THE OTHER IN THE GRAND SIECLE

Il faut escrire à la moderne.—Théophile (de Viau)

On sera bien surpris de retrouver dans Théophile des idées qui paraissaient, il y a dix ou douze ans, de la plus audacieuse nouveauté. — Car c'est lui, il faut le dire, qui a commencé le mouvement romantique.—Théophile (Gautier)

I. A NEW ORDER OF THINGS

Certes, les fils chicanent volontiers les pères, s'imaginant qu'ils vont refaire un monde qui n'attendait qu'eux pour devenir meilleur; mais les remous qui agitent les générations successives ne suffisent pas à expliquer un changement si rapide et si décisif. La majorité des Français pensait comme Bossuet; tout d'un coup, les Français pensent comme Voltaire: c'est une révolution.¹

Today many literary and intellectual historians would find much to criticize in the description given by Hazard's La Crise de la conscience européenne of the transformation in French thought from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. A surprising number of theoreticians have turned their attention to the intellectual upheavals of these centuries. Many agree with Hazard that, in any schema of the period, room must be made for one or more times of crisis marking the transition between different world views, and that somewhere in this slice of time the ultimate crisis that signals the beginnings of our modernity can be situated.² This quest for the origins of contemporary problematic leads to a reevaluation of the lines that divide “Renaissance” from “Classicism” and “Classicism” from “Enlightenment.” I do not plan to take sides in this variant of the problem of periodization,
but rather to superimpose several theories, each of which concludes, for different reasons, that fundamental changes occur somewhere near 1650.

Intellectual historians like Pintard and Spink present this period as the beginning of the modern age, because it marked the collapse of all systems of belief that had previously obtained nearly total allegiance. As Spink describes it:

The collapse of medieval teaching was becoming unmistakable . . . outside the classrooms it was already discredited. To fill the gap there was as yet only the revised version of Aristotle professed in the University of Padua by Pomponazzi and Cremonini and certain themes of hylozoic or panpsychistic naturalism, also of Italian origin and propagated in the works of Cardano and Bruno. Even these were under fire before their position was established; Renaissance science, the science of the astrologers and alchemists was following Scholasticism in collapse, while the new science, the science of modern times, was only at its beginnings.3

Pintard completes Spink’s testimony on the scientific void by stressing the religious void faced by the period: “Le seizième siècle avait hérité du Moyen Age et réajusté le compromis de l’aristotélisme et du christianisme; il avait, par ses propres forces, organisé l’union de la sagesse antique et de la foi. . . . Le dix-septième, au contraire, les recevait épuisées.”4 For Pintard and Spink, the age immediately following what Spink terms “the crisis of 1619–25” is a particularly crucial one intellectually, because it provides the small number of thinkers aware of the consequences of that crisis with no system of belief they could use to stabilize their existence. Confronted with the crumbling of the combined forces of Catholicism and Aristotelianism, the intellectual initiate of the mid-seventeenth century experiences a second fall from Paradise: from a theo- and geocentric universe, he is rather unexpectedly thrust into a largely unexplored anthropo- and heliocentric one. With no acceptable beliefs to break his fall, he has no choice but to become a renegade and a freethinker.

Traditional intellectual historians divide the seventeenth century in two in order to account for the presence in the mid-seventeenth century of a brand of freethinking that seems unmistakably “modern,” one that can be held up as an ancestor for the eighteenth-century movement to which they trace the origins of
contemporary thought. More recently, 1650 reappears as a turning point in several less orthodox structural histories of thought. Having found the period of my research mentioned when I least expected it, I began to pool the descriptions made of it in various theoretical contexts. Each of the schemas I plan to examine here develops a theory that can help situate and account for the exceptional nature of the libertine novel. I do not intend to pass judgment on these various systems. I will discuss them neither as though they reflected historical realities, nor as though they presented a vision of the past filtered through personal mythology and an individual's theoretical obsessions. I will simply juxtapose the two most striking interpretations of the period. By outlining what their authors believe to have been at stake at this turning point, I hope both to provide a framework in which to discuss the status of the libertine text and to answer the question of how a small and, in many ways, minor group of authors could renew and (re)create a novelistic form.

The first unexpected encounter with the mid-seventeenth century occurs in Roland Barthes’s *Le Degré zéro de l’écriture*. In the course of his attempt to trace the evolution of écriture, Barthes reaffirms the conclusion advanced by Spink and Pintard: through 1650 passes a major line of demarcation in French intellectual history. For Barthes, prior to this period French literature had not yet reached a turning point in the development of modernity: “On peut dire que jusque vers 1650, la Littérature française n’avait pas encore dépassé une problématique de la langue, et que par là même elle ignorait encore l’écriture. En effet, tant que la langue hésite sur sa structure même, une morale du language est impossible.” Barthes’s sense of the importance of the changes taking place at this period can be related to Foucault’s discussion in *Les Mots et les choses* of the shift from a medieval to a classical episteme. In the section entitled “Représenter,” Foucault documents the change he sees in the role of language, the movement by which, during the reign of classical thought, words were perceived as having lost the direct, mimetic relationship with things posited by the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Once the old order based on resemblance disappears, “le language n’est plus une des figures du monde.” For the view of the linguistic sign as a sort of eternal signature branding its object, the seventeenth century sub-
stitutes the notion of its arbitrariness. Questions of resemblance yield to questions of representation. This is amply supported by the texts Foucault terms central to this episteme, the *Logique* and the *Grammaire* of Port-Royal. In Cartesian linguistics, words and things are neatly sealed off into separate realms, and language, liberated from its identification with a system of referents, is free to be studied as the autonomous, synchronic system Saussure describes as *langue*. In Foucault’s reconstruction of the classical episteme, the time is ripe, as Barthes remarks, for the emergence of *écriture*.

The year 1650 turns up as a pivotal date in another recent description of linguistic and literary evolution, a theory that refers to the role of several of the libertine novelists, but one that weighs much of Foucault’s evidence in a very different manner. This second interpretation, that of Mikhail Bakhtin, constitutes the most important recent attack on the foundations of Cartesian linguistics, especially the notion of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. Bakhtin and his followers, unlike Barthes and Foucault, consider the changes taking place in 1650 as essentially negative. Rather than glorifying a break responsible for the growth into Structuralist modernity, Bakhtin describes with nostalgia a spirit and a consciousness that existed before 1650, that lost much of their substance and underwent profound transformations about this time, but that are essential for the creation of what he considers the greatest works in modern literature.³

Among the theories discussed here, Bakhtin’s will enjoy a privileged status, not only because he actually takes these libertine texts into account, but also because the central concepts defined by his work are those I find most illuminating for them. Bakhtin’s principal studies, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, *Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, and *Rabelais and His World*,⁹ often overlap each other as they develop a semiotic schema that attempts to trace the history and ramifications of three literary (and partially sociological) notions: carnival and carnivalesque literature, dialogue and the dialogic, and Menippean satire or the menippea.¹⁰ In Bakhtin’s system, the notions are intimately related historically, and 1650 is a critical date in the history they share. I will return to these concepts shortly to define them in more detail, but I would first like to discuss Bakhtin’s view of the importance of this periodization.
Bakhtin traces the evolution of an extralinguistic concept that he holds responsible for certain changes in language. In his system, 1650 marks the separation between an age in which carnival and the spirit of carnival flourished and were glorified in literature, and one in which they became extinct, no more than memories, occasionally and fleetingly evoked by literary texts that could do no more than artificially re-create their myth. Bakhtin defines the carnival spirit as the spirit of folk humor, “the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truth and authorities.” It is a force that overthrows all hierarchies and systems of belief since it strives “to consecrate interior freedom . . . to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés. . . . This carnival spirit offers the chance . . . to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things.”

When carnival reigned over the universe, fools became kings, and kings became fools, as opposites were reconciled. Anything was possible, in a world constantly à l’envers. Systems of separation were defied. The body, for example, was the grotesque body triumphant in its union with its surroundings: “Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits.”

Carnival became institutionalized at the time of the development of Foucault’s classical episteme. Without natural sources, literature could no longer transmit the true spirit of carnival. During the domination of the classical canon, the grotesque and folk humor were excluded from “great” literature and were confined to the harmless space of low comic genres. The carnival spirit itself became trivialized, until its utopian vision of freedom was reduced to nothing more than a sort of carefree holiday mood. In the end, the essence and imagery of the grotesque were passed on only as a purely literary tradition, one associated with the Renaissance.

Bakhtin discusses the traditions that kept the grotesque alive during the period of the classical canon’s domination: the comic novel, the travesty, traditions of particular interest to him because they are borderline cases, almost, but not totally, removed from their roots. Despite his nostalgia for an age in which carnival was still alive, Bakhtin ultimately reaches some of the same inter-
pretations for the transformations of 1650 as Foucault: without the direct influence of carnival, words and things are (irrevo-
cably) separated in this period. Even the texts he describes as
struggling against this separation of the word from the context of
its utterance are able to reproduce, no longer a reality, but only a
reality already fictionalized by other texts. Bakhtin enters at this
point in his discussion the realm of what is currently referred to as
the meta- and intertextual. The first texts marked by the death
of carnival convey an awareness of their being less re-creations of
some microcosm than readings of previous creations. Their prim-
ary signifié is “literature.”

For Bakhtin, the texts born of this movement toward pure
literariness—the comic and libertine novels, for example—are
bastardized products of a fall from past glory. They at least share
the merit of struggling to preserve the fading contact with the
world of relativism and physical reality. The intellectual tradition
covered with glory in the course of its rediscovery by Foucault
and other contemporary thinkers does not fare as well in Bakh-
tin’s system. His Marxism and the Philosophy of Language at-
tacks the premises on which the logic of Cartesian linguistics and
Port-Royal’s universal grammar are founded:

The idea of the conventionality, the arbitrariness, of language is a
typical one for rationalism as a whole; and no less typical is the
comparison of language to the system of mathematical signs. What interests the mathematically minded rationalists is not the
relationship of the sign to the actual reality it reflects or to the
individual who is its originator, but the relationship of sign to sign
within a closed system already accepted and authorized. In other
words, they are interested only in the inner logic of the system of
signs itself, taken, as in algebra, completely independently of the
meanings that give signs their content.

In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin stresses the destruction of the
grotesque body cut off from direct contact with the world. In
Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, he deplores the belief
that language can be removed from the reality in which it is an-
chored. “A sign is a phenomenon of the external world.”

To separate words from things is to deny them the context in
which they evolve. For Bakhtin, language should be studied
primarily on the level of what Saussure terms parole. Signs exist
first and foremost in verbal communication, in the process of in-
teraction between two individual consciousnesses. By remaining blind to the dialogic structure of the word, through which one reality reflects and alters another, Cartesian linguistics fosters the creation of literary texts hopelessly anchored in linguistic and philosophical monologism. In Bakhtin’s system, the greatest literary texts are, on the contrary, those that manage somehow to overcome the legacy of the split of 1650 and to re-create an anti-system of relativism by maintaining an awareness of their existence in a context of verbal communication, at the point of intersection of various speech acts. Such texts are distinguished by the type of discourse they develop, which Bakhtin calls dialogic or polyphonic, and are placed under a very flexible generic heading, menippea.

Bakhtin traces the development of the menippea, beginning with its origins in antiquity, and devotes a major study to an author representative of the tradition before the disappearance of carnival, Rabelais, and one to a novelist who demonstrates its re-creation, Dostoevsky. In Dostoevsky’s Poetics, Bakhtin discusses the rejection of linguistic arbitrariness by dialogic discourse that situates itself at the point of collision between voices. A work may be described as dialogic if, first, it is centered on the act of verbal communication, and, second, it takes this polyphony to its logical polysemic conclusion. In the dialogic text, all voices are equal and unmerged, and no one voice controls the others and has power to establish truth. To give expression to its polyphony, the dialogic text functions best within the most flexible type of formal organization. The menippea is just that: a prose (anti-) genre, based on the integration of disparate elements (verse interludes, interpolated stories, letters), on open-endedness, and on parataxis.

I evoke these theories of 1650 at the outset of my concluding remarks on seventeenth-century French libertine fiction in order to illustrate the particular tensions that form a backdrop for its creation. The answer proposed by the libertine authors to the crisis of 1650 is a type of novel that, in its dialogic and carnivalized aspects, corresponds to the model proposed by Bakhtin. Yet the libertine novel is not free of the sense of its own arbitrariness to which Foucault and Barthes accord priority. It is with these apparently conflicting forces in mind that I would like to return to the texts.
2. A POETICS OF MODERNITY

Un discours qui contient beaucoup de passages différents, non seulement pour le style, mais même pour le langage ressemble à une robe de diverses couleurs et de plusieurs pièces rapportées qui la rendent ridicule. (La Mothe Le Vayer)

Describing the crisis of 1619-25, Spink stresses its lack of contemporary public impact. Only a handful of specialists could have been fully acquainted with the terms and consequences of the new physics developed by scientists such as Copernicus, Tycho-Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo, and even they prudently refrained from commenting freely on these matters. Despite the limitation of, at best, only a secondhand and limited knowledge of the recent theories, the libertine novelists, never known for their prudence, were quick to realize that they could speak where others were silent. They were conscious of the fact that, in the world of Copernicus, writers could no longer content themselves with the same means of expression developed for that of Aristotle. A literary revolution had to follow the scientific one. The challenge of scientific expansion had to be met with a discourse of freedom. The discourse they chose was dialogic, and their choice cannot be explained solely on the basis of Rudolf Hirzel's conclusion, supported by John Cosentini, that dialogue flourishes in periods of dissolution of old dogmas and in times of political and social upheaval. The libertines turn to various manifestations of the dialogic to express their liberation and their relativism, and are able thereby to renew a narrative tradition with an important heritage. They announce the new by resurrecting the memory of their predecessors who wrote freely. They do so, not only by adopting the narrative form Bakhtin refers to as the menippea, but also by means of a complex network of references to a past in language.

The desire to develop a theory of literary modernity is immediately evident in the earliest libertine novels. L'Histoire comique de Francion proves itself to be worthy of its title with its opening sentence:

Les voiles de la nuit avoient couvert tout l'Orison lorsqu'un vieillard qui s'appelloit Valentin sortit d'un chasteau de Bourgogne avec une robbe de chambre, un bonnet rouge en teste et un gros pacquet sous son bras, encore ne seay-je pourquoy il n'avoit point ses lunettes, car c'estoit sa coutume de les porter tousjours à son nez ou à sa ceinture (p. 66).
Francion can be called an *histoire comique* because it is a funny novel, but also because, like the other seventeenth-century novels that bear this generic label, it can be seen as an attack on what its author views as outmoded forms of prose fiction. The description of Valentin is made in the narrator’s own language, but “les voiles de la nuict avoient couvert tout l’Orison” is clearly a borrowed utterance, foreign words that sound ludicrous in what is for them an unnatural context. The phrase is more than ludicrous, it is empty. By inserting a foreign element at the beginning of his novel, Sorel attempts to demonstrate how meaningless inflated style is, and by contrast, to show how meaningful his own will be. In 1623, the style that will be known as the burlesque is beginning to make its presence felt on the French literary scene, and the first message it transmits is a warning against the prevalence of cliché. Rhetorical repetitiveness is the target most often associated with the burlesque’s literary aggressivity. Sorel’s opening phrase must have been immediately recognizable to those of his contemporaries who were also readers of more heroic novels. This is, so they had been told, the way a novel should begin. In Sorel’s opinion, the novelists who were busy telling them so could have put their energy to more profitable use had they turned to the creation of new forms rather than repeating the faded language of cliché.

That Théophile shares Sorel’s concern with a theory of modernity is immediately evident from his decision to begin the *Fragments* with what is arguably the most aggressive moment of literary polemic ever to find its way into the pages of a novel. The novel’s first chapter might be considered the founding text of the seventeenth-century parodic tradition. The novelists who come after Théophile will be able to insert a parody of heroic language into the first sentences of their novels and feel certain that their polemical intentions will be understood. Théophile, on the other hand, far surpasses this pale and limited dialogue with unnamed adversaries. The first chapter of the *Fragments* is completely un-novelistic. Here, Théophile does more than insert borrowed clichés: he makes place in the narrative he is about to begin for a representative of a non-narrative, non-fictional genre, the literary manifesto. Chapter one of the *Fragments* is an example of interpolation, like the *Roman comique’s nouvelles espagnoles* or the catalogues in the *Roman bourgeois*. The separation between Théophile’s prescription for literary modernity and the other chapters
of the *Fragments* is "punctuated" by formal differences: the manifesto is written in the present tense, as opposed to the past that dominates the rest of the novel; it is almost entirely narrated in the first person plural ("je" intervenes only twice), and it makes a rather extraordinary use of the imperative mode ("il faut" appears five times, "devoir" twice). In so straightforward a context, the humorous juxtaposition found in *Francion*’s opening sentence would be out of place.

The *Fragments* begins: "L’élégance ordinaire de nos Ecrivains est à peu près selon ces termes." This opening clause immediately counteracts any potentially comic effects to which the subsequent exceptionally long parodic *incipit* might otherwise give rise:

> L’Aurore, toute d’or et d’azur, brodée de perles et de rubis, paroissait aux portes de l’Orient; les Estoiles, éblouies, d’une plus vive clarté, laisseoient effacer leur blancheur et devenoient peu à peu de la couleur du ciel; les bestes de la queste revenoient aux bois et les hommes à leur travail; le silence faisoit place au bruit et les tenebres à la lumière (p. 1).

After he demonstrates what not to do with this interpolation of empty rhetoric, Théophile is able to offer his theory of a modern style: "Il faut que le discours soit ferme; que le sens y soit naturel et facile; le langage expresse et signifiant" (p. 2). Théophile’s manifesto, like a burlesque text, constantly juxtaposes and maintains a distinction between two discourses ("mine" and "other"). Unlike the burlesque, it does so solely for polemical, and never for comic, ends. Théophile chastises writers for what his contemporary Guy de la Brosse calls "le superstitieux respet de l’antiquité" that prevents them "de passer plus outre que l’Alphabet de [leurs] devanciers." By setting up with precision in four pages of examples the two voices in the dialogue (ancient and modern, trite and innovative, foreign and French), Théophile contributes the first clear example of parodic intertextuality in the libertine novels. The *Fragments* and *Francion* are engaged in a dialogue with texts past and present with which they disagree. Like the burlesque tradition, they call attention to the malfunctioning of language that is so codified that it is no longer meaningful. They inaugurate a polemical dialogue with cliche.

The parodic dialogues with alien literary texts opened by the first sentences of the *Fragments* and *Francion* provide an imme-
The immediate indication of the “literariness” of these novels. From the beginning, Théophile and Sorel take pains to inscribe in their works an atmosphere of self-consciousness. Their narrators/heroes are not only écrivants or écrivains: they are above all readers of novels. No libertine text illustrates this function more elaborately than the Page. Here, reading is more than a pastime or avocation: it is the source of the page’s greatest successes. As far back as he can remember, his love of stories and his prodigious memory win him the attention he craves. Already at age four, he is an avid reader of novels. Since he retains every detail of their adventures, “je débitais agréablement à mon aïeule et à mon grand-père” (p. 54). He reads and reads, until he is able to call himself “le vivant répertoire des romans et des contes fabuleux” (p. 59).

When he begins his career as a page, he puts this talent to good use in his duties. He tells his tales to the young princes he serves to help them fall asleep when they are sick. Eventually, like other faithful readers of fiction, he comes to identify himself with its heroes: “Je me figurais . . . que j’étais quelqu’un des héros d’Homère, ou pour le moins quelque paladin, ou chevalier de la Table ronde” (p. 81). His literary storytelling serves him best when he uses it to further his love interests. In the chapter entitled “Les Premières Amours du page disgracié,” the adventures of the lovers in the novels he narrates to his young mistress form an intentional mise en abyme for the love story he is hoping to begin. Just as he plans, she falls in love with him by projecting herself into the narratives he uses to enchant her, the Aethiopica and a strong dose of “ces romans héroïques dont on fait estime” (p. 122). Indeed, his mistress is so pleased with her page’s talents that she delights in showing them off. On a family journey, all of the entertainment value of his vast reading is exploited, as “j’entrepris de conter à ma maîtresse tout ce que j’avais lu de l’Astrée. . . . J’en entretenais tous les jours cinq ou six heures ma maîtresse sans que ses oreilles en fussent fatiguées . . . et c’était un charme dont j’endormais la mère et une de ses confidentes, afin qu’elles ne puissent prendre garde aux oeillades que nous nous lancions” (pp. 146-47). Like Scheherazade, the page knows how to use story to disarm the watchful dragon.

It seems that in this role he can produce any effect desired. Only
once does he fail to control his powerful talent, and his slip has fatal results. His mistress, ever desirous of finding a wider audience for her protégé, invites one of her cousins to hear his stories. "Pour obéir à ce commandement et ne m'engager pas en une matière qui leur pût être ennuyeuse, j'entrepris de leur raconter les aventures de Psyché," the page remarks with perfectly feigned naïveté (p. 124). Like his mistress, the cousin is young and beautiful, and she of course shares her fate. As a result of what the page terms his "jeune et folle éloquence" (p. 125), the cousin is soon hopelessly in love with him. The page is too successful at Scheherazade's game, and the conquests he obtains from his vulgarizations of heroic fiction lead to his banishment from England. Another type of text, however, is healthier for him, and near the end of his adventures we see the page, living proof of the victory of the comic style, happily spinning tales once again, this time to his new master in France: "Bien souvent, je lui contais quelque aventure nouvelle que j'avais apprise; d'autres fois, c'était une vieille histoire renouvelée que j'avais prise ou dans le Décameron de Boccace, ou dans Straparole, Pogge Florentin . . . et d'autres auteurs qui se sont voulu charitablement appliquer à guérir la mélancolie" (p. 257). With its web of intertextual references, the Page gives ample testimony to the seductiveness of storytelling.

Although its composition is less firmly anchored in a literary atmosphere, the Voyage nevertheless lays much stress on the narrator/reader relationship. It contains references to literary works of the period and reports one extensive conversation with a group of précieuses from Montpellier about men of letters (Sarrasin, Voiture, Ménage, and so on) and heroic novels. In a manner reminiscent of Molière, the précieuses are mocked because they praise the likes of Cassandre, Cyrus, and Clélie "pour la magnificence de l'expression et la grandeur des événements" (p. 82). In the context of as passively chatty a voyage narrative as Chapelle's, the narrator has a special relationship to the reader, as Jean Rousset points out: "On voit que le narrateur est moins acteur que spectateur et auditeur; auditeur de récits offerts par les surprises de la route, selon une ancienne tradition, il est ici une figure du lecteur de romans, oubliant ses 'chagrins' dans les aventures d'autrui." Such a narrator is a perpetual reader of novels, literally and metaphorically.
In Cyrano’s two imaginary voyages, the question of intertextuality attains a far greater complexity than in other libertine texts. The key intertextual references in *L’Autre Monde* act first of all as signs of homage. When the narrator returns home from the moonlight stroll narrated in the novel’s opening scene, he finds the works of Cardano open on his table:

Je tombai de vue, comme par force, justement dans une histoire que raconte ce philosophe: il écrit qu’étudiant un soir à la chandelle, il aperçut entrer, à travers les portes fermées de sa chambre, deux grands vieillards, lesquels, après beaucoup d’interrogations qu’il leur fit, répondirent qu’ils étaient habitants de la lune, et cela dit, ils disparurent (p. 32).

The lunar intervention to which Cyrano refers here is actually described by Cardano, who claims to have benefited from such an inspirational visit on more than one occasion in his *De la subtilité et subtiles inventions, ensemble les causes occultes et raisons d’icielles*. By mentioning the visit at the beginning of his novel, Cyrano immediately demonstrates an awareness of literary precedent as keen as the sense of stylistic and metaphoric relativity embodied in *L’Autre Monde*’s first paragraph. Other books have dealt with men from the moon before his, and Cyrano deliberately flaunts his novel’s literary origins (unlike Théophile and Sorel, who begin by flaunting their literary adversaries).

His narrator is not only a reader of literature. He is a reader of works that present parallels to his own situation more striking than those found by the page in his heroic love stories, works that can have an active influence on his adventures. The page merely uses novelistic plots to program his fate, but the narrator’s story is preordained by literature, is generated by previous literary texts. In the case of Cardano’s lunar visitors, for example, they gain a second literary existence in the pages of *L’Autre Monde*, since they can provide an explanation for the coincidence of the open book: “Sans doute . . . les deux vieillards qui apparurent à ce grand homme sont ceux-là mêmes qui ont derangé mon livre, et qui l’ont ouvert sur cette page, pour s’épargner la peine de me faire cette harangue qu’ils ont faite à Cardan” (p. 32). Cyrano begins by citing an incident from Cardano, thereby giving it a second life, the indirect, passive life of quotation. He then goes beyond this first movement to reanimate quotation by giving the incident
a new active literary existence. When Cyrano attributes an action in his book to characters cited from Cardano’s, he succeeds in blurring the boundaries between quotation and original. In this case, quotation can even replace the primary text. The narrator needs neither to see the lunar visitors nor to hear what they have to say to him. The ideal scene to begin his adventures already exists, so reading can be substituted for action. An extreme use of Cyrano’s “blurring” would lead to a type of livre sur rien in which the hero would do nothing but read about what happened to previous heroes.

In order to make his point absolutely clear, Cyrano does not abandon the question of the extraterrestrial inspiration of Cardano’s works after this initial reference. Shortly after they meet, the demon of Socrates describes for the narrator a similar intrusion into Cardano’s life for which he was responsible: “Un jour, entre autres, j’apparus à Cardan comme il étudiait; je l’instruisis de quantité de choses, et en récompense il me promit qu’il témoignerait à la postérité de qui il tenait les miracles qu’il s’attendait d’écrire” (p. 56). This passage proves that Cardano keeps his promise, for, once again, Cyrano does not invent the incident described in L’Autre Monde but cites it from Cardano’s autobiography. Cardano’s book precedes Cyrano’s and may have inspired it. Cyrano returns the literary favor by giving the passage from his predecessor in freethinking a second life in print, thereby refulfilling Cardano’s promise to share credit with a demon.

He does the same thing a few lines later for another of his libertine and literary ancestors. In the course of his genealogy, the demon lists a second fruitful encounter: “Je connus aussi Campanella . . . il commença à ma prière un livre que nous intitulâmes de Sensu rerum” (p. 56). In the case of Campanella, the inspirational link (at least with the Estats et empires) is certain. Cyrano pays homage to him not only by citing an incident from his work but also by connecting him with Cardano by means of the demon they shared. Furthermore, his use of quotation does not end here. Extraterrestrial inspiration is brought closer to home when the spirit involved is one actually seen by the narrator. Cyrano makes it clear that even the demon of Socrates has a previous literary existence. His name, as the demon himself is the first to point out, already marks him with his borrowed status. He may explain the
inspiration of his narrator's book (this is never said, although perhaps implicit in the citation from Cardano), but he was not created by Cyrano. The demon is borrowed from previous accounts, those of Socrates, Cardano, and Campanella. He serves not only as a character but also as an extended citation from the printed pages that first gave him life.

This type of borrowing is most unusual in literature. It is not uncommon to see a historical figure re-created in the pages of a novel; a well-known name is both likely to intrigue the reader and to facilitate his acceptance of the character, to encourage a "suspension of disbelief" at least as far as this element of the novel is concerned. The brand of re-creation practiced by Cyrano, however, works in the opposite direction. The demon of Socrates is not invented by Cyrano, any more than the faces from the then recent past used by Madame de Lafayette; but he, unlike the vicomtesse de Chartres or Diane de Poitiers, can hardly be said to anchor the text in authenticity. The demon is not accepted by history: no documents or events guarantee his physical reality. Only strange accounts, which might be described as metaphorical renditions of personal adventures, attest to his acts. Cyrano repeats without alteration all the proofs available of the demon's existence. Since this existence is literary rather than historical, it contributes to L'Autre Monde's denunciation of its own fictionality. By introducing a "citation character" like the demon of Socrates, Cyrano continues the blurrings between history and fiction practiced by the libertines with regard to their own origins, and he also evokes a problematics of quotation.

Two other characters in L'Autre Monde might be termed citations. The Spaniard who plays male to the narrator's female on the moon, like the majority of characters in the novel, has no proper name to identify him. He must be distinguished from the other porte paroles the narrator encounters, however, because, like the demon, he has a literary past. In this case, Cyrano simply does not bother to make this fact explicit. A Spaniard on the moon for Cyrano, and for any reader familiar with the texts he evidently considers his literary predecessors, can only be Domingo Gonzales, the hero and alleged author of Francis Godwin's The Man in the Moon (1638). Cardano may have mentioned men from the moon, but Godwin came much closer to Cyrano's proj-
ect when he told the story of a man on the moon. Once this reference is traced, it is clear that the narrator and the Spaniard form a couple more unique than the lunar race, the Selenians, imagined: as Christian Barbe points out, Gonzales is the narrator’s “précursieur fictif.” The Spaniard is a citation from Godwin. Like the demon of Socrates, he is a character with a literary past. Furthermore, that literary past is parallel to the literary present being acted out by L’Autre Monde’s own narrator.

The third instance of the use of character as citation in L’Autre Monde is the most complex. This citation is made by the demon of Socrates. Shortly after suggesting his relationship to Cardano’s work, the demon tells of meeting Tristan L’Hermite. In a passage (wisely) expurgated by Le Bret, the demon delivers an elaborate eulogy of Cyrano’s contemporary and sometime friend, which he concludes with an incident from Tristan’s life intended to provide the ultimate confirmation of his status as virtue incarnate (“la vertu dont il est le trône”):

Quand je vis une vertu si haute, j’appréhendai qu’elle ne fût pas reconnue; c’est pourquoi je tâchai de lui faire accepter trois fioles; la première était pleine d’huile de tacle, l’autre de poudre de projection, et la dernière d’or potable, c’est-à-dire de ce sel végétatif dont vos chimistes promettent l’éternité. Mais il les refusa avec un dédain plus généreux que Diogène ne reçut les compliments d’Alexandre quand il le vint visiter à son tonneau (p. 57).

The scene narrated by the demon here is no more of Cyrano’s invention than is the demon’s appearance to Cardano. To the reader familiar with a certain textual tradition, it becomes clear that the demon’s literary past is even more complicated than originally suspected. Not only is he the demon of inspiration who visited Socrates, Cardano, and all the others listed in his impressive genealogy (pp. 55–56), but he lays claim to a recent literary past in which he played a role somewhat different from his earlier ones.

The demon’s anecdote of the three vials is an explicit reference to a scene in the Page acted out by the novel’s hero and his “nouvel Artefius” just before their separation. On their last day together, the philosopher wakes the page with a demonstration of his powers: he shows his pupil three little glass bottles, each containing a beautifully colored substance, and describes their special powers.
The bottles are filled with "huile de talc," "poudre de projection," and "médecine universelle." Until this point, the two versions are identical, as though Cyrano/the demon wished to make certain of his audience's confidence before moving to alter literary history. Far from scornfully refusing these substances, the page is only too eager to accept, and immediately tastes the "médecine universelle." No sooner has he begun to drink, however, when "l'excès de la joie me fit ouvrir la main et le breuvage précieux tomba par terre." At this sight, the alchemist "fut épouvanté de cet accident et l'interpréta possible à mauvais augure" (p. 105).

Shortly afterward, he is called away, and they part forever, with the master displeased at his pupil's behavior. The changes in the demon's rendition of this tale completely alter its significance. Whereas in his own version the page bungles his much-desired initiation into alchemy and fails to win even the confidence, much less the admiration, of the alchemist, according to the demon (who should know, since he claims to have been there in the form of the alchemist himself), Tristan uses the encounter to his advantage, and emerges from it "tout esprit . . . tout cœur," the freest man in France, a true libertine hero.

This lesson in contradiction and subjective vision is Cyrano's most interesting use of a particular form of citation. With it, the demon of Socrates establishes a new facet of his literary past: if they have not already read about him, readers who enjoy him can turn for additional adventures to the Page, where he has previously played the role of the magician (who was playing the role of Artefius, who was playing the role of Apollonius of Tyana). But when he identifies himself as the magician, he at the same time, and without even calling attention to the substitution, equates Tristan with his page. While it is surprising to find that the fictional demon is partially a quotation of other characters, it is harder to accept either the fictionalization of Tristan by someone else (even though he himself certainly encouraged the tendency) or the assimilation of his novel's hero into his autobiography (we have already seen the dangers that entails). Furthermore, the demon's drive to fictionalize strains the boundaries of citation, thereby putting its functioning into question. How exact does quotation have to be in order to operate as quotation? Is it simple perception as quotation enough? If the reader does not know the
text quoted, does a citation still retain its status as citation? These questions are posed in a footnote by the "rédacteur" of one of the greatest monuments to borrowed speech, Les Liaisons dangereuses: "On croit que c'est Rousseau dans Emile, mais la citation n'est pas exacte, et l'application qu'en fait Valmont est bien fausse; et puis, madame de Touvel avait-elle lu Emile?"28

Related to these intertextual assimilations in L'Autre Monde are certain well-documented references to Francion. In the last edition of his novel, Sorel has his pedant Hortensius describe at great length the world on the moon and the lunar novel he plans to compose. At times, Hortensius's account "prefigures" L'Autre Monde. For example, he says of the earth: "Il faut croire qu'elle sert de lune à cet autre monde" (p. 427). He makes the same analogy later developed at great length by one of Cyrano's lunar philosophers: for a mite or a louse, a human body is as big as the whole world is for that human being (p. 428). It is clear that Cyrano does not want these parallelisms to be missed. Citation is an act of homage for him, so he is never ashamed to acknowledge his predecessors. After all, L'Autre Monde is the lunar novel Hortensius never wrote. Thus, he quotes one of the pedant's visions: on the moon, poets are relieved of financial worries, since their poems are accepted as money.29 And this time he does not close the episode without inscribing his source's name in his text:

Ha! vraiment . . . voilà justement la monnaie dont Sorel fait servir Hortensius dans Francion, je m'en souviens. C'est là sans doute, qu'il l'a dérobé; mais de qui diable peut-il l'avoir appris? Il faut que ce soit de sa mère, car j'ai oui dire qu'elle était lunatique (p. 64).

His discovery of Hortensius's genealogy repeats a movement found in all of Cyrano's explicit intertextual references, a movement that sets them apart from simple inscriptions of the names of previous novels in novels. For Cyrano, quotation is practiced in conjunction with an implicit reflection on its limits. Each time he quotes, Cyrano builds into his own text a scene inspired by a previous literary work, a literary work of a tradition with which his own presents affinities, and one that his reader is therefore likely to know. Then he announces his citation, with an initial effect of calling attention to the fictionality of the universe in which his text inscribes itself, of flaunting its self-consciousness. Cyrano's
originality comes from the fact that he accompanies self-conscious denunciation, an awareness of citation, with a denial of citation. Hortensius/Sorel did not invent the idea of poems used as money; it already existed on the moon. He is not, therefore, inventing, but copying, just like the narrator/Cyrano. In the same manner, Tristan did not create the alchemist in his novel, since he existed, and Cyrano can prove it because his narrator met the demon, who was the alchemist, who met Tristan (who perhaps called himself the page?). Nothing more than flashy games, it might be argued. Perhaps. But through his manipulation of quotation, Cyrano is able to make a move beyond self-consciousness in the direction of a new representational “fallacy.” He reunites books with their referents, at least on the moon.

Can Cyrano’s free “tampering” with texts be used to document the libertine obsession with plagiarism? Did he himself lavish accusations of plagiarism on all those writers whose styles had affinities with his own because of an awareness of his own literary crimes? Many critics would agree with this view, Emile Roy, for example, who comments at length on Cyrano’s “emprunts” from Sorel and concludes: “Les quelques pages où le pédant Hortensius expose ses projets de voyage fantastique dans la lune... ont plus servi à Cyrano de Bergerac, que tous les livres analogues publiés dans les trente années suivantes; il doit la moitié de ses ‘burlesques audaces’ à l’Histoire comique de Francion et au Berger extravagant.” Alcover speaks of Cyrano’s “larcins,” and contends that “aucune des coutumes, souvent ingénieuses, rencontrées dans la Lune n’est de Savinien: il a plagié partout.” The opinion that everything in Cyrano comes from someone else is responsible for the enormous number of pages devoted to the sources of his novels. The study of influences on him makes up the major part of Cyrano criticism. Such a perspective, faithfully adopted, can lead to a judgment as severe as Jacques Denis’s condemnation of the entire contemporary French libertine movement: “En général, leur esprit était tout d’emprunt, et leur science regardait plus vers le passé que vers l’avenir... À la différence de Descartes, qui semble jaloux de ne rien avancer que de lui-même, ils mettent leur esprit et leur gloire à citer.”

It is impossible to deny the libertine penchant for copying. However, the question of sources has now been sufficiently doc-
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umented to allow the focus of the discussion to be shifted to the originality of such an enterprise. Maurice Blanchot says of Cyrano and L'Autre Monde: "Il n'invente rien . . . Et pourtant, il a une 'imagination de feu,' et L'Autre Monde est un livre qui frappe encore par son étrangeté et sa nouveauté." It is the difference between borrowing and an art of quotation that can unravel Blanchot's paradox, that can explain why writers who, for some, are of interest only because of the sources they compile can also be described as "new" by Blanchot's modernity.

The problem of quotation in literary narrative has been treated in two complementary studies, Herman Meyer's The Poetics of Quotation in the European Novel and Bakhtin's Marxism and the Philosophy of Language. Both of these works articulate definitions of quotation that stress the dual nature of the relationship an incorporating text entertains with the discourse it incorporates. The relationship is based on similarity and difference, on rapprochement and distancing. As Meyer phrases it: "The charm of quotation emanates from a unique tension between assimilation and dissimulation: it links itself closely with its new environment, but at the same time detaches itself from it, thus permitting another world to radiate into the self-contained world of the novel." Quoted discourse maintains a certain independence with regard to its new context. It is recognizable as a foreign element because it retains some or all of the exact words of its original author, and/or because it retains at least part of its first content. Quotation represents the concrete linguistic presence of the other. This other is kept under control by being removed from its original context and inserted into a new, foreign one. Such an uprooting of necessity entails at least a minimal blurring of intentions.

It is this simultaneous otherness and sameness, this hide-and-seek effect, that Meyer uses to distinguish quotation from borrowing and thereby to separate its study from the search for influences or sources. A borrowing does not have a double nature, first, because it is completely severed from the context of its origin, and second, because its author's intentions are never blurred, simply repeated. All that is gained from tracing it to its source is what Meyer terms "a certain philological clarification" or "philological satisfaction." The discovery of a borrowing neither en-
riches the meaning of the englobing text nor provides any clue to the aesthetic value of that text. Hence the failure of source studies to treat many passages in a text like Cyrano's composed of quoted material that is not severed from its original context, and that does not merely repeat the author's intentions in that context. Tracking down the numerous sources of ideas expressed in _L'Autre Monde_ is an enterprise of a concrete value for the history of ideas, but one that does not necessarily contribute to an understanding of the works “nouveauté.” To reduce _L'Autre Monde_ to a list of authors whose theories it develops is to enrich the _livre à clef_ theory with a new facet, to make yet another attempt to discover the mythical “Grand Cyrus libertin.” Such a treatment is contrary to the spirit of libertine aesthetics as I have attempted to define it here. Ideas in _L'Autre Monde_ are ultimately subordinated to a theory of knowledge, and this explains why quotation plays such an important role in the novel. The realization that the demon claims to have been Tristan's alchemist, for example, provides more than a philological satisfaction. It is essential for the comprehension of Cyrano's view of the nature and the status of fiction.

“Reported speech is speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time also speech about speech, utterance about utterance.” Bakhtin's broadest definition of quotation explains why the study of this phenomenon occupies such a privileged position in his work. Since there is no change of intention involved, speech that is merely borrowed does not require an act of recognition. But quotation is, in Hjelmslev's terminology, a connotative system because its signifier is already a language, someone else's language. Its signified is a calling into question of the nature and functioning of discourse. It must be seen for what it is, and it must be reunited with its original environment in order for its dialogue with and about language to flourish. For Bakhtin, quotation is one of the means by which texts created after the fall from carnival can recapture its spirit and reenter the kingdom of relativity. It is the type of linguistic and intertextual dialogue generated by quotation that allows texts to escape imprisonment in a world of hierarchies and avoid the monologism that serves their cause.

Dialogue is a model sketched everywhere in the libertine nov-
els. The storytelling positions, first oral, then written, so frequently adopted in early first-person fiction are more than nominally present here. Francion stages a command performance of his life story for his “Gentil-homme Bourguignon.” Contrary to standard practice for this particular convention, he does not launch into his tale and immediately forget the presence of the listener who had so eagerly begged for his rendition. By regularly proving that he is tailoring his performance to his audience, Francion maintains contact with the character who gives him a pretext for telling his life story. He foresees his objections (“Vous me direz que”). He demonstrates his faith in the other’s ability to fill in the gaps (“Je vous laisse à juger si”).

The narrator of the Fragments maintains a separate “frame” dialogue in each of the novel’s sections: with the implied reader for whom he describes his tastes and habits, and with the readers sufficiently versed in contemporary polemics to be included in the first chapter’s clearly literary “nous” (“nos vers d’aujourd’hui”; “Démosthène et Virgile n’ont point écrit en nostre temps, et nous ne saurions escrire en leur siècle”). L’Autre Monde’s series of conversations provide a model of dialogic solicitude. The interlocutors often engage in long tirades, but they persistently try to foresee the opinions of their partners in dialogue. While the Spaniard presents his ideas on the existence of a vacuum, for example, he constantly makes place in his discourse for the objections he imagines are being formed in the silent narrator’s mind. By leaving room for antagonism, he creates a progressively larger and more hostile audience for his discourse: “Je vois fort bien que vous me demandez pourquoi donc . . . Qu’il me réponde donc, je l’en supplie. . . . Mais, sans m’amuser à répondre à toutes leurs objections” (p. 69; italics mine).

The mission D’Assoucy assigned to the Avantures—to justify his actions and save his reputation—is omnipresent. On the one hand, he takes the offensive and addresses his enemies by name in the hope of engaging them in a dialogue that will ultimately prove his innocence. Hence the diatribes directed at Loret, at Cyrano, at Chapelle (“Ample réponse de Dassoucy au Voyage de m. Chapelle”) and at “Messieurs les sots,” the legions of readers of Chapelle’s Voyage who D’Assoucy imagines are convinced of his guilt (“Epistre à messieurs les Sots . . . contenant les actions de grace
de l’autheur, des biens et des faveurs infinies que par toute terre il en a reçues”). This dialogue of aggression is complemented by a defensive dialogue with the “tres-sage Lecteur” (significantly in the more intimate singular), whom he constantly calls upon as the last purely innocent presence capable of believing in his virtue. This reader is asked to make judgments, to take sides (D’Assoucy’s side) in his dialogue with the texts that have slandered him, with their writers and the readers who have accepted their testimony. To this reader alone, D’Assoucy will bear his soul: “Je te confesse, Lecteur” (p. 125).

In the libertine novels, dialogue is ubiquitous. The presence of levels of dialogue, from the situational (serving to recall the presence of a silent audience, and largely conventional) to the intertextual (with admired and scorned predecessors), is certainly worthy of note because of a degree of complexity and continuity uncommon at the period. However, dialogue does not in itself embody a philosophy of relativity. This is a function of the use of quotation. Citation provides the most convincing means of implying an essential tenet of freethinking, what Jan Miel has called the “discovery that all knowledge is hollow at the center.”

This awareness is often expressed in libertine texts by means of a device borrowed from the seminal work of self-conscious fiction, Don Quixote. The innkeeper gives the priest a copy of one of Cervantes’s own Exemplary Novels (actually a double wink at the reader, since these were published after the first part of Don Quixote, in which the reference is placed). Early in the second part of the novel, Sancho reveals to the Don that “the story of your Grace has already been put into a book called The Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha, they mention me in it, under my own name, Sancho Panza... along with things that happened to us when we were alone together.” At these moments, the reader finds his foothold in fiction shaken.

Sorel, the libertine novelist closest to the self-conscious tradition, repeats this effect in the passage of Francion in which its hero discusses his novelistic projects. Sorel uses both types of self-citation found in Cervantes in the same passage: he has Francion claim authorship of a not yet published text (Le Berger extravagant) and the text in which he is actually appearing (pp. 436–37). He thereby indulges in a game played out time and again
in *Quixote's* wake: the weakening of the boundaries between fiction and reality, and the destruction of the neatly established chronological territory assigned to a work of fiction. *Le Berger extravagant* is allowed a sort of impossible preview by being cited before its publication, before, therefore, it has a right to literary life. But this bit of anachronistic fireworks is surpassed by Francion's revelation that the book of his youth (*La Jeunesse de Francion*) already exists. Since *Francion* was originally published in serial form, for its contemporary readers the literary game is parallel to that created by Sancho Panza's discovery of the first part of *Don Quixote*. Francion, like Sancho and the Don, acquires a simultaneous and inconceivable double existence. Characters have no right to stick around to comment on the books that contain the story of their adventures. Furthermore, for the twentieth-century reader faced with the complete text of Francion's life, the issue is still more complicated: how can he describe the book of his life as though it were an independent volume, when the narrative in which those adventures are contained is not yet completed?

Cyrano continues such speculations in his pair of voyages. I have already discussed at some length the account of the composition of *Les Estats et empires de la lune* given at the beginning of *Les Estats et empires du soleil*. In this passage, Cyrano does not step outside the realm of the possible. Just as D'Assoucy mentions works he has already published, the *Ovide* and the volumes of his burlesque poetry, Cyrano stays within accepted literary chronology. Cyrano's reference is, nonetheless, more startling than D'Assoucy's self-conscious allusions because of his alterations, of his fictionalizing of fiction. Far from disturbing the reassuring chronology of literature, he creates for it a stability, in this case, one that is too good to be true. Cyrano describes the composition and publication of the first part of a two-volume work in that work's second volume, thereby providing both a transition between the two parts and a literary past for the second half. The transition is quite effective, since it establishes an intertextual identity between the two works: Dyrcona has been to the moon, has met the demon of Socrates; the narrator of the lunar voyage continues to exist, and acquires a name (which in turn involves him with Cyrano in the same way as the demon involved the page with Tristan). The past, however, is largely false. The *Estats et em-
pires de la lune certainly had an existence at the time of the composition of the Estats et empires du soleil, but not a public one. The action of choosing a place for it on the shelves of the library is premature. But then, the only public existence to which a truly libertine text can aspire is fictional.

This idea receives a more explicit treatment in a passage from L'Autre Monde in which the demon makes the narrator a present of two books he has selected to entertain the narrator while he waits for the vehicle the demon is building for his voyage back to earth. The first, brought to the moon from the demon's "pays natal," the sun, is called Les Etats et empires du soleil. Cyrano's anachronism, while following the model proposed by Cervantes and already repeated by Sorel, adds a new twist to its speculations. The Exemplary Novels and Le Berger extravagant were published only after they had acquired a fictional existence as completed books, but their narratives in no way depend on those of the works in which they are inscribed. The relationship between Cyrano's two voyages, however, is symbiotic. Can a sequel exist as a completed, published volume before the narration of its first half has been completed? Can, furthermore, this volume be handed over to the individual who is identified in its opening pages as its author? He is thus able to read it and his own story. He can discover not only that he has written this book but that he will write (therefore, has already written, if its composition and publication can be described in the book he is given) the story of the voyage he is still living out on the moon.

The demon gives the narrator ("afin de vous divertir") not only the story of his past life to read but also the story of his present life, and even the story of the end of this phase of his life and much of his future life as well. Sancho Panza is frightened when he thinks of someone knowing about the past he had believed he alone possessed: "I had to cross myself, for I could not help wondering how the one who wrote all those things down could have come to know about them." Imagine his reaction if he had been asked, like the narrator, to make a leap through several modernities, to be transformed into a character out of Borges. The narrator, fortunately, is far less emotional than his Spanish predecessor, and he does not even bat an eye. Perhaps he is able to preserve his sang-froid because he is in on the secret of the birth of all libertine texts. The
demon from the sun, who inspired Cardano and Campanella directly and Tristan (the page) indirectly, goes even further in the narrator’s case, and hands him the book to be written, the *Estats et empires du soleil* (which also tells him how to write/how he wrote *L’Autre Monde*). This Socratic (dialogic) demon offered Tristan in “real” life magic potions. Disguised as Artefius, he gave Tristan’s double, the page, both elixirs and impetus. He inspired Cardano’s books, and was responsible for Campanella’s subject and even his title (“un livre que nous intitulâmes *de Sensu rerum*,” he says [p. 56], graciously sharing the credit with him). He reduces the narrator (Cyrano’s double) to the level of a scribe as unoriginal as Flaubert’s copy-clerks. Origin has been thwarted once again.

The demon does even more than that. Along with the narrator/Dyrcona/Cyrano’s book-to-be-that-already-is, he presents him with a second volume, about which he is more explicit:

> Je vous donne encore celui-ci que j’estime beaucoup davantage; c’est le *Grand Oeuvre des philosophes*, qu’un des plus forts esprits du soleil a composé. Il prouve là-dedans que toutes choses sont vraies, et déclare la façon d’unir physiquement les vérités de chaque contradictoire, comme par exemple que le blanc est noir et que le noir est blanc; qu’on peut être et n’être pas en même temps; qu’il peut y avoir une montagne sans vallée; que le néant est quelque chose, et que toutes les choses qui sont ne sont point. Mais remarquez qu’il prouve ces inouis paradoxes, sans aucune raison captieuse, ni sophistique (pp. 103–4).

Within the context of libertine intertextuality, the reference to the *Grand Oeuvre des philosophes* enjoys an exceptional status. This is the only instance in which the work cited does not exist. Furthermore, from the demon’s description, it is clear that this text would have a particular appeal for a libertine reader. The *Grand Oeuvre* is the ultimate work of freethinking, a book that stretches the dialogic reasoning of the demon’s first master/pupil and of the freethinkers’ first example/warning to its extreme (anti)conclusion: the destruction of the notion of opposites. No trace of hierarchy or the monologic in its universe. All systems of thought can peacefully coexist when “toutes choses sont vraies.”

*L’Autre Monde* is Cyrano’s web of other voices and other discourses, all pushed through a sieve until they lose their individual textures, and then glazed with a comic style and the rhetoric of
dialogue, so that all its characters ultimately speak with the same voice. These different homogenized discourses are then juxtaposed, without the judgmental markers that would enable a reader to decide which one is “right.” *L’Autre Monde*, in other words, aspires to be *Le Grand Œuvre des philosophes*, the book of every libertine author’s dreams. Next to his citation of his own, perhaps as yet only dreamed of, book, Cyrano inscribes the most curious of his libertine *mises en abyme*. The demon’s second gift to the narrator provides a clue to the importance of all these citations, and, after his presentation, he makes his message clear in his salutation and last words to the narrator: “Songez à librement vivre” (p. 104).

By means of these citations, the dialogue is kept open, and the voices of the past continue to be heard. *L’Autre Monde* even contains a vision of a dialogic utopia: the books the demon gives the narrator are “oral.” They are boxes carved from precious stones that contain metal disks with ridges. Each box is wound up with a key, and its needle is placed on the ridge of the desired chapter. The lunar books have the advantage of reproducing an author’s voice as his text: “Ainsi vous avez éternellement autour de vous tous les grands hommes et morts et vivants qui vous entretiennent de vive voix” (p. 105). They can thus defy what Bakhtin perceived to be the ultimate barrier to the realization of the dialogic in a literary text: the inability of the work held prisoner within the pages of a book to do more than faintly suggest (through *skaz*) the voice of its author and thereby the oral language to which his system accords primacy.

Regarded in this light, citation’s role in a libertine system seems positive, blending the past, the present, and the possible in a discourse of progressive liberation. However, this overlooks one implication of the structure of the demon’s presentation. When Cyrano juxtaposes his own would-be book with another book also, in a sense, of his own invention but impossible on earth, a dream book, he puts into question the importance of his own intellectual enterprise. Can his own book ever have any real value, or might it just as well be only imaginary? The narrator’s lunar visitors do not bother to speak to him because they have already told Cardano what they want to say to him, and Cardano has transcribed their message for all to read. If the *Grand Œuvre des philosophes* al-
ready exists in some other world(s), is it necessary to repeat its message in an imperfect, earthly book? Quotation may be a valuable tool for the expression of freethinking, but it is impossible to maintain a sense of self-importance in its presence. After all, as Edward Said points out: “Quotation is a constant reminder that writing is a form of displacement. For although quotation can take many forms, in every one the quoted passage symbolizes other writing as encroachment, as a disturbing force moving potentially to take over what is presently being written. . . . It is a reminder that other writing serves to displace present writing . . . from its absolutely central, proper place.”

Thus, the libertine penchant for quotation is born of the same sense of alienation that spreads their fear of plagiarism. Writers constantly aware of the slippage between discourses, of the impossibility of staking a claim and policing it in the territory of language, know that they can have no voice of their own. They must adopt the voice of the other, annihilate the self to facilitate its blending into the other.

There are striking illustrations of this in the libertine novels. The “singe de Scarron” who writes about the “singe de Brioché” makes an extravagant use of his own previous works. He frequently refers to the number and importance of the “gros volumes” he has already published. More surprisingly, he even inserts (quotes) entire poems of his composition. These texts have been in print previously in one or another of the fat volumes, but D’Assoucy feels compelled to give them a second literary existence, in a last-ditch attempt to defend himself against slander and to guarantee that at least his poetic voice will be heard. In the event that his latest literary creation, the Avantures (an additional “cinq gros volumes,” as he tells the king in his dedication), is not sufficient to speak for him, he juxtaposes his old literary voice and his new one. But just as he realizes that the juxtaposition of his version of his life with Chapelle’s contradictory one will ultimately annihilate both of them (“Mais pour dire la vérité, / L’un et l’autre de son costé / N’a rien écrit de véritable.” [p. 188]), so he must sense that his poems will suffer a loss of importance from their reduction to the status of quotation. Because of their interpolation, his own poems become foreign. The territory of D’Assoucy’s “new” literary voice in the Avantures is so overrun by other voices, both friendly and enemy, that its force, and that of
the present it represents, are weakened. Once again, D'Assoucy manages to help his enemies in their task of destroying him.

Repetition also undermines the auctorial or narrative voice in Cyrano's voyages. In the course of an interior monologue during his solar sojourn, Dyrcona considers four examples that illustrate the imagination's power over the body. His reflections are immediately followed by a conversation with a bird who explains to him that "la Nature a imprimé aux oiseaux une secrète envie de voler jusqu'ici, et peut-être que cette emotion de nostre volonté est ce qui nous a fait croistre des ailes." The bird goes on to give four examples of similar occurrences involving humans, in which it is disconcerting to recognize two of the four incidents cited by the narrator only two pages earlier: that of the pregnant women whose babies take on the shape of their desires and that of Cippus, who, dreaming of bulls, made horns grow from his forehead. These vignettes are in no way disguised to keep the reader from recognizing them as those just used, and the only change is in their order (Dyrcona's first example becomes the bird's last, and his last is the first used by the bird). This is a strange case of repetition afraid to go unnoticed. Although the Estats et empires is perhaps not the most polished of texts, this figure is certainly intentional, for surely any author could remember a passage for two pages. Such a blatant repetition raises questions about the possession and the uniqueness of discourse. If the same thing can be said by two speakers, then the speaker's identity is no longer important.

L'Autre Monde poses this question of narrative identity more forcefully still. When the narrator lands on the moon, he finds himself in the Paradis terrestre whose beauties he proceeds to describe at some length (pp. 41-43). This passage is clearly parenthetical, different in tone and form from the rest of the text. In a work as bare of obvious rhetoric as L'Autre Monde, this elaborate figure seems out of place. It is reminiscent of Cyrano's public letters, such as those about the four seasons, whose carefully codified elegance is a far cry from the seventeenth-century comic tradition. Moreover, the passage seems contrary in intention to Cyrano's small Oeuvre des philosophes: it is the only segment in L'Autre Monde in which the monologic manages to drown out the dialogic. In a work devoted, if not to causal development, at least to unfolding narrative elements through repetition and addi-
tion, it represents a moment of stasis that challenges the text’s momentum, all the more remarkable because it stands alone in a work hostile to description and does not form one link in a chain of ornaments. This carefully sculptured digression seems a more likely candidate for Scudery’s *Ibrahim* than for Cyrano’s manifesto against closure.

Such clues, for once, are not meant to lead the reader astray. The unmistakeable sensation of difference generated by the narrator’s description of the Earthly Paradise on the moon stems from its very real literary independence. It is not without reason that Cyrano’s descriptive parenthesis recalls the style of his public letters: it is (or was) part of one of them. The charms of Paradise were first enumerated as part of a (fictional) seduction plot with a scenario reminiscent of that which allegedly motivated the writing of *La Religieuse*. In a letter usually referred to as “D’une maison de campagne,” but also as “Le Campagnard,” the narrator tries to convince an unidentified friend to leave Paris and return to his country home. To prepare the text for insertion in *L’Autre Monde*, Cyrano simply eliminated the frame seduction motif and made minor alterations and cuts in the descriptive body of the text. He thereby removes the text from its original *raison d’être*, leaving it free to be manipulated as a prefabricated literary building block. Cyrano then performs a maneuver rare in literary history: he indulges in a lengthy self-citation. This citation must be distinguished from any other enclave of foreign influence in *L’Autre Monde*. It is completely unrelated to the borrowings from the systems of Gassendi, Copernicus, and others that frequently subtend its discussions. It is also different from its fellow citations because its source is not mentioned and it bears no other habitual signal of its status, and because there is nothing in it of Cyrano’s playful sleight of hand. No real changes are made in the passage. No fun can be had and no insight gained from returning it to the context of its creation. This is the only section of *L’Autre Monde* that refuses to dialogue, either internally or externally. Due to its array of superlatives and the preciosity of its images, the description can function equally well and equally blandly in any situation calling for a beautiful spot, an estate thought to be heaven on earth, or the “real” earthly heaven in the other world.

This much links the passage to the question of narrative iden-
tity. The speaker loses importance when what he has to say can be shifted verbatim from mouth to mouth. But that point alone is not sufficient to explain why Cyrano chooses to double his narrative voice, without either calling attention to his trick or covering it up by pushing this discourse, like all the other ones, through his stylistic sieve to make it blend in. Perhaps the doubling goes undetected because, for once, quotation is totally dissociated from self-conscious games and the comic tradition. Its implications here are far more serious. If Cyrano does not use original words to describe utopia, it is not because he is unable to find them but because he chooses not to. This self-avowed amateur of citation and obsessive borrower who does nothing to hide either his borrowing or its obsessiveness, this writer so afraid that his words will be pillaged that he accuses even his closest friends of plagiarism, gives utopia the form of self-citation. If ideas can come from other books and inspiration can be attributed to other books, why not a vision of paradise as well? In this case, Cyrano, instead of having his text violated by foreigners, as he feared would happen, is able to indulge in a moment of auto-mutilation (castration). Instead of having his voice displaced only by the foreign voices whose presence he constantly senses around him, he is displaced by one of his own other voices. This is without question the most dangerous invasion in L'Autre Monde. Cyrano's self-citation casts doubts on the originality of both utopia and his own voice.

This evocation of the pitfalls of cliché and copying can be linked to the parody of an inflated "heroic" style discussed early in this chapter in relation to Théophile and Sorel. The sin of merely repeating what has already been said by others must be avoided at any price. The crucial point of the literary manifesto that opens the Fragments is a simple one: a writer must find his own language, not the language of others: "Il faut comme Homère faire bien une description; mais non point par ses termes, ny par ses Epithetes: il faut escrire comme il a escrit, mais non pas ce qu'il a escrit" (p. 3). After his initial declarations in favor of originality, Théophile proceeds to fill his text with examples of language that fails to communicate. There is Ronsard's pedantic and cumbersome return to Greek and Latin roots ("Il semble qu'il se veuille rendre incogneu pour paroitre Docte. . . . Dans ces termes estrangers il n'est point intelligible pour François") [pp. 2-3]). There
are those who hide behind Latin and assume, like Ronsard for his “mots forgés,” that it is intelligible to all: Sidias peppers his sentences with Latin phrases that he does not bother to translate into French and that remain empty signifiers. There are the nonsense sounds of the “fille obsédée” who has learned what her teachers consider a convincing language of possession: “Elle . . . court en gromelant quelques mots de Latin mal prononcé: je luy parlay Latin le plus distinctement qu’il m’estoit possible, mais je ne vis jamais aucune apparence qu’elle l’entendit” (p. 16). These incorrectly assimilated foreign tongues illustrate language’s communicative breakdown when it is blindly repeated and distanced from its original function. The enclaves of empty signifiers the narrator cites, like Cyrano’s self-quotation, are hopelessly monologic when they are cut off from their roots in conversation and seduction and cannot find the dialogue that would give them meaning.

The libertine meditations on cliché, quotation, and other phenomena of linguistic uprootedness are rarely counteracted by moments of linguistic creativity capable of indicating routes out of the quagmire of the already said or ways of returning the speaker’s sense of identity and property to him. If one overlooks the progressiveness and vitality of the *Fragments*’ manifesto, there is not much evidence elsewhere to indicate that the modernity forecast by these texts is really that of the Romantics, as Gau­tier would have us believe, and not that of a far more nihilistic vision, constantly displaced by inter- and meta-textuality. The libertine awareness, with only rare exceptions, is unable to go beyond the sense of invasion by other voices in order to reassert power over the aggressor.

Early in the *Avantures*, D’Assoucy receives a gift more precious than any magic potion: he learns how to break out of the vicious circle of his repeated misfortunes. The thief-with-a-thousand-faces teaches him how to avoid being robbed, and this lesson simultaneously indicates a method for surmounting his literary paranoia. First he explains that everyone is a thief, and then he exposes the complex linguistic system devised by men to hide both their activity and their awareness of its status:

Chaque métier a son nom, chaque permission de dérober a son titre.

Si le Capitaine vole le soldat, cela s’appelle le *tour du baston*; le
soldat volé par son capitaine vole le paysan, et ce vol s'appelle vivre sur le bon homme. Le paysan volé par le soldat prend tout ce qui se rencontre dans son désespoir, et ce vol s'appelle
Butiner,
Fourager,
Aller à la petite guerre,
Aller en course,
Faire contribuer, etc.,
sont les titres honorables dont les nobles enfans de Mars se servent pour s'emparer honnêtement du bien d'autrui.

Que diray-je de plus? autant d'hommes, autant de larrons; et, autant de larcins differens, autant de titres particuliers: comme Ransomner, faire venir l'eau au moulin, faire un trou à la nuit, tirer d'un sac deux moutures, jouer de la harpe, grivel, grapiller, plumer la poule sans crier, sophistiquer, relatter, faire du bien d'autrui large courroye, donner à manger à la pie, mettre de la paille en ses souliers, plier la toilette, aliage, corvée, monopole.

Ainsi dans le monde dérobant et dérobé, chacun dérobe sous ses titres spécieux, et les plus puissans comme les plus dignes d'estre respectez erigent leurs larcins en titre d'honneur, ainsi, il faut qu'un honneste larron, s'il veut dérober honnêtement et sans reproche, ait ses patentes (pp. 28–29).

An instinctive first response to this passage might link it to the problematic of language's nonfunctioning so often evoked in the libertine texts. After all, the thief describes another instance of subversion of the communicative function. Words are used here in order to camouflage, to remain opaque to all but a small number of initiate who alone are capable of discerning the thief's paradox: though expressions like "faire un trou à la nuit" and "jouer de la harpe" would appear to the outsider to belong to completely different semantic worlds, in fact they are synonyms. The range of expressions he is able to elucidate makes evident why this impressive passage is confided to the thief. Through him, language becomes an active accomplice in an act faithful to its nature of deception and duplicity: the instrument of the libertine's loss of identity helps rob others of their material property.

It cannot be argued, however, that the passage in its entirety remains nihilistic. In fact, the notion of language's ability to conceal and impoverish is almost taken for granted. Far more striking than the idea that everything the thief says can be reduced to a unique signifié is the dazzling richness of the signifiants that can be used to convey that one meaning. Signifying here is clearly
subordinated to connotation. This passage is the antithesis of those moments in the *Avantures* where D'Assoucy, like a caged beast, grovels for scraps of pity. Here the emperor reigns in new clothes, brilliant in their opacity. For a moment, he revels in the secret of his extraction from the alienation of linguistic *singeries*. And the thief's method is as easy as child's play. Instead of trying to get around language's deceptiveness, flaunt it, indulge in it, enjoy it. The catalogue of thievery explodes with the paradoxical riches of language's nonfunctioning, verbal proof that "larcins" can become "titres d'honneur." There is no doubt that the ill-gotten gains D'Assoucy parades before his "cher Lecteur" are fascinating. He taps the deepest source of synonyms and metaphors, the realms of slang and popular language, and uses them to create a brilliant verbal carnival. D'Assoucy demonstrates that linguistic play and the games of language can ward off displacement by quotation and cliché and can return his text to a context of relativism as surely as do the images of the union of opposites and the systems of reversal in *L'Autre Monde* and *Francion*.

"Quotation and proverb have as a common denominator the fact that both are preformed linguistic material. Proverbs in their totality constitute an unwritten literature, as it were, and represent a popular analogue to the quotation for written literature," Meyer affirms. Thus, proverb can be used to "fight" quotation because they are in this sense equal arms. D'Assoucy is not the only libertine novelist to sense the potential of proverbs for making the essence of oral dialogue accessible to written texts. Some of the most Promethean (Prometheus was, after all, a thief) moments in *L'Autre Monde* involve an exploration of proverbs and lexicalized expressions. But whereas D'Assoucy accumulates gleaming heaps of proverbs in order to glorify their variety and suggestiveness, Cyrano scrutinizes them one by one and painstakingly dissects them. For Blanchot, this literal interpretation of metaphor—or, rather, this giving life to situations inscribed in proverbial expressions—is the central creative impetus behind *L'Autre Monde*: "Presque toutes les situations importantes de *L'Autre Monde* sont des métaphores qui se réalisent par de vraies métamorphoses. Le langage prend le pas sur le contenu théorique." The carnival D'Assoucy describes is a nocturnal one.
(thieves prefer the dark; if necessary, they can always "faire un trou à la nuit"), so it is only natural that Cyrano’s exploration of its creative consequences take place in the lunar dimness. And the original "trou à la nuit" is, of course, the moon, which may also be the sun, according to L’Auteur Monde’s opening paragraph: "Ce pourrait bien être . . . le soleil lui-même, qui s’étant au soir dépouillé de ses rayons regardait par un trou ce qu’on faisait au monde quand il n’y était plus" (p. 31).

Cyrano produces his own verbal fireworks when he gives new life to the ultimate in the already said, to words so borrowed that they fulfill the libertine dream of being beyond origin. Popular language receives the same literal interpretation as other systems in L’Auteur Monde. Cyrano’s literary citations attempt to confirm the “reality” of incidents from various works, by providing eyewitness accounts (either the narrator’s or the demon’s) that consider them as historical rather than literary facts. The treatment of biblical scenes that Le Bret found dangerous enough to merit expurgation is in fact no more devious or sophisticated. All of the narrator’s long conversation with Elie in the Earthly Paradise examines the consequences of the assumption that everything narrated in the Bible literally took place in exactly that manner. Hence, for example, Elie’s description of the solution to the dilemma of interplanetary travel devised by Enoch when he, long before the narrator, decided to head for the moon. Jacob’s ladder had not yet been invented, so he is forced to resort to his memory of God’s words “l’odeur des sacrifices du juste est montée jusqu’à moi.” Enoch fills two bottles with the smoke from his next sacrifice, attaches them under his arms, and, like the narrator after him, aspires straight up to Paradise.

When Cyrano extends this same treatment to lexicalized expressions, his game becomes both more complex and more elusive. One indeed begins to suspect, along with Blanchot, that there are metaphors coming to life all over the pages of L’Auteur Monde, like the solar men who are born when they bubble up out of the warm mud (p. 132). Blanchot’s discussion of the scenario devised by Cyrano to act out the implications of formulas such as “mourir de chagrin” and “être dévoré de mouches” provides a model for further explorations of the expressions that lie unno-
ticed behind Cyrano’s words and situations. Not all of them, however, remain hidden. For example, the translation of one proverb from metaphoric to literal status is clearly explained:

... Le chasseur décharge en l’air un coup de feu, et vingt ou trente alouettes churent à nos pieds toutes cuites. Voilà, m’imagine-je aussitôt, ce qu’on dit par proverbe en notre monde d’un pays où les alouettes tombent toutes rôties! Sans doute quelqu’un était revenu d’ici (p. 64).

With the narrator’s lunar experience, terrestrial language finally finds a home. Words with only a metaphorical signification are given a new life when what is impossible suddenly takes place. L’Autre Monde attempts to reinstate the old, symbiotic relationship between words and things and, in so doing, releases language from the tyranny of the already said and restores to it some of its lost magic. Language is freed, if only briefly, from the context of broken-down communication and displacement of identity, and is portrayed as an all-powerful force. Words can make anything happen. Everything that can be said is possible, if not in this world, at least in another. With his proverb-come-true, Cyrano rejoins D’Assoucy’s carnivalistic celebration of the joys of language. Because of its unbroken ties to oral tradition and the spirit of carnival, street language, Boileau’s (in)famous “langage des Halles,” can remain creatively alive and anti-hierarchical. It can resist confinement through codification, while its connotative suggestiveness simultaneously permits self-conscious explorations. By setting off proverbial language’s fireworks, the libertine authors most intimately connected with the burlesque manage to unite Bakhtin and Foucault.

3. THE MUTED BELL

Je suis la cloche qui annonce une aurore nouvelle. (Campanella)

Spink provides a translation of Gassendi’s pedagogical goal:

I always saw to it that my pupils were in a position to defend Aristotle fittingly, but I proposed to them nevertheless by way of appendices the opinions by which Aristotle’s dogmatic teaching is weakened. . . . By this means my pupils were warned not to decide too hastily, seeing that they would never meet with an opinion or proposition so admitted and so plausible that its opposite could not be shown to be equally probable, if not more probable still.51
The master of relativism’s discourse on method provides a succinct résumé of the attraction and the pitfalls of the dialogic. Most evident is its attraction. Such a demonstration that “toutes choses sont vraies” must have seemed a heady philosophy indeed. Gassendi’s method was perfectly suited to an age when, for the first time, relativistic writers refused to have their open-endedness counterbalanced by unflinching belief in some untouchable system of values. Even their immediate predecessors were either unwilling or unable to go that far: dialogue in Rabelais, for example, is ultimately broken by his unambiguously reverent attitude toward antiquity. The seventeenth-century libertines, however, are prepared to look to the future without even the comfort of a backward glance. Witness Adam’s description of the new attitude toward satire developed by Sorel: “Ce n’est pas au nom de la tradition que Sorel condamne les vices de son temps. . . . Il n’invite pas les hommes à se retourner vers le passé. Il les appelle à se libérer.”

It might be argued that the liberation Sorel presents is restrained by an almost religious glorification of nature. Yet even if this barrier to the development of seventeenth-century libertinism did exist at one point, it too will eventually disappear. By the time Cyrano comes along, even the religion of nature has been rejected, and most of his commentators would agree with Prévot’s judgment: “La cohérence de ses critiques et de sa satire ne donne naissance à aucune sagesse. Thèse et antithèse ne se résolvent pas en synthèse, la dialectique demeure en suspens.”

By demonstrating an absence of faith unheard of prior to their appearance, the libertines outdo their sixteenth-century pre­ursors in a manner many have interpreted as a necessary prelude to the explosion of freethinking in the eighteenth century. The libertines of the seventeenth century have often been considered a vital link in an intellectual chain, a life force that succeeded in keeping a movement alive at what could be viewed as its nadir: “C’est eux et non les dogmatistes du dix-septième siècle qui établissent et nous font toucher du doigt la continuité de la chaine, l’union des idées. Sans eux serait inexplicable, au temps de Voltaire, ce retour offensif.” Such an attitude is hardly surprising. It can turn for support to no less an authority than Voltaire. In a letter to Chaulieu, the first leader of victorious freethinking imagines a conver-
sation with Chapelle and Bachaumont in which the former tells him:

Puis à Chaulieu l'épicurien
Je servis quelque temps de maître:
Il faut que Chaulieu soit le tien.35

The vision is heroic and therefore appealing. It is tempting to accept at face value the romanticism of the young Voltaire and not to question the extensive influence exercised by the seventeenth-century libertine thinkers.

But there is, after all, madness in Gassendi’s method. A teaching that aims to demonstrate that no system is airtight—that no system can be used to exclude the possibility of other, even contradictory, ones—such a teaching can only make life very difficult for its adherents. Taken to its extremes, dialogic reasoning leaves nothing to hold on to. A thinker who accepts its tenets must always see that the opposite of any system that attracts him is equally plausible. He must never lose the awareness that any system that gains a following will eventually be overthrown, and, most difficult of all, that even a system of freedom and relativism, a system that pretends to be a non-system or an anti-system, cannot survive the holocaust. Thus, in the incipit of L’Autre Monde, the narrator and his friends mock the comprehensive systems that pretend to have an explanation for everything (Christianity, Classical mythology), but the loudest laughter of all is reserved for the narrator’s system of relativism. Any reader alert to the consequences of the leveling process of L’Autre Monde’s juxtapositions cannot but sense that the new scientific openness, allegedly championed by a libertine such as Cyrano, will not stand up to the force of questioning he unleashes.

The signs of the defeat of the libertine experience are inscribed in the libertine life-stories. At key moments, the libertine hero experiences intellectual failure, the failure of knowledge, the impossibility of total freedom, and always under humiliating circumstances. The page is given three vials that represent infinite knowledge and complete liberation, but he lets them fall in a moment of awkwardness. The narrator of L’Autre Monde literally crashes into paradise, and ends up in a most ignominious position: “Je me trouvai sous un arbre embarrassé avec trois ou quatre
branches assez grosses que j'avais éclatées par ma chute, et le visage mouillé d'une pomme qui s'était échappée contre" (p. 41). He falls not only into the Garden of Eden but also into knowledge, in the form of an apple, but the relationship is not a successful one. He destroys the fruit of wisdom, and ends up with it smeared all over his face, no wiser for the experience. No less humiliating is Dyrcona's encounter with infinite freedom in the beginning of the Estats et empires. He acquires his name (when Cussan asks: "Et vous, monsieur Dyrcona, quel a esté le vostre?") in the episode when the three friends tell each other their dreams. Dyrcona had seen himself pursued by assassins, and escaping them, when "dans un Ciel libre et fort éclairé, mon corps soulagé de toute pesanteur, j'ay poursuivy mon voyage jusques dans un Palais où se composent la chaleur et la lumière." The dream of liberation, however, ends just as abruptly as the page's possession of the vials: "J'y aurais sans doute remarqué bien d'autres choses, mais mon agitation pour voler m'avoyt tellement approché du bord du lit que je suis tombé dans la ruelle, le ventre tout nu sur le plastre, et les yeux fort ouverts" (p. 106). Dyrcona is agitated; the page opens his hand; both are afraid of the experience of knowledge. The humiliating positions in which they find themselves serve to burlesque the great dream of freethinking.

The fact that the narrator's dream comes to a bad end just after he arrives in a place that evidently represents the sun is a premonition of failure for the work in which his dream is inscribed. In any libertine system, and especially in one with a Promethean vocabulary like Cyrano's, the sun, the home of light, enjoys a privileged position. It is on the sun, for example, that the demon is born, and from there that he brings the books of total philosophy. But for a libertine who has taken the dialogue of freethinking so far that he is afraid of a world in which it would find perfect realization, the sight of the sun can only bring about a sensation of vertigo. Indeed, as Dyrcona approaches the sun for the second time (this time in "reality," not in dream), the normally stoic traveler registers the strongest emotional reaction of his life. It is with "horreur" that he realizes that his body has become transparent (p. 134). In his commentary on this passage, Blanchot concludes: "Il ne supporte pas ce regard suprême qui le rend invisible à force de le voir. Cette chute angoissée dans le jour, cet attachement in-
stinctif au corps obscur et impénétrable représentait beaucoup plus
que les idées physiques qui tourment autour de l’épisode.”

Much more indeed. When Dyrcona continues to the land of perfect
light, he disappears. He disappears because he is seen too well. He
also disappears because he is no longer able to be seen. The sun
blinds all those who get too close to it, all those who try to look at
it without mediation. If you choose to see the sun, you will never
again see anything else. The same analogy holds true in the realm
of questioning. In the home of total dialogue, your book, too,
becomes invisible, loses its importance. When too clearly seen, its
ideas disappear like Dyrcona’s body.

It is logical, therefore, that Dyrcona’s solar explorations mark
the apex of monologic systems. Cyrano, the most daring of the
libertine novelists, the man with “une imagination de feu,” ends
his novelistic enterprise by constructing a monument to (his fear
of) the impossibility of the libertine enterprise. Once Dyrcona
reaches the sun, the entire form of his story is irrevocably altered.
He finds fewer interlocutors; he no longer dialogues with himself;
dialogue is generally replaced by description and narrative; a ser-
ies of interpolated stories acquires an inordinate importance; the
“corps obscur” of intertextuality to which he had clung almost
disappears; there are few references to illustrious predecessors. In
general, the question of self-consciousness vanishes from the
pages of the *Estats et empires*. Dyrcona learns that the perfect lan-
guage exists, the “langue matrice,” in which there is no gap be-
tween thought and expression: “Cet idiome est l’instinct ou la voix
de la Nature.” The “langue matrice” is comprehensible to all be-
ings, human and animal, because it is so logical: “Le premier
homme de nostre monde s’estoit indubitablement servy de cette
langue matrice, parce que chaque nom qu’il a voit imposé à
echaque chose déclaroit son essence.” He also learns that in sci-
ence there is “un Vray, hors lequel on estoit toujours éloigné du
facile” (p. 129). Such theories of language and scientific truth are
perfectly suited to make the last master who appears to guide
Dyrcona feel at home: when the *Estats et empires* breaks off,
Descartes has just entered the scene. Furthermore, allegory, the
monologic’s best friend, rears its ugly head on the sun, first in the
battle between the “beste à Feu” and the “animal Glaçon,” the
*Salamandre* and the *Remore*, and then in Campanella’s long de-
scription of solar topology, especially the rivers and fountains of the five senses. In this context, the outcome of the combat between fire and ice comes as no surprise: “Ainsi mourut la beste à Feu sous la paresseuse résistance de l’animal Glaçon” (p. 180). In the long run, the Promethean complex does not even die a glorious death—it simply has its energy “lazily” pushed out of it. The demon may distribute solar books, but he had to leave the sun before he could begin giving out inspiration.

In a sense, this less-than-glorious culmination of the libertine quest was inscribed in its beginning. The descriptive, allegorical passage at the end of the *Estats et empires* serves as a structural counterpart to *L’Autre Monde*’s (false) utopia. Both are concerned with the gratification of the five senses. Unlike Rabelais and Voltaire, Cyrano situates his utopia at the beginning of his text. And he has his narrator speedily evicted from this monologic, borrowed, and (for a libertine) empty anti-paradise, never again to find his way back—not that he wants to. It seems odd that he, like Candide, never attempts to regain “paradise,” until it becomes clear that “paradise” is exactly where he was heading all along. Dyrcona builds machine after machine and makes countless voyages, just to end up where he started, in the midst of allegory, this time in the company of Descartes.

Hardly a glorious end for the libertines’ most unrelenting questioner and most skillful practitioner of the art of dialogue. But as the page knew from the moment he began to put his story in writing, only disgrace(s) can await those who adopt this life style. As to whether their books served a useful function, kept a chain unbroken, were listened to in an age that saw the triumph of free-thinking’s vertiginous spiral, well, Sade, the most superb of the “hommes noirs,” said there was no seventeenth-century novel before Madame de Lafayette. Diderot told his daughter to read *Le Roman comique*, but *no Histoires comiques*. Rousseau had surely never heard of his less than illustrious predecessor in the discovery of persecution’s joys. The libertine novelists would almost certainly not have been surprised at this outcome. They made no great promises, and would have agreed with Galileo that, without them, they would have no following: “Grandiose promises attract the natural curiosity of men and hold them forever involved in fantasies and chimeras.”

They never pretended to be of the race
of Campanella, capable of ringing in a new dawn. Hence their disgrace. Unless, of course, they somehow agreed with the judgment of the *Fragments*’ libertinely anonymous narrator: “Cette disgrâce n’est que paroles qui ne sont que vent” (p. 7).


2. In “Ideas or Epistemes: Hazard versus Foucault,” Jan Miel contrasts these two important schemas, and argues for the usefulness of supplementing Hazard’s *crise de conscience* with a second period of crisis that he situates at the end of the sixteenth century.


4. Pintard, pp. 75–76.


6. In Foucault’s terminology, an episteme is the basis structure of knowledge of a given period.


8. The two visions of modernity sometimes coincide, and the same work is interpreted on the one hand as a meditation on the arbitrariness of language and on the other as an attempt to shatter that arbitrariness.

9. In this section, I will follow the practice adopted by Roman Jakobson in his preface to the French edition of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Editions de Minuit, 1977) of attributing this work to Bakhtin. Jakobson states that Volosinov, the critic to whom this work was previously attributed, merely revised certain sections to meet the demands of censorship and allowed his name to be used as a pseudonym for Bakhtin. This change in attribution remains problematic, and many critics now refer to the author of *Marxism* as Bakhtin/Volosinov.

10. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* and the first edition of Dostoevsky’s *Poetics* both appeared in 1929, a second edition of Dostoevsky’s *Poetics* in 1963, and *Rabelais and His World* was finally published in 1965, even though the work’s composition dates from 1940. In quoting from these works, I will refer to the recent English translations of them.


12. Ibid., p. 26. The link Bakhtin establishes between the carnival and the grotesque recalls Wolfgang Kayser’s concept of the grotesque. Indeed, Kayser, like all the theoreticians mentioned here, describes the mid-seventeenth century as an important period of transformation and, like Bakhtin, feels that the *grand siècle*’s work is a negative force, responsible for a “loss of substance” as far as the grotesque is concerned. “Here the grotesque had lost all its sinister overtones and merely elicits a carefree smile.” According to Kayser, the grotesque loses its energy because of “the tendency to equate it with the burlesque,” and he mentions Cyrano and Scarron as two of the writers who share an important responsibility for this “crime” (*The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, p. 27). Bakhtin realizes that surface similarities appear to link his system with Kayser’s, and is quick to stress their differences. He feels that Kayser errs in separating the gro-
tesque from carnival and folk humor and in privileging Romantic theories of the grotesque at the expense of ancient, medieval, or Renaissance ones. These fundamental errors lead Kayser to view the grotesque only as a principle of terror, and the world of the grotesque not as a world upside down but a world become alien to men. Kayser's shortcomings culminate in what is for Bakhtin a completely false definition of the grotesque: "The Grotesque is the estranged world" (Kayser, p. 184; Rabelais, pp. 39, 46-47).

13. Rabelais, pp. 33-34.

14. Thus, Kristeva interprets him as a precursor for her own theories of intertextuality in "Le Mot, le dialogue, et le roman."

15. Pp. 57-58. (The English edition is attributed to Vološinov.) It is interesting to read Bakhtin's attack in conjunction with Louis Marin's study of the irrationality behind Port-Royal's rationality, of the anti-representational drive behind its theory of representation (La Critique du discours).

16. Marxism, p. 11.

17. These are the formal characteristics I ascribe to the libertine novel in chapter three. Bakhtin's study of the menippea makes it possible to situate this novel in a long "tradition."


19. Although Théophile and Sorel are the first French seventeenth-century novelists to begin their novels in this way, other subsequent histoires and romans comiques will choose the same type of parodic incipit (Le Romant satyrique, Le Gascon extravagant, Le Roman comique, etc.). It eventually comes to constitute one of the distinguishing marks of a comic novel. See my "Scarron's Roman comique: The Other Side of Parody."


21. In Francion, the functions of writing and reading are partially divided between the two narrators. The anonymous voice that first assumes responsibility for the narration is a reader so familiar with heroic texts that he is able to parody them. This initial narrative voice does not lay claim to the composition of Francion, but Francion himself does.

22. The older page is capable of joining the narrators of the Fragments and Francion in their mockery of the clichés he favored in his youth. He sees the ridiculous aspect of the narrative inflation in his performance for his mistress and her cousin: "Je leur fis une description des beautes d’Amour, qu’elles trouvèrent merveilleuse, pour ce que je pris un style poetique. Je ne me contentai pas de leur representer tout le corps de Cupidon comme une belle statue d’albatre qu’on aurait couchée sur un lit, et de faire ses cheveux d’une agréable confusion de filets d’or. Je leur voulus encore dépeindre en ce sujet des choses qu’on ne voyait pas... Je leur représentai sa bouche... et leur dis que le vif corail de ses lèvres couvrait encore deux rangs de perles plus blanches et plus précieuses que toutes celles que donne la mer" (pp. 124-25).

23. Narcisse romancier, p. 66.

24. In Imitation and Illusion in the French Memoir Novel, Philip Steward discusses many different variants on the use of historical figures as characters in the eighteenth-century novel: as title characters in pseudo memoirs, as minor characters who function almost as elements of local color. He also documents
cases in which only a name is borrowed to be given to a completely fictional character, and examples of characters whose names resemble those of historical figures. The only moment in this movement toward realism in naming that could be related to Cyrano's creation of a fictional past for his characters concerns the choice of names that are similar to those of other novelistic characters (Mouhy's Melicourt and Crebillon's Meilcourt, for example) (pp. 217, 221, 264, 270).


26. Many of whom, Agrippa de Nettesheim and César, for example, did in fact claim to have acted or written under the influence of some sort of guiding spirit, so the demon's claims can be easily "verified."

27. Otherwise known as "or potable." Although it is difficult to imagine why he made such a change, Cyrano merely substitutes a synonym for the alchemist's substance.


29. A slightly different vision of this problem is presented by D'Assoucy in the Combat de Cirano de Bergerac avec le singe de Brioché in which he describes Cyrano's reaction when he is put on trial for the murder of Brioché: "Bergerac se défendit en Bergerac; c'est-à-dire avec des écrits facetieux et des paroles grotesques: Il dit au Juge qu'il payerait Brioché en Poète, ou en monnoye de Singe; que les espèces étaient un meuble que Phébus ne connaissait point" (p. 14).

30. La Vie et les œuvres de Charles Sorel, pp. 386-87.

31. La Pensée philosophique et scientifique de Cyrano de Bergerac, p. 77.

32. Alcover devotes most of her study to this question. In her Cyrano de Bergerac and the Polemics of Modernity, Erica Harth never discusses themes, events, and descriptions in Cyrano without detailing their similarities with contemporary and earlier works. Prévot finds fault with critics (he mentions Alcover) who see copying everywhere in L'Autre Monde. He rightly feels that the question to be discussed is not that of plagiarism but those of reference and parody, yet he gives only a faint hint of the playfulness that guides Cyrano's use of borrowed material (pp. 15, 105-6, 124-25). Many of his analyses are in fact concerned with tracing the systems for which various characters serve as mouthpieces, and he thereby rejoins the type of source study he claims to repudiate.

33. Sceptiques ou libertins dans la première moitié du dix-septième siècle, pp. 5-6.


36. The literary phenomena that result from partial reproduction and/or deformation of language or content, such as allusion, stylization, pastiche, parody, and plagiarism, are discussed by Meyer and examined by Bakhtin in the section of Dostoevsky's Poetics devoted to the various forms of what he calls "double-voiced" discourse.

37. The Poetics of Quotation, p. 8.

38. Which he calls "cužaja reč, "foreign speech," "another's speech," or "reported speech" (Marxism, p. 115).

39. The other means are stylization, parody, and skaz (the "oral" narration of a narrator), the forms of double-voiced discourse or the dialogic. Bakhtin actually traces the emergence of the new form of the dialogic (the movement from Rabelais to Dostoevsky) to the libertine period. He describes the sharply defined
boundaries of hierarchical literature, which does not allow itself to be penetrated by foreign styles, and chooses as his example French classicism. During its reign, only so-called low genres display noteworthy deviations from its linear style of speech reporting, and Bakhtin notes that "quasi-direct discourse achieves its first powerful development in the fables and tales of La Fontaine" (p. 123).

40. The "second generation" of dialogical texts, which for Bakhtin culminates in Dostoevsky, will attain linguistic and literary dialogism. This later generation's links to carnival and folk tradition are purely artificial. At this point in his schema, Bakhtin's theory of modernity may be said to rejoin Foucault's. Quotation plays an essential role for Foucault as well: "C'est que le dix-neuvième siècle a découvert un espace d'imagination dont les âges précédents n'avaient sans doute pas soupçonné la puissance. . . . L'imaginaire ne se constitue pas contre le réel pour le nier et le compenser; il s'étend entre les signes, de livre à livre, dans l'interstice des redites et des commentaires; il naît et se forme dans l'entre-deux des textes. C'est un phénomène de bibliothèque" ("Un fantastique de bibliothèque," pp. 10-11).

41. From this example and others in L'Autre Monde, a relationship between the obsessive movement toward dialogue and libertine paranoia is suggested.

42. Miel, p. 243.

43. Cervantes, pp. 421, 525.

44. Although this passage is not in the first edition of Francion, I include it because it represents one of the few instances of self-citation similar to Cervantes's in seventeenth-century French fiction.

45. Beginnings, p. 22.

46. Lachevre partially reproduces the letter under the title "Le Campagnard" (2:205-6). The complete text may be found in the Oeuvres diverses (Charles de Sercy, 1654), pp. 59-65, or in the Prévôt edition of the Oeuvres complètes, pp. 54-56. Critical opinion generally holds (Lachevre, Erba, Laugaa) that the passage was used in the letter before finding a place in L'Autre Monde. Prévôt disagrees with this view: "Nous pensons au contraire que le texte de la lettre, plus élaboré, mieux équilibré, plus riche de sens métaphorique, en est un état postérieur" (p. 142). However, the stylistic differences between the two "versions" (if indeed they are different enough to deserve this appellation) are not as important as Prévôt contends. Furthermore, his theory completely ignores the signals of difference emitted by this passage in the context of L'Autre Monde, signals that designate it as foreign discourse.

47. Besides the catalogue, the Avantures presents other ways of performing the alchemical trick of turning linguistic poverty into riches; for example, the so-called burlesque repetitions, in which different forms of the same root are accumulated in a passage. At one point, a midnight encounter with a mysterious stranger inspires an exploration of "lanterne," which culminates in "j'avois beau contempler la lanterne, je ne voyais pas le lanternier. Ce qui me fit juger que c estoit un homme qui portoit une lanterne sourde . . . car cette honnete lanterne, qui sans doute devoit estre la Reyne des lanternes de tous les pays lanternois" (p. 66).

48. One such image in Francion involves Catherine, the ladies' maid who is really a man. In the course of a thwarted robbery attempt, she/he is found dangling upside down from the façade of Valentin's château with his/her long skirts over his/her head: "Tous les habitants du village s'assemblerent devant le Chas-
teau, pour voir le soudain changement d’une fille en garçon,” and one woman says: “Cela seroit plus à propos à Caeresme Prenant” (p. 83). By making a thief the figure of carnival, Sorel prefigures D’Assoucy.

49. Meyer, p. 69.
51. From the preface to his Exercitationum paradoxicarum adversus Aristoteleos libri septem (1624); Spink, p. 15.
52. Romanciers, p. 32.
54. Perrens, p. 52. This historical vision is echoed by Adam in Les Libertins au dix-septième siècle: “Mais les philosophes, les écrivains ont joué leur rôle dans cette évolution. Ils ont sauvegardé à une époque où le parti religieux dominait le pays, certaines traditions que l’orthodoxie prétendait étouffer. Quand le matérialisme commence à s’affirmer de nouveau dans les premières décades du dix-huitième siècle, nous découvrons qu’il se relie très exactement à celui . . . de Cyrano, de Denis Veiras, et, au delà d’eux mais aussi grâce à eux, à celui des grands naturalistes italiens de la Renaissance” (p. 30).
57. The dreaded name thus enters a libertine text, as well as the glory of classical discourse, the act of naming. For Foucault, classical discourse becomes as transparent as Dyrcona’s body in order to name more successfully: “La tâche fondamentale du ‘discours’ classique, c’est d’attribuer un nom aux choses, et en ce nom de nommer leur être. Pendant deux siècles, le discours occidental fut le lieu de l’ontologie” (Les Mois et les Choses, p. 136).