

Introduction

ELLEN R. WELCH & MICHÈLE LONGINO

(UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL & DUKE UNIVERSITY)

The map we draw of seventeenth-century French literary and intellectual culture is usually a small one, centered on Paris and Versailles to reflect the consolidation of intellectual and artistic capital under absolutism. Yet this process of centralization depended on the creation of strong infrastructures connecting France's seat of political and cultural power to the provinces and the rest of the world: an efficient postal system, Europe's largest network of foreign embassies, trade links stretching to Asia and the Americas. How might a focus on these networks—and on the agents, materials, concepts, and practices that constituted them—broaden our mental topography of seventeenth-century French culture? How could an attention to social interconnection, technologies of circulation, and the material and human conduits of exchange offer a potentially less centralized, less hierarchal vision of the literary, artistic, and intellectual fields of seventeenth-century France? How might this critical lens emphasize the contributions of those who inhabited the geographical or social margins of French culture but nonetheless interacted with metropolitan thought?

These are the questions that animated a rich discussion during the May 2014 conference of the North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature, held at Duke University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Over three days, presenters mapped seventeenth-century France's intellectual networks, examined the transmission of texts and ideas across geographical and cultural borders, explored connections between humans and the natural world, theorized connections across time, and attended to social and cultural mechanisms of exclusion and disconnection. The present volume represents a small selection of the contributions to the conference. The essays demonstrate how our scholarship might reveal a more dynamic and complex seventeenth century by highlighting its practices of exchange, collaboration, and connectivity.

The volume begins with Hélène Merlin-Kajman's "conférence d'honneur," a rigorous investigation of the theme. The author opens her essay by questioning the usefulness of the network metaphor for seventeenth-century French studies, rightly noting that the comparison of human associations to networks is largely anachronistic. The term "réseau" is foreign to the times, extrinsic to the context ("etic"), rather than rooted in the social and material culture of seventeenth-century France ("emic"). Yet, Merlin-Kajman discovers in La Fontaine's fables—particularly "Le chat et le rat"—another model for theorizing relations, perhaps more germane to the seventeenth century, which describes human relations in terms of "knots." Knots of alliance and obligation grounded in structures of belonging, sometimes called "connexité," formed the solid society of the Ancien Régime, organized by order and hierarchy. To reflect on literature's role in forming and reforming social ties, Merlin-Kajman returns to the quarrel of *Le Cid* and slightly revises her own highly influential study of that affair's creation of a public. In this new discussion, she demonstrates how Corneille's play created a socially mixed public through recourse to the private and the intimate: "[ce qui] noue chacun en public mais par le secret du privé." Her rich and insightful essay prompts us to take into account the unknowability of connections that arise in part from the intimate and the secret.

Recalling Merlin-Kajman's observation that "la littérature est affaire des nœuds," this volume's first grouping of essays examines literature itself as a space and agent of connectivity. Nina Ekstein explores how characters wield "possible worlds" as a form of weapon in Corneille's play *Nicomède*. Threats, conditions, and plans substitute for action in this drama constrained by geography and theatrical *bienséances*. Although the static and closed world represented on stage leaves little room for positive change, Corneille shows how the imaginary may function as a political tool, particularly through a dénouement "in which the possible triumphs." Taking a different approach to theatrical representations of connection, Denis Grélé explores the intersection of the exchange economy with the economy of comedy in Lesage's *Crispin rival de son maître*. Connections among characters as they barter for love, esteem, and above all money serve to analyze the broader cultural and economic "practices of exchange" in the France of the last years of Louis XIV's reign.

Literature's relationship to networks of sociability have long preoccupied seventeenth-century studies. From the creative activity of salons (discussed in this volume by Faith Beasley) to the elegant letters of well-connected correspondents such as Sévigné, many of the period's literary accomplishments emerged from, and worked to maintain, social *réseaux*. Several essays in this volume continue that tradition while also deepening

our understanding of the literary, material, and philosophical complexities of social connection. In her essay Christine Probes demonstrates how the correspondence of Elisabeth-Charlotte d'Orléans (Madame Palatine) constructed a vast communications network stretching across Germany and France out toward Spain and Prussia. Probes calls our attention to the many forms of labor required to maintain this web of exchange. As political and material conditions posed obstacles to mail delivery, Madame relied strategically on the post or on private couriers to transmit her missives. Language barriers entailed an assiduous commitment to translation, performed both by Madame and her correspondents as they passed letters among their social circles. Above all, Probes emphasizes, the tender gestures of friendship and the pleasures of verbal communication provided the strongest adhesive in the social and literary connections maintained through letter exchange. The bonding force of "*mots d'esprit*" is the subject of Malina Stefanovska's contribution. Charming verbal pleasantries and biting witticisms circulated promiscuously in seventeenth-century discourse, through oral conversations into poems, written anecdotes, memoirs, *maximes*, and *historiettes*. As Stefanovska reveals, *mots d'esprit* served as an agent of social cohesion even as they enshrined the fissures and conflicts in French society. Ulrich Langer and Anne Theobald propose a philosophical exploration of the place of conflict in social and affective relations. They explore how both moral-political discourses and literary works address the "threat of disconnection" in public and private relationships, providing potential models for tolerating conflict within the context of friendship.

Horizons broaden in the third part of the volume, devoted to networks created and sustained by travel. Micah True argues that we must study not only people who traveled, but also books that traveled: in his case, the raw material of the *Jesuit Relations*, accounts composed on-site in New France by the intrepid missionaries, then shipped to Paris and there edited, printed up, bound together and circulated back to New France. There the Jesuits read them and commented on the editing that had taken place in Paris. In addition, the collections of New France also contained at that time books on travel from such distant places as the Caribbean, in China, the Levant, complicating thereby a simple circular movement between homeland and mission site, that enriched knowledge and fueled curiosity in many directions at once. Catherine Broué's contribution uses the concept of the network to correct the tendency to view the history of France's American exploration as the work of heroic individuals. Instead of focusing on La Salle's well-known contribution to French exploration of Louisiana, Broué examines three intersecting, transatlantic networks of influence. Her study demonstrates that Louis Hennepin's writings, their distribution and mar-

keting played an even greater role in the history of the exploration of Louisiana than the famous La Salle. The article also shows how influences on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean—and not just one person's initiative—helped to build the French empire. Focusing on an even more marginalized group of individuals, Ashley Williard examines the practice of sending “filles de joie” to the Caribbean colonies like chattel both to rid France of vice and to build up the French population in the colonies. She examines the institutions from which these young women were culled, the official French government positions concerning their banishment from their homeland, their status in their New World homes, vis-à-vis their French colonist husbands, and also vis-à-vis the African slave women who were so often exploited by those same French colonist males for sexual gratification. With Faith Beasley, we leave New France and the French Caribbean, and find ourselves instead in India, but via the Paris salon society that François Bernier frequented. Much of his travel writing was occasioned with the aim of pleasing his French circle of friends, particularly the members of Madame de La Sablière's salon group. Thus, his travel discourse was shaped in a contrastive way, at once setting the French monarchy to advantage and tactfully suggesting ways in which the king and his ministers could learn much from the Grand Mogol and his court and benefit from their example. The king might not have been the direct addressee of all of Bernier's writings, but the message was clearly intended for those surrounding the monarch that they might provide him with the guidance necessary to build and maintain a powerful kingdom. Circuitously, these lessons in power traveled necessarily through the spaces of women, both in India and in Paris, where manners were formed and perfected, and were essential to the proper expression of power.

Under the rubric of intellectual networks, we find three articles: those of Stephanie O'Hara, Agnès Cousson, and Katherine Dauge-Roth. Stephanie O'Hara's study of English translations of French midwifery manuals demonstrates how much is mangled and lost in the process of translation, including credits for authorship, and puts into question the cohesive value of the intellectual network when it must traverse linguistic, cultural, and gendered boundaries. In Agnès Cousson's article, we find another challenge to the power of the network: the ideological refusal of Rapin and other Jesuits to acknowledge the position of the Jansenists, and instead their attempt at every opportunity to discredit them. Katherine Dauge-Roth's article examines the received notion that women were totally dismissed as serious scientists in the seventeenth century. She examines two cases that illustrate that women were acknowledged and praised for their work in science, and taken seriously by their male counterparts, and argues that we must read

gender relations around knowledge and science in this period as more fluid than we have tended to believe.

The volume concludes with two essays that explore education's network-making potential. Sara Melzer's article examines how French schoolboys were taught to develop a profound imaginative connection to Ancient Rome. Devotion to Latin and the authors of antiquity constructed a "habitus" in which many young Frenchmen came to view the Romans as their kin, while others rejected the oppressiveness of "Roman universalism." Although it did not have a consistent effect on every pupil, Classical education powerfully shaped how Frenchmen understood their relationship to the past. The final article explores how modern pedagogical techniques might foster similarly intimate connections between our students and the culture of the Ancien Régime. Charlotte Trinquet and Benjamin Balak outline their use of gaming software to engage undergraduate students in a recreation of seventeenth-century salon society, publication networks, and social controversies. Twenty-first-century electronic social networks become a means to build connections with the past.

We offer this diverse collection of essays as a means of continuing the rich conversation that began in Durham and Chapel Hill. We also use it as an opportunity to thank the individuals and institutions who made both the conference and this volume possible: The Florence Gould Foundation; Duke's Office of the Dean of Humanities, Franklin Humanities Institute, Romance Studies Department, Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies and Center for French and Francophone Studies; UNC's Department of Romance Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, Program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies, History Department, Art Department, and Center for European Studies; graduate assistants Kasia Stempniak and Andrew Gard; a brilliant group of anonymous peer reviewers; the sharp and generous readers who constitute the NASSCFL Editorial Board; and above all Biblio-17 Series editor Rainer Zaiser for his invaluable assistance.

Corneille : ronge-maille ou nœud public ?

HÉLÈNE MERLIN-KAJMAN

(UNIVERSITÉ SORBONNE NOUVELLE - PARIS 3)

Qu'est-ce qu'apporte à notre compréhension du public au XVII^e siècle le fait d'envisager sa configuration à partir de la métaphore et/ou du concept sociologique du *réseau* ? Je voudrais envisager cette question en me cantonnant à un corpus particulier, celui de la querelle du *Cid* – particulier, mais crucial : car c'est certainement la querelle du *Cid* qui a imposé le mot de « public » pour désigner à la fois l'horizon de la destination littéraire, et la fin assignée aux Belles-Lettres.

La métaphore du « réseau » est une métaphore magnifique. Mais est-ce que cela suffit pour en faire un usage heuristique fiable ? Le mot n'a développé en français toutes ses riches significations sociales, au départ métaphoriques, qu'à partir du XIX^e siècle, quand est apparu notamment le sens de « société secrète ». Le Littré ne retient encore, pour les valeurs qui concernent les relations et communications, que la définition suivante : « Se dit d'un ensemble de chemins ou de voies ferrées qui mettent en communication les diverses localités d'une contrée. / Se dit aussi des lignes parcourues par un service régulier de bateaux à vapeur. »

De là, ne cessant de développer ces significations à la fois techniques et sociales, il s'est mis à désigner ce que j'appellerais des portions du *tissu* social (pour mobiliser une autre métaphore plus ancienne mais bien proche), ou, pour le dire de façon plus savante, un complexe de relations entre un ensemble d'individus, un collectif envisagé à partir des interactions individuelles qui le constituent. Un réseau, ce n'est pas un groupe ou un collectif institué qui détermine, par sa structure et ses règles internes, les comportements des individus. Ce n'est pas non plus un agrégat d'individus envisagés à partir de leurs actions et décisions. Un réseau naît avec des relations et des interactions.

La métaphore est aujourd'hui omniprésente : nous la mobilisons tous au point qu'elle est parfaitement lexicalisée. Le développement d'internet et des « réseaux sociaux » lui donne une sorte de présence tangible dans nos