CHAPTER TWO

"THEME OF THE TRAITOR AND THE HERO"

In Nolan’s work, the passages imitated from Shakespeare are the least dramatic; Ryan suspects that the author interpolated them so that one person, in the future, might realize the truth. He understands that he, too, forms part of Nolan’s plan. . . .

At the end of some tenacious caviling, he resolves to keep silent his discovery. He publishes a book dedicated to the glory of the hero; this, too, no doubt was foreseen.—Jorge Luis Borges

I. FOR A NEW AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Libertine novels have had a hard time establishing their titres de fiction. Their commentators and editors generally find themselves in agreement on at least one point: these texts must be situated in the domain of autobiographical literature, since most of the events they recount actually took place. When Gautier uses fragments of the Fragments to reconstruct the life of the young Théophile, he inaugurates a type of mixed reading that will continue to hamper the reception of these texts. Following in Gautier’s footsteps are all subsequent biographers not only of Théophile but more especially of Tristan, whose life seems to exert a particular fascination on historians of literature. Such a fascination is difficult to explain. So few documents concerning Tristan’s life have survived that his biographers can do little more than repeat the story told by the Page, which they accept as the scenario of the early years, and follow with a rapid survey of the meager evidence available on the page/Tristan grown up. Without his novel, Tristan’s existence could hardly be described as a rich ter-
rain inviting exploration. Little wonder then that the great majority of those who direct their attention to the Page do not hesitate to accept its content as autobiographical. Dietrich's proclamation, "Le Page . . . est avant tout . . . une autobiographie véritable et sincère," is echoed, for example, in statements by Perrens, Savarin, and Grisè. In view of their far more overtly personal statements, it is even less surprising that Chapelle's Voyage and D'Assoucy's Avantures are both read as consistently autobiographical texts. Referring to the Voyage, one of its nineteenth-century editors affirms that "la personnalité des deux auteurs se confond avec leur principal ouvrage. Parler de l'ouvrage, ce sera parler des auteurs." Emile Colombey demonstrates a similar attitude when he presents the Avantures as "l'autobiographie de D'Assoucy."

An especially evident problem avoided by such a reading of these texts is that of the proper name. The section of my first chapter concerned with the integration of proper names as a form of libertine recognition may suggest that names are to be found in some abundance in libertine texts. In fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. I chose to dwell upon the listings of libertine precursors because the very mention of their names should be regarded as a risky venture. But it is important for my present argument to note that proper names, except for their function as referents to the historical past, are rarely encountered in these texts. Actually, the authors consistently avoid naming the individuals evoked in connection with their stories. Persons merely talked about are identified, but characters who play an active role in the narrative remain anonymous. So, whereas names of historical figures (Gassendi and such) may be mentioned in the course of discussions, the characters whose lives are unfolding are usually unidentified. Such an absence of proper names would be worthy of note in even a purely fictional work. In one that is to be regarded as autobiographical, it is an ever-present source of embarrassment. If the reader accepts the editor's advance warning that the text he is about to begin is historically accurate, he must be equipped with the skills of a first-rate sleuth in order to participate in the autobiographical experience with any degree of satisfaction and conviction. Instead of a certain number of identified, or at least identifiable, proper names, he is given as "clues" only
such intentionally vague appellations as "mon aieule maternelle" or "ma maîtresse."

If the task of an editor can be considered largely one of removing potential obstacles to a smooth reading of a work, then these texts provide an editorial paradise. Indeed, in the infrequent cases when libertine novels are rewarded with critical editions, easy explanations are adopted for the absence of precision in references to the individuals encountered: "Quant à l'omission totale de noms propres que l'on y regrette, . . . elle s'explique d'une façon toute naturelle. D'une part, plusieurs des personnages que Tristan met en scène ou vivaient encore, ou avaient laissé des descendants, et l'auteur était, en conséquence, tenu à une grande circonspection à l'égard de ceux-ci comme de ceux-là." The editor feels permitted to immerse his reader in a sea of identifications designed to fill in the undesirable silences and ambiguities of the text: "Tristan, en ne donnant . . . aucun nom propre dans son ouvrage, en avait rendu la lecture moins amusante et même difficile pour le grand public."

The Fragments and the Voyage, probably because they are so short, have never had the benefit of this type of editorial scrutiny. Editors of Francion are quick to decide that Sorel is either telling his own life story or that of Théophile. However, because the first-person narration in the final 1633 edition is limited to one-third of the text and is, as Démoris describes it, "partielle, fragmentée et encadrée," they generally save their footnotes for the transmission of other types of information. The complex web of inventions, fantasies, and theories in Cyrano's voyages has enjoyed priority with his editors over questions of character identification. But D'Assoucy and Tristan have certainly attracted their fair share of footnotes, and since Tristan's commentators are faced with the most complex case, their efforts can serve as a particularly illuminating illustration of a type of textual "bending."

Only in its original edition may the Page be read as Tristan intended; that is, studded with purposeful ambiguities created by the absence of proper names. With the appearance of the second edition in 1667, the transformation of Tristan's hybrid into a showcase for editorial ingenuity begins. Whereas the 1643 edition is published by the well-known Toussaint Quinet, the text of 1667 is "signed" in the place reserved for the name of the libraire
This Boutonné is responsible for the preface, “Le libraire au lecteur,” in which he explains the nature and purpose of the additions with which he has taken the liberty of endowing the text established by Tristan: “Pour rendre cette lecture plus intelligible, j’ai encore ajouté la clef et les annotations qui servent à l’éclaircissement de quelques noms propres et autres passages obscurs, que l’auteur avait ainsi fait imprimer pour des considérations qui me sont inconnues et qui cachaient une partie des beautés de ce roman” (p. 47).

“Boutonné” is traditionally identified as Jean-Baptiste L’Hermite, Tristan’s younger brother and would-be borrower of his name and glory. But the Page’s first editor chooses to mask his clef to the novel’s characters behind a second clef: he wants to reveal other names, but at the same time to hide his own. Such an identification would therefore seem unfounded, a mere result of critical tradition, were it not for the fact that Jean-Baptiste shows his hand with the style he adopts in his notes. As I have already mentioned, J.-B. L’Hermite, in his attempt to surpass his brother’s efforts in at least one domain, developed Tristan’s genealogical tricks into a true genealogical obsession in his interminable treatises. His mania overflows in a most astonishing fashion in the pages he devotes to “remedying” his brother’s lack of genealogical conscientiousness in the Page. Jean-Baptiste, alias Boutonné, goes so far beyond the discreet cover-up implied by his name that he surpasses the level of fervor expected from even the most zealous editor. To give but one example, a simple reference by the page to “mon aïeule maternelle” is overburdened in a note by Jean-Baptiste that is closer to an entry in the international social register he certainly dreamed of composing than a “clarification” of the text: “Denise de s.-Prés, Dame de saint Pres les Chartes, fille de Jean de saint-Prés, dit Gros Jean, renommé és guerres d’Italie, où il commandoit la Compagnie de Gendarmes de Monseigneur Yves d’Alegres; sa mere Anne de Chateau-Chalons tiroit son commencement des anciens Ducs et Comtes de Bourgogne.”

Jean-Baptiste adds footnotes whenever he believes he has the knowledge necessary to bridge a “gap” in the Page. Stamped with the weight of brotherly authority and thereby legitimated to an unusual extent, his critical reading represents an impressive
burden for subsequent editors. Indeed, none of the modern editors of the *Page* manages to escape Jean-Baptiste’s influence, and only Dietrich is able to blend the fraternal commentary with his own erudition in a manner that clearly establishes the boundaries between the two. He relegates the genealogical meanderings of L’Hermite de Solier to an appendix, and limits his own contributions to simple “identifications.” “Mon aïeule maternelle,” in Dietrich’s judgment, calls for a minimal footnote: “Denise de Saint-Prest.”

Editors less wary of the extent of the fraternal presence (Arland, for example) build confusion into their work by maintaining the anonymity of the author of the prologue and by pillaging his clef without reproducing it in its entirety. The reader unaware of the editorial past of this text is thus faced with a nearly hopeless muddle. Logically, he has no choice but to attribute all the notes to the only editorial voice assuming responsibility for them, that of the “libraire Boutonné.” He quickly realizes, however, that certain notes (linguistic commentaries, for example) cannot be contemporary with the text and can only be the product of a more modern editorial instinct. He may read as carefully as he likes, but he will never be entirely certain of the identity of the voice assuring him that “mon aïeule maternelle” is/was Denise de Saint-Prest. He may eventually begin to suspect some sort of editorial joke along the lines of the “Préface-Annexe” to *La Religieuse*. At least one thing is certain: such a critical edition cannot explain or clarify the interpretive problems posed by the *Page* for contemporary readers.

Tristan created a work in which the absence of proper names is a striking feature. If he had wanted it to be viewed in the light of the added precision names can provide, he could either have inserted them into the text or have provided his own clef. His brother, a maniac for names and the links among them, sensing the opportunity to show off his genealogical capabilities (and perhaps at the same time to breathe new life into what he probably viewed as a washed-out text), decided to fill in the blank each time Tristan chose to replace the specific with the general, and all subsequent editors follow suit. Why?

“Boutonné” explains that his annotations will “improve” the text because, without them, some of its “beauties” are hidden and
some of its passages are "obscure." He simply wants to make it "more intelligible." Bernardin agrees with this opinion and contends that the clef makes the novel more "amusing" and less "difficult." Dietrich justifies his own increased efforts in this domain by stressing the deficiencies of even Jean-Baptiste's complex work. He stresses "l'omission totale de noms propres . . . à laquelle la Clef de Jean-Baptiste L'Hermite est loin de suppléer suffisamment."

None of these explanations, however, seems legitimate. It has never been adequately demonstrated, or indeed demonstrated at all, that the Page in its original version is an obscure text. For whom, then, is it being made more comprehensible? Questions of intelligibility have little or nothing to do with the true motivation of these various clefs—witness the example of Arland's "mixed" text. The editors of the Page seek to do much more than merely "sharpen" the contours of the reading proposed by Tristan for his work, as they claim. They are attempting instead to give his text an entirely different type of reading, one in which a somewhat simplistic vision of reality and of reference is prized as much as, or more than, the novel itself. They assume that the facts of a life can be counted and measured, like the ingredients in a recipe. Consequently, they do not recognize that (auto)biography is a creative art. Their glosses represent an attempt to explain the "sources" of the text, as though there could be no doubt that the page's "aïeule maternelle" was also Tristan's. They are attempting to decipher a text that does not ask to be decoded in a literal, or so-called normal, manner but otherwise. And because the interpretations they strive to impose on this text, far from being natural to it, are explicitly rejected by it, editors are inevitably confronted with absences or silences behind which they cannot discover the "truth."

At these times when the Page throws off all attempts to read it literally as "straight" autobiography, its editors usually write off such aberrant behavior as momentary frivolity, insisting all the while that they know best how to calm this text that dares to fight back: "Le Page disgracié est une autobiographie, nous le savons, mais une autobiographie empreinte, çà et là, d'un cachet un peu romanesque, et il ne faut donc pas prendre à la lettre cette affirmation de notre auteur."14

Sometimes, they simply skim over unexplainable passages,
passages for which there exists no clef, in silence. Thus, Arland, faced with the “nouvel Artefius” chapters, makes no attempt either to guess at the identity of the philosopher or to speculate on the validity of this episode, of such central importance for the Page. His notes in this section are limited to such matters as unusual grammatical constructions or the identification of those historical figures the page evokes to describe the alchemist, such as Jacques Coeur. This example illustrates the principal weakness of all such attempts to construct a clef for Tristan’s text. Only secondary figures, those mentioned in passing references, have been given names. Despite the best efforts of those determined to reveal the Page’s secrets, its main characters retain their original anonymity. The very silence the editors are obliged to maintain with regard to them serves to proclaim the fictionality of the text.

The blind commitment to reality that guides these readings of the Page reflects, in addition to attitudes about the nature of biography, autobiography, and critical editions, a widely prevalent attitude toward seventeenth-century fiction: that it can be appreciated only as a strange sort of historical document. This point of view was encouraged by seventeenth-century readers, who provided in abundance the first clefs to contemporary novels, and it was nurtured and repeated by subsequent generations of readers and critics. Thus, Dietrich’s second explanation for the absence of proper names in the Page (“Il s’est conforme tout simplement à la mode de son temps. Tous les récits de l’époque, en effet, à part les mémoires proprement dits, sont des récits à clef.”)15 echoes the prevailing ideas of his day, as expressed in articles by Nodier and others.16

The culminating monument to this critical fascination with clefs is Fernand Drujon’s three-volume compilation, Les Livres à clef. Drujon’s commentary on his collection of clefs is characterized by a conviction of its indispensability and at the same time by a fear that it lacks foundation: a conviction that these novels can only find readers when accompanied by their clefs, and a fear that all of the “information” he is publishing is of a highly dubious nature. “Cet ouvrage n’offre aucun intérêt maintenant, il ne serait utile à lire que si l’on en retrouvait la clef.” “Le malheur est que toutes les attributions de ces clefs sembleraient n’être pas très exactement fondées.”17 The obsessive need to find clefs for the liber-
ing novels establishes the affirmation of historical or autobiographical content in seventeenth-century novels as still another manifestation of the overwhelming desire on the part of subsequent periods to treat these novels as *jeux de société* or curiosities for bibliophiles.

Amazingly enough, to date no critics have pointed out that this application of autobiography is actually anti-autobiographical, and few even mention the fact that these texts, when taken to be the factual accounts of the story of a life, present, as Adam phrases it, occasional "inverisimblances." Adam admits that, when seeking parallels between Tristan and his novel, "c'est se risquer fort que de prétendre tirer de cette oeuvre romanesque une histoire exacte de ses premières années." Such an appraisal, however, simply replaces one point of view with its opposite, and fails to contribute to an understanding of what it is in the text that makes this type of reading possible. Admittedly, certain of Madeleine de Scudéry's novels overtly beg to be included in Drujon's lists and to have their not-so-secret secret codes drawn up at great length. I hope to have demonstrated that such is not the case with Tristan's text, yet a question remains: Is the *Page* totally innocent of responsibility for these explanations? Only Démoris hints at a certain complicity on Tristan's part: "L'allusion à la réalité a pu contribuer à induire un mode de lecture légèrement différent de celui qui s'appliquait ordinairement aux romans." But there is no need for hesitation on this issue. The *Page* "beguiles" its reader, "induces" him to believe that its strange world cannot be accounted for in purely novelistic terms. It simultaneously invites and rejects allegiance to the world of "autobiography," not only because it calls for the type of "mixed" reading advocated by Adam, Démoris, and occasionally even Arland, but more importantly because the reality it integrates is a reality consciously rearranged according to the peculiar specifications of the libertine author.

To find a writer altering and disguising personal experience for presentation in a fictional work is no more unusual than to discover that certain events may be demonstrated to have been cloaked in a robe of fictionality when presented by a novelist in an autobiographical context—hence the "purist" belief that man can never know himself and that true autobiography is impossible, advanced in the mid-seventeenth century by, among others, La
Neither of these tendencies can be equated, however, with the transformations effectuated by Tristan and the other libertine novelists. They in a sense have no choice but to present events with a simultaneous existence in the realms of reality and fiction. They can create a special brand of literary autobiography because they have already succeeded in the creation of an unusual mode of existential autobiography. They "handle" their own existences as though these existences were equivalent to those of a character in a work of their own creation.

"Je suis le Heros veritable de mon Roman" (p. 9), says D'Assoucy in the first sentence of the Avantures, as if heroes were real and life were a novel. These libertines maintain a distance from the events of their lives that allows them to mingle what actually took place and what they imagine as having taken place (what they would have liked to take place?), so that in the long run all notions of true and false become inoperative. For them, the reality of an event is less important than the presentation of that event as real. Their passion for control over events, like their obsession with onomastic autonomy, makes them entirely responsible for their lives. They attain their goal, that of molding lives like no others in their day.

What are the facts about Cyrano's legendary dueling skills: did he really chase Montfleury from the stage, rout a hundred men at the Porte de Nesles? Was D'Assoucy actually burned in effigy in Montpellier? Did Tristan, alias the page disgracie, really meet a magician? Under the guidance of libertine manipulations, all such questions become illegitimate. According to D'Assoucy's conclusion:

Chapelle t'en a bien conté,
Dassoucy t'en fait le semblable:
Mais pour dire la vérité,
L'un et l'autre de son costé
N'a rien écrit de véritable;
Croy, Lecteur, que c'est une fable
Et que le tour est inventé.

(P. 188)

The libertine novelist's way of handling his existence invalidates the assumption advanced by all composers of clefs and
footnotes that the composition of (auto)biography is somehow less artistic than that of literary texts. By making operative a theatrical conception of reality, he transforms himself into a living carnival, what Démoris calls, in reference to the hero of a contemporary comic novel not without thematic links to the libertine tradition, *Le Gascon extravagant*, a “fou conscient . . . spectateur d’une société où il se trouve déclassé, mais . . . aussi un acteur conscient d’être un spectacle.” In their personal existences, Théophile, Tristan, Cyrano, Chapelle, and D’Assoucy act out the myth of the writer larger than life. They dramatize themselves and forge their own destinies, arranging and shaping occurrences in a literary way, according to literary models. A far cry from the passive, almost accidental mingling of fiction and reality found, or at least suspected, in much contemporary personal literature, this represents a conscious project to make reality imitate the fictional. The would-be libertine biographer who becomes aware of such deformations must come to the conclusion that he cannot verify the events described, but can only trace the contours of their legends. Such a realization is strangely similar to that which enlightens Ryan, the hero of the Borges story from which, in an attempt to be faithful to the spirit of these authors by keeping my own critical reality within boundaries already set by literature, I borrow the title and the epigraph for this chapter. This is a chapter of quotations, but also about a particular brand of quotation, illustrated best in Borges’s allegory.

Ryan’s attempt to write an autobiography of his great-grandfather, Fergus Kilpatrick, a political hero and victim of assassination, is hindered by his discovery of an unthinkable number of parallels between his ancestor’s last days and those of Julius Caesar. He postulates the existence of a “secret pattern in time, a drawing in which the lines repeat themselves,” until he realizes that part of a reported conversation with Kilpatrick on the day of his death had already been pronounced in *Macbeth*. “That history should have imitated history was already sufficiently marvelous; that history should imitate literature is inconceivable.” When Ryan pieces together the “truth” of Kilpatrick’s death, he discovers that the patriot was in fact a traitor who chose to be executed according to a prearranged script borrowed from
the two Shakespeare plays in order to provide the hero needed by the Irish rebellion. None of those who participated as unwitting actors in the drama staged by Kilpatrick and his former friends suspected the prepackaged and plagiarized nature of its scenario; they saw only the tragic and heroic death of a great leader. Ryan himself decides not to betray the legend, but to publish "a book dedicated to the glory of the hero."

Borges's story shows that literature is or can be more real than life, more believable and certainly more gripping. More precisely, it can provide, as Borges's Irish rebel and our group of French ones illustrate, a model for a world view that enables its followers to laugh in the face of traditional norms and categories of behavior, and thereby free themselves from them. By forging for themselves lives "based on the techniques of art," they gain the distance from the events they are living described by Viktor Shklovsky in his own autobiographical novel, *Zoo*: "We play the fool in this world in order to be free. Routine we transform into anecdotes. Between the world and ourselves, we build our own little menagerie worlds."23 The libertines choose to adopt neither the role of hero nor that of traitor, but the more ambiguous status of the doubtful hero, playing out a series of not always heroic acts in a spirit of grandiose, and borrowed, glory. They thereby change their autobiographies into literary material, into the biographies of heroes in a novel. They become in real life ready-made characters, deliberately setting themselves apart and demanding consideration, not as ordinary human beings, but as superhuman mixtures of fact and fiction. As a consequence of this irreverent playfulness, the fact they mingle into their works generally cannot be treated as ordinary fact, and is destined to defy interpretation in footnotes. An event in such a life is already a bit of literary material, and to make reference to it is therefore to indulge in nothing less than a striking form of citation. It can be said that any autobiography incorporates or in a sense "quotes" material already in existence, but its libertine variant takes this notion one step further, since the act of citation involves the real already made fictional, and as such constitutes a true text within a text.

Thus, when the lack of proper names is compensated for by what would seem the ultimate in realistic naming, the presence of the author's name in his own text, the function of such an evoca-
tion is far from clear. It is certainly not sufficient to conclude quickly that, because the narrator of Cyrano’s utopias bears the anagram Dyrcona, or because D’Assoucy’s name is omnipresent in the chapter titles and in the text of the Avantures, the identity among author, narrator, and main character is confirmed. The first indication of the complexity of this presence is given by the fact that Cyrano chooses for his narrator what is perhaps the most bizarre of the long list of signatures he employs, one he did not use to take possession of a literary work, one outside his plural replacements for the normally unique nom d’auteur.

“Dyrcona” is an anagram, a type of name usually associated with hiding or self-protection. This is its function when used, for example, by an author either to refer to himself in a daring context or to a target for ridicule in a satire or a roman à clef. This latter context is one familiar to Cyrano, who turns to anagrams to “cover up” his most ferocious satirical letters: “Contre Ronscar,” “Contre Soucidas.” The anagram’s enigma is that it usually provides the barest minimum—indeed, an almost nonexistent—cover. Any secrecy obtained by an anagram is fragile. If the word from which it is composed remains unknown, then the anagram maintains its incognito—“Voltaire,” for example. In the case of the great majority of anagrams, nothing is involved but the pretense of a game, the innest of in-jokes for the initiate so bored that he wants to be given the illusion of working to decode, whereas the task is, in fact, effortless. The anagram pretends to hide something that it really unveils. It is the ultimate in onomastic titillation, libertine in the other sense of the word. In describing “Dyrcona”’s function in naming Cyrano’s narrator, Jean Serroy, the only critic to have directed his attention to the problem of this anagram, concludes too quickly that, just as the moon is “le monde autre, le monde à l’envers, . . . il n’est pas jusqu’au nom même de Cyrano qui ne soit inversé.”24 Dyrcona is not, however, allowed to assume his twisted name until he has left the land of reversals (where he remains nameless) and has returned to earth at the beginning of the Estats et empires. Furthermore “Dyrcona,” unlike Cyrano’s other examples of the art of anagramming, “Soucidas” and “Ronscar,” is not based simply on inversion—here, the juggling is more complex.

Generally speaking, the subclass of the proper name that is the
The proper name exists as nom d'auteur only with regard to a body of works, and cannot begin to exercise this function until at least one of these works is in circulation. The nom d'auteur is not a nom d'auteur unless the reader, seeing it, can say: "Oh, yes, he wrote ______." "Peut-être n'est-on véritablement auteur qu'à partir d'un second livre, quand le nom propre inscrit en couverture devient le 'facteur commun' d'au moins deux textes différents."28

Cyrano manages to short-circuit the functioning of the nom d'auteur. He does so first of all by refusing to standardize his name, to present a stable name to be associated with his collected
literary production. Second, he chooses to inscribe in the *Estats et empires* a variant of his name without literary connotations. “Dyrcona” is neither a *nom d’auteur* nor really even a proper name—at least, it does not look like what would be accepted as a “normal” proper name in French. It is a game, a formation of shifted letters that points to only an individual protected by a series of masks, neither completely author nor nonauthor, grounded principally neither in reality nor in fiction. That someone could transform himself according to artistic techniques, that history could be made to imitate literature, is in a sense, as Ryan concludes, “inconceivable,” so the critic, biographer, and reader of Cyrano all come away baffled. “Dyrcona” may have a foundation in reality, but it functions in Cyrano’s text not as a *nom d’auteur* but as a *nom de personnage*.

D’Assoucy continues the problematic raised by Cyrano by “doubling” his own name in the *Avantures*. From the dichotomy he maintains, it would seem that there was a private individual (Coypeau) whose existence was cut off by the birth of the literary persona (D’Assoucy). The first ceases to exist when the second gains recognition. On the unique occasion when D’Assoucy seeks to evoke the past and the man outside literature, the family name is used. The encounter with his “cousin de Carpentras”?9 is an acceptance, even though accidental, of origin. The pseudo cousin approaches D’Assoucy and pushes him to pronounce for the first time the name that links him to his past: “Ma foi, luy dis-je, j’ay eu autre fois un oncle, qu’on appeloit Coypeau” (p. 154). It is then the cousin’s turn to reconfer the abandoned name: “Je vous appelleray mon cousin Coypeau” (p. 155). Indeed, the entire scene takes place under the banner of the forgotten “Coypeau,” a sign mentioned no fewer than seven times in the course of two pages. The meeting and evocation of his past does not seem painful for D’Assoucy—“Je m’en rejouis, luy dis-je” (p. 154). He, nevertheless, does not seek, and fails to find, occasion to repeat it. “Coypeau” is never mentioned again in the *Avantures*.

The proper name most in evidence in the text is the name chosen to replace “Coypeau,” the stage name, “D’Assoucy.” Attention is called to the “falseness” or “literariness” of this title through the integration of a moment of onomastic playfulness. When the people of Montpellier want to attack him, “au lieu de
Soucy Musicien, ils... m'appellassent Sorcier et Musicien.” An unmistakable indication of the center of interest in the text is the fact that all but three of the chapter titles in the Avantures and the Avantures d’Italie contain “D’Assoucy,” and they almost always begin with this name: “Dassoucy, partant de Paris pour aller servir leurs A. R. de Savoye, rencontre un Filou,” and so on. In addition, on the three other occasions in the Avantures on which the narrator is named by someone else, whether in the course of being robbed or being saved from robbery, he is always addressed as “D’Assoucy.”

The preference for this name expressed in the Avantures would seem at first glance to be a clear case of reference to a nom d’auteur in Foucault’s sense. The “monsieur Dassoucy” mentioned during the three name-assuming encounters is always, in fact, D’Assoucy, poet and author of numerous collections of verse: “Vous souvenez-vous de cette chanson à boire que vous fistes, et que tout le monde chantoit à la Cour?” (p. 24); “Je luy présentay tous mes ouvrages burlesques dans trois livres differens, bien reliez et bien dorez” (p. 46); “et luy... me riposta autant de fois, en disant à la santé du Grand Dassoucy, Prince des Poètes Burlesques” (p. 86). A well-known literary name, but the story it evokes is past and concluded. The composition of songs was accomplished in a bygone era. The books have ceased to roll off the presses. The only eulogy in the present tense is made by Philippot, a “poète du Pont neuf,” and therefore hardly an appropriate judge of genius. In short, the man of letters who tells his story in the Avantures is a has-been, and the name “D’Assoucy” has become more and more readily associated with the scandalous life of the composer of the poems and the travelogue. The initial break with the past destroys the family name; the second leaves the nom d’auteur behind.

2. FOR A NEW NOVEL

The preceding pages may be read as an attempt to do the impossible: to simultaneously affirm and deny the presence of autobiography in the libertine text. I want to deny the possibility of an autobiographical interpretation that could be termed traditional in any sense of the word and to affirm the existence of a conception of autobiography particular to the libertine novel.
These texts can be read neither as *romans à clef*, nor as historical documents, nor as precursors of the texts generally accepted today as the first manifestations of modern autobiography. Their case is exceptional, not, however, because the conditions for modern autobiography were absent in the seventeenth century, as perhaps they were in earlier periods. It is exceptional because they tantalize by inviting, yet escaping, assimilation in any of the traditions of the “prehistory” of autobiography discerned by Lejeune or others. To describe the libertine texts, it is necessary to step outside the norms and the terminology developed from and for less malleable texts, and to stumble about in a blurred and not quite definable space. When Jean Fabre, for example, raises the question of the existence of an “autobiographie ‘libertine,’” extending from Cardano to Rousseau, in which the libertines “dévoilaient à dessein, aggressivement, leurs secrètes pensées et les scandales de leur vie,” even this “home” must be denied the libertine novelists. If (and the point is certainly open to debate) Rousseau can be traced to Cardano, the seventeenth-century libertines cannot be easily used to complete the chain. The very conditions for autobiography affirmed by modern theoreticians on the basis of such texts as the *Confessions* exist for seventeenth-century freethinkers only to be partially rejected, and for this reason, if for no other, the filiation cannot be neatly traced. I have attempted to describe their particular conception of autobiography and the implications it had for the conduct of their lives. I would now like to examine the effect of this attitude on their novels, to trace the imprint of the libertine vision of personal history on them. It will be necessary at times to reopen questions raised in the first part of this chapter in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the specific qualities of libertine narrative. By measuring the technical distance that separates these *autobiographies romantées* from autobiographies, I hope to arrive at a more complete description of the libertine sensibility.

As Lejeune conveys in his now-famous formula, “le pacte autobiographique,” autobiography originates in the asking. I, the author, make explicit in some way and at some point in my text my desire to have this text read as the most accurate account I can possibly give of my psychological and factual existence(s). The libertine writers seem at times to be making this request. The
Page opens with a cry from the heart to a certain “cher Thirinte”: “La fable ne fera point éclater ici ses ornements avec pompe; la vérité s’y présentera seulement si mal habillée qu’on pourra dire qu’elle est toute nue. On ne verra point ici une peinture qui soit flattée, c’est une fidèle copie d’un lamentable original; c’est comme une réflexion de miroir” (p. 50). This rivals La Rochefoucauld’s confrontation with the mirror in its pretense of sincerity. But the Page is part fiction, Thirinte entirely so, and there is no truth to tell anyway. The libertines are aware of the fact that their protestations of accuracy are clouded by a primordial drive toward fable. The resulting notion of “pact” is best expressed in D’Assoucy’s warning to the reader not to believe a word of what he reads (p. 188).

How could there be a pact of fidelity in texts that systematically reject initiation and development and indeed all factors of autobiographical “stability”? Such notions are central to most current theories of early autobiography, Georges Gusdorf’s, for example: “Toute autobiographie digne de ce nom présente ce caractère d’une expérience initiatique, d’une recherche du centre.” The importance Gusdorf places on this new “quête du Graal” is derived from a conversion experience of “un christianisme à la première personne” that he feels is inextricably linked to the formation of the genre. In this light, the libertine texts can be described as the record of anti-Christian and anti-conversion experiences. They continue the liberation from the divine made by the humanistic autobiographies of the Renaissance, but differ from them in their refusal to see an evolution in what they view as a shifting moi.

All libertine narrative takes place under the sign of what Starobinski, speaking of the picaresque, has called “le temps faible”: “le temps des faiblesses, de l’erreur, de l’errance, des humiliations.” The libertine narrator is even more static than his picaresque counterpart. By this I mean that, even though he is constantly on the move, he never moves out of “le temps faible.” Whereas the picaro’s récit is told from the vantage point of a present characterized by rest from turmoil and folly, by some sort of peaceful comprehension of past weaknesses, even by integration into the society that sought to humiliate him, the libertine’s (with the exception of Francion) unfolds against a backdrop of continuing upheaval, both social and intellectual. The present repeats the story of the
past, and the unseen future can only bring more of the same, in a world in which there is no salvation—religious, intellectual, or social—and therefore no possibility of conversion. The libertine hero can neither develop nor unfold in the course of a series of adventures. The only integration of difference left open to him is absolute change, stripped of explanation and blatant in its simplicity. Thus, he may defend a certain belief at one point, its opposite at another, like Dyrcona, who makes the switch from Catholic to atheist without even the minimal signal of the drop of a hat.

Little wonder, then, that in the accumulations of follies, past, present, and certainly to come, there seem to be no limits in the domains of both feasibility and complexity. Even if there is initially something of the identity among author, narrator, and hero that all theoreticians of autobiography, from Starobinski to Lejeune, believe to be essential, this conformity is quickly lost, and the narrator/hero often embarks on a separate course of adventure possible only in the novelist's imagination. The context of the libertine story may vary from author to author, even while retaining the same basic mixture of what can be attributed to the domain of authentic and accurate autobiographical description and what is evidently part of the fantastic portrait. On this question, the *Page* provides a good point of departure, since the spectrum of events it contains ranges from the verifiable, the measurable (Tristan and his hero both have early “careers” as pages; both travel extensively), to the credible, if not yet verified, or indeed not verifiable (the circumstances of first loves, the itinerary of their voyages), to the completely improbable (Tristan’s sharing of his page’s encounter with someone able not only to make gold before him but also to offer him a selection of magic potions). The events belonging to the last category often contribute the most striking points of comparison among the various libertine texts.

Théophile’s *Fragments* provides the best example for a detailed analysis because the shortness of the text permits a complete listing of the events it describes. To begin with, almost all the tidbits of information that can be gleaned about the narrator of the *Fragments* can be assigned without hesitation to one of the first two categories described above. For the most part, they fall under the heading of the historically verifiable in terms of Théophile’s biography: Théophile and the narrator both are literary “mod-
erns”; both are exiled; both are well-known figures; both are polyglots; and, most strikingly, both are poets. In the second category belongs the outline of a psychological portrait provided by the Fragments: the mood of the narrator/hero, and quite possibly of Théophile as well, is influenced by the weather; for him/them, it is necessary to feel passions simultaneously in several domains; and he/they dislike overly formal social situations.

These two listings omit only two indications about the narrator’s life, both intimately linked to the status of the Fragments as a libertine text. The narrator describes in some detail the scene in which he is responsible for unmasking a “démoniaque” who, with the assistance of a priest and an old woman, had succeeded in convincing the public that she was possessed. This scene is a central one, not only for its humor and its striking topicality, but also because it borders on the impossible—the likelihood of Théophile’s indulging personally in such a flamboyant exposure of the abuses of organized religion and then boasting of it in a public confession seems slim. Moreover, this gesture is in open contradiction to the other problematic event in the Fragments, the narrator’s own “unmasking” when he is discovered to be a Huguenot. At this time, his first reaction is to defend himself, not from condemnation by fellow libertines for his open statement of religious belief, but rather from condemnation by Catholics who might be outraged by any gesture of support for such a heretical group. He protests: “Dieu ne m’avoit pas fait encore la grace de me recevoir au giron de son Eglise,” thereby negating the potentially dangerous affiliation by affirming his subsequent conversion to the one, true faith and his entry into a state of grace.

With this seemingly innocent sentence, Théophile plunges his reader into the problem of autobiographical interpretation. The narrator’s profession of religious orthodoxy functions as a trick to catch the unwary reader. Near the end of a text filled with similarities and points of identification between its narrator and its author, the narrator slips in an affirmation that even a reader who does not believe Garasse’s slanders and the evidence accumulated by his persecutors cannot accept as true. There is no information to support the assertion that Théophile was a willing convert to Catholicism at an adult age roughly contemporaneous with the composition of the Fragments. The very presence of this
line in his work solicits a protective reading for it, but one that is also false and troubling. How can Démoris’s interpretation of the Fragments as “l’autobiographie du libertin triomphant” be wholeheartedly defended in the face of such a statement? Théophile’s narrator certainly dwells at times on moments of libertine glory—the strident literary polemic of the first chapter is proof enough of his confidence—but as long as the freethinker feels obliged to hide behind a mask of beliefs, he is far from completely triomphant. Keeping in mind Théophile’s refusal to stand up and be counted as a libertine, it becomes impossible to accept Démoris’s attractive explanation for the unfinished state of the text: “Théophile n’écrira pas son roman autobiographique, dont l’esquisse est motivée sans doute comme réponse au fait de l’exil. Le libertin heureux a sa vie: il n’a pas besoin de son histoire.” To a large extent, the Fragments describes the fun and games of a happy libertine, but of one, nevertheless, deprived of intellectual freedom, and therefore perhaps of the desire to complete a story that can only have an unhappy ending. The hesitant autobiographical mode fathered by Théophile in the Fragments and adopted by the libertines puts any classification of their works into question.

The life stories traced by these works are all partial, both chronologically and experientially. There is no claim to totality in the libertine text, no attempt to account for the fullness of a life, an aim generally deemed essential to autobiography. Francion clearly presents the most complete treatment, taking its hero from birth up to marriage (in the third edition), yet even here it is obvious that the reader has not arrived at the end of the tale. There must be something to life that does not end with marriage, even for a libertine super-hero. The Fragments contains the account of a small slice of adulthood, lasting no more than a few days, with a unique excursion into the near past for the story of the “démoniaque.” The Page makes no attempt to extend its horizons beyond youth and adolescence; when we leave its hero, he is only nineteen. Chapelle’s tale has the smallest scope of all, no more than that of a short-distance voyage with a few brief encounters. And though the attention devoted by D’Assoucy to his family background and to episodes from his childhood cannot be underestimated, his Avantures and Avantures d’Italie remain essentially
the story of another voyage, even though a longer and more complex one than Chapelle’s outing. As for the life story covered by Cyrano’s two utopias, it could hardly be less complete. In fact, even to speak of autobiography with regard to a text that tells the story of voyages in strange vehicles to and from the moon and the sun and describes the even stranger group of individuals found in these worlds seems uncalled for, if not laughable.

But it is precisely the type of autobiographical revelations contained in *L’Autre Monde* and the *Estats et empires* that is most characteristic of libertine texts. For them, the life story is, or can be made, important, but it is not essential. Rather than the stories of facts, dates, and events, these are intellectual autobiographies. Thus, external events are secondary to attitudes toward them and the philosophies developed or borrowed to deal with them. Plot is subordinated to sensation and belief. What is important in these texts is not what the heroes do, but how and in what spirit they do it.

More radically than the previous writers of intellectual autobiography (Cardano, for example), they do away with any attempt at seeking chronology and causes. After all, how could these beings who subvert names, genealogy, and all other forms of authority and control over their existences devote their energies to a search for origins? They are, not because—. They simply are. They do not believe such and such because—. They simply believe. The portrait ultimately assembled may not seem complete when judged by the standards of cause-effect logic, but it succeeds in transmitting an image of intellectual distress in the face of a world determined to keep those who dare ask questions in a position of alienation. Théophile’s narrator and Dyrcona are obliged to perform intellectual about-faces. The page and D’Assoucy are able to distance themselves from their disgraces, but they cannot escape them. Events are present only to confirm the ultimate intellectual sensation of aporia.

These heroes live their adventures in a spirit faithful to the libertine attitude toward personal history. The belief in “literary” detachment is handed down from author to narrator. The page, Dyrcona, and the other narrators are auctorial reflections essentially because of their visions of themselves. Like their creators, they see themselves as characters, so they play out continuously
the role with which they identify. The confusion between life and reality evident in D'Assoucy's opening formula, "Je suis le Heros veritable de mon Roman," also permeates the tone in which his narrative unfolds. The detachment with which D'Assoucy in his role of "Don Quichotte moderne" narrates his adventures is so thoroughly burlesque that, were it not for the predominance of prose, the *Avantures* could be described as one of the epic poems characteristic of that genre. D'Assoucy is wrong to apologize, even in jest, for the time robbed from his poetry for this text: "J'eusse bien mieux fait de continuer à composer des vers... que d'aller, comme un Don Guichot [sic]; chercher des avan­tures étranges par le monde" (p. 7). All libertine compositions, in life as well as in fiction, have essentially the same status, a point made clear by Boutonné's remark: "Entre ses oeuvres je n'ai pas estimé que le roman de sa vie fût des moins achevés" (p. 47).

These narrators who simultaneously affirm that their stories are "véritables," based on real life, and that they are defined according to literary terms and thereby consumed from within, demonstrate a carefree attitude toward chronological and factual precision that reveals the fiction of their accuracy. Thus, D'Assoucy's attempt to situate the starting point of his journey is limited to a hesitant "Je ne scay si ce fut l'an mil six cens cinquante quatre ou cinquante cinq." (His editor Colombey feels obliged to "clear up" the matter with a note explaining that it was actually neither 1654, nor 1655, but 1653 [p. 11]). In a similar manner, the page closes his narrative by remarking to his "cher Thirinte" that he has taken him up to the point "ou finit le dix-huit ou dix-neuvième an de ma vie" (p. 317).

Texts that are "véritables" may transmit doubtful information, but they rarely admit to doing so, or at least stop short of flaunting the fact. The libertine text reveals a kinship with the burlesque in this domain, a kinship reinforced by a certain hesitancy with regard to basic narrative problems. Who, for example, is the hero of D'Assoucy's text? D'Assoucy seems to have forgotten that he has provided the most logical answer to this question by affirming that he is himself the true hero of his novel when he later echoes his striking opening formula with no explanation for either the change of mind or the change of word order: "Pierrotin, le Heros de mon veritable Roman" (p. 71). This is precisely the kind of
seemingly offhand comment with which any burlesque narrator worthy of the name delights in teasing his reader—witness the *Roman comique*’s “hero intervention”: “Le Comedien la Rancune, un des principaux Heros de nostre romant, car il n’y aura pas pour un dans ce livre-icy; et puisqu’il n’y a rien de plus parfait qu’un Heros de livre, demy-douzaine de Heros ou soy-disant tels feront plus d’honneur au mien qu’un seul.”  

D’Assoucy’s wavering is not as overtly self-conscious as Scarron’s, but it ultimately serves the same purpose of casting doubt on the exclusiveness of the notion of the hero.

As a result of their double life on the frontier of life and literature, these narrators share the psychological blindness of the original self-conscious hero and D’Assoucy’s model, Don Quixote. The switch to the first person from the third person used to narrate the Don’s adventures gives them no additional insights, as is shown when the page presents a choice of motivations for his actions. Here, the doubt used by self-conscious narrators to mark the distance between them and their creations is found in a first-person account of a former self, indicating that this self has been so completely objectified into third-person status that the appropriate emotions can no longer be re-created: “Je me retirai dans une hôtellerie assez écartée, où je soupaï peu, soit par lassitude ou par tristesse” (p. 94; italics mine). In a different vein, but with a similar effect, D’Assoucy’s psychology remains completely burlesque. He revels in such non-explanations of his actions and cavalier treatments of his personality as his attribution of the origin of the quarrel with Cyrano to the theft of a capon. He claims that he fled to Italy and began living his *Avantures* simply because he had seen Cyrano carrying a gun—even though he knew that he was only taking it to be repaired.

In any but the libertine text, such reasoning would seem an affront to a reader’s intelligence. In these novels, where character is static, constructed through parataxis rather than the result of causal progression, its mysteries cannot be explained, but only recorded. Instead of including the evolution leading to a crucial moment, an evolution normally associated with a work of philosophical or psychological initiation, these texts are simply structured around the seemingly infinite repetition of a key situation, the situation responsible for the posture assumed in their narra-
tion. Francion outwits Valentin in the novel’s opening scene and continues to be victorious in every round of the never-ending battle of wits that eventually leads him to the satisfaction of all his desires: social status and wealth, as well as friendship and love. The narrator of the *Fragments* is as victorious in showing up other representatives of intellectual dishonesty, bad poets, and pedants, as he is at unmasking the possessed woman. Both are eternally faithful to the “franchise” Francion bears inscribed in his name, the honesty and directness that expose the imposter.

In the *Page*, this invariability of characterization is even more evident, as well as more brutal, because of the totally pessimistic vision of the libertine fate the novel introduces. The reader begins with the conclusive judgment provided by the work’s title: the “I” of the narrative voice is always already a page disgracié. Evidently, the older page responsible for the existence of the text chooses this title. While he was living the events that compose the story of his life, the young page could not yet have known that all mobility was forever to be denied him. Because of the work’s title, in the reader’s mind he remains frozen in the initial position selected for him. As Démoreis points out, this is one case in which the fact that an autobiography is incomplete is of no consequence: “L’important est que le lecteur sache que cette suite absente ne doit rien changer au sens des premières expériences.”

The page moves from disgrace to disgrace in the existing volumes of his adventures. An additional volume is announced in the last pages of the text, and held out like a carrot by Boutonné to the “good” reader who had the power to make the book a commercial success: “L’auteur a aussi laissé quelques fragments d’un troisième volume qu’il se promettait de faire imprimer . . . que je m’efforcerais d’assembler, si le lecteur paraît satisfait de cet essai” (p. 47). But it certainly would have done nothing to change the page’s disgraceful course, and thus would have been completely superfluous.

Dyrcona’s wanderings may be described as a continuous free fall from grace, broken by occasional landings. He falls into, as well as out of, paradise, drops back to earth, slams down onto the sun’s surface, a cosmic Slinky condemned to perpetual motion. When the libertine hero finds a good role, he holds onto it, as the example of D’Assoucy confirms. Like the *Page* and *L’Autre Monde*, the *Avantures* is the story of a victim—not just an ordi-
nary victim, but a victim whose victimization takes on gigantic proportions through repetition. He is robbed and swindled by virtually everyone he meets, a perpetual realization of the fable of Jacques le Fataliste, every man's dog. The last libertine heroes find themselves sharing the repetitive punishment of a Prometheus, the mythical figure mentioned most often in L'Autre Monde.

Unlike the victorious libertine figures who proceed joyfully to unmask every fake in the universe without stopping to ask questions about the origin of their power, their less fortunate successors seem anxious to place the blame for their state on an outside source. Echoing the lamentations of the characters of the roman heroïque (who at least have the consolation of finding an end to their trials), they speak of their destiny, of the bad star under which they were born, or they attribute their ability to attract misfortune to the devil's intervention. The page remarks, "Dieu permet que les démons s'en mêlent" (p. 52), thereby transferring to a universal present Dyrcona's explanation for the slip that incurs the wrath of Elie in the paradis terrestre: "Le Diable s'en mêla" (p. 53).

The most striking illustration of this use of fate is provided by the adjective the page chooses to describe himself. He is not in a state of grace, either because he has been deprived of grace—pushed, like Dyrcona, out of the paradise that is never really present in the Page—or because, like the damned in Jansenist terminology, he simply was never given any to begin with. Moreover, his graceless state seems permanent, given the finality of the work's title. Unlike the narrator of the Fragments, he is not destined to receive grace from God. D'Assoucy's humbler equivalent to describe his own fallen state is the adjective whose popularity he helped establish. The Avantures and the Avantures d'Italie are often grouped together under the title Avantures burlesques, a suitable label for a work in which D'Assoucy proves that the Emperor of the Burlesque is a true medieval fool king, master and slave wrapped up in one. With the numerous disgraces he endures, he outstrips even the most famous burlesque hero in prose, the Roman comique's Ragotin, who, like the tattered Emperor, is a human godenot, or marionette, constantly made to fall down for the crowd's entertainment.
In this vision of himself, the later libertine hero is indeed an anti-hero, fortune's scapegoat. In the page's terms, "Je trace une histoire déplorable, où je ne parais que comme un objet de pitié et comme un jouet des passions des astres et de la fortune" (p. 50). The key words are "objet," "jouet." Despite his use of the first person, the libertine narrator's experience is apparently a totally passive one. He is a puppet, and fortune is the puppeteer, pulling the strings and playing with him as though he were a mere object to be tossed about. As a result of this predicament, the page and D'Assoucy are unable to assume total responsibility for the subjective vision of first-person narration. Thus, although the body of the account is controlled by the first person, third-person narrative is not wiped out, as could be expected, but continues to exist in the chapter titles: "L'Enfance et élévation du page disgracié," "Comme le Page disgracié faisait la cour à son maître, qui était tombé malade d'une fièvre tiéde," "Dassoucy traverse la Bourgogne, et va à pied pour son plaisir; il décrit son grotesque équipage, et fait voir la simplicité de ceux qui se rendent esclaves du sot honneur." These headings maintain the existence of "he" and "his" alongside "I" and "my." "I" chooses to ensure the presence of its object next to itself. The third-person cannot be erased from these texts because the subject continues to see itself, in gambling as in life, as the object of the verb "jouer."

In considering this insistence on the presence of "I" as object and as victim, the fact that the third person is relegated to a secondary status in chapter titles cannot be forgotten. The subjectivity of the first-person vision clearly dominates, and there is an occasional realization that the notion of the self as victim is a role actively assumed. "I" chooses to be viewed as "he," and controls the transmission of this vision. Through that choice and that control, "I" takes on an active role. The libertine hero may lament his fate, but he aggressively works to manipulate it. When outside forces trick him, he is the object, or plaything, of the verb "jouer," but such occurrences do not exhaust the importance of this verb in the libertine text.

Far more often than he is toyed with, the narrator himself leads the game. Thus, D'Assoucy presents a "portrait enjoué" of his life (p. 7). In the Page, role-playing runs rampant, since the hero is always playing at being what he is not. When the need arises, he
pretends to be asleep, rich, noble. For his mistress, he re-creates himself and his past, in order to make himself into a hero of the type of love story he feels will impress her: "Je m'étudiai à oublier tout à fait mon nom et à me forger une fausse généalogie et de fausses aventures." He even frees himself so completely from the constraint of his past that he not only acquires the new name that goes with his new genealogy but also stresses the fact that he bestows it on himself: "Je me nommois Ariston" (p. 119). Ever taken in by play, even when he is in charge of it, the page succeeds in disguising himself so well that "je ne me connusse pas moi-même" (pp. 93-94) and in changing his past so thoroughly that "je croyais ces choses-là véritables" (p. 152).

It appears that his play-acting is so well executed that the page can even succeed in shaping his destiny, in actually making his tales come true. With his mistress, for example, when she is afraid he loves her cousin, "j'avais joué le personnage d'innocent accusé" (p. 127)—which he later becomes. When he is accused of having tried to poison his mistress, "j'étais l'innocent persécuté que l'on tenait comme en prison" (p. 172). His desire to conform to his vision of himself forces things to happen as he believes they should with regard to still another episode of the past he crafted for his mistress's benefit. For her, the page pretends to be the son of a merchant (p. 119). Later, in the course of the voyages he undertakes when he is obliged to flee England, his valet buys furs in Norway so they can make a profit from their stay. When faced with paraître become être, the page comments: "Et de seigneur et de prince imaginaire que j'avais été, je me vis effectivement mar­chand" (p. 203).

Confronted with this vision of the narrator as the creator of the game of his life, the reader is never entirely convinced that "he/I" accepts the explanations so readily given for his status. The page, for example, clearly feels he should have been more successful, since he was so richly endowed at birth: "et si l'espérance de pou­voir trouver cet homme ne m'eût point longtemps abusé, je me fusse trouvé trop riche du bien de mon patrimoine et des talents qu'il avait plu à Dieu de me donner" (pp. 212-13). He hesitates between fortune and artifice when it comes to placing the final blame, to giving the ultimate explanation for his status. Is he disgracié because he is a victim of the whims of fate, or because he
himself creates this fate with the strength of his vision? He wonders "si ce que je croyais être un caprice de la fortune n'eût point été un pur ouvrage de l'artifice" (p. 218).

Nothing illustrates more forcefully the page's indecivity than the pair of names he bears in the text. Is he defined by the title adopted by the older narrator and linked to his status as a third-person object, or is he better described by the false name the young page chooses for himself in a gesture of the first-person's subjective artifice: Ariston, the best, upper class? The coexistence of the fate-artifice couple in the Page is indicative of a fundamental indecisiveness in its hero's sense of identity, and this indecisiveness is echoed in the special character of the two names he adopts. This reduction of the proper name to a title composed of a common noun and an adjective and to an invented, cardboard name is not incompatible with the absence of proper names in the Page. These tags do not really function as names, but are substitutes that fool no one and can do nothing to bridge the gap at the non-center of the work.

In the opening pages of his story, the page uses another third-person title to replace his father's name: "Je ne vous déduirai point toute cette aventure, . . . vouloir la représenter sur ce papier, serait vouloir écrire l'histoire de l'écuyer aventureux, et non pas l'aventure du PAGE DISGRACIE" (p. 51). The strange presence of capital letters only strengthens the impression that the page is aware of the inadequacy of these name objects and wants to call attention to their artificiality. He himself confirms their functioning as mere extensions of his silence about his origins when he admits the existence of a third, supposedly "real," name. Typically, he refuses to reveal this name, despite the pleading of his faithful valet, who before leaving his service begs to be told his name in order to be able to say where he had served (p. 211).

The page's obstinate refusal to lift the veil covering his own name is echoed by his secrecy regarding his mistress's: "Je ne lui dis pas le nom ni la qualité de ma maîtresse, m'étant résolu de ne découvrir jamais à personne un secret si fort important" (p. 230). In most other cases, the names of the characters encountered are revealed only as they are about to disappear from the pages of the novel. For example, the valet who wants so desperately to learn his master's name has a name, Jacob Cerston, which designates
him more appropriately than the vague “l’irlandais” or “mon irlandais” used for him throughout their travels, but it is not passed on to the reader until after the valet has left the novel. Likewise, we learn only as the English sojourn is coming to an end that the woman referred to simply as “la favorite de ma maîtresse” has a name—of sorts: “Après que Lidame (c’est ainsi que j’appellais la favorite” [p. 175]). This appropriation of the right to name is enacted by the page once more in the text when he mentions “ce petit chasseur de qui j’ai parlé et que je nommerais Gélace” (p. 262).

He thus admits that the proper names assigned to the secondary characters in the Page in this offhand, after-the-fact manner do not really function as they should. They do not indicate origin, since they are invented by the page in an attempt to create still another façade in front of the characters in his story, and to subvert the normally trustworthy function of the name in literature. “Gélace,” for example, would be an ideal name for a character in a novelistic system where “Greek name” equals “character’s name.” The normal process of interpretation of such a name in such a system would involve a simple transcoding through which the suggestiveness of its meaning in Greek, in this case “he who laughs,” would be properly appreciated. In the Page, however, this type of interpretation is blocked by the intervention of the narrator’s “que je nommerai,” which announces a self-consciousness incompatible with a highly codified system and one which no editor’s footnote can eliminate.

The most problematic name in the Page shares certain of the peculiarities of this use of “Gélace.” When not considered as a reference to an actual bearer of the name, “Artefius” tantalizes by appearing to invite integration into the “Greek or Latin name” category responsible for “Ariston” and “Gélace.” This classification quickly shows itself to be inadequate. All the meaning to be extracted from “Artefius” is already present in its French homonym, artifice. The assimilation Artefius/artifice is generally overlooked, perhaps because it is so obvious, even though it is invited by the presence of “artifice” only a few lines before the first use of “Artefius”: “je lui rendis celle-là fort adroitement et vis par cet artifice” (p. 96). It is also encouraged by the unusually high rate of appearance of this word in the Page, in contexts that suggest both
its link to magic and its association with the power of language. "Artefius" is clearly the most important proper name in the Page. It must be interpreted both historically and allegorically in order to see that it is at the same time an acceptance of libertine origins and a rejection of all others. The man of artifice can be reincarnated at will, but he remains ultimately the being without center, he who cannot be named.

In parallel, if often less complicated, ways, the other libertine texts continue the reflection on the proper name found in the Page. The only real exception to this is Francion, where names are never absent. This novel shows off a vast web of names, from Valentin to Laurette, designed mainly to offer a system opposed to that of the heroic novel. In a discussion on libertine naming, only the name of the book's title character has a place. Francion is always frank and always physical, characteristics already inscribed in the two halves of his name, but nevertheless explicated for those who might have missed the obvious. The act of naming occurs frequently in the novel in order to flaunt Francion's fidelity to his destiny. He is named before he appears; he is named by the narrator; he is named by numerous other characters. As soon as his name is mentioned, all present recognize it. When he is called upon to tell his story in the inn, he begins without hesitation: "Sachez donc que je m'appelle Francion" (p. 94). He thus demonstrates libertine immutability with none of the libertine hesitation about making the self public.

In the Fragments, on the other hand, this hesitation, this holding back, is present in an interesting manner. The first-person voice assumes responsibility for the narration with a simple "I," an "I" identified only by a certain number of traits, but never by a name. The other characters in the Fragments have Greek names ("Sidias," "Clitiphon") of the kind used by the tradition the narrator denounces in the first chapter. Such names seem to ask for a sort of allegorical decipherment in what could be seen either as a gesture of parody or an attempt to point out the simplistic rigidity and limited functioning of the old names next to the freedom of the newly nameless.

Cyrano's L'Autre Monde continues the libertine tradition of the unnamed narrator, and goes even further than the Page in subverting the reign of the proper name as a means of identifying.
and eventually of interpreting the function of, characters. With only one exception, that of M. de Montmagny, viceroy of Canada, the only proper names to be found are those of the numerous mythological, biblical, and historical figures brought up in discussions. It is important to note that the example of “Montmagny” occurs before the narrator leaves for the moon, whose cold light encourages neither procreation nor the ultimate sign of origin, the proper name. This fact is amply illustrated by the appellations chosen for the characters encountered there. The demon of Socrates bears only an almost-name, since it is one that tells the reader nothing about him other than that he once inhabited the individual known as Socrates. Since, however, this demon was not particularly exclusive and also inspired the minds of at least a dozen or so other historical figures, just to count those listed by him in the text, such an appellation does not provide a very complete description.

As in the Page, many of the characters in *L'Autre Monde* are referred to by the vaguest identifications possible: “l'Espagnol,” “le fils de l'hôte” or “le jeune hôte,” “une des demoiselles de la Reine.” On the moon, the narrator sometimes even goes so far as to replace names (of kings, rivers, and so on) with musical notations, employing the so-called “idiome des grands” (“celui des grands n'est autre chose qu'une différence de tons non articulés, à peu près semblable à notre musique” [p. 60]). When he eventually returns to earth, while still under the moon’s influence (as the howling dogs prove), he continues the page’s silence about geographical matters and refuses to identify the Italian city where he is taken by the peasants who find him, replacing it with three dots (p. 117).

It would seem that a voyage to warmer climates loosens the narrator’s tongue, for the *États et empires* is less hesitant on the subject of names. *L'Autre Monde* insists that the heat of the sun’s fire is necessary for generation. The name of Prometheus, who “fut bien autrefois au ciel dérober du feu” (p. 32), is appropriated to designate the male sexual organ: “un membre sans qui nous serions au rang de ce qui n'est pas, le Prométhée de chaque animal” (p. 108). With (t)his fire, procreation is possible, as in the case of crocodiles, who are born “du limon gras de la terre échauffé par le soleil” (p. 87). And with the acceptance of origin comes naming.
Thus, the narrator's two benefactors, the marquis de Colignac and the marquis de Cussan, are allowed the full use of their titles. On the sun, the majority of birds in "l'Histoire des Oiseaux" have names. The magpie who fights to save the narrator, for example, reveals not only her own name but those of her parents as well.

It is, of course, also in the Estats et empires that the narrator is identified as Dyrcona. The functioning of this anagram as a kind of now-you-see-it, now-you-don't mask, however, is the first indication that, even at the source of origin, the proper name in a libertine text can only have a problematic existence. Margot, the magpie, tries to make the narrator less objectionable to her fellow birds by replacing his human title with "Guillery l'enrumé," a formula that clearly fulfills the necessary criteria for a bird name: the partridge bringing suit against him, for example, is known as Guillemette la charnuë. The fact that both "Dyrcona" and "Guillery l'enrumé" are used to refer to the same character makes them in a sense equivalent, and this equivalence attracts attention to the patronymic. "Dyrcona" does not sound right; it simply does not correspond to the image of a family name. In the case of the bird name, the first part is perfectly "normal," but the choice of an adjective as noun for the last name is merely descriptive, and contains no indication of origin. Guillery is referred to as "l'enrumé" because of what he is or seems to the birds to be, not because of his genealogy or what his father was. The double names of the narrator, the one used by others (the name object) and the one he himself answers to, in the long run serve, much like those of the page, to challenge the notion of origin. Also worthy of note is the scene in the Estats et empires in which one of the "venerable" members of the Parlement of Toulouse, attempting to arrest Dyrcona for heretical acts, refuses to pronounce the devil's name: "avoir monté à la Lune, cela ne se peut-il sans l'entremise de... Je n'oserai nommer la beste" (p. 102). He thereby indicates a parallel between the nameless libertines and the nameless devil, and a moment of parody of the libertine fight against the proper name.

In the travelogues of Chapelle and D'Assoucy, this fight is somewhat mitigated. In addition to the names brought up in the course of conversations, also present in earlier works, the names of many individuals actually encountered are included, especially
by Chapelle. D'Assoucy toys with the rejection of identification by his frequent reduction of the name to its initial(s). He hesitates between presence and this form of semi-absence, referring sometimes to Chapelle, for example, with his full name (p. 146) and at others with only a “C.” (p. 133). It is true that the name behind this "C." and those represented by most other initials in the Avantures may be easily supplied in context, but D'Assoucy's instinctive move against the space normally allowed the proper name in a text continues the libertine tradition.

Linked to the libertines' resistance to naming is a resistance to the consequences of the use of the first person. The choice of the first person is an exceptional one at the period for works with any fictional content, so exceptional in fact that it invites the assimilation of such works into the category of memoir literature. This invitation to a subjective reading is, however, quickly undercut by the distancing with regard to the personal I have been describing here. This combination of presence and absence results in a use of the first person unique in the history of literature with autobiographical intentions, a far cry from the expected "retour du moi sur soi-même." Because of the absence of development in these texts, the choice of the first person may seem strange. Starobinski argues convincingly that, in the case of the narrator of a life without change, "il lui aurait suffi de se peindre lui-même une fois pour toutes, et la seule manière changeante apte à faire l'objet d'un récit serait réduite à la série des événements extérieurs: nous serions alors en présence des conditions de ce que Benveniste nomme histoire, et la persistance même d'un narrateur à la première personne n'eût guère été requise."

Starobinski goes on to explain that a text can only be rescued from the attraction of histoire by the presence of a dialogue between present and past, between new and old: "En revanche, la transformation intérieure de l'individu—et le caractère exemplaire de cette transformation—offre matière à un discours narratif ayant le je pour sujet et pour "objet." The division of "I" into subject and object is a matter of central concern to the libertine text. It succeeds in escaping the monologism inherent in the picaresque narration of a life by opening up the contact between two temporalities ("I" as subject and "I" as object) in a manner without literary precedent. Furthermore, this manner does not
really come into its own, as far as the novel in France is concerned, until the reign of the eighteenth-century memoir novel. In these less than total accounts, the look to the past does not go back very far. Childhood plays an uncertain, reduced role, evoked only in exceptional circumstances. The moi with whom a dialogue is set up is generally a young adolescent in a period of intellectual formation. The narrator only occasionally practices dédoublement, and then simply to confirm the destiny his older self believes was always mapped out for him. This dialogic movement marks, nevertheless, a first step toward the separation of voices with such an important future in autobiographical and pseudo-autobiographical narration. Francion, for example, does not merely retell his life; he relives its various episodes in order to find a justification for them and to illustrate the fidelity and uniformity of his existence. The narrator looks back at his younger self to see signs of the future, and occasionally marvels at the perfection of those he finds. By the time he is old enough to leave home for lessons with the curé:

_j'avois desja je ne scay quel instinct qui m'incitoit a hayr les actions basses, les paroles sottes, et les facons niaises de mes compagnons d’escole, qui n’estoient que les enfans des sujets de mon pere, nourris grossierement sous leurs cases champestres. Je me portois jusques a leur remonstrer de quelle façon il faloit qu’ils se comportassent . . . ces ames viles ne cognoissants pas le bien que je leur voulois . . . me disoient en leur patois . . . mille niaiseries et impertinences rustiques (p. 169)._

Francion stresses the fact that there was already present, in the child that he was, a clearly developed sense of the separation between the self and others, or at least others of a different social class—“leur patois.” All the scorn and condescension of the would-be “grand seigneur” who will later attend the village marriage simply to make fun of it is foreshadowed here in Francion’s early behavior.

With the _Avantures_ and especially the _Page_, the look over the shoulder becomes more troubled, as the narrator can see in his past only warnings of the misery that was to follow each action. In such an atmosphere, premonition reigns. The narrator is unable to forget the outcome of an event, a forgetting essential to an objective narration. For example, the older page, the page who is
no longer a page, sees danger where his former self could only have been blind to it. He therefore begins his account of what the page would certainly have presented at the time as a scene of triumph, Artefius's offering of the vials of magic substances, with a description of Pandora's box that concludes: "On ne sut jamais si elle était un mal ou un bien, ou si c'étaient tous les deux ensemble" (p. 102).

On occasion, the relative subtleness of such a warning yields to the more strident voice of the man bitter at the thought of what he has lost, and the narrator cannot stop himself from intervening in his story to announce its outcome. Even as he is building castles in Spain with his mistress, based on the wealth he is to obtain from the alchemist, the anachronistic voice of pessimism is heard:

"Comme la jeunesse est audacieuse et folle, tenant bien souvent pour des biens solides les biens qu'elle ne possède qu'en espérance, j'osai l'assurer qu'avant qu'il fût trois mois, je la viendrais demander en mariage à ses parents avec un équipage et un éclat qui serait égal à ceux des plus grands d'Angleterre. Et j'étais si simple de me promettre toutes ces prospérités sur la parole de l'alchimiste que je ne revis plus jamais (pp. 139-40).

Like the model "romantic" hero that he is, the page cries out "nevermore" at regular intervals throughout his story, keeping the older self and his subjective interest in the narration alive. And D'Assoucy, more strident still and far less polished, continues to make the cry resound: "O moy misérable! je me réjouissois approchant de mon Paradis terrestre, tandis que mes destins enragé m'entraînoient tout vivant dans les Enfers" (p. 103).

Concurrently with this subjectivity in moments of premonition, the libertine narrative voice retains comic elements associated with the burlesque tradition. Of these techniques that refute the notion of personal exploration, preterition is the most striking. The page breaks off the story of his passion for his English mistress with an abrupt "Je ne vous dirai point ici des choses qu'on peut mieux ressentir que dire" (p. 150). D'Assoucy cuts short a description of one of his misfortunes with an equally curt "Je ne diray pas à quelle extrémité je fus reduit" (p. 97). At these moments, the reader is thrown off guard by this avoidance of emotion in texts often capable of telling all with feeling.

Perhaps the most effective narrative means of by-passing per-
sonal involvement is the particular brand of first-person narration chosen by Chapelle and Bachaumont. Their “nous” has nothing to do with the artificial plurality of various noble forms of address and unmistakably contains two separate voices. It therefore restricts the text to the level of experience shared by both members of the couple. Nothing must go beyond the events of the voyage made together. Events are seen not as either one of them would have alone but in a collective vision to which both can affix their signatures, as though the narrators were acting, in Roussset’s expression, “en témoin latéral plutôt qu’en sujet central.” Personal impressions or reactions to what takes place, links between present and past, anything that does not belong simultaneously and equally to both pairs of eyes, have no place in this narrative model.

This distancing may be interpreted as one more manifestation of the seventeenth-century’s distrust of the first person and of subjective narration, a distrust that is given coherent formulation by Madeleine de Scudéry: “Quand on dit soi-même son histoire, tout ce qu’on dit à son avantage est suspect à ceux qui l’écoutent. . . Il est mille et mille fois plus raisonnable que ce soit une tierce personne qui raconte, que de raconter soi-même.” Scudéry’s adjective “suspect” may well deserve a broader application than it receives in this passage. When a narrator is telling his own story, he not only becomes aware that an account painting him in a favorable light may seem suspicious to others, but also that a portrayal of himself in a less than favorable position may equally well be viewed with suspicion.

D’Assoucy’s pervasive paranoia is aggravated by the announcement of his death in Loret’s Gazette the year of the composition of the Avantures, by Chapelle’s attacks, and by countless other incidents, many of which are referred to in his text. It makes the Avantures partly a self-justification before public opinion. Hence his frequent references to the “très-sage Lecteur” capable of vindicating him. Any attempt at pleading his case must of necessity delve into unsavory material, however, and the “I” of the Avantures realizes, as any “I” admitting a libertine past must, that to be subjective is to invite danger by providing excellent ammunition for one’s enemies. For libertine purposes, the only justifica-
tion or revenge possible has to be sought through an "objective," always distilled subjectivity.

In the light of this problematic, I propose to return for the last time to this chapter's opening discussion of the lack of proper names in these texts. The libertine projects have always (correctly) been assumed to be autobiographical, and this absence in them has been perceived (equally correctly) as anti-autobiographical. The proper name, as Lejeune affirms, is intimately connected with the standard autobiographical project:

L'autobiographie est le genre littéraire qui . . . marque le mieux la confusion de l'auteur et de la personne . . . . D'où l'espèce de passion du nom propre, qui dépasse la simple "vanité d'auteur," puisque, à travers elle, c'est la personne elle-même qui revendique l'existence. Le sujet profond de l'autobiographie, c'est le nom propre. On songe à ces desseins de Hugo, étalant son propre nom en lettres gigantesques à travers un paysage en clair-obscur.

The self-effacement characteristic of the libertine text is a far cry from Hugo's almost monstrous affirmations of his person. In a world colored not by chiaroscuro but by the less dramatic effects of gray, these authors who destroy the personal in their lives through objectification perform the same operation in their texts. Ultimately, their enterprise takes on a strange resemblance to another vision of autobiography, one with which they would appear to have little in common.

In the section of the Grammaire de Port-Royal devoted to pronouns, Arnauld and Lancelot give an explanation of their origin and role:

Comme les hommes ont esté obligez de parler souvent des mesmes choses dans un mesme discours, et qu'il eust esté importun de repeter toujours les mesmes noms, ils ont inventé certains mots pour tenir la place de ces noms.

Premierement ils ont reconnu qu'il estoit souvent inutile et de mauvaise grace, de se nommer soy-mesme, et ainsi ils ont introduit le Pronom de la premiere personne.

The grammarians' coolness and scientific spirit allow them to treat this point as though it were of no importance to the complex theological system for which they are spokesmen. Only a single phrase, "de mauvaise grace," evokes the specter of the Jansenist
attack against the proper name. The proper name for the gram­
marians is not only ungraceful but also grace-less, attracting at­
tention to physical presence in a way that is morally wrong. They
criticize it according to the reasoning used to attack the theater
and painting, other representatives of the all-too-solid human
flesh.

Just as Philippe de Champaigne bent his style to suit the de­
mands of Jansenist theory, so the writer of memoirs for the greater
glory of Port-Royal was also obliged to make his narration
conform to their system if he wished to gain approval. The Mé­
moires of de Pontis, originally composed in the third person, were
completely altered to permit the substitution of the first person
and thereby avoid the repetition of his name.60 "Je" is a less no­
ticeable, more transparent replacement. According to the Logique ou l'art de penser, "Les personnes sages évitent autant qu'ils peuvent, d'exposer aux yeux des autres, les avantages qu'ils ont; ils fuient . . . de se faire envisager en particulier, et ils tâ­
chent plutôt de se cacher dans la presse, pour n'être pas remarqués."61

The ideal Jansenist text would be as personless, as weightless,
as possible, in order to allow the self to be dominated by the abso­
lute weight of fatality and the mystery of the Deus absconditus.
Man without a name loses his sense of place and therefore his
ability to defend himself in language and in life: "Rien ne lie
mieux un homme au langage que son nom. . . . Cette pauvreté
en noms . . . tient, de la façon la plus intime, à l'essence d'un
ordre dont les membres vivent sous une loi sans nom, soumis à
une fatalité qui répand sur leur monde la pale lumière d'une
eclipse solaire."62 Walter Benjamin describes in this manner
another text that seeks to be nameless, the Elective Affinities.

The fatality in the libertine text must, of course, be held separ­
ate from the Jansenist fatality. Lionel Gossman distinguishes
Rousseau's anguish at the world's silence from Pascal's by argu­
ing that Rousseau replaces the Deus absconditus with the equally
mysterious Other.63 His distinction is certainly valid in the case of
the libertine novelists. Nevertheless, the sense of inevitability
shared by the libertine and the Jansenist texts links them in an
important way. It is perhaps ironic that stories of conversion and
stories of damnation should take the same form. It is less ironic
that the dialogues around which they are centered should be the most complete, the most anguished, of their period. These two systems without compromise brand themselves with the same narrative mark.

"Ce n'est pas pour rien que tant de romans personnels sont les histoires des gens sans nom," remarks Démoris far too casually, for he fails to draw any consequences from his statement. Without a name to identify it and thus anchor it to a system of exchange, "I" becomes a generalized, floating signifier limited only by the information that can be associated with it. The reader wants to use a name to restrict a character's implications, to follow what Barthes terms "la nature économique de Nom—en régime romanesque, c'est un instrument d'échange: il permet de substituer une unité nominale à une collection de traits en posant un rapport d'équivalence entre le signe et la somme."

In every case but that of Francion, however, the libertine novelists frustrate the reader's expectations because they want to make it clear that the story narrated by the deliberately unnamed "I" is not only the story of their unnameable, because politically dangerous, authors. The narrator/heroes are also unnameable because their story is not the story of one person to be identified with one name. As in the Borges allegory, literature can repeat history here. It can only do so because history has repeated history—and undoubtedly will continue to do so. The libertine fate is not anchored geographically or chronologically, but is played out again and again by those who dare to question accepted systems. The men who were denied names by their own period created unnamed and unnameable porte-paroles to underline the universality of the form of alienation these "characters" endure. "Je" is not only "un autre" but also all those who chose and choose to remain "autre."


2. Dietrich, p. v; Perrens, p. 273; Jacques Savarin, ed., Le Page disgracié, p. ix; Catherine Grisé, "Towards a New Biography of Tristan L'Hermite," p. 298. Adam contends that the Page also contains another fragment of Théophile's story. He feels that the "poète nouvellement sorti des écoles" whom the page saves from actors (p. 56) is none other than Théophile, and not Alexandre Hardy, as editors generally claim (Théophile de Viau, p. 19).
5. Dietrich, p. xxxvi.
7. Démoris, p. 23.
8. The decision to include Francion is a discussion of (conceivably) autobiographical texts is questionable, even for proponents of the real-man-behind-the-character theory. I would defend it in two ways. In the first place, the largely, if not completely, fictional nature of the life story told in it is not incompatible with the ideas on autobiography advanced in this chapter. The texts examined here may be considered more or less autobiographical, but they all present similar problems. Furthermore, I plan to limit my discussion of Francion to the 1623 edition (books 1–7), partly because, as Adam admits, this is the text “qui fait apparaître les plus belles audaces, le texte primitif du Francion” (Romanciers du dix-septième siècle, preface, p. xxxvi). I also use the first edition because of the far greater role played by autobiography in it, a fact stressed by Démoris; “Il semble en effet que l’oeuvre se soit constituée autour du projet autobiographique, progressivement ‘digéré’ et réduit à un rôle moins important dans les versions successives, à mesure aussi que le livre perd de son audace et renonce à ce qui pouvait faire scandale” (p. 23). Indeed, if Francion’s dream is included as a prologue to his récit (justifiable in this context, since it provides a sort of “psychological” autobiography), 59 percent of the 1623 edition is devoted to autobiography. Its share will be reduced to 37 percent in the 1626 text, and to 32 percent in the 1633 edition.
9. To such an extent that surprisingly few critical studies of L’Autre Monde and the Estats et empires are concerned with literary aspects of the works. Prévot, for example, chooses the title Cyrano de Bergerac romancier for his work and then proceeds to devote most of it to a discussion of scientific and philosophical theories, avoiding the question announced by his title, the process by which these ideas are transformed by their presentation in fictional form.
10. It is likely that A. Boutonné was chosen to encourage confusion with Rolet Boutonné, who published novels by Du Baal and others until his death in 1639. For information on R. Boutonné, see H.-J. Martin, Livre, pouvoirs, et société à Paris au dix-septième siècle. A. Boutonné has been identified as André Boutonné, but the puzzle of this libraire’s complicity with J.-B. L’Hermite has never been clarified.
11. Although no explanations for the attribution are given, it is accepted by Bernardin (p. 14), Dietrich (p. xxxvi), and Carriat: “La dédicace . . . est l’oeuvre probable du frère de Tristan, auteur également de la clé et des notes terminales” (p. 20).
12. If his first initial is included, however, “A. Boutonné” does stress the notion of unveiling.
15. Ibid., p. xxxvii.
16. For example, Nodier’s “De quelques livres satiriques et de leurs clefs,” Bulletin du bibliophile, offprint.
18. As Philippe Lejeune affirms, “L’autobiographie n’est pas un jeu de de­
vinette, c’est même exactement le contraire” (Le Pacte autobiographique, pp.

19. Adam, Histoire, 1:369. For Adam, such a judgment is pejorative. Else­
where, he chastises the Page for being imperfect as an autobiography and there­
fore unsuitable for the historian’s purposes: “C’est un défi à toute méthode de 
vouloir tirer d’une œuvre aussi fantaisiste que celle de Tristan une précision de 
date. Des scènes vraies, le livre en contient, mais librement, et très librement 
disposées” (Théophile de Viau, p. 20).


21. All these legends, however improbable, ultimately find later-day Ros­
tands to support their factual existence. Bernardin, for example, faced with the 
unlikelihood of an encounter between Tristan and a real magician, refuses to 
eliminate the story from the autobiographical category, and quickly translates it 
into more acceptable terms: “Il a rencontré tout simplement quelque escroc” (p. 
59).

22. Démoris, p. 36.


25. “But what is that one next to it?”

   “La Galatea of Miguel de Cervantes,” said the barber.

   “Ah, that fellow Cervantes and I have been friends these many years” 
(The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha, p. 57. The presence of 
the author’s name in self-conscious fiction seems, in fact, to be much less com­
mon than would be expected.

26. Rousset, Narcisse romantier, p. 76.

27. Michel Foucault, “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?”?, pp. 82–83. The peculiarities 
of the junction between proper name and author’s name are described in similar 
terms by Philippe Lejeune in the section of Le Pacte autobiographique that deals 
with the importance of the proper name for the autobiographical text, p. 23.

28. Foucault, p. 83.

29. The “cousin” eventually turns out to be a fake, like most individuals en­
countered by D’Assoucy in the course of his travels, but that problem does 
nothing to alter the importance of the exceptional choice of name in this context.

30. This is similar to the moment in the Combat de Cirano de Bergerac, avec 
le singe de Brioché when D’Assoucy speculates on the etymology of “Cirano”:
“Bergerac soutenoit en plaisantant, que Mage et Roy etoient unum et idem, 
qu’on appelloit un Roy Cir, en français Sire, et comme ce Mage, ce Roy, ce Cir, 
pour faire ces enchantements, se campoit au milieu d’un cercle, c’est-a-dire d’un 
O, on le nommoit Cir an O” (pp 5–6).

31. Although the robbery is no realer than the cousin, and has actually been 
staged to enable the Marquis de... to bestow his hospitality on D’Assoucy for 
a time—but this is still another problem. The relationship between the false 
name and robbery should be linked to the libertine obsession with plagiarism 
(Cf. chapter 4).

32. See Paul Zumthor’s discussion of the absence in the Middle Ages of these 
conditions (the notion of author, the auto-referential use of the first person in 

34. "De l'autobiographic initiatique à l'autobiographie genre littéraire," pp. 971, 985.


36. Théophile is questioned about this incident during the third interrogation of his trial. In his defense, he indicates a blending of fact and fiction in the Fragments parallel to those I have been discussing here. Théophile admits to having visited the "démoniaque," but "desynye avoyr parlé à elle ny faict aucun effort en sa personne et qu'il y avoit grand nombre de personnes en la chambre où elle estoit" (Lachèvre, *Le Procès du poète Théophile de Viau*, 1:397).

37. *Oeuvres du Sieur Théophile, seconde partie*, p. 25. I use this edition because it reproduces the same text as the first edition of 1626, but with clearer punctuation.


39. As François Rigolot remarks about Renaissance poetry, "La datation est moins une affaire de vérité historique que de convenance poétique" (*Poétique et onomastique*, p. 204). Much of Rigolot's discussion about the relationship between history (autobiography) and Renaissance poetry is pertinent to a treatment of similar problems with regard to libertine fiction.


41. Démoris, p. 37.

42. The page provides a graphic illustration of this when he describes in some detail the astrological configuration of the moment of his birth (p. 52).

43. Furetière: "disgracier: priver quelqu'un de ses bonnes graces, éloigner quelqu'un de sa présence, lui ôter la faveur, la protection qu'on lui donnait." *Disgrace* thus can be a synonym for *exile*, another key word in the libertine vocabulary.

44. Furetière: "disgracié: outre la signification de son verbe, on le dit aussi des hommes malfais de corps ou d'esprit, commes s'ils n'avoient reçu aucunes graces du Ciel ou de la nature."

45. It must be admitted that the state of grace the narrator says will follow his unmasking as a Huguenot ("Dieu ne m'avoit pas fait encore la grace de me recevoir au giron de son Eglise.") cannot have been of long duration, since the beginning of the Fragments finds him once again stripped of grace, this time by the exile he describes as "ma disgrace."

46. On the title page of the Colombey edition, for example. Since I can find no earlier reference to it, this title is probably of Colombey's invention.

47. Even as he takes over the power to name, the page is surrounded by this veil of hesitation. The name he appropriates for himself is in direct conflict with the past he chooses at the same time. His name means "upper class," yet he claims to be the son of a merchant: "Je lui dis que je me nommais Ariston, que j'étais fils d'un marchand assez honorable que j'avais perdu depuis un certain temps" (p. 119). Even when he is in complete control over the fiction of his life, the page is unable to erase contradiction.

48. For example, when he turns to storytelling to explain his tears to his mistress's mother: "Sa fille admira mon invention et me sut bon gré de cet artifice" (p. 135).
49. Hortensius’s etymology: “Il luy dit qu’il s’appelloit Francion parce qu’il estoit rempli de franchise, et qu’il estoit le plus brave de tous les François” (p. 436). Valentin’s: “Vous n’estes venu en terre que pour me faire jouyr d’une douce chose de qui par une rencontre fatale l’on trouve le nom dans celui que vous portez, si on en veut oster un I” (p. 69). Each is able to decipher only the inscription of that “quality” he himself lacks.

50. He is first named by his protector, the marquis de Colignac: “Et vous, dit il, monsieur Dyrcona, quel a esté le vostre?” (p. 106).

51. Dyrcona is named for the second time by a bird dear to burlesque authors because of its proverbial reputation for the gift of gab: “jazer comme une pie (borgne).” But how can a chatterbox with troubled vision make an accurate distribution of descriptive names?

52. Rousset, p. 65.


54. Only the Avantures privileges scenes from childhood in any way. Using a flashback technique, it devotes two central chapters (numbers 10 and 11 out of 19) to an account of youthful persecution.

55. Speaking, interestingly enough, to a pair of addressees, the marquis and count du Broussin, so that the duality is retained in the process of transmission.

56. Rousset, p. 65.

57. Clélie, 1:1378; quoted by Rousset, p. 52.

58. Lejunc, p. 33.


60. A phrase in the avertissement to the first edition of de Pontis’s Mémoires, probably by Thomas du Fosse, provides a parallel between the vantage point from which these Jansenist memoirs are written and that of the libertine text. De Pontis, as much as the page, is a disgraced hero. “Il arriva toujours par je ne scay quelle disgrace de la fortune . . . qu’il se rencontroit à toute heure de nouveaux obstacles à son établissement dans le monde” (Guillaume Desprez, 1676), pp. 2-3.

61. Logique, p. 329.


64. Démoris, p. 8.
