” and to writer. Finally, he runs away from Libertini’s house, “comme emporté par un tourbillon,” and flees Paris to escape being imprisoned because of his repeated sinful acts.⁵⁰⁵ Sanfrein assumes so many lifestyles and identities in such a short period of time that he even manages to deceive himself. He becomes convinced that the odds are stacked against him and that somehow he is a victim of circumstances: “Il semble que la fortune ne s’occupe qu’à former des obstacles à tous mes desseins” (37); “imprudent Sanfrein! dangereux Senior [Libertini]! monde séducteur et perfide! je le vois bien, les hommes sont pour moi autant de pierres d’achoppement; [...] Je fuirai tout le genre humain” (41).

Through Sanfrein’s different identities and the people who surround him in *le monde*, Tiphaigne paints a panoramic portrait of the individuals and the dynamics that make up Parisian

⁵⁰⁵ Thus the chapters centered on Sanfrein are entitled “Sanfrein, libertin,” “Sanfrein, Dévot,” “Faute de Sanfrein,” “Repentir de Sanfrein,” “Sanfrein, Amoureux,” to name a few.

society. He brings up the importance of the burgeoning press in the eighteenth century, underlines the prolific number of parasitical figures who give advice to Sanfrein when he is wealthy, speaks of *philosophes* and *gens de lettres*, and notes the abundance of gambling, theater, and salons. Thus, although *Sanfrein* tells the life story of its protagonist, it also investigates the forces in society that cause human beings to live in a state of vortex (“tourbillon”) and the behaviors of individuals from different walks of life as they attempt to deal with these forces. Tiphaigne makes use of a cast of characters that typically populate the period. Some examples include Sanfrein’s greedy brother in the military who puts money ahead of family; the morally corrupt Senior Libertini, who willingly teases the devout and fasting Sanfrein on Good Friday by savoring a meal in front of the hungry man; the parish’s hypocritical director who refuses to pardon Sanfrein for having eaten a partridge on Good Friday and sends him to the cardinal (“Le Grand-Pénitencier”) for punishment; and an orator “qui ne disoit rien, et ne finissoit point de discourir” during a sermon.⁵⁰⁶

The focus on the behavior of individuals supports my earlier argument regarding the significance of *Sanfrein*. Its role in Tiphaigne’s corpus of texts consists of displaying the author’s effort to apply his findings resulting from philosophical dreams and magical voyages in his earlier works to an existing society. Thus, he puts together a network of signposts to build coherence between his earlier magical tales and *Sanfrein*. One such example is Tiphaigne’s use of the terms “impétueux/impétuosité” and “tourbillon” through *Sanfrein*, *Amilec*, and *Giphantie*. He uses the expression “emporté par un tourbillon” when describing Sanfrein’s

⁵⁰⁶ *Sanfrein*, 15, 24, 27, 30. “Senior, qui lisait dans l’âme de Sanfrein, prend un perdreau, le coupe précipitamment, en goûte et se récrie sur sa faveur,” 24. The director expresses that he could have pardoned Sanfrein if the latter would have “only” betrayed his best friend or tarnished the most honest man on earth, but that eating a partridge while fasting is unpardonable, 27.

escape from Libertini's house (and Paris) to echo the vortex of seeds in *Amilec*.⁵⁰⁷ "Impétuosité" of the seeds in the "tourbillon" is what caused the seed of the flatterer to float loosely and cause commotion in *Amilec* (103). Tiphaigne often brings up "l'impétuosité" of individuals in *Sanfrein*, and Soulangue explains in great detail why impetuous people are happier in cities (57-63). In *Giphantie*, the narrator speaks of a beautiful tree of Love whose leaves resist being "emportées par le souffle impétueux des aigles."⁵⁰⁸ A powerful "tourbillon" of sand instantly carries *Giphantie*'s narrator from the desert to an island, similar to how Sanfrein "comme emporté par un tourbillon" flees Paris, only to find himself in the village.⁵⁰⁹ More importantly, two out of the three definitions given by the 1762 edition of *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* for the term "tourbillon" display the expressions found in Tiphaigne's texts.⁵¹⁰ The first definition states that a "tourbillon" is a "Vent impétueux, qui va en tournoyant"; and the third definition could easily pass for a reference to *Sanfrein*'s protagonist: "On appelle figurément *Tourbillon* tout ce qui entraîne les hommes. *C'est un homme emporté par le tourbillon des plaisirs.*"

One other reason why the 1770 title can be misleading is that it overlooks the central role that the protagonist plays in manifesting the capacity to evolve intellectually and grasp a better understanding of his own nature. Sanfrein's moment of clarity at the end of the story points to the possibility of self-discovery for any human being and echoes Tiphaigne's intention to champion the human capacity for learning in the work. Even the most inconsequential and hopeless individual like Sanfrein, who always gets carried like a "girouette" by the forces

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 40-41.

⁵⁰⁸ *Giphantie II*, 22-23.

⁵⁰⁹ *Giphantie I*, 8-10.

⁵¹⁰ "Tourbillon," *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 1762.

surrounding him, possesses the ability to self-reflect in light of previous failures and experiences. Close to his death, Sanfrein refrains for the first time from making excuses for his downfall and confesses to the priest that any effort to lead him to a certain disposition is futile.⁵¹¹ While the priest attempts to save him by instructing him how he could repent and maybe recover, Sanfrein insists that any advice would prove useless, since it would only drive him to do the opposite: “Pour ce qui est de promettre, je vous promettrai ce que vous voudrez, et de bon cœur; je serai même intimement persuadé que je tiendrai parole; mais je me connais, il n’en fera rien” (185). Although it is too late for him, Sanfrein has reached a clear understanding of his disposition and no longer fabricates excuses as he constantly did throughout his life. During his conversation with the priest, despite being dangerously close to his death, he seems calmer and more composed than he has ever been in his life.

4.1.9 Philosophe Soulange

One of the most significant characters to emerge out of Tiphaigne’s body of works over the course of his writing is Soulange who embodies the magical knowledge of Amilec and conducts scientific experiments with his plants that yield more concrete results than the genie does with his supernatural method of regenerating humans. While Soulange’s many faces in *Sanfrein* (the sage *philosophe*, botanist, scientist, self-subsistent naturalist, etc.) could easily be the subject of a number of studies, the one that interests me is his role as the figurative *porte-parole* of Tiphaigne’s intellectual development. Soulange is certainly the character with whom Tiphaigne could most easily identify. Like Tiphaigne, Soulange has a clear interest in plants (chapter nine),

⁵¹¹ *Sanfrein*, 181-85. The chapter is entitled “La Confession de Sanfrein.”

in the reproductive system of living organisms (chapter eighteen), and the human constitution (chapters nine and fifteen). The dialogues between Soulangue and the narrator represent the scientific and philosophical components of *Sanfrein*, and not surprisingly, out of the twenty-two chapters in total, the six in which Soulangue appears are the longest ones.⁵¹² Soulangue and the narrator represent more intellectually developed versions of Amilec and the dreaming narrator respectively. Thus, they play a key role not only in reinforcing the coherence in Tiphaigne's body of work, but also in representing the culmination of the author's intellectual development.

Soulangue appears for the first time in chapter nine and he offers henceforth his views on nature, plant reproduction, and human temperament. He also elaborates the effects of the milieu in which each individual lives. Tiphaigne introduces Soulangue as a unique individual: "Si le Lecteur le trouve bon, [...] je lui parlerai d'un homme un peu différent, qui ne l'amusera pas tant mais qui lui plaira davantage."⁵¹³ He is one of M. de la Prime-heure's neighbors with whom the narrator forms a close friendship. They often engage in conversations that the narrator finds intellectually stimulating: "je passai le reste de la journée chez le Philosophe, et ne le quittai que le plus tard que je pus," "je philosophais chez Soulangue" (98, 160). At first, Soulangue's relation with "je" resembles that of the genie with the dreaming "je" in *Amilec*. Soulangue shares his opinions with the narrator on plants and human disposition much as Amilec did with its narrator on human generation. However, Soulangue's discourse differs from that of Amilec with regard to the depth of its analysis. Soulangue appears to have formed cogent interpretations of his observations, whereas in *Amilec*, the deterioration of the human seeds leaves the genie

⁵¹² Chapters 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 21.

⁵¹³ *Sanfrein*, 50. At various points in the text, Tiphaigne, Dinville, M. de la Prime-heure, and Cécile refer to Soulangue as "sage" or someone with "sagesse." Tiphaigne often describes him as "sage" and "philosophe" on multiple occasions.

bewildered. The extent of Soulangue's knowledge of his plants exceeds Amilec's knowledge of his human seeds. In a key passage noted earlier, Amilec expresses his disappointment with his inability to shield the seeds from corruption.⁵¹⁴ Despite their supernatural powers, the genii cannot fully control the elements of their process. By contrast, *Sanfrein's* narrator explicitly marvels at how Soulangue meticulously supervises every step of his plants' growth under various conditions and takes notes on their transformations for future experimentation:

Vous ne pouvez faire un pas sans rencontrer quelque appareil extraordinaire. Depuis la germination jusqu'à la fructification, Soulangue suit toutes les opérations des plantes: il connaît la quantité de nourriture qu'elles prennent; combien il en passe en leur substance; combien il s'en évapore et s'en dissipe. Il les examine dans leur enfance, leur adolescence, leur âge consistant, leur décadence et leur décrépitude. [...] La terre même renferme cent sortes de pièges [*sic*] tendus aux efforts de la végétation. Ici une plante ne peut pomper les sucs de la terre que par des pores qui ne semblaient pas destinés à cette fonction. Là, telle autre ne peut s'élever que par des voies particulières que Soulangue lui a tracées. (86-87)

The earthly and human Soulangue seems to manage his experiments of mixing plants more efficiently than the genie Amilec manages that of mixing seeds to manufacture humans. This is especially remarkable, considering that Amilec has the luxury to oversee the operations with an army of harvesting genii assisting him in a vast complex built above the clouds, while Soulangue experiments alone with flower seeds in his pastoral house "d'une agréable simplicité" that is "ni belle, ni meublée curieusement" (*Amilec* 28, *Sanfrein* 85). Furthermore, in opposition to Amilec who has no other duties that could distract him from his occupation, Soulangue gets interrupted by other people's problems that are irrelevant to his occupation. In one instance, Dinville interrupts the discussion between Soulangue and the narrator because he needs Soulangue's assistance to convince Cécile's parents to consent to their marriage (93-94). In another, M. de la Prime-heure asks for Soulangue's help in convincing Sanfrein to abandon his plans to marry his daughter (165-

⁵¹⁴ *Amilec*, 66. See 4.1.4

66). Both instances result in Soulangue taking time away from his progress and engaging in lengthy dialogues to satisfy their requests. Amilec, for his part, engages in a conversation with the dreaming narrator only because he feels sympathy for him. Soulangue's didactic persona extends beyond his dialogues with the narrator. He seems to cherish informing and assisting others, and thus embodies *l'esprit philosophique* described in the article "Philosophe" of the *Encyclopédie*:

L'esprit philosophique est donc un esprit d'observation et de justesse, qui rapporte tout à ses véritables principes; mais ce n'est pas l'esprit seul que le *philosophe* cultive, il porte plus loin son attention et ses soins. [...] Notre *philosophe* ne se croit pas en exil dans ce monde; il ne croit point être en pays ennemi; il veut jouir en sage économe des biens que la nature lui offre; il veut trouver du plaisir avec les autres: et pour en trouver, il en faut faire: ainsi il cherche à convenir à ceux avec qui le hasard ou son choix le font vivre; et il trouve en même tems ce qui lui convient: c'est un honnête homme qui veut plaire et se rendre utile.

Apart from being a botanist, and having lived extensively in both the city and in the countryside, Soulangue has also developed his own theories on which types of individuals would thrive under certain habitats. One of the issues that he tackles is the comparison between the disposition of an impetuous individual and that of a phlegmatic one (57-59). He draws from his observations in order to describe in detail the characteristics of the two extremes. The pattern of observing and describing is in abundance in *Amilec* and most of Tiphaigne's earlier works. However, Soulangue pushes the boundaries further. He contemplates the issue and forms theories in search of an explanation. For example, when the narrator delves into the question of whether people have more virtue in the countryside than in the city, Soulangue confirms that he has pondered upon the topic: "J'ai plusieurs fois réfléchi sur cet objet, [...] je vous dirai ce que j'en pense" (104). *Sanfrein's* function as the culmination of Tiphaigne's intellectual development in his body of works manifests itself in the air of serenity and confidence that Soulangue exudes, as opposed to the overwhelmed Amilec, who watches in perplexity as human seeds continue to

deteriorate. On the one hand, *Amilec* represents a time of philosophical experimenting and learning through dreams. On the other hand, *Sanfrein* puts to use the data accumulated during the experimental voyages on which Tiphaigne embarked in *Amilec* and in subsequent supernatural tales, and applies that data to a tangible environment.

Finally, the comparison of the relationship between Amilec and the dreaming “je” with that between Soulangue and “je” reveals that the narrator-guide duo in *Sanfrein* represent the more intellectually evolved versions of the same figures in *Amilec*. As the closing lines of *Amilec* suggest, the narrator has affection for the genie Amilec:

Mais quel chagrin succéda à cette joie, quand je me retrouvai seul dans mon cabinet au milieu de tous mes tristes volumes, et privé peut-être pour toujours de la compagnie d’Amilec! Une jeune femme que d’impitoyables Corsaires enlèvent d’entre les bras d’un Époux chéri, n’est pas atteinte d’une plus vive douleur. Amilec, m’écriai-je, savant Génie, généreux Amilec, pourquoi m’abandonnez-vous? (106)

In *Sanfrein*, despite the gratifying moments that the narrator spends with Soulangue,⁵¹⁵ he sees the *philosophe* as no more than an intellectual companion with whom he enjoyed holding stimulating discussions for diversion: “j’ai trouvé de quoi me distraire et m’occuper agréablement” (iii). The past tense in the very first words of the preface, “je viens de passer,” indicates from the beginning that the narrator has already returned from his visit to the countryside. The story’s first sentence adds that the visit only took place because circumstances forced him to reside temporarily in the countryside (5). As much as the narrator enjoys Soulangue’s company, the conversations that he held with Soulangue are only a part of what he casually scribbled on paper: “j’ai employé quelques momens à jeter sur le papier, ce qui se passait autour de moi” (iii). The relationship between him and Soulangue is built on mutual

⁵¹⁵ Tiphaigne affectionately refers to Soulangue as “mon Philosophe” and talks often of how content he feels when he is at Soulangue’s house and in his company, especially as his third visit begins (145, 157-58).

respect, and their curiosity to learn gets rewarded through scientific experimentations and philosophical discussions. The natural beauty surrounding Soulange's house, and the set-up of tools inside the house for Soulange's experimentations, pique the narrator's curiosity as he probes into the old man's mind.⁵¹⁶ Soulange's enthusiasm to learn continues through his experimentations: "il s'occupait agréablement avec la nature qu'il ne cessait point d'interroger" (51). In the relationship between Amilec and the narrator, the latter undoubtedly takes a subordinate role. He follows Amilec everywhere and listens to him, often without asking any questions. Throughout the philosophical dream, the narrator is dependent on Amilec for traveling, learning, and discovering. Thus, it comes as no surprise that he feels lost at the end when he wakes up alone. Unlike the balanced relationship between Soulange and the narrator in *Sanfrein*, the relationship between Amilec and the narrator echoes that of a student and a teacher, or that of a child and a parent, or literally, that of a mortal human being and a genie. Tiphaigne's theories that were in their formative stages in *Amilec* have equally matured in *Sanfrein*. For example, Soulange successfully mixes stamens of flowers from different strawberry plants to discover the advantages that hybrid fruits and vegetation can generate, whereas, Amilec remains in the experimental stages of mixing seeds and worries that his attempts may prove useless, thus not stopping nature from withering away (*Sanfrein* 90, *Amilec* 66). As such, *Sanfrein* codifies in a realistic setting the development of Tiphaigne's intellect since the times of *Amilec*.

⁵¹⁶ Tiphaigne asks a number of questions during their dialogues with regards to plants, nature, and humans in chapters nine, twelve, fifteen, and twenty.

4.1.10 *Sanfrein*, Ecto-Philosophical text

Tiphaigne often accentuates the lack of critical thinking in his characters other than Soulangue in order to reinforce the positive aspects of the latter's *philosophe* identity. He satirically identifies Sanfrein as "presque Philosophe," Durieul as "une espèce de Philosophe," and M. de la Prime-heure as "sans être Philosophe" (13, 78, 129). The narrator's frequent references to Soulangue as the sage *philosophe*, his desire to learn from him, as well as Tiphaigne's description of the old man as a botanist leading a modest life in a simple house in pursuit of new discoveries, confirm the author's interest in the figure of *philosophe*. To draw from a Voltairian phrase, Soulangue literally and figuratively cultivates his garden.⁵¹⁷ He has lived in the city, failed at his attempts to convince others of his views, and returned to the countryside to experiment on the plants in his garden. In fact, Soulangue's discourse specifically refers to "cultivating the field" after he cites a poem by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau in which the poet claims that gods live in the countryside.⁵¹⁸ He vehemently opposes the poet by saying that it is men who live in the countryside and not gods, and criticizes them for their limited thinking in cultivating their fields (157). Along with the *esprit philosophique* that he adopts, Soulangue's discourse also closely parallels the reason-passion dichotomy in the article "Philosophe" in the *Encyclopédie*. As noted previously, the article posits reason as the most essential requirement in the *philosophe*'s disposition and passions as the dominant trait of "others."⁵¹⁹ When prompted by Tiphaigne to clarify the notion

⁵¹⁷ Voltaire finishes *Candide* with the famous phrase "il faut cultiver notre jardin."

⁵¹⁸ *Sanfrein*, 156. The text does not mention Jean-Baptiste Rousseau by name but refers to him as "très-grand Poète," but the excerpt of the poem points to one of Rousseau's odes.

⁵¹⁹ From the article "Philosophe" in the *Encyclopédie*: "La raison est à l'égard du philosophe, ce que la grâce est à l'égard du chrétien. La grâce détermine le chrétien à agir; la raison détermine le philosophe. La raison est à l'égard du philosophe, ce que la grace est à l'égard du chrétien. La grace détermine le chrétien à agir; la raison détermine le

of virtue, Soulange affirms that it is reason that mobilizes men's capacity to perceive the order that will eventually lead to virtue and identifies passion as the detractor of that process:

J'appelle vertueux celui qui n'est pas capable de faire sortir de l'ordre. Dès que les premiers rayons de la raison luisent aux yeux de l'homme, il s'aperçoit l'ordre; il s'y attache; il l'aime; et s'il en sort, ce n'est que la force des passions qui l'entraîne. Où les passions sont moins fréquentes et moins vives, la vertu est donc plus sûre. (109-10)

Sanfrein puts Soulange on a pedestal as a *philosophe*, leaving the protagonist to his self-destruction. The latter shows no signs of maintaining order in his life, hangs on to moderation in an activity only until it transforms into an obligation, and reasons well only as long as restrictions are not imposed on his decision-making process. At first, these signs point to a work that favors the perspectives of the *philosophes*.

Yet, a closer look reveals that Tiphaigne takes ambiguous positions on a few other issues dear to the philosophical discussions of the century. He takes a Rousseauist (Jean-Jacques) approach when he points to nature offering an ever-lasting "sublimité" as a spectacle, and criticizes French society for ignoring nature and pursuing sensual pleasures in the arts (149). Tiphaigne echoes Rousseau again when *Sanfrein* develops a taste for theater as soon as he begins to earn income. Tiphaigne posits theater as the beginning point of a succession of pleasure-related activities that lead to *Sanfrein's* downfall during his time as an abbé (12-13). These passages imply that the pursuit of theater and sensual pleasures does not have any instructional benefits and echo what Rousseau explicitly told d'Alembert in his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les*

philosophe. Les autres hommes sont emportés par leurs passions, sans que les actions qu'ils font soient précédées de la réflexion: ce sont des hommes qui marchent dans les ténèbres; au lieu que le philosophe dans ses passions mêmes, n'agit qu'après la réflexion; il marche la nuit, mais il est précédé d'un flambeau." *Encyclopédie*.

Spectacles: “Quant à l’espèce des spectacles, c’est nécessairement le plaisir qu’ils donnent, et non leur utilité, qui la détermine.”⁵²⁰

Soulange often represents life and people in the city in a pejorative light, compared to the accolades that he accords to the countryside and its inhabitants. Everything about *le monde*, in which Tiphaigne includes spectacles, ecclesiasts, salons, artists, actors, libertines, writers, protectors, and even *philosophes* and *gens de lettres*, reeks of fakeness, selfishness, and arrogance.⁵²¹ As much as *Sanfrein* glorifies the figure of the *philosophe* through Soulange, it appears that the old man is the only *philosophe* in the text. The few other characters in *Sanfrein* that have positive traits do not belong to *le monde*. The schoolmaster astutely recognizes Sanfrein’s nature and educates him accordingly, warning him about the pitfalls of *la société* (7-9). Cécile possesses a natural beauty and shows great magnanimity by helping those in need to the point of being compared to a divinity by the villagers.⁵²² Dinville stays loyal to Cécile and continues to love her through adversity (79-85, 94-98, 158-62). Furthermore, similar to what Fréron says in his *L’Année littéraire* when he reviews *Sanfrein* that, in the closing sentence of the work, Tiphaigne acknowledges the possibility that characters such as Sanfrein are ubiquitous in society.⁵²³ Sanfrein is not a bad person by nature, but his weak disposition makes him vulnerable to being manipulated. *Sanfrein* remains an ecto-*philosophe* text in the sense that its

⁵²⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettres à d’Alembert sur les spectacles*, (Paris: Garnier-Frères, 1889), 123. One of Rousseau’s overall and central arguments in *Lettre* is that theater serves to corrupt human morality. The narrator also reminds Soulange at one point that “La société corrompt les hommes” (111).

⁵²¹ *Sanfrein*’s chapters two, three, and four give the full panoply of all groups of people that populate the eighteenth-century society and present every single one of them in an extremely pejorative frame.

⁵²² *Sanfrein*, 44-50. The villagers name Cécile “Ange tutélaire” ‘guardian spirit’ (49).

⁵²³ *Sanfrein*, 186. Fréron’s quote: “C’est le portrait de beaucoup de Lecteurs qui ne s’y reconnaîtront pas” (qtd. in Marx 91).

author oscillates between criticizing and praising various views from each camp, while manifesting an impressive knowledge of the eighteenth-century's social dynamics.⁵²⁴

Tiphaigne situates his work similar to how he situates himself as a writer in terms of the debate. *Sanfrein* is as much an *ecto-philosophe* text as Tiphaigne is an *ecto-philosophe* writer. It tackles the philosophical debates of the divide, but also provides an example of what Citton notes when he says that, in order to do justice to Tiphaigne's literature, the analysis should avoid reducing it to the limited scope of the divide between the two camps (68). Many topics around which the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* conflict revolves are present in *Sanfrein*, yet contributing to the debate is not Tiphaigne's philosophical concern. In fact, *Sanfrein* qualifies as an *ecto-philosophe* work precisely because its stakes are beyond the tension involving the two opposing visions. They can best be described through a passage in which Soulangue talks in detail about his plant experimentations (88-93). As he concludes his description of the procedures that he uses in mixing different stamens of flowers and plants, he reveals the core purpose of the experiments:

Ces idées et bien d'autres semblables peuvent ne pas réussir. Sauf cent expériences de cette nature, à peine une ou deux vont à leur but: mais vous convenez que c'est beaucoup, et que, par ces sortes de voies, on peut parvenir aux découvertes les plus utiles. Lors même qu'on ne réussit pas, on apprend au moins que la nature se comporte autrement, et c'est quelque chose. Enfin on s'amuse agréablement et philosophiquement, et c'est je crois ce qu'on peut désirer de mieux. (92-93)

In Soulangue's world, it is not so much the end result that counts, but rather the desire to learn. Even if success comes at a slow rate, the effort yields its rewards. Soulangue's discourse also alludes to Tiphaigne's earlier texts in that not every philosophical dream or utopian voyage may ultimately be productive, but each experience teaches us *quelque chose*. The systems that he creates during his intellectual explorations (and subsequently defends against more traditional

⁵²⁴ Not one of the major societal trends of the period escapes Tiphaigne's pen. He brings up the increasing efficiency and influence of the press (14), the public's increasing role in judging literary works (19), and the increasingly frivolous behavior of *la société* (chapters two and three).

systems) demonstrate how far the author is willing to go in order to learn and make new discoveries. *Sanfrein* gathers the sum of Tiphaigne's acquired knowledge – the sum of the *quelque(s) chose(s)* – from previous works, brings it from above, down to the ground, and integrates it into the various facets of society.⁵²⁵ It extols humanity's desire to learn and to strive for discoveries, just as it celebrates Tiphaigne's own pursuit of knowledge.

4.2 SAINT-FOIX: ENGAGING BOTH CAMPS

Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix was one of the most prolific writers of the mid-eighteenth century. Although he grappled with the elements of the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* debate, it is impossible to call him one or the other as he criticized and praised, at the same time, ideas that were dear to both camps throughout his writings. According to *Biographie universelle*, that a few passages in *Lettres turques* (1730) led some readers to believe that he shared the *philosophes'* principles was an error in judgment on their part because a man of Saint-Foix's character "ne pouvait appartenir à aucune secte. Il disait franchement sa pensée sur les personnes et les choses; mais il était beaucoup plus circonspect en écrivant."⁵²⁶ What little is known of his life reveals a writer who, despite his well-established name within eighteenth-century literary circles, neither cared for inclusion in the period's influential groups nor sought the approval of

⁵²⁵ This echoes Tzvetan Todorov's point in his *L'Esprit des Lumières* regarding the diminishing distance between action and its goal. See also Introduction. Before the Enlightenment, humans take action with the goal of reaching heaven in the afterlife. During the eighteenth century, the goal of the action no longer points to the skies, but lands to the ground and points to an individual's immediate happiness. In this sense, Tiphaigne appears very much as a writer of his century considering the shift from Amilec and the elemental spirits in the skies to the *philosophe* Soulangue who cultivates his garden and engages with his fellow neighbors. Tzvetan Todorov, *L'Esprit des Lumières*, (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 89.

⁵²⁶ *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, rédigée par une société des gens de lettres et de savants, (Paris: G. Michaud 1825), 574.

key individuals. The “Éloge historique de M. de Saint-Foix” in the beginning of his *Œuvres complètes* (1778) claims that although his literary talent earned him entry into the Académie française, his unwillingness to conform to socially acceptable norms of behavior that such positions required resulted in the Académie’s refusal to elect him.⁵²⁷ According to the *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, Saint-Foix never wanted to be a part of the Académie française because he did not care to engage in formalities and visits.⁵²⁸ Saint-Foix often defers the judgment of his works to the public rather than to critics.⁵²⁹ During a literary career that lasted thirty-six years, he published over twenty plays, a number of short poems, as well as epistolary novels and historical works.

Research shows that Saint Foix’s works were widely read by his contemporaries.⁵³⁰ Major eighteenth-century journals such as Grimm and Diderot’s *Correspondance littéraire* and both of Fréron’s journals, *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps* and *L’Année littéraire*, as well as the *Journal de Trévoux* and the *Journal encyclopédique*, often comment on his works. His name frequently appears in the correspondences and memoirs of the eighteenth century’s leading chroniclers such as René-Louis de Voyer de Paulmy d’Argenson, Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis, Charles Collé, and Louis Petit de Bachaumont. His plays *L’Oracle* (1740) and *Les Grâces* (1744) enjoyed considerable success. Françoise de Graffigny modeled her play *Phaza* (1753) after

⁵²⁷ “Éloge historique de M. de Saint-Foix Saint-Foix,” *Œuvres complètes de M. de Saint-Foix*, Tome 1, (Paris: J.-E. Dufour et P. Roux, 1778), xviii. When quoting directly from this book in further citations, I used “et” instead of the classic “&” found in the citations.

⁵²⁸ *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, ed. M. W. Duckett, Tome 48, (Paris: Belin-Mandar, 1838), 90.

⁵²⁹ In several passages in the *Essais historiques sur Paris*, he confronts his critics and says that the public will ultimately judge the merit of his essays. One example is in his response to a review of his work that appeared in a brochure (235; tome 5).

⁵³⁰ There are over 40 entries on Saint-Foix’s works in just four of the period’s established journals: *Journal de Trévoux*, *Journal encyclopédique*, and Fréron’s periodicals *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps* and *L’Année littéraire*.

L'Oracle that she “voit et apprécie beaucoup en mars 1740.”⁵³¹ Theaters staged *L'Oracle* over two hundred times throughout the eighteenth century.⁵³² Several sources show that the public's reception of the play, along with that of *Les Grâces*, was very positive.⁵³³ Yet, Saint-Foix and his works fell into complete obscurity after the eighteenth century. There are no detailed biographies of Saint-Foix, no book-length studies focusing on his works, and the last collection of his complete works was published two years after his death.⁵³⁴ He was, however, a renowned writer in his time and contributed to eighteenth-century literature by publishing successful works in several genres and by staging a number of plays that theatergoers embraced.

This section explores Saint-Foix's identity as an *ecto-philosophe* in two distinct, but closely related aspects. It first delves into his interactions, or lack thereof, with the leading

⁵³¹ Charlotte Simonin, “Phaza, la ‘fille-garçon de Madame de Graffigny,” *Le mâle en France, 1715-1830: représentations de la masculinité*, eds. Katherine Astbury and Plagnol-Dieval, Marie-Emmanuelle, eds. (New York: P. Lang, 2004), 53-54.

⁵³² Alexandre Joannidès, *La Comédie-française de 1680 à 1920. Tableau des représentations par auteurs et par pièces*, (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1921), 93. The table shows that *L'Oracle* was represented 220 times between 1740 and 1792. It is worth noting that this is twice more than the combined number of times *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* and *La Gageure imprévue*, the two most successful plays of Sedaine, were staged in the eighteenth century.

⁵³³ In his *Correspondance littéraire de Karlsruhe* (Paris-Genève: Slatkine-Champion, 1995) Claude Pougin de Saint-Aubin indicates that the *parterre* demanded to see the *Les Grâces* and watched the play with “grand plaisir” (160-61). Jean-François de la Harpe's correspondence also notes that both *L'Oracle* and *Les Grâces* “se recommandent par la délicatesse des idées, et par des tableaux riants et voluptueux.” *Œuvres de la Harpe, de l'Académie française* (Paris: Verdrière, 1820), 9. In an article announcing the death of the author, *Correspondance littéraire* of Grimm and Diderot also comments favorably on the two plays, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, Tome 3, (Paris: F. Buisson, 1812), 256. Gustave Lanson also affirms that *L'Oracle* received many “applaudissements” in his *Nivelle de la Chaussée et la comédie larmoyante*, (Paris: Hachette, 1903), 112. Mademoiselle Dumesnil affirms in her *Mémoires* that Saint-Foix's works helped actors and actresses make “de si fortes recettes.” *Mémoires de Mlle Dumesnil, en réponse aux Mémoires d'Hippolyte Clairon*, (Paris: L. Tenré, 1823), 111. According to the *Œuvres de M. et Mme Favart*, three plays of Saint-Foix were applauded at Comédie française: Charles-Simon and Justine Favart, *Œuvres de M. et Mme Favart. Leur vie, par Lord Pilgrim. Mme Favart et le maréchal de Saxe, par Léon Gozlan*, (Paris: E. Didier, 1853), 212. Voltaire says that *L'Oracle* made Saint-Foix famous and calls it a “charmante comédie” in his correspondence, *Œuvres de Voltaire, avec préfaces, avertissements, notes, etc.*, ed. M. Beuchot, Tome 59, (Paris: Lefèvre, 1832), 200.

⁵³⁴ Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix, *Œuvres complètes de M. de Saint-Foix*, Tomes 1-6, (Paris: J.-E. Dufour et P. Roux, 1778). All further quotes from Saint-Foix's works will come from this edition unless otherwise noted.

figures and establishments in the literary circles, in order to demonstrate Saint-Foix's indifference to building influential relationships to advance his career. Then, focusing on his play *L'Oracle* (1740), it examines the author's pursuit to set his literary identity apart from other *gens de lettres* with a new theatrical genre.

4.2.1 A Singular *homme de lettres*

Saint-Foix's interactions with others and his writings ultimately amplify the difficulty of placing him within the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* divide, because they portray him as an outcast in the world of *gens de lettres*. Eighteenth-century memoirs and correspondences are filled with anecdotes on sensational stories about Saint-Foix's combative personality and impulsive behavior. "Éloge historique" in the *Œuvres complètes* describes him as a "bouillant et fougueux" man whose temperament was marked by "l'âcreté et la violence" (ix, xi). The announcement of his death in the *Correspondance littéraire* characterizes him as "le mortel le plus sec et le plus bourru qu'il fût possible de rencontrer" and dedicates more than three of its four pages to describing his personality while only briefly mentioning his works (256-59). Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, whose mother, Madame Ducrest de Saint-Aubin, would occasionally welcome Saint-Foix into their home, remembered him as a person whose manners did not fit the profile of an author capable of writing a "jolie comédie" such as *L'Oracle* or *Les Grâces*: "sa tournure et ses manières contrastaient étrangement avec la grâce de ces agréables productions; il avait un ton brusque et grossier, un visage affreux et la physionomie la plus rude

et la plus sinistre.”⁵³⁵ In *Le Chevalier Dorat et les poètes légers au XVIII^e siècle*, Desnoiresterres refers to Saint-Foix as a “terrible” man.⁵³⁶ Catherine Rosalie Gérard Duthé (1748-1830), who knew Saint-Foix personally, paints a striking portrait of the writer:

Homme de lettres, homme du monde, maniant également bien la plume et l’épée, M. de Sainte-Foix⁵³⁷ était depuis longtemps fameux par ses succès au théâtre et par les bizarreries de son caractère. On le savait porté à quereller pour un oui ou un non, et qu’il ne se bornait pas à ce moyen de défense, ayant dans son esprit mordant des ressources non moins redoutables; le chantre des *Grâces* était un ours mal léché, grondant toujours, inquiet, tracassier au possible, et avec lequel on ne gagnait rien à se fâcher.⁵³⁸

Duthé’s description specifically refers to Saint-Foix as an *homme de lettres* and *du monde*. Yet, the excessive references to the author’s quarrels reveal a unique literary figure who seemingly garnered literary accolades solely through the quality of his writings, and not thanks to his social skills. In opposition to Sedaine who formed alliances to help his literary career, Saint-Foix’s refusal to mind his manners socially indicates his indifference to earning the favors of a certain group or circle. In fact, Saint-Foix’s literary career and reputation remarkably grows even as he disregards standards of sociability and comportment that shaped the figure of the *homme de lettres* during his times.

According to Brown, inclusion into the category of the *gens de lettres* depended on proper “acculturation, as displayed through comportment and self-presentation.”⁵³⁹ He further adds that “those seeking acceptance in this community had to demonstrate personal worthiness

⁵³⁵ Stéphanie-Félicité Du Crest, comtesse de Genlis, *Mémoires inédits de Madame la comtesse de Genlis, sur le dix-huitième siècle et la Révolution française, depuis 1756 jusqu’à nos jours*, Tome 1, (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825), 142.

⁵³⁶ Gustave Desnoiresterres, *Le Chevalier Dorat et les poètes légers au XVIII^e siècle*, (Paris: Perrin, 1887), 162.

⁵³⁷ The name “Sainte-Foix,” also used by Charles-Simon and Justine Favart in their *Œuvres*, was one of the variants to the spelling of Saint-Foix’s name in the eighteenth century.

⁵³⁸ Catherine Rosalie Gérard Duthé. *Souvenirs de Mlle Duthé de l’Opéra (1748-1830)*, ed. Paul Ginisty, (Paris: Louis-Michaud, 1909), 239. This was an abridged version of the *Galanteries d’une demoiselle du monde; ou, Souvenirs de Mlle. Duthé* (1833) by the Baron de Lamothe-Lagon.

⁵³⁹ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Introduction, p.9.

for inclusion [...] by conforming to established norms of comportment in social encounters” (10-11). However, Saint-Foix’s interactions constantly highlight his rigid, often contentious, disposition with *le monde*. The *Biographie universelle* mentions his quarrels with others, his “humeur insociable,” and “la rudesse de ses manières” (575). The *Dictionnaire de la conversation* speaks of his rift with Père Griffet over the identity of the Masked Prisoner, as well as his tendency to engage in duels with those who opposed or insulted him.⁵⁴⁰ Fréron mentions how Saint-Foix threatened the actor Jean-Baptiste de La Noue with “cent coups de bâton” if he refused to play the role of Prométhée in his play *Les Hommes*.⁵⁴¹ In an encounter often cited in other works of the period, Saint-Foix insulted an officer of the King at the famous Café Procope in Paris over his meal and the two ended up drawing their swords, an incident that left Saint-Foix with an injured arm (*Biographie universelle* 575). According to Desnoiresterres, even a writer such as Claude-Joseph Dorat, who had favorable relations with poets and other literary figures of his time, could not include Saint-Foix among his circle of friends (162). Saint-Foix did not show restraint when targeting individuals that were held in high esteem in society or occupied an important position in government. In his most notable non-theatrical work,⁵⁴² the *Essais*

⁵⁴⁰ For more on the Masked Prisoner, see Alexandre Dumas, *L’Homme au Masque de Fer, récit tiré du vicomte de Bragelonne*, ed. E. A. Robertson, (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), 89-90. Saint-Foix’s duel with the chevalier de Saint-Louis over a dinner menu is mentioned in the *Correspondance littéraire* (256). “Éloge historique” also mentions how some of his quarrels ended up with both parties pulling resorting to their swords (x).

⁵⁴¹ Balcou, *Le dossier Fréron*, 73.

⁵⁴² Of the eighteen articles on Saint-Foix in the *Journal encyclopédique*, eight are solely about the *Essais historiques*. There are also articles dedicated to the work on every other major journal of the period. *Correspondance littéraire*, *L’Année littéraire*, *Journal de Trévoux* have a number of articles on the *Essais historiques*, and it is often used as a point of reference when various memoirs and correspondences bring up Saint-Foix’s name. La Harpe calls it “l’ouvrage le plus lu de M. de Saint-Foix” (6). Voltaire calls it “un livre très utile et très agréable sur plusieurs points curieux de notre histoire de France [...] d’un homme d’esprit qui a vu et pensé” (200). Voltaire calls it “un livre très utile et très agréable sur plusieurs points curieux de notre histoire de France, *Œuvres de Voltaire*, Tome 59, (Paris: Lefèvre, 1832), 200. The nineteenth-century literary editor Damase Jouaust referred to it as the most important work of Saint-Foix, “Avertissement,” Germain-François Poullain de Saint-Foix, *Lettres turques*. Ed. D. Jouaust, (Paris: Jouaust, 1869), x.

historiques sur Paris (1754-77), he claimed that Nicolas de la Mare, the chief of police of Châtelet under Louis XIV, used conjectures as facts in his *Le Traité de la Police* (9-12; tome 3). As will be discussed later in detail, he questioned the accuracy of Voltaire's account of how Louis XIV solicited the Italian architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini (195-97; tome 3). He challenged Montesquieu and affirmed that a passage in *L'Esprit des lois*, relating to the power that the Ottoman Emperor held over his people, was inaccurate (263; tome 4). If the contents of a work did not agree with his interpretation of the events, Saint-Foix showed no remorse in aggressively denouncing it, regardless of the author's identity. Criticizing the elite writers of the era signals Saint-Foix's lack of conformity to the literary arena's unwritten guidelines, but also fits his *ectophilosophe* identity in that he remained on the outer edges of literary circles whose members adapted to what was deemed acceptable among *gens de lettres*.

Brown extensively discusses what is expected from writers if they desired to be considered among the elite in the literary institutions that defined social and professional success: "to elites at court, to office holders in royal cultural institutions, and to established writers, new writers remained uncivil and dangerous – and should be denied publication – until they achieved legitimacy by demonstrating their adherence to established norms and deference to established hierarchies in literary institutions."⁵⁴³ It is clear from Saint-Foix's comportment that he did not follow these guidelines. According to the "Éloge historique," during his retirement years, the author would only welcome to his house a select group of peers: "ils se prétaient à son caractère, cédaient à ses emportemens, ne le contrariaient jamais, et souffraient son humeur en faveur de son esprit et de ses bonnes qualités, qui balançaient quelquefois ses défauts" (xviii-xix). In a number of the prefaces to his plays in his *Œuvres complètes*, Saint-Foix replied with

⁵⁴³ Brown, *A Field of Honor*, Introduction, p.18.

acerbity to his critics.⁵⁴⁴ “Acculturation” and respect for the “established norms of comportment in social encounters,” concepts that, as Brown has shown, were central to inclusion among the elite circle of belletrists, did not concern Saint-Foix.

It is worth noting that Saint-Foix is not an *ecto-philosophe* simply because he earned a reputation for being irascible or striking back at his critics. In a period where two major camps opposed each other, there were indeed a number of other writers who went after their peers or selected authority figures. For example, André Morellet, whom Voltaire aptly nicknamed “Mords-les” (Bite them), was also known for his sharp attacks on other writers. However, Morellet used his literary skills to align himself with the *philosophes*. His most famous work was a pamphlet entitled *La Vision de Charles Palissot* (1760) that the inspector of the library d’Héméry called “une satire affreuse contre Palissot” in his journal.⁵⁴⁵ According to Alan Charles Kors, it resulted in Morellet’s incarceration because the pamphlet offended one of Palissot’s protectors, the princesse de Robecq.⁵⁴⁶ Kors affirms that this event “infuriated the *philosophes*, and made a hero out of him” in their eyes.⁵⁴⁷ Morellet, in his memoirs, speaks fondly of the increasing sympathy he received from Turgot, Trudaine de Montigny, Diderot, and D’Alembert during his imprisonment, and how he felt consoled when he noticed that the doors to “beaucoup de maisons, celles du baron d’Holbach, d’Helvétius, de M^{me} de Boufflers, de M^{me}

⁵⁴⁴ For an example of an open attack see the preface of *Le Double déguisement* (243); and for an example of a riposte to critics see the preface of *La Colonie* in which Saint-Foix, for those who found certain aspects of the play “licencieux,” puts on display the letter from the Minister confirming that nothing was offensive in the play (376-81). Both plays are in Tome 1 of Saint-Foix’s *Œuvres complètes*.

⁵⁴⁵ Cited in Charles Palissot, *La Comédie des “Philosophes” et autres textes*, ed. Olivier Ferret, (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2002), 107.

⁵⁴⁶ Alan Charles Kors, *D’Holbach’s Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 26-27.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

Necker, etc., s'ouvrirent aisément pour moi.”⁵⁴⁸ Saint-Foix is an *ecto-philosophe* precisely because, unlike other contentious writers such as Morellet and Palissot, he neither showed interest in garnering support from one camp or the other, nor did he exclusively target one or the other.

Saint-Foix's noble background and early military career seem to have exacerbated (or facilitated) his reputation as a temperamental individual who did not respond amicably to criticism.⁵⁴⁹ The *Dictionnaire de la conversation* affirms how his nature intimidated critics and journalists: “La réputation qu'il s'était faite d'un spadassin déterminé, retenait les journalistes. Aucun n'osait se permettre de porter un jugement défavorable sur des ouvrages dont l'auteur avait menacé plusieurs fois de couper les oreilles au premier qui l'attaquerait; et l'on était convaincu qu'il ne s'en tiendrait pas à la menace” (574). Saint-Foix's hostile nature and his tendency to overreact to criticism reached beyond journalists and critics. According to Bachaumont, the anti-*philosophe* playwright Palissot feared Saint-Foix's “justice militaire.”⁵⁵⁰ Marie-Françoise Dumesnil points to how the comedians who tended to mistreat most playwrights had to manage Saint-Foix “plus qu'aucun autre à cause de ses fureurs” (111). Saint-Foix did not hesitate to engage authorities in order to defend his writings against what he perceived as unjust accusations. The first example took place when he denounced the *Journal chrétien* to magistrates

⁵⁴⁸ André Morellet, *Mémoires inédits de l'abbé Morellet, de l'Académie française, sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, Tome 1, (Paris: Ladvocat, 1822), 123. Morellet also refers to the *philosophes* as “mes amis” in many passages of his memoirs and invites on their behalf the Italian writer Cesare Beccaria “à venir passer quelque temps avec des philosophes dignes de l'entendre” (166).

⁵⁴⁹ There are no long and detailed biographies published on Saint-Foix. However several of the epoch's publications such as *Biographie universelle* (573), *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture* (89-90), as well as the “Éloge historique de M. de Saint-Foix” in *Œuvres complètes* provide brief biographies of the writer. Majority of them note that his family came from the nobility and that he spent many years during his youth in the military.

⁵⁵⁰ Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets de Bachaumont, de 1762 à 1787*, Tome 1, (Paris: Brissot-Thivars, 1830), 267.

and took its editors to criminal court over their claim that he tarnished religion in his *Essais historiques*.⁵⁵¹ Voltaire criticized the *Journal chrétien* for accusing every writer of being an atheist and implied that the journal misjudged its victim in this instance, when it “unfortunately” attacked Saint-Foix.⁵⁵² Unlike other writers, the latter did not hesitate to take the religious journal to court for wrongful accusation, to the delight of Voltaire: “Le Sr. Saint-Foi, qui n’entend pas raillerie, a résolu de leur donner sur les oreilles; mais ayant considéré qu’il était plus chrétien de leur faire un procès criminel, il les a assignés au Châtelet.”⁵⁵³ Saint-Foix ultimately settled for a retraction from the journal.⁵⁵⁴ His reaction to Étienne Teisserenc’s *Géographie parisienne* (1754) was equally motivated by a desire to protect his work.⁵⁵⁵ Having seen a large portion of his *Essais historiques* plagiarized “mot pour mot, phrases pour phrases” by Teisserenc, Saint-Foix wrote a letter to Antoine de Sartine, Lieutenant General of the Police of Paris, asking that Teisserenc receive swift punishment for his “theft.”⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵¹ There is a detailed account of the correspondence regarding the court process in Saint-Foix’s *Œuvres complètes*, Tome 5, 422-458. In fact, Several times throughout the *Essais historiques*, Saint-Foix shows his disdain for religious orders and how they used religion to their advantage in order to gain hold on people. He begins with an attack on the Druids during Cesar’s reign of Gaul, with regards to how they used their religious affiliation to gain hold over women in the Senate (3-4; tome 3). Later, he criticizes the religious for their negative commentary regarding the Greek language and College Royal under Henri IV (92; tome 3); he next targets the Curés de Picardy for extorting money from newly married couples (117; tome 3); the monks are not spared either: “Les Moines, dans ces siècles reculés, montraient une délicatesse extrême sur tout ce qui concerne leurs intérêts” (365; tome 3); he again blames the priests’ hypocrisy for reinforcing people’s superstitions about snakes having the abilities of genii (299; tome 4).

⁵⁵² Voltaire, *Œuvres de Voltaire, avec préfaces, avertissements, notes, etc.*, ed. M. Beuchot, Tome 14, (Paris: Lefèvre, 1833), 187, note b.

⁵⁵³ “Le Factum du Sr. Saint-Foi,” *Recueil des facéties parisiennes*, 148.

⁵⁵⁴ *Œuvres complètes*, Tome 5, 456.

⁵⁵⁵ The full title of Teisserenc’s work is *Géographie parisienne en forme de dictionnaire contenant l’explication de Paris ou de son plan mis en carte géographique du royaume de France pour servir d’introduction à la géographie générale, méthode nouvelle*, (Paris: Vve Robinot, 1754).

⁵⁵⁶ *Œuvres complètes*, Tome 5, 457-58. Saint-Foix uses the French term “vol.”

Voltaire and Saint-Foix's views on each other's works support the latter's ectophilosophical profile. In a letter written on December 23, 1760, to the Marquis Albergati Capacelli, Voltaire fulminates against the unjust attacks of the religious on the *gens de lettres*.⁵⁵⁷

In it, he comments on the affair between the *Journal chrétien* and Saint-Foix:

Je ne sais quels écrivains subalternes se sont avisés, dit-on, de faire un *Journal chrétien* [...] M. de Saint-Foix, gentilhomme breton, célèbre par la charmante comédie de *L'Oracle*, avait fait un livre très utile et très agréable sur plusieurs points curieux de notre histoire de France. La plupart de ces petits dictionnaires ne sont que des extraits des savants ouvrages du siècle passé: celui-ci est d'un homme d'esprit qui a vu et pensé. Mais qu'est-il arrivé? sa comédie de *L'Oracle* et ses recherches sur l'histoire étaient si bonnes, que messieurs du *Journal chrétien* l'ont accusé de n'être pas chrétien. Il est vrai qu'ils ont essuyé un procès criminel, et qu'ils ont été obligés de demander pardon; mais rien ne rebute ces honnêtes gens. (200)

As this passage shows, the trial against the religious journal was not the only reason for Voltaire's admiration of Saint-Foix. Voltaire also calls the author a thoughtful gentleman and refers to *L'Oracle* as a charming play. As a historian, he deems Saint-Foix's *Essais historiques* to be a useful and pleasant work. On the one hand, the fact that Voltaire sided with any writer who antagonized one of the leading religious journals of the period comes as no surprise. In fact, he further supported Saint-Foix by inserting the thirty-five-page-long "Le Factum de Sr. Saint-Foi" (a variant of the name) that brought the process to light in his *Recueil des facéties parisiennes*.⁵⁵⁸ On the other hand, it is unusual that Voltaire would praise a work, the *Essais historiques* in this case, in which the author had directly criticized one of his own works, attacked the Royal Court, and repeatedly condemned "la philosophie" for corrupting society. These passages merit a more detailed description.

⁵⁵⁷ *Œuvres de Voltaire*, Tome 59, (Paris: Lefèvre, 1832), 193-211.

⁵⁵⁸ *Recueil des facéties parisiennes, pour les six premiers mois de l'an 1760*, (Genève: Cramer, 1760), 145-180.

Saint-Foix contradicts Voltaire's account *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751) of how the king solicited the Italian architect Bernini for the Louvre (193-97; tome 3). It is not a fleeting criticism and Saint-Foix explicitly addresses Voltaire's work. After recounting the events leading up to Bernini's arrival, Saint-Foix questions the accuracy of Voltaire's version. Then, he cites passages from Voltaire's work that oppose his own version and meticulously points to the inconsistencies in *Le siècle de Louis XIV* (196-97). He finally defers judgment to the reader on the merits of his version. In another section entitled "Pensées diverses," he portrays the Royal Court as a stage where false appearances and ulterior motives determine behaviors:

c'est le vrai théâtre où se jouent les grands rôles, dont le monde ordinaire n'est que le Spectateur ou le Copiste [...] c'est-là qu'on s'introduit par vanité, qu'on se craint par ambition, qu'on n'aime, qu'on ne hait que par intérêt [...] là qu'on se montre tout ordinairement tout autre que l'on n'est, qu'on dissimule si bien ce qu'on pense, qu'on affecte si habilement ce qu'on ne sent pas. (431-32; tome 3)

It should be noted that Saint-Foix's description of the Court mirrors one of his earlier plays, *La Cabale* (1749). In the play's preface, the author says that he originally wrote it in three acts and that one of the three possible titles was *La Cabale à la Cour*. However, after having read it to friends, he noticed that they began associating the characters in the play with the existing members of the Royal Court, so he reduced it to one act to avoid such interpretation (449; tome 1). Some of the play's main characters are called le Philosophe, l'Homme de Cour, l'Homme de lettres, le Financier, la Médisante, and le Jeune Magistrat. All characters are portrayed in a negative light and possess the traits that Saint-Foix indicates in the above passage in *Essais historiques*. Most hover around the main character named La Cabale, a powerful mistress, and solicit her protection while secretly despising her. According to Collé in his *Journal et mémoires*,

the troupe at the Comédie française refused to perform the play.⁵⁵⁹ Collé also claims that Voltaire's friends played a major role in the troupe's refusal (44; tome 1). Considering that one of Voltaire's most influential protectors was Madame de Pompadour, Collé's claim is likely to be true.⁵⁶⁰ Voltaire probably wanted to prevent the pejorative representation of Madame de Pompadour as La Cabale and of his friends at the court who sought her protection.

Later in the "Pensées diverses," Saint-Foix blames the new "Philosophie" for the increasing number of people who commit suicide:

Le Suicide est un de ces présents funestes que nous devons à la nouvelle Philosophie. C'est parmi nos Sages, parmi les bienfaiteurs de l'humanité, que cette doctrine a trouvé ses apologistes; c'est à la lecture de leurs écrits, que l'imagination du malheureux s'enflamme, que son désespoir s'aigrit, et que la rage s'empare de son cœur. Philosophie, non moins impuissante que cruelle, c'est donc ainsi que tu te consoles! (432-33; tome 3)

He then denounces the new wave of writers who earn their success through their social skills rather than the quality of their works and mocks the superficiality of protectors and protégés, as well as their vanity (433-34; tome 3). Finally, Saint-Foix connects the "philosophie" of his contemporaries to the deterioration of French society and national pride:

J'ai vu le Français publier lui-même ses disgrâces et n'en plus rougir, pleurer la perte de ses richesses, se consoler de celle de ses flottes ; et, ce qui est peut-être le dernier période du mal, forcer sa raison à justifier, par des sophismes, l'indifférence qu'il a témoignée pour son Pays. [...] J'ai vu les lumières des connoisseurs refroidir la chaleur du zèle; l'esprit analyser les loix, parce que le cœur avait cessé d'admirer le Gouvernement. J'ai vu enfin les mœurs anéanties et remplacées par des plans de morale; et lorsque la Patrie demandait des secours, je n'ai entendu que des voix qui lui offraient des systèmes. Alors, je me suis écrié: O mes Concitoyens! les préjugés de vos ancêtres valaient mieux que votre Philosophie. (445; tome 3)

⁵⁵⁹ Charles Collé, *Journal et mémoires de Charles Collé sur les hommes de lettres les ouvrages dramatiques et les événements les plus mémorables du règne de Louis XV: 1748-1772*, tomes 1-2, ed. Honoré Bonhomme, (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1868), 44; tome 1.

⁵⁶⁰ *La Cabale* was first represented at the Comédie italienne on January 11, 1749.

There is no evidence of any friendship or correspondence between Voltaire and Saint-Foix. In fact, Saint-Foix was a well-known friend of the anti-*philosophe* Fréron, Voltaire's archenemy. It is striking that Voltaire, the leading *philosophe* figure of the eighteenth century, would praise Saint-Foix and his *Essais historiques*, a work that questions the accuracy of *Le siècle de Louis XIV* and attacks mid-eighteenth century "Philosophie." Voltaire's support for Saint-Foix seemed to originate strictly in his admiration for some of Saint-Foix's works and his anti-clerical stance. It is worth noting that Voltaire wrote the above-mentioned letter to Capacelli in 1760, the year during which the tension between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* culminated with the staging of Palissot's anti-*philosophe* play *Les Philosophes* and Voltaire's riposte *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise* (in which Voltaire attacks Fréron, no less).⁵⁶¹ At the time, Saint-Foix's works usually received favorable reviews in Fréron's journals, while Voltaire's allies at the *Correspondance littéraire* generally saw them in a negative light. Voltaire's approach to Saint-Foix and his works demonstrates the latter's ambiguous literary identity among the *gens de lettres* in that the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* seemed to neither embrace nor reject him. Voltaire admired and supported Saint-Foix's dislike of the religious, found him to be a worthy writer with *esprit*, yet he also intervened behind closed doors when he deemed one of Saint-Foix's plays dangerous to the well-being of his protectors and friends. Nonetheless, while Fréron may be Saint-Foix's friend, the likelihood of an alliance between Saint-Foix and the anti-*philosophes* seemed improbable due to Saint-Foix's strong anti-clerical views, which were also on display in his play *Le Derviche* (1755).

Le Derviche's plot consists of three Muslims named Osmin, Achmet, and Sélim who are stranded on an island after a shipwreck. The island is inhabited by six young girls and an older

⁵⁶¹ See chapter two.

woman named Fatime, who also escaped a shipwreck years earlier. Throughout the play, Osmin plots one devious scheme after another to get rid of the other two men and have the six girls to himself. At the end of the play, he notices the robe of an old dervish who properly raised the girls but died many years earlier. Realizing that his schemes are not working, he concocts a plan in which he adopts the role of the new dervish sent from the sky – “la compagnie que le ciel leur envoie” – to protect and look after the girls (260; tome 2). He announces to everyone that the “Prophète” ordered him to be his successor on the island and sent him the robe. Then he assures the six naïve girls that if they had marital problems, he would always be there to console them. Achmet and Sélim believe Osman’s lies, but his ulterior motive does not escape Fatime, who utters the following words at the end of the play: “Les pauvres dupes, qui ne pensent pas qu’un homme ne se fait ordinairement Derviche, et ne renonce à avoir des femmes à lui, que parce qu’il compte sur celles des autres!” (268; tome 2). According to Collé, Saint-Foix wrote the play to get back at the religious Order of the Carmes Déchaux which wrote three defamatory letters about him.⁵⁶² Collé says that they were upset about a passage of the *Essais historiques* in which Saint-Foix portrayed them as greedy religious mendicants who had amassed a fortune, yet still kept going from house to house, asking for more money. In response to their letters, Saint-Foix wrote *Le Derviche* to portray the Carmes Déchaux with the three Muslim hypocrites in the play. Collé notes that Saint-Foix’s idea to mock the Order’s monks did not please the royal censor Crébillon.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶² Charles Collé, *Journal et mémoires de Charles Collé sur les hommes de lettres les ouvrages dramatiques et les événements les plus mémorables du règne de Louis XV: 1748-1772*, Tome 1, Ed. Honoré Bonhomme, (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1868), 32-33.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

Saint-Foix not only attacked the *philosophes* and religious institutions, but also other members of the literary community and academies. In the *Essais historiques* for example, he castigated the Academy of Dijon for awarding the prize to Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* in 1750 and questioned its legitimacy: "Et croirait-on que cette Académie a cependant toujours continué ses séances?" (220; tome 4). Saint-Foix's unstable social interactions, coupled with the ambiguous nature of his writings, essentially made him a risky ally for either the *philosophes* or their enemies to have on their side. In plays such as *L'Isle sauvage* (1743) and *Le Double déguisement* (1747), he seemed to take an anti-*philosophe* position on certain issues, yet in other plays such as *Le Silphe* (1743) and *Le Financier* (1761) he favored the *philosophes'* views.⁵⁶⁴ With *Le Derviche* and the *Essais historiques*, he angered the religious authorities. Yet, Saint-Foix also had friends from a variety of circles. For example, he was close friends with the Duc de Choiseul, whom the *philosophes* liked, as well as with the anti-*philosophe* Fréron. He also frequented the circles of actresses Mlle Clairon and Mlle Doligny, and regularly visited the retired actress Mlle Dangeville in her house, as did many of his contemporaries.⁵⁶⁵ Mlle Dumesnil refers to Saint-Foix as "l'Ajax des gens de lettres" in her memoirs.⁵⁶⁶ This shows that Saint-Foix, like other ecto-*philosophes*, did not completely alienate himself from the literary milieu, but rather remained on its outer edges. There is no known correspondence between Saint-

⁵⁶⁴ In *L'isle sauvage*, through the character of Béatrix, Saint-Foix degrades the approach that praises the arts, spectacles, and sociability. Béatrix is praising them based on a lie that she used to deceive her daughters (155). In *Le Double déguisement*, through the character of Damis, he attacks the *romans'* ability to corrupt naïve and innocent hearts (254). In *Le Silphe*, through the dialogue between the Marquis and Frontin, he criticizes blind obedience to God and religion (84-85). Finally, *Le Financier* is an attempt at a *drame bourgeois* at a time when the genre was popular in Parisian stages, few years after Diderot invented it, with a merchant named Alcimon who manifests virtue much like M. Vanderk of *Le Philosophe sans le savoir* and other merchants in other *drame bourgeois*.

⁵⁶⁵ *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, 90. Dumesnil also confirms the friendship of Fréron and Saint-Foix, *Mémoires de Mlle Dumesnil*, 365. Fréron often gave favorable reviews of Saint-Foix's works in his journals.

⁵⁶⁶ Dumesnil, *Mémoires de Mlle Dumesnil*, 111.

Foix and any prominent *philosophe* or anti-*philosophe* figures, and no references in any historical sources about Saint-Foix regularly frequenting salons that exclusively hosted members of one camp or the other. As an ecto-*philosophe*, his position remained ambivalent and fluctuated depending on the specific work, while tackling the issues that are dear to both sides in his writings.

4.2.2 L'Oracle

L'Oracle is a one act-play that stages a fairy tale.⁵⁶⁷ It is an experiment with a new style of stage performance, represented for the first time at the Comédie française on March 22, 1740. The play helped Saint-Foix introduce the fairy tale as a new theatrical genre.⁵⁶⁸ Even the *Correspondance littéraire*, which regularly gave unfavorable reviews of Saint-Foix's plays, had to recognize the play's originality on more than one occasion.⁵⁶⁹ The plot consists of an oracle who threatens to curse the son of a fairy. The only way for the son, Alcindor, to avoid the curse is to make a princess fall in love with him while pretending to be deaf, mute, and unemotional. The fairy kidnaps a young girl named Lucinde early in her childhood, raises her in a chateau isolated from all other human beings, plans to trick her into falling in love with her son, and thus lift the curse. As Lucinde grows up, the fairy introduces her to Alcindor, who pretends to be a machine that looks like a human being designed to perform certain human functions. Alcindor, for his part, falls immediately in love with the beautiful Lucinde and struggles to hide his feelings. The fairy

⁵⁶⁷ *Œuvres complètes*, Tome 1, 1-30.

⁵⁶⁸ "Saint-Foix se flattait d'être le créateur d'un genre nouveau," *Biographie universelle*, 574. "Sainte-Foix peut être considéré comme le créateur de ce genre," *Dictionnaire de la conversation*, 90.

⁵⁶⁹ June 1755, Tome 3, 41-42; August 1761, Tome 4, 444, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1878).

reminds him that, in order to eliminate the oracle's threat, he must continue his act until Lucinde falls in love with him despite believing that he is a machine. Eventually, the fairy and Alcindor succeed and Lucinde falls in love with Alcindor, who follows her every command. Finally, Alcindor also declares his love for Lucinde, and the oracle's threat of the curse never materializes.

There are several moments in the play where elements of philosophical and antiphilosophical discourses can be found. In the first scene, when the fairy explains her plan to Alcindor and instructs him to remain unemotional throughout his time with Lucinde, an optimistic Alcindor claims that she will love him because "on peut tromper la raison mais jamais le sentiment; son cœur recevra de la Nature des avis qu'elle goûtera, sans les comprendre, et qu'elle suivra par instinct, comme l'Abeille va cueillir le parfum des fleurs" (7). As noted in chapter two, pitting reason against sentiments, or love, was an integral component of the anti-*philosophes'* attempts to denigrate the *philosophes*. They demonized the *philosophes'* admiration of *raison* while, the *philosophes* believed that reason is a powerful tool for counteracting archaic prejudices (Masseau 60). One scene later, Lucinde, despite her naïve and sentimental nature, uses her reason to detect a lie that the fairy has been telling her throughout her life. She notices two birds communicating with each other, which contradicts the fairy's claim that she is surrounded by machine-like beings who simply simulate the actions of living things (7-9). Thus, the passage shows how reason can prove useful to uncover deceptions even for a character like Lucinde, who seems to rely on her emotional side. Alcindor had indeed underestimated Lucinde's reason a scene earlier when he predicts that her love would easily trump it. Later in the same scene, when the fairy tells Lucinde that men are brutes who fight wars, Lucinde's first reaction is to resent their lack of reason: "Cela est horrible! Oh, ce sont des machines; il n'y a

point de raison à tout ce carnage-là” (12). Two scenes later, Lucinde admits to the fairy that love is indeed clouding her reason and causing her to fall in love with Alcindor, whom she calls “Charmant” at this point. The prospect of being left alone with Alcindor and having her passions cloud her judgment intimidates her: “En vérité, Madame, je raisonnerais fort mal” (16). At the end of the play, in perhaps the most crucial passage relating to the *raison-sentiment* debate, a frustrated Lucinde no longer wants to hear the fairy’s explanations. She is angry with her because the fairy refuses to grant Lucinde her wish and does not use her powers to make Charmant human. Lucinde furiously criticizes the fairy’s lack of sympathy and reprimands her *philosophie*:

J’y vois, Madame, que vous êtes très-savante; que vous voudriez que je devinsse une Philosophe comme vous, pour avoir toujours quelqu’un avec qui raisonner; et que vous ne jugez pas à propos d’animer Charmant, parce que vous croyez que si nous pouvions nous entretenir ensemble, nous ne serions occupés que du plaisir de nous voir, de nous aimer, et que nous nous soucierions fort peu de nous rendre dignes de vos sublimes entretiens. Eh bien! Madame, une juste colère me saisit. Je vous déclare que je suis une ignorante; que je veux toujours l’être; que j’ai la science en horreur, et que je vais, à l’instant, briser et mettre en pieces tous ces instruments de Philosophie, qui me paraissent des meubles très-ridicules dans mon appartement. (19-20)

Not only has Lucinde’s love for Alcindor clearly trumped her reason, it has also led her to reject the life-long philosophical education provided by the fairy. Lucinde remains angry until the very end of the play. Alcindor, unable to hold himself together any longer after seeing Lucinde’s outbursts at the fairy and her declarations of love for him, lets his feelings show. He declares his undying love for her, thus revealing his true nature to Lucinde (26-27). Finally, the threat of the Oracle’s curse is removed and the two lovers are united.

L’Oracle reflects one of the main traits of an *ecto-philosophe* text in that it oscillates between *philosophe* and *anti-philosophe* positions while grappling with aspects that are centrally pertinent to the dichotomy. Sentimental love triumphs over reason, and as a result, the two lovers

unite. At the same time, it is the fairy's calculated strategy based on reason that ultimately succeeds in lifting the curse. So does *L'Oracle* champion *raison* just as the article "Philosophe" does in the *Encyclopédie* ("Le philosophe est donc un honnête homme qui agit en tout par raison")? Or does the play undermine it by concluding with a happy ending via the emotional outbursts of the two lovers? In the latter case, it would echo the anti-*philosophes'* criticism of reason. In his *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, McMahon shows how the anti-*philosophes* opposed reason to sentiments, using Rousseau's discourse:

Anti-*philosophes* borrowed from him extensively, citing Rousseau's passages against their common enemies; sharing his dissatisfaction with the corruption of the age; and echoing his belief that sentiment, emotion, and feeling were wellsprings of faith. Like Pascal, Rousseau argued convincingly that the heart had reasons that reason knows not, that when left to themselves our rational faculties left us lifeless and cold, uncertain and unsure. This was a powerful weapon in an 'age of reason,' and opponents of the *philosophes* drew on it repeatedly to attack the pretensions of those who would live by thought alone. (35)

Whose approach is justified in the play? Is it that of the fairy or of Lucinde and Alcindor? In the passages from the first scenes analyzed above, the answers to these questions appear to be just as ambiguous as determining Saint-Foix's position in the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* conflict. The point is that Saint-Foix's text does not necessarily remain neutral. It goes back and forth across the divide, flirting with the two opposing discourses. True to an ecto-*philosophe* text, Saint-Foix's play remains fully immersed in the issues dear to both camps, but it travels along the divide's *boundaries* and never settles on a position. *L'Oracle* pushes the boundaries of the dichotomy, encouraging the reader to reevaluate the tendency to reject or favor a text based on predetermined assumptions, and thereby tackling the divide through the agency of a previously unseen genre.

Although *L'Oracle* received many accolades, its success did not prove enough for Saint-Foix's new genre to survive in the long term. Fréron, the anti-*philosophe* journalist who usually

wrote favorable reviews of his friend's works stood out as the only major literary critic who supported Saint-Foix's venture into staging a fairy tale: "Saint-Foix, père du charmant *Oracle*, du *Sylphe*, des *Graces*, et d'un nouveau genre de Comédie, qui est bien plus dans la nature que le genre larmoyant."⁵⁷⁰ In his correspondence, Voltaire calls the play a "charmante comédie" (200). The *Correspondance littéraire*, which was generally sympathetic to the *philosophes'* cause, admitted to the success of *L'Oracle* and *Les Graces*, but lambasted the genre of theatrical *merveilleux* in a three-page article published in June of 1755: "De tous les genres dont les modernes ont enrichi la littérature, le plus mauvais est sans difficulté la féerie."⁵⁷¹ The article claims that the Orientals, namely the Arabs, have distracted the French with genii, fairies, and imaginary tales, and that the French have rapidly become obsessed with them. The fact that a few French writers began to experiment with it, only reinforced the obsession. What the author of the review finds surprising is the public's enthusiastic reception of the new genre, but he adds that its obsession with the fairy tales will eventually fade away (41). However, the author finds it surprising that the genre has spread to theater and chastises its supporters for betraying the French public: "Un mauvais genre ne peut donc y avoir du succès sans porter des coups sensibles au bon, et sans perdre le goût, en accoutumant le public à souffrir et à admirer successivement ce qui ne mérite pas le suffrage d'un peuple éclairé et lettré" (41). Saint-Foix is then blamed in the article for extending the livelihood of the genre on the Parisian stages. The author ties *L'Oracle's* success in the eyes of the public to the performance of Mlle Gaussin, one of the play's actresses:

Le premier qui ait eu ce tort avec la nation, de mettre une féerie sur la scène de la Comédie française, est M. de Saint-Foix. *L'Oracle*, qui est de cet auteur, eut un grand succès. La nouveauté, toujours sûre de plaire en ce pays-ci, et le jeu de Mlle Gaussin

⁵⁷⁰ Élie Fréron, *Opuscules de M. F****, (Amsterdam: Arkstée et Merkus, 1753), 79.

⁵⁷¹ *Correspondance littéraire*, (ed. Garnier Frères, 1878), 40 The full review is on pages 40-43..

furent sans doute les grands resorts d’une impression si forte. Ce succès a été plus funeste au goût qu’on ne pense, et c’est aujourd’hui que nous en éprouvons les inconvénients. (42)

La Harpe, another writer sympathetic to the *philosophe* camp, admits to the “délicatesse des idées” in both *L’Oracle* and *Les Graces*, but also affirms that the genre is “très-inférieur, non-seulement au comique de caractère, mais aux moindres petites pièces où il y a de la gaieté et de l’intrigue.”⁵⁷² He further argues that Saint-Foix’s plays are not *comédies* and that they should have another title: “ce sont de petits tableaux de féerie ou de mythologie, qui, sur la scène, peuvent plaire aux yeux, mais qui n’ont rien de dramatique, et surtout rien de comique” (6).

Curiously, Saint-Foix may have preemptively answered La Harpe’s criticism in the prologue to one of his plays, *Deucalion et Pirrha* (1741), which had been staged more than three decades earlier than La Harpe’s comments.⁵⁷³ The prologue consists of a debate between a marquise and a chevalier on the merits of the play.⁵⁷⁴ The marquise criticizes the play for having only two actors, which she considers insufficient for staging brilliant portraits and “idées plaisantes, agréables, et piquantes” (37). Countering the marquise, the chevalier responds that with two people, the performance efficiently conveys the intimacy of the scene to the theatergoers: “La Comédie doit être une image de la vie ordinaire” (37). La Harpe criticized Saint-Foix’s fairy genre, to which *Deucalion et Pirrha* also belongs, for lacking comical and dramatic qualities. Saint-Foix was perhaps less concerned with producing comedy or drama than

⁵⁷² *Œuvres de la Harpe, de l’Académie française* (Paris: Verdrière, 1820), 6.

⁵⁷³ La Harpe’s letter, noted above, in which he comments about the genre’s “inferiority,” does not indicate a date. However, the volume contains letters from 1774 to 1789 (5), and the letter is in the very first few pages of the volume. Considering that the letter mentioning Voltaire’s death follows several pages later (20), it is safe to assume that he wrote the comment sometime between 1774 and 1778, probably closer to 1774.

⁵⁷⁴ *Œuvres complètes*, Tome 1, 35-39.

with offering portraits of ordinary life through his new genre, in the same way that the chevalier was defending *Deucalion et Pirrha* for aiming to accomplish precisely that.

According to Fréron's letter to d'Hémery in 1753, Saint-Foix did have a more direct response for another belletrist, the poet Robbé de Beauveset, who dared to refer to the fairy genre on stage as "childish fairies" in a conversation with the author: "Saint-Foix donna l'autre jour des coups de pied dans les jambes à Robbé sur le théâtre de la Comédie, parce que Robbé dans sa Satyre a dit 'enfantines féeries.'"⁵⁷⁵ Saint-Foix distanced himself from critics, either by responding in the prefaces of his works or by resorting to more severe methods of retort such as contacting authorities, pursuing lawsuits, or as in the case above and others noted earlier, personal assaults and duels. As an *ecto-philosophe*, he was not interested in the polemics of the divide. His way of responding remained the same whether the critic sympathized with the cause of the *philosophes* or that of their adversaries, and it mattered little to him that the critic had ties to either camp.⁵⁷⁶

4.3 WOMEN ECTO-PHILOSOPHES

In the middle of the eighteenth century, women who pursued a literary career faced daunting challenges. Joan B. Landes, in the opening lines of her book *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, summarized the dilemma that they faced: "How difficult it is to uncouple women from domestic life. How much more difficult, once uncoupled, to imagine a

⁵⁷⁵ Balcou, *Le Dossier Fréron*, 66.

⁵⁷⁶ For example, Beauveset, whom Saint-Foix kicked in the leg for mocking the fairy genre, was a close friend of Fréron who published the leading anti-*philosophe* journal.

world in which women's proper place is the public sphere."⁵⁷⁷ Rousseau, for example, in the dedication to the Republic of Geneva in his second discourse, called women "cette précieuse moitié de la république qui fait le bonheur de l'autre," citing in particular the role they played in maintaining domestic peace: "Heureux quand votre chaste pouvoir, exercé seulement dans l'union conjugale, ne se fait sentir que pour la gloire de l'État et le Bonheur public!"⁵⁷⁸ The marquise de Merteuil, the renowned protagonist of Choderlos de Laclos in his *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), was much more blunt on the condition of women in the eighteenth century, when she described her own youth in the following way: "Entrée dans le monde dans le temps où, fille encore, j'étais vouée par état au silence et à l'inaction."⁵⁷⁹ During the middle of the eighteenth century, a period when men clearly dominated the literary arena, the conventional roles allotted to women were yet another boundary to overcome if they chose to become authors. In other words, female *ecto-philosophes* faced not only the challenges of establishing a literary career without adhering to the *philosophes* or the *anti-philosophes*, but also had to deal with the general limitations imposed on women by eighteenth-century society.

It is for these reasons that, in my research, it has been difficult to find women writers who can easily be categorized as *ecto-philosophes*. There were not many who wrote in multiple genres and who were well-read by their contemporaries, while not showing any clear adherence to the ideas of one camp or the other. For example, *salonnières* often sided with the *philosophes* who frequented their salons. Their close association with them undoubtedly influenced their writings. To my knowledge, there were no salons that hosted a balanced mix of *philosophes* and

⁵⁷⁷ Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1.

⁵⁷⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1973), 287.

⁵⁷⁹ Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 214.

anti-*philosophes*. Most *salonnières*, such as the marquise du Deffand, Madame Geoffrin, and Madame Helvétius, exclusively hosted the *philosophes* and assisted them in propagating their ideas. A rare case to the contrary was Madame de Graffigny, who, as noted in chapter three, sided with Fréron in his conflict with the *philosophes*. In any case, in my research, I did not uncover any *salonnières* who remained ambiguous in relation to the conflict. Other women writers such as Fagnan mentioned earlier, were not widely read and quickly fell into oblivion because they wrote in a single genre. So, were there no female authors who could be classified as *ecto-philosophes* during the height of the divide between the two camps? It was only after extensive research that I came across the names of two women who began their literary career in the 1745-1765 period, yet who consciously avoided joining one side or the other despite addressing issues in their works that were pertinent to the divide: Marie-Geneviève-Charlotte Thiroux d'Arconville and Madeleine d'Arsant de Puisieux.

Thiroux d'Arconville had fallen into obscurity until the recent publication of a collection of essays compiled under the direction of Patrice Bret and Brigitte Van Tiggelen entitled *Madame d'Arconville. Une femme de lettres et de sciences au siècle des Lumières* (2011). Born in 1720 and daughter of M. Darlus, a *fermier-général*, she married Louis-Lazare Thiroux d'Arconville at the age of fourteen, a counsel at the Parliament in Paris.⁵⁸⁰ According to *Biographie universelle*, scarred from an early age by smallpox, she dedicated the rest of her life to science, literature, and her family.⁵⁸¹ Bret notes that she did continue to frequent *la société*

⁵⁸⁰ For more on Madame d'Arconville's biography see *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne, rédigée par une société des gens de lettres et de savants*, Ed. G. Michaud, (Paris, 1825), 428-30. See also the collection of essays *Madame d'Arconville. Une femme de lettres et de sciences au siècle des Lumières*. ed. Patrice Bret and Brigitte Van Tiggelen, (Paris: Hermann, 2011), 21-33, 147-49.

⁵⁸¹ *Biographie universelle*, 429. Élisabeth Bardez gives a similar version of *Biographie universelle* in her article "Madame d'Arconville et les sciences. Raison ou résonance?" in *Madame d'Arconville*, 38. In contrast, Marie-Laure Girou-Swidorski expresses her doubts about the idea of the smallpox causing Thiroux d'Arconville to turn to

however by hosting gatherings and balls at her house.⁵⁸² As was the case with Tiphaigne and Saint-Foix, Thiroux d'Arconville wrote many different kinds of works in various literary and scientific domains. She began her literary career in the mid-1750s with translations, later wrote treatises, historical and scientific essays, poetry, biographies, plays, and novels throughout the next three decades. Like the other *ecto-philosophes* mentioned earlier, her works were widely read and often reviewed by the leading journals of the eighteenth century, including Fréron's *L'Année littéraire* and Grimm and Diderot's *Correspondance littéraire*, before falling into oblivion in the following centuries. It is only in recent years that scholars such as Elisabeth Badinter, Julie Hayes, Patrice Bret, and Adeline Gargam have begun to examine Thiroux d'Arconville's writings and determine her place within eighteenth-century French letters.⁵⁸³

Thiroux d'Arconville published anonymously, resulting in the erroneous attribution of many of her works to other writers.⁵⁸⁴ According to Hayes, Thiroux d'Arconville's writings deliberately reinforce this anonymity through the use of ambivalent pronouns. By masking her identity, Thiroux d'Arconville sought to disengage her texts from the era's preconceived notions

literature and science in her article "La présidente d'Arconville, une femme des Lumières?" in the same collection of essays *Madame d'Arconville*, 23.

⁵⁸² "La face cachée des Lumières: à la découverte de Madame d'Arconville," *Madame d'Arconville*, 13.

⁵⁸³ Elisabeth Badinter wrote the preface to the first book published that is entirely dedicated to Thiroux d'Arconville: *Madame d'Arconville. Une femme de lettres et de sciences au siècle des Lumières*, ed. Bret and Van Tiggelen. It is a collaboration of essays and anecdotes on the author, written by ten female scholars. Also, Julie Hayes focuses on Thiroux d'Arconville's writings in her articles "Friendship and the Female Moralist," (*Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*. v39, 2010), 171-189, and, "From anonymity to autobiography: MME d'Arconville's self-fashionings," (*The Romanic Review*. v3.n3-4, May 2012), 381-97. Adeline Gargam contributed with her article "La Chair, l'os, et les éléments. 'L'heureuse fécondité' de la traduction scientifique au XVIIIe siècle: le cas de Marie-Geneviève Thiroux d'Arconville," to the collection of works entitled *Les Rôles transfrontaliers joués par les femmes dans la construction de l'Europe*, ed. Guyonne Leduc, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), 59-75.

⁵⁸⁴ *Biographie universelle*, 428. This is also confirmed by the scholars who collaborated for *Madame d'Arconville*. it is worth noting that there is a book containing her essays *De l'amitié* and *Des passions* that attributed these works to Denis Diderot, published in 1770: *Les œuvres morales de Mr. Diderot : contenant son traité De l'amitié et celui Des passions*, (Francfort: 1770).

about her gender.⁵⁸⁵ For example, as Karen Reichard has argued, Thiroux d'Arconville “abhorred [the] limitations that women faced in the realm of science and when she defiantly chose to continue her intellectual endeavors, she recognized that she did so from an essentially marginal position.”⁵⁸⁶ Thus, by publishing her works anonymously, “she positioned herself in the textual margins rather than trying to occupy center stage” (44). In any case, this tendency to publish while concealing her identity and the lack of any considerable amount of correspondence point to a similarity that can be found in most *ecto-philosophes*. For the most part, they showed little concern for the approval of their texts by the influential literary circles and seemed indifferent to building a reputation among the elite *gens de lettres*.⁵⁸⁷ In the preface to *Madame d'Arconville. Une femme de lettres et de sciences au siècle des Lumières*, Élisabeth Badinter affirms that “Madame d'Arconville n'a jamais revendiqué le moindre désir de gloire.”⁵⁸⁸ In her article “From Anonymity to Autobiography,” Hayes further argues that, for Thiroux d'Arconville, her “true public is composed of those who nourished both her heart and her head, the dedicatees of her published works and those who remain of her family and friends in her later years, the ‘indulgents lecteurs’ of her late essays” (395). In her analysis of Thiroux d'Arconville’s scientific writings, Élisabeth Bardez gives a similar opinion: “Les ouvrages qu’elle publie sont spécialisés. Elle n’écrit pas pour les femmes, ni même pour le grand public.”⁵⁸⁹ As Girou-

⁵⁸⁵ Julie Hayes, *Translation, Subjectivity, and Culture*, 153-54; see also her article “Friendship and the Female Moralist,” 180.

⁵⁸⁶ Karen Reichard, *Stolen Glances: Women and Spectatorship in Eighteenth-Century French Literature*, (Diss. Tulane University, 2001), 40.

⁵⁸⁷ In her article “From Anonymity to Autobiography,” Hayes further argues that for Thiroux d'Arconville, the “true public is composed of those who nourished both her heart and her head, the dedicatees of her published works and those who remain of her family and friends in her later years, the ‘indulgents lecteurs’ of her late essays,” 395.

⁵⁸⁸ “Préface: Lever le voile de l’anonymat,” *Madame d'Arconville*, 8.

⁵⁸⁹ “Madame d'Arconville et les sciences. Raison ou résonance?” *Madame d'Arconville*, 50.

Swiderski notes, “le besoin d’apprendre et de comprendre et la volonté d’être utile” motivate Thiroux d’Arconville to write.⁵⁹⁰ As was the case for Tiphaigne de La Roche, another scientific *ecto-philosophe*, Thiroux d’Arconville’s desire for knowledge trumped the concern for a large readership. Ultimately, public recognition was not what motivated Thiroux d’Arconville, but simply the desire to write, “à tout prix,” in anonymity and at the cost of being marginalized: “Son besoin d’écrire doit se satisfaire de la clandestinité et d’une écriture dans les marges.”⁵⁹¹

Because Thiroux d’Arconville published her works anonymously, critics reviewed them strictly on their own merits and not in relation to her background. Badinter underlines Thiroux d’Arconville’s limited formal education, which was a common characteristic of the life of women in the eighteenth century.⁵⁹² According to Hayes, “even given the lax standards of the time for girls’ education, Geneviève’s lack of formal education is striking: her father allowed her to be taught letters only in response to her request for instruction around age eight.”⁵⁹³ As noted in Sedaine’s case in chapter two, writers’ backgrounds and education often came into question while they were trying to build their reputation and garner respect for their writings. Thiroux d’Arconville preemptively nullified any possibility of literary judgment based on her identity through the use of anonymity. In fact, literary critics remained oblivious to her identity and they frequently assumed the author of her works was a man. For example, in the conclusion of his

⁵⁹⁰ “La présidente d’Arconville, une femme des Lumières?” *Madame d’Arconville*, 32.

⁵⁹¹ Girou-Swiderksi, Marie-Laure. “Écrire à tout prix: La Présidente Thiroux d’Arconville, polygraphe (1720–1805),” collection *Les écrits féminins non-fictionnels du Moyen Âge au XVIIIe siècle: Un inventaire raisonné*, Université d’Ottawa.

⁵⁹² “Préface: Lever le voile de l’anonymat,” *Madame d’Arconville*. 7-9. In the same book, Girou-Swiderski also tackles the issue of Thiroux d’Arconville’s lack of education in her article “La présidente d’Arconville, une femme des Lumières?” 21-22.

⁵⁹³ “From Anonymity to Autobiography,” 387.

rather favorable review of *Des passions*, Fréron uses the pronoun “he” when referring to the author: “Si l’auteur n’a pas traité son sujet d’une manière neuve, il l’a fait avec intérêt.”⁵⁹⁴ In his review of *L’Amour éprouvé par la mort* (1763), he uses the ambivalent pronoun “on” to refer to the author: “On nous dit dans un Avertissement très court que [...] ces Lettres sont historiques.”⁵⁹⁵ The *Journal encyclopédique* makes the same assumption in its praise of *De l’amitié* (1761), as does the *Correspondance littéraire* in its severely unfavorable review of *Des passions* and *De l’amitié* by referring to her as “un bavard” and “un marchand.”⁵⁹⁶ While the *Correspondance littéraire* acknowledged the anonymity of the author, it does refer to the author as “cet homme” (99). Although Hayes claims that “her identity was surely known in some circles” and that reviewers made a conscious effort to maintain the secrecy, the *Correspondance littéraire*’s consistently negative reviews of her works appear to indicate otherwise.⁵⁹⁷ According to Girou-Swidorski, Malesherbes, Voltaire, and Diderot figured among her circle of friends.⁵⁹⁸ It seems unlikely that the *Correspondance littéraire*, which favored the writings of the *philosophes*’ close acquaintances, would write uniformly unfavorable reviews of her works, at times in scathing language. It is more likely that they did not know the author’s identity. Thiroux d’Arconville reinforced the ambivalence surrounding her identity and gender by using the first

⁵⁹⁴ Élie Fréron, *L’Année littéraire*, Tome 6, (Amsterdam: Panckoucke, 1764), 253.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., May 1763, Lettre XII, 269.

⁵⁹⁶ *Journal encyclopédique*. Tome VIII. 15 Nov 1761, (Amsterdam, 1761), 4, 7. Friedrich Melchior Grimm and Denis Diderot, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique*, Tome 6, (Paris: Garnier-Frères, 1878), 98-99.

⁵⁹⁷ “Friendship and the Female Moralist,” 180.

⁵⁹⁸ “Écrire à tout prix,” *Les écrits féminins*. A number of sources also mention her close friendships with Turgot and Malesherbes, both friends of the Encyclopedists. Her strong ties to well-known scientists such as Pierre-Joseph Macquer are explained in detail in Bardez’ article *Madame d’Arconville*, 39-40.

person singular as a masculine pronoun in some prefaces and by hinting at links between her texts through titles or paratexts.⁵⁹⁹

If Thiroux d'Arconville's main purpose in effacing her identity was to put her works on center stage as Reichard argues, and to avoid the possible influence of her identity and gender in the evaluation of her writings, the *Journal encyclopédique*'s entry on *De l'amitié* in November 1761 points to her strategy's success (3-14). The eleven-page review is almost entirely an outline of the book's contents, interrupted at times by short paragraphs summarizing the purpose of a specific chapter or by handful of laudatory comments at others. The critic refers to Thiroux d'Arconville with the masculine pronoun several times. At one point in the review, he calls her "notre nouveau Docteur en amitié" and adds that even though the author gives a bleak view of humans' inability to form long-lasting friendships, "il apporte des raison trop fortes, et des exemples trop frappants, pour que nous entreprenions de les contredire" (10). Because the critic did not know the author's identity, he limited his review to the contents and merits of the work. In a negative review of Thiroux d'Arconville's *Pensées et réflexions morales* (1760), published in the *Correspondance littéraire*, the critic attacks solely the text and never refers to the author:

Petit volume de deux cents pages. C'est une autre rapsodie de réflexions triviales, qui n'a pas trouvé de lecteurs. Voici une de ces réflexions: 'Le sentiment ne s'exige ni ne se demande; il se mérite.' Je dis que si cette façon d'écrire pouvait jamais devenir à la mode, la langue serait bientôt barbare. Heureusement tout ce barbouillage reste dans l'obscurité, ne trouve tout au plus des lecteurs que dans les îles sous le vent. (234)

⁵⁹⁹ See Hayes, "From Anonymity to Autobiography," 381-82; also Hayes, "Friendship and the Female Moralist," 180-81. Girou-Swidorski affirms that she practiced the use of masculine adjectives, "je me suis cru obligé," throughout her writings in *Madame d'Arconville*, 26. See the full title of *Des passions* which is *Des passions par l'Auteur du Traité de l'amitié* which was the title used when published originally in 1764, three years after *De l'amitié* was published. In Tome 2 of *Mélanges de littérature, de morale et de physique*, (Amsterdam: 1775), that is composed of both *De l'amitié* and *Des passions*, the addendum above is eliminated since both works are in the same volume, thus indicating the same authorship.

In the 1764 review of *De l'amitié* mentioned above, the *Correspondance littéraire*'s entry is reduced to having to speculate on the author's identity, erroneously assuming the author is a man, while lambasting the work:

Un bavard qui fait un ouvrage mediocre sur les passions ou sur l'amitié ne peut être regardé que comme un marchand de papillote. Nous en avons un qui a publié, il y a quelques années, un froid traité *De l'Amitié*, et qui vient d'en imprimer un autre sur les *Passions*. Ces deux ouvrages ont été attribués à une femme de beaucoup d'esprit, Mme la comtesse de Bouflers; mais ils ne sont pas d'elle. L'auteur a gardé l'anonyme, et le public n'a voulu ni connaître son nom, ni lire son ouvrage [...] On ne peut rien lire de plus sec en fait de sentiments, et de plus dur et heurté en fait de style. Cet homme a voulu nous prouver que M. de Voltaire a raison de nous reprocher, dans le *Portatif*, à l'article *Amitié*, que nous sommes un peu secs en tout. (98-99)

Margaret Carlyle notes that in two articles dated 1767 and 1774, the *Correspondance littéraire* credits Thiroux d'Arconville for two of her works.⁶⁰⁰ Thus, she was either not anonymous to the critic who penned the article above, or by 1767 the *Correspondance littéraire* (perhaps Diderot whom she had met, although the precise date of their meeting and friendship remains uncertain) was aware of her authorship but chose to respect her anonymity. In either case, it does not alter the success of Thiroux d'Arconville's strategy of keeping her anonymity in order to avoid her gender becoming the target of further attacks. Bret notes that Thiroux d'Arconville knew that the dangers of making her identity known as the author far outweighed the benefits:

Sans doute d'ailleurs est-ce [anonymity] un *topos* qui a guidé Madame d'Arconville. Elle s'en explique encore à la fin de sa vie, sans rien regretter de ce refus à pénétrer ouvertement l'espace public: 'J'ai été fidèle au parti que j'avais pris sur cet objet, ayant fait réflexion qu'il y avait toujours à perdre pour une femme de se déclarer auteur, et très peu à y gagner.'⁶⁰¹ (14)

⁶⁰⁰ "Femme de sciences femme d'esprit: 'le Traducteur des *Leçons de Chymie*.'" *Madame d'Arconville*, 72.

⁶⁰¹ "La face cachée des Lumières: à la découverte de Madame d'Arconville," *Madame d'Arconville*, 14.

The fact that Thiroux d'Arconville wrote anonymously presents a challenge in categorizing her as an *ecto-philosophe*. One of the important common characteristics of the *ecto-philosophes*, and it should be recalled that a writer must possess all the characteristics listed earlier, is that their overall body of work must maintain intellectual coherence. To overcome the question of anonymity, Thiroux d'Arconville, as Hayes shows, “employs a number of textual strategies to construct an authorial voice and to assert her authority as both translator and author” which consist of “systematic paratextual interlinking of her anonymous works, as well as through her direct oversight of the production process.”⁶⁰²

The recent scholarship on Thiroux d'Arconville shows that, besides being a prolific writer, she also had friends on both sides of the divide. Girou-Swidorski notes that she was “farouchement opposée aux Philosophes.”⁶⁰³ At the same time, she also had close ties with Turgot and Malesherbes who were sympathetic to the cause of the *philosophes* and deeply admired Voltaire with whom she was acquainted. While in the cases of Tiphaigne and Saint-Foix literary reviews of their works seemed to be biased depending on the camp to which the journal was sympathetic, with Thiroux d'Arconville, there was no such visible pattern. The *Journal encyclopédique* gave mostly favorable reviews of her works, the *Correspondance littéraire* consistently challenged the literary value of her works, and Fréron's *L'Année littéraire* offered mixed opinions depending on the work. Thiroux d'Arconville strongly believed in both science and religion. She collaborated with the well-known chemists Pierre-Joseph Macquer and François Poulletier de La Salle, whom she referred to as good friends.⁶⁰⁴ Carlyle goes into great

⁶⁰² Hayes, “Friendship and the Female Moralist,” 180-81 and “From Anonymity to Autobiography,” 381-82.

⁶⁰³ “La présidente d'Arconville, une femme des Lumières?” *Madame d'Arconville*, 24.

⁶⁰⁴ Carlyle, “Femme de sciences femme d'esprit: ‘le Traducteur des *Leçons de Chymie*.’” *Madame d'Arconville*, 79.

detail about her scientific work, including how she conducted experiments in her laboratory, and even refers to her reliance on empirical evidence as “rigid.”⁶⁰⁵ Bardez notes Thiroux d’Arconville’s deep religious faith and describes her as a Christian who believed that science only uncovered the marvels of nature to further prove “l’existence de Dieu et de sa grandeur.”⁶⁰⁶

She also modified the texts of others to incorporate issues pertinent to the *philosophe* versus anti-*philosophe* conflict in her translations. Scholars such as Elisabeth Blood and Nina Rattner Gelbart have examined Thiroux d’Arconville’s modifications to her translations.⁶⁰⁷ Blood’s analysis of Thiroux d’Arconville’s *Le bijoutier philosophe* (1767), a “more or less a straightforward translation” of Robert Dodsley’s play *The Toy Shop* (1735), demonstrates the degree to which the conflict between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* resonated with Thiroux d’Arconville.⁶⁰⁸ In her article, Blood analyzes the way that four eighteenth-century female writers, including Thiroux d’Arconville, represented the figure of the *philosophe* in their works. She argues that for these writers, the “struggle to define a social role for the *philosophe*” contributed at the same time to their own effort to “represent themselves as important figures in the public sphere” because the *philosophe* was “gaining authority as a public figure” (109). The

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 74-80, 89. A description of her laboratory is on page 78.

⁶⁰⁶ “Madame d’Arconville et les sciences. Raison ou résonance?” *Madame d’Arconville*, 49.

⁶⁰⁷ Elisabeth Blood, “Adapting to the Theater: ‘Representations of ‘Philosophe’ by French Women Writers,” *Altered Narratives: Female Eighteenth-Century French Authors Reinterpreted*, (London, Canada: Mestengo Press, 1997), 109-42. Nina Rattner Gelbart, “Splendeur et squelettes: la traduction ‘anatomique de Madame Thiroux d’Arconville,” *Madame d’Arconville*, 55-70. Also chapters three through six in *Madame d’Arconville* examine the author’s translations through four essays by different scholars, 55-122.

⁶⁰⁸ A numerical copy of *Le bijoutier philosophe* and *The Toy Shop* can be found on Google books with the title page *Le bijoutier philosophe. Comédie. Approuvée et encouragée par le feu celebre Monsieur Pope. The Toy-Shop. A Comedy. Approved of and encouraged by the late celebrated Mr. Pope.* Further citations will come from this copy. However, there are no indications of the publication house or the year of publication. *Le bijoutier philosophe* was published originally in volume two a collection of British plays entitled *Nouveau théâtre anglois, ou choix des meilleures pièces de théâtre représentées à Londres depuis quelques années*, (Londres: Jean Nourse, 1767).

divide between the two camps is briefly mentioned in Blood's outline of the plays that followed Palissot's *Les Philosophes* (109-10). As noted in chapter two, Palissot's anti-*philosophe* play and Voltaire's riposte *Le Caffé ou l'Écossaise*, both staged in 1760, generated a number of plays that centered on the quarrel between the two camps. Blood argues that these plays were stringently connected to one another by their representation of the *philosophe* figure:

To write and publicize a play with the *philosophe* as the central figure in the title was, necessarily, to comment on earlier plays in that vein, to criticize other authors and to engage oneself and one's work in a public exchange of ideas [...] It stands to reason that authors who published plays with the *philosophe* as their central figure in the title, especially after 1760, wanted their work to be a part of that public controversy. (110)

On the one hand, the idea that Thiroux d'Arconville entertained the notion of being a part of such controversy seems implausible considering her reclusive lifestyle and self-effacement as author of her works.⁶⁰⁹ On the other hand, it does point to her awareness of the divide and to her effort to adapt the play to make it resonate more with the conflict brewing between the two camps through the quarrel of plays. As Blood notes, among Thiroux d'Arconville's few modifications, the most notable one is the change in the title that allows for the inclusion of the word *philosophe* (115). Although Dodsley's original play does not contain any reference to philosophers, inserting the term *philosophe* in the title allowed Thiroux d'Arconville's play to join the ranks of many other plays of the early-to-mid 1760s that were deeply involved in the quarrel pitting the *philosophes* against their enemies.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁹ In fact, Blood's analysis does not seem to take into account Thiroux d'Arconville's practice of publishing works anonymously. She says at the end of his analysis of *Le bijoutier philosophe* that she created a work "of her own, without causing a scandal or breaching the unwritten codes of women's literary conduct, 118.

⁶¹⁰ Some examples are Palissot's *Les Philosophes*, Sedaine's *Le philosophe sans le savoir* and Jean-François Marmontel's *Le Philosophe soi-disant* that were mentioned in chapter two, André-Charles Cailleau's *Les philosophes manqués*, Antoine-Alexandre-Henri Ponsinet's *Le Petit Philosophe*, Louis Ponsinet de Sivry's *Les Philosophes de bois*, and Charles-Pierre Coste d'Arnobat's *Le Philosophe ami de tout le monde*.

The writers who participated in the quarrel intentionally took measures to portray their main character in either a positive or negative light. They did not hide either their status as close friends or sworn enemies of the *philosophes*.⁶¹¹ However, Thiroux d'Arconville's *philosophe*, a shopkeeper of a "cabinet de curiosité," remains a neutral participant in the conversations although he philosophizes abundantly with his customers about the virtues and vices of the eighteenth century. As the customers enter the store and buy trinkets, the shopkeeper explains that each trinket serves to reveal a vice in the character of the buyer, to make the buyer aware of it. The dialogues on the trinkets tackle issues related to human behavior at times, and to society at others. Yet the shopkeeper never targets his customers with his comments, although a few take offense like the "4me Dame" – "4th Lady" in Dodsley's play – does when she asks for a mask. The *philosophe* shopkeeper tells her that he does not have any because "les gens de ce siècle" have mastered the skill of disguising themselves so well that they no longer feel the need for masks to do so (46-48). He comments on eighteenth-century virtues and vices, but his customers can never be sure if he is merely providing information or warning them specifically. The closing lines of the play reflect the enigmatic character of the shopkeeper. He politely announces that it is time to close his shop. Three people, two women and a man, who have been conversing with him since the beginning of the play as various customers come in and out of the boutique, buy their trinkets and exit. Once outside, one of the women turns to the man and says in reference to the shopkeeper, "A vous en dire franchement mes sentiments, il n'a pas dans sa Boutique une plus grande curiosité que luy même" (70). Although Thiroux d'Arconville was not the original author of the work, it is telling that she chose a play that she could modify through translation and designate the protagoniste as a *philosophe*. The title of the text is the only time that Thiroux

⁶¹¹ As an example, see chapter two's introduction (2.0) for Sedaine's famous declaration on his intention to restore the reputation of his friends the *philosophes* that were tarnished by Palissot's play.

d'Arconville inserted the term *philosophe* in the text. Her *philosophe*, the shopkeeper, projected neither a pejorative image of the *philosophe* like that of Valère in Palissot's play, nor a sublime one like that of M. Vanderk of Sedaine's play.⁶¹² The shopkeeper echoes a staged version of an ecto-*philosophe*. He possesses a large amount of knowledge with which he attempts to educate his customers in the same way that Thiroux d'Arconville seeks to instruct her readers.⁶¹³ For the most part, he remains preoccupied with the day-to-day operations of his shop and does not judge or attack anyone there, unlike the numerous verbal attacks that exist between the characters in other plays in which the *philosophe* forms the central figure.

Le bijoutier philosophe represents only a small fraction of how Thiroux d'Arconville altered original texts in her translations. As Marie-Pascale Pieretti shows, she often expressed openly in paratexts her right to assert her presence as a translator and took liberties to eliminate passages or words in order to shorten certain scenes in dramatic works.⁶¹⁴ Carlyle's article focuses on Thiroux d'Arconville's *Leçons de Chymie* (1759) that she refers to as "manipulation expérimentale littéraire" due to the additional paratexts and extensive notes that Thiroux d'Arconville added to her translation of Peter Shaw's *Chemical Lectures* (1734-35).⁶¹⁵ In her translated work *Traité d'Ostéologie* (1759), Thiroux d'Arconville not only modified Alexander Monro's original text titled *Anatomy of the Human Bones* (1726), but also expanded the work's

⁶¹² For more on the 'sublime' aspect of the *philosophe*, see chapter two.

⁶¹³ Girou-Swidorski notes that Thiroux d'Arconville's scientific works serve to reconcile the author's desire to learn with her "désir d'éclairer," *Madame d'Arconville*, 33; also in *Madame d'Arconville*, Bardez describes the author as "bonne pedagogue," 43 (note 50), and Hayes interprets the certain passages in *Des Passions* as manifestations of the author's hope that "ses lecteurs bénéficieront" from her presentations of passions (130).

⁶¹⁴ Marie-Pascal Pieretti, "Women Writers and Translation in Eighteenth-Century France," *The French Review*, v75n3 (Feb., 2002), 479-80.

⁶¹⁵ "Femme de sciences femme d'esprit: 'le Traducteur des *Leçons de Chymie*.'" *Madame d'Arconville*, 71-91. The quote is on page 83.

content by adding illustrations in the text, and its size by adding thirty-one separate plates.⁶¹⁶ According to Bardez, she took complete charge of the publication process, financing the *planches*, the paper, and the printing costs, as well as the diverse ornaments that embellished it: “De superbes ornements allégoriques agrémentent l’ouvrage, vignettes, culs-de-lampe, et surtout un frontispice représentant l’anatomie sous les traits d’une femme prête à assister à une dissection.”⁶¹⁷ Gelbart’s article draws attention to the overwhelming size of Thiroux d’Arconville’s final product and claims that her motivation for producing such a voluminous work was aesthetic: “L’observation, la manipulation, et la comparaison de ces deux ouvrages est une [*sic*] exploit physique: on a l’impression de jongler entre une souris et un éléphant”; “Pour d’Arconville, la satisfaction ne pouvait être que personnelle. Elle souhaitait produire un opus imposant, un objet d’admiration splendide, un chef d’œuvre.”⁶¹⁸ Drawing from the author’s own commentary about *Le Traité d’Ostéologie* and from other reviews, Gelbart shows that Thiroux’s claim in the preface that she wished to “rendre service au public et enrichir sa patrie” camouflaged her true goal of “édifier un véritable monument” (70). Thiroux d’Arconville sought to satiate “son appétit de savoir et son besoin de transmettre” through this sizeable work in the same way that Tiphaigne attempted to do so with his exploration of human constitution through philosophical dreams.⁶¹⁹ Thiroux d’Arconville continued to publish works well into the 1780s.

⁶¹⁶ Gelbart notes that Thiroux d’Arconville must have used the editions of 1741 and 1750 of Monro’s book for her translation, *Madame d’Arconville*, 58 (note 12).

⁶¹⁷ Bardez, “Madame d’Arconville et les sciences. Raison ou résonance?” *Madame d’Arconville*, 43-44.

⁶¹⁸ “Splendeur et squelettes: la traduction ‘anatomique de Madame Thiroux d’Arconville,” *Madame d’Arconville*, 55, 70.

⁶¹⁹ Girou-Swidorski, “La Présidente d’Arconville: une femme des Lumières?” *Madame d’Arconville*, 32. Earlier in the same article, Girou-Swidorski also says that Thiroux d’Arconville had a “‘faim canine’ d’apprendre et ‘de faire’” (23). Hayes also underlines Thiroux d’Arconville’s need for intellectual stimulation and productivity in “From anonymity to autobiography: MME d’Arconville’s self-fashionings,” 385. For Tiphaigne on this topic see sections 4.1.3, 4.1.9, and 4.1.10.

According to Girou-Swidorski, the latest research revealed that, during the last few years of her life, she wrote twelve volumes of memoirs that were never published.⁶²⁰

Puisieux, another female *ecto-philosophe*, was born in the same year as Thiroux d'Arconville, Puisieux, but launched her literary career in the 1740s, much earlier than her. Puisieux also had an intimate five-year (1746-1751) relationship with Diderot during her early years of writing, which led many critics to believe that not only were some of her works actually written by Diderot, but also that she had only gained fame because their relationship. Grimm, at one point, went so far as to say that Puisieux wrote only one good work because, she was, at the time in a relationship with Diderot, and that she became “célèbre depuis vingt ans parce qu'elle avait tourné la tête d'un illustre philosophe.”⁶²¹ Grimm's judgment seems harsh, considering that Puisieux's contemporaries appreciated her writings and that many of her texts enjoyed success beyond the borders of France.⁶²² For example, her essays *Conseils à une amie* (1749) and *Les Caractères* (1750) had several subsequent editions and were translated, along with a few other of her works, into other languages.⁶²³ In her biographical essay on Puisieux, Nadine Bérenguier explains how her association with Diderot impacted her reputation:

Madeleine d'Arsant (or Darsant) de Puisieux belongs to a group of women writers whose names have survived in literary history because of their association with famous men. In this case the man is Denis Diderot. The five years of Puisieux's liaison with the philosophe have overshadowed her twenty-year career as a moralist and novelist in the 1750s and 1760s [...] None of her novels was greatly successful. The majority of eighteenth-century critics disliked her works. In a memoir published in the nineteenth

⁶²⁰ For the intriguing account of how these long-lost manuscripts were discovered in 2009, see Girou-Swidorski, “La Présidente d'Arconville: une femme des Lumières?” *Madame d'Arconville*, 31-33.

⁶²¹ *Correspondance littéraire*, Tome 8, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1879), 17.

⁶²² Alice M. Laborde, M. *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, (Saratoga: Anna Libri, 1984), 49-50.

⁶²³ Nadine Bérenguier, “Madeleine d'Arsant de Puisieux,” *Writers of the French Enlightenment II*, ed. Samia I. Spencer, *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 314*, (Detroit: Gale, 2005).

century, Diderot's daughter Marie-Angélique de Vandeul portrayed Puisieux as frivolous and immoral. These harsh comments prompted Diderot's subsequent biographers to treat her mercilessly. Puisieux's precarious position in eighteenth-century literary circles has thus obscured the more engaging aspects of her literary career.⁶²⁴

Puisieux's literary career actually spanned three decades (1746 to 1775) during which she published a number of poems, fairy tales, historical and moralist essays, novels, plays, and memoirs. Judging from her essays and novels, she was a radical feminist even by today's standards.⁶²⁵ While there is plenty of evidence to show that, Diderot and Puisieux collaborated on some works throughout their relationship, and that she became friends with several of his *philosophe* allies, her writings show a more ambiguous position in her stance on the ideological conflicts pitting the *philosophes* against the anti-*philosophes*.⁶²⁶

Puisieux studied for five years at Port-Royal de Paris. From most accounts, her instructors were inspired by "l'esprit et la philosophie" and provided her with an education that went beyond simple religious doctrine.⁶²⁷ In fact, Puisieux seems to have built on this early education by developing a severe dislike of religion. She considered religious belief to be a sign of weakness and attacked the "dévots" numerous times in her writings.⁶²⁸ In her *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* (1750), adopting what Laborde calls a "radical position," Puisieux argued that religion should be kept out of education, because it was not necessary in the development of morality. She criticized religion for having discriminated against women by not

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ On her feminist stance, see Laborde, *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, and Marie-France Silver, "Madame de Puisieux ou l'ambition d'être femme de lettres," *Femmes savants et femmes d'esprit*, eds. Roland Bonnel and Catherine Rubinger, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 183-201.

⁶²⁶ According to Laborde, Diderot collaborated with Puisieux on *L'Oiseau blanc* (1747) and Puisieux contributed to *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (1748) of Diderot, *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, 16. For her friendship with the *philosophes*, see *ibid.*, 38-39, 49.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 4-6.

⁶²⁸ Silver, "Madame de Puisieux ou l'ambition," 187.

allowing them to serve as church officers when they, “ayant un penchant naturel à pratiquer la vertu,” would be more qualified to do so than men who have “incontestablement la pente générale” to sin.⁶²⁹ She considered religious teachings to be a waste of time, and furthermore, claimed that they were specifically designed to hold women back. Armed with their “natural penchant for virtue,” women, in her view, would indeed make better *philosophes* even without religious education:

au lieu de perdre le tems à des bagatelles, qui occupent l'étude de la plupart des Philosophes mâles, nous nous appliquerions à réfléchir sur nous-mêmes et sur les divers objets qui nous environnent, afin de découvrir, quels rapports ou quelles différences ils ont avec nous, et par quelles applications ils peuvent nous être avantageux [...]. Ne pourrions-nous donc pas par ce moyen être des Philosophes aussi scavans, et des Théologiens aussi capables que les hommes, et autant en état d'apprendre et même d'enseigner pour le moins qu'ils le font?⁶³⁰

While Puisieux's criticism in *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* centered on the problems of gender inequality, a sizeable portion of her attacks pointed to religion as their source. Marie-France Silver situates Puisieux “dans le courant philosophique” because she adhered to the idea of separating superstition from religion in her writings. Despite her strong opinions on theological matters, Puisieux never directly attacked the devout branch of the anti-*philosophes*. Alice Laborde, for example, notes that Puisieux's writings manifest signs of “sa neutralité vis-à-vis du Parti des dévots, c'est-à-dire celui de la Reine, en opposition avec celui de la Pompadour” (9). Her intimate relationship with Diderot coincided with the years during which the tension between Fréron and the *philosophes* was escalating. As noted in chapter three, Marie, the Queen of France, protected the anti-*philosophe* Fréron, while Pompadour was aligned with his enemies. Despite her involvement with Diderot and her friendship with the *philosophes* at the

⁶²⁹ Madeleine d'Arsant de Puisieux, *La femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme*, (1750), 105.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 100-01.

time, Puisieux neither referred to the conflict in any of her writings nor took sides between the two camps. Yet, Puisieux's ambiguity goes further than her lack of engagement on religion-related debates in the context of the divide between the two camps. She also fits the profile of the *ecto-philosophe* writer in her ideas, as well as in her connections with members of both camps.

Puisieux considered "passions" as a necessary ingredient of the *esprit*, and as essential to achieving happiness. She wrote, in her *L'éducation du marquis de ***, ou Mémoires de la comtesse de Zurlac* (1753), "On a dit tant de fois que les grandes passions étaient la source de toutes les peines, qu'il y a peut-être de la témérité à soutenir le contraire," which opposes the severely unfavorable view of passions expressed in the article "Philosophe" of the *Encyclopédie*: "Les autres hommes [other than the *philosophes*] sont emportés par leurs passions [...] ce sont des hommes qui marchent dans les ténèbres."⁶³¹ Eight years later, in her *Réflexions et Avis sur les défauts et les ridicules à la mode*, she associated being a *philosophe* with harboring too much ambition, thus stifling one's own freedom: "Voilà je [the author, giving advice to a young women] crois un portrait qui pourrait vous guérir de l'ambition, si vous en aviez; mais je vous crois trop philosophe. En vérité, Madame, le rang le plus distingué ne vaut pas notre liberté."⁶³² At the same time, according to Laborde, Puisieux advanced the same ideas as Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot, in the domains of *Nature* and *droit naturel* which puts her "dans la ligne des philosophes qui œuvrent en faveur des réformes qui doivent fonder un avenir meilleur" (75). She also argues that in many of Puisieux's works, the same "thèmes philosophiques chers à Voltaire et Montesquieu et même certaines de leurs techniques littéraires" can be found in

⁶³¹ "Philosophe," *Encyclopédie*. Madeleine d'Arsant Puisieux, *L'éducation du marquis de ***, ou Mémoires de la comtesse de Zurlac*, Tome 1, (Berlin: Bauche, 1753), 2.

⁶³² Cited in Silver, "Madame de Puisieux ou l'ambition," 194-95.

abundance. The difference is that Puisieux criticized “La France des Lumières” for not having integrated women into the philosophical movement.⁶³³

The reviews of Puisieux’s works by critics during her lifetime do not diminish the ambiguity surrounding her position on the *philosophe*-anti-*philosophe* divide. Grimm, in the *Correspondance littéraire*, and l’abbé Raynal in *Nouvelles littéraires*, both *philosophes*, either dismissed her works, claiming that the ideas in them originated from their friend Diderot, or ridiculed them. Their opponent, the anti-*philosophe* Fréron, usually gave favorable reviews of Puisieux’s novels.⁶³⁴ Yet, he was an exception to the rule as many anti-*philosophes*, based on their knowledge of her close ties to Diderot, of her friendship with other *philosophes*, and of her open criticism of religion, assumed that she was a member of the opposing camp and denounced her writings.⁶³⁵ It was true that she had several *philosophe* friends, but she also became friends with Jacob-Nicolas Moreau, one of the leading anti-*philosophes* who wrote *Mémoire pour servir à l’histoire des cacouacs*, a virulent treatise against the *philosophes*.⁶³⁶ In short, Puisieux seems at no point in her literary career to have clearly sided with the *philosophes* or their enemies.

In my research of women writers during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, Thrioux d’Arconville and Puisieux are the two writers that I could comfortably qualify as ecto-*philosophes*. This assertion is not to claim that my study is conclusive. I certainly believe that more research will uncover other female ecto-*philosophes*. For example, the cases of Madame de Beaumer, one of the three editors of the *Journal des dames*, and Anne-Marie du Boccage, whose

⁶³³ Ibid., 153.

⁶³⁴ Laborde, *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, 58. Bérenguier, “Madeleine d’Arsant de Puisieux.”

⁶³⁵ Laborde, *Diderot et Madame de Puisieux*, 58.

⁶³⁶ Ibid. Laborde adds “selon Mme Roland” without specifying the reference. I have not been able to trace this passage in Roland’s *Mémoires*. I am assuming that Laborde uses another source for it.

writings in several genres were lauded by both *philosophe* and anti-*philosophe* critics, deserve further analysis. However, the cases of Tiphaigne, Saint-Foix, as well as those of Thiroux d'Arconville and Puisieux, should be enough to show that the ecto-*philosophes*, despite suffering for the most part the same fate of falling into oblivion in the post-eighteenth-century era, occupied a notable space in the mid-eighteenth-century literature. These names alone should be enough to make scholars question the general impression that the discourses of the *philosophes* and their detractors essentially shaped literature in the 1745-1765 period.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It is hard to determine when, exactly, the divide between the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* started and ended. Progressive or traditional forces have opposed each other long before the middle of the eighteenth century and continue to do so today. It is, however, safe to say that no conflict between two groups had an impact on every aspect of social, political, cultural, and intellectual milieus of a nation as much as this divide did for about two decades. During the period of 1745-1765, the ideological clash that gripped the French nation featured, for the most part, the members of these two groups.

As I noted in my study, the *philosophes* and the anti-*philosophes* engaged not only in an intellectual battle, but also sought to gain control of powerful institutions, academies, and the royal court. Even the definition of the term *philosophe* changed according to the contemporaries' position in the divide.⁶³⁷ Lost in this mix were those writers, such as the ecto-*philosophes*, who dared to build a career without taking one side or the other. They contributed significantly to the intellectual production in literature during those years and did not necessarily ally themselves with Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Fréron, Palissot, the Church, or the King. The lack of access to the network of support that the two major groups enjoyed posed significant challenges that they attempted to overcome, often without success. Tiphaigne, Saint-Foix, Thiroux d'Arconville, and

⁶³⁷ John Lough, "Who Were the *Philosophes*?" *Studies in Eighteenth-Century French Literature Presented to Robert Niklaus*, eds. J. H. Fox, M. H. Waddicor, and D. A. Watts, (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1975), 140-41.

Puisieux managed to carve enough of a literary identity in order to publish books that were widely read. Thus, they qualified as successful writers, but their lack of identity as a *philosophe* or anti-*philosophe* did nonetheless hamper their posthumous fame. Since their times, eighteenth-century studies have focused, for the most part, on the *philosophes*' writings.

My definition of an ecto-*philosophe* and the arguments that I advance about their writings certainly do not represent a conclusive judgment on their place in the eighteenth-century French thought. I do, however, hope to build upon what I have discovered during my research on writers that did not neatly fit into the conventional categories of mid-eighteenth century France. It has been my intention to shed light on these writers who have been neglected due to the fact that they were not identified as members of the philosophic party or as that of their adversaries during the height of the conflict. It is mostly for this reason that writers such as Sedaine and Fréron, who initially did not belong to a camp, were able to secure their long-term fame by joining a side, and other well-read writers such as Tiphaigne and Saint-Foix have fallen into obscurity. This difference is only the tip of the iceberg in understanding the dynamics of negotiating a literary identity at such a contentious period, and understanding how it influenced writers in terms of securing a place in the history of French literature. While the period of 1745-1765 gives great insight to the tactics used by writers in creating their profile to use a contemporary term, a comprehensive study should also take into account the post-revolutionary period. For example, a detailed analysis of how the French public's perception of writers evolved through the post-1789 era, or how the changing trends in theater affected playwrights and the expectations of theatergoers, may shed light on this question. Nonetheless, a thorough understanding of the conflict between the *philosophes* and anti-*philosophes* in the middle of the century must lay the

groundwork for such studies, and that is ultimately what I have attempted to establish in the preceding pages.

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