The Diamond of *Courtoisie* and the *Dragonnades* of 1681: Valincour's *Vie de François de Lorraine*
I. Valincour, Historian and Humanist

Jean-Baptiste Henri du Trousset de Valincour (1653-1730) became historiographe du roi after serving a willing apprenticeship under his friends Racine and Boileau. During the 1690s he accompanied Racine in the field on occasion, by his own choice, to witness at firsthand the military events that Racine and Boileau had been commissioned to chronicle. Although by 1699 he had enjoyed in society for almost two decades success as a poet and literary critic, the same year of his official charge brought him the principal recommendation for election to Racine's place in the Académie. Eight years after his death, the Armorial général de la France paid an eloquent tribute to the man of letters whose career culminated in that charge. "Les grands talens de feu M. de Valincour, & son génie heureux dans tous les genres de littérature, lui méritèrent l'honneur d'être choisi par le feu Roi Louis XIV pour écrire les Annales de son Règne. Il sacrifia à cet Ouvrage la plus nombreuse partie de ses veilles." Voltaire, who respected Valincour's probity and academic eloquence without finding much éclat in his career, ranged his predecessor as historiographe among the "do nothings." A letter from Valincour to Noailles seeking aid in obtaining work space at Versailles for his research and writing, however, reveals that a not inconsequential part of each working day...
was reserved for that task. But whatever the fruits of his labors, the writing perished in the conflagration that destroyed his retreat at Saint-Cloud in 1726. Anecdote has it that Valincour's man, sent to fetch the history especially, returned from the flames with a bundle of court gazettes. It is generally destruction of Racine's or Boileau's contributions to the history that is regretted. And for some commentators the fire would seem, less regrettably, to have destroyed all claims for Valincour's consideration as a historian. Good reasons are to be found, however, in the evidence of his mind and method that the surviving historical writing gives, to regret the loss of his contributions to the history of the reign quite as much as one must those of his more illustrious colleagues.

It is unlikely that Valincour, educated at Clermont, received there the prize awarded later to Voltaire, a copy of Davila's history of the civil wars, which might conveniently have offered a first step toward concentrated work on his biography of Guise. His training there, overseen in part perhaps by no less a prose stylist than Bouhours, did initiate him into the "beautés de l'Histoire" and the art of oratory that he demonstrated later in widely appreciated eulogies of Racine and of Boileau in the Académie. The impetus to seek felicity of expression, ease, and elegance in the kind of non-oratorical prose that distinguishes his life of Guise may well have come also from the author of *Du bel esprit*. The master later praised the *Vie*, but a more telling compliment was Bussy's recommendation of it to one of his correspondents. A hard judge of men of letters' efforts to write about men of arms, neither satisfied with the historiographical appointments of Racine and Boileau nor enthusiastic over Bouhours's own biography of Pierre d'Aubusson, Bussy awards the prize to the pupil rather than the teacher—complimenting him indirectly by supposing the anonymously published *Vie* to have been the work of a former soldier—Saint-Evremond.

Fontenelle also admired the *Vie* and gave, in fuller description of its qualities than they have yet had, reasons for both
its appeal to men like Bussy and its broader achievement as historical writing. After judging this history by his fellow academician “plus convenable à ses talents et à son caractère” than was his earlier verse, Fontenelle praises the Vie as a petit morceau d’histoire qui remplit tout ce qu’on demande à un bon historien; des recherches qui, quoique faites avec beaucoup de soin, et prises quelquefois dans des sources éloignées, ne passent point les bornes d’une raisonnable curiosité; une narration bien suivie et animée, qui conduit naturellement le lecteur, et l’intéresse toujours; un style noble et simple, qui tire ses ornements du fonds des choses, ou les tire d’ailleurs bien finement; nulle partialité pour le héros, qui pouvait cependant inspirer de la passion à son écrivain.10

These qualities of brevity and animation of narrative, sobriety of tone, modest but affirmative probity in research, and impartiality in its presentation seem to have recommended the Vie to Voltaire. Voltaire’s listing of it for Sir Everard Fawkener among the twenty “best books I know in regard to history” produced by Frenchmen (Best. 4240) and its use by historians from Bayle through the nineteenth century bear witness to the real presence of those qualities whose praise could be thought suspect in Fontenelle’s semi-official history of members of the Académie des Sciences. The qualities praised by Fontenelle look forward, in their own way, to distinctive aspects of Voltaire’s own writing of history. Their presence in Valincour’s earliest history, the erudition and concision of analysis of his later naval history highly acclaimed by Eugène Sue,11 his outspokenly precise historical appraisal of both the state of Europe and of French naval affairs for Fleury in 1726,12 and his final denunciation of eulogies passing as history13 promise much and justify disappointment that no more of his historical writing was completed or has survived. But the Vie has never been accorded the attention that its qualities merit it in this history, within Valincour’s career as it may be seen to be oriented toward the Enlightenment,
and perhaps most significantly for that orientation in its treatment, in 1681, of an inflammatory subject that could gain the respect of Voltaire.

II. In Search of the Vie

There is no direct documentation to reveal either Valincour's reasons for writing the Vie or the genesis of the history. Reasons are suggested, however, by the book itself and the qualities praised by Fontenelle, whereas external events in the historian's career and especially in the affairs of the church not previously considered cast light upon the genesis of the history.

Since Mabre-Cramoisy's notice promises a series of similar lives "de tous les grands hommes du siècle passé & de celuiicy," it is quite probably a publisher's venture that was initially responsible for Valincour's Vie. The subject later in the century of several fictional works, Guise's person and dramatic career were unquestionably the stuff of an attractively saleable book. Valincour was a good "risk" in this venture that he most probably accepted with interest and pleasure. His lively and irreverent Lettres à Mme la marquise de *** sur le sujet de la Princesse de Clèves, published in 1678 also by Marbre-Cramoisy, had demonstrated both his ability to produce a best-selling book and his extensive and thoughtful acquaintance with the period and the sources of its history that were Mme de Lafayette's. Although he shows interest and originality in literary criticism, Valincour's first interest, in history, orients his remarks to problems of the relationship of history and fiction, of Mme de Lafayette's characterization, narrative technique, and style in terms of the demands made on the knowledgeable reader of history. Notable among sources of knowledge were Brantôme's lives of distinguished captains, which were published only twelve years earlier. Valincour savored Brantôme's style, respected his principles, and took the lives as a major source for the Vie.
The Vie, stamped with the same independent critical spirit that enlivened the dialogues on the novel, was in fact attractive to men like Bussy and sold more widely than has been acknowledged. Several printings, including a pirated one and an English translation by Ferrand Spence, all in 1681, constituted no real failure and brought the volume to a fairly large number of readers. But there are a number of indications that Valincour himself was not seeking to capitalize finally on current vogues of biography and pseudo-biographical fiction and that he had other reasons than sales to a broader audience for writing the Vie as he did. The drama and psychological portraiture that had made the fortune of a Mézeray and continued to make that of writers of historic fiction are much subdued and generally schematic. High seriousness of concern is conveyed by a sobriety of tone and a style that are almost bleakly incolores. With an aristocratic scorn for Parisians' political fickleness also apparent, the Vie is little calculated to appeal to the wider audience that would have brought it extensive reprinting.

The historical interest and knowledge of the period of the Wars of Religion, very much a part of Valincour's preoccupations from 1678, are again displayed near the end of his official career. In 1725 he took the opportunity of a Discours welcoming Président Portail to the Académie to develop at length the virtues of litterae humaniores and to celebrate the tempering of the letter of the law by the spirit of humane magistrates formed by their study of them. To this celebration is added denunciation of the fanaticism of the Ligue and specific praise for those members of the magisterial class who, he believed, had undertaken to combat it by composing the Satire Ménipée, "Satire ingénieuse, qui couvrant d'un ridicule amer & judicieux, la folie & l'insolence des Ligueurs, retint tant de bons François dans les sentiments de respect & de fidélité qu'ils doivent à leur Prince légitime."

At this date what had been a scandal to the mind of Montesquieu's intellectual Persian was no less scandalous to Va-
lincour, unmitigatedly disgusted by the fanatical factionalism firing the *Unigenitus* controversy to the point that he feared both for the community of the faithful within France and the weakening of the church before the challenge of the East. Having failed in his own practical efforts to be a voice of mediating reason in this controversy, his letters to Cardinal Gualterio—and through him to the Curia—repeatedly deplore in the tone of a concerned and reasonable Catholic layman the dogmatic factionalism and fanaticism that kept the controversy and its threats alive throughout his lifetime. The *Discours* of 1725 is both an appeal to the reason of enlightened magistrates and a tribute to them that echoes at the end of his career homage paid to Michel de l'Hôpital in the *Vie*. The state of religious controversy by April 1681, which recalled to men of the day the more violent prejudices of the Ligue, suggests that Valincour made his *Vie* also a plea for reasoned mediation and a denunciation of fanaticism, which in its own way might "retenir de bons Français."

By 1679, when Locke recorded in his journal that about three hundred Protestant churches had been destroyed in France in the last two decades, aspiration to unification of the French church had been seriously compromised by the proliferation of restrictive edicts harassing places of worship, ministers, and the faithful of the Protestant community. If in June of 1680 Pellisson optimistically predicted "l'extinction prochaine de l'hérésie en France," opinion on the means of achieving it was yet in 1681 much divided in print. While one Gallican extremist recommended the violence of separation from Rome as key to the *Moyens sûrs et honnestes pour la conversion de tous les hérétiques*, Maimbourg provided his usual use of history as apology for power. Arnauld, on the other hand, in his *Apologie pour les catholiques*, endorsed the pacific moderation of Pellisson's tested policy of tax dispensations and monetary indemnities for abjuration. But more expeditious and violent tactics had already begun to replace Pellisson's plans. In the first months of 1681, Maril-
lac implemented in Poitou the menacing and ruinous tactic of garrisoning of troops as pressure to abjure. “La seule vue de ces troupes,” it was said without any suggestion of abuses, “déterminait les esprits à écouter plus volontiers la voix des pasteurs qu’on leur envoyait.” Well before Louvois adopted it as policy in the summer of 1685, duress or its threat “avait gêné autant qu’il pouvait l’œuvre de rapprochement des esprits, d’abord par les dragonnades de Marillac, odieuses aux protestants les mieux disposés.” These measures threatening to resolve once and for all the question “Réunion ou dragonnades?”—with especially violent words from the Assemblé du clergé, hostile policy of the Le Telliers, and new rigor of the king responding to pressures of international politics—led in turn to a hardening of opposition by the Protestant community. The extreme point was being approached when repulsion of any suggestion of conferences for the purpose of reasoned mediation of concessions put an end to the real possibility of reunion.

Mme de Maintenon, Valincour’s future protectress and friend, protested to little avail the general policy of harassment and expressed the belief, also in 1681, that in the matter of Huguenots’ conversion “il faudroit ne rien oublier pour les gagner par douceur.” Henri Daguesseau (of whom Valincour left an admiring prose portrait) wrote from Languedoc that “le zèle de la Religion ne doit pas aller jusqu’à l’injustice.” But this moderation was not shared by all zealous ladies of piety or intendants with force of arms at their disposal. The irenic direction taken by Bossuet, in the attempts of his Exposition (1668-71), Conférence avec Claude (1678), and Histoire des variations (begun in 1681), to liquidate purely verbal matters of controversy standing in the way of reunion, may have seemed on the point of being no longer open to a hardened factionalism refusing discussion and insisting on differences. Reasoned mediation and reason itself appeared in danger of coming to a standstill.

It is in this climate of religious and political controversy,
extremism, civil disturbance, and stalemate that Valincour's *Vie* was published. Whether or not this history published by Bossuet's printer was planned to demonstrate its author's worth to the prelate who was later his spiritual adviser, and who was just beginning the *Histoire des variations*, its implied views are Bossuet's. The *Vie* was no impediment to Valincour's advancement shortly after its appearance to a position in the entourage of the young Toulouse, which most probably would have required the approval of Bossuet. Bossuet's opinions as a member of the special council exploring the possibilities of reunion were from 1666 moderate, politic, and reasoned. He had predicted in 1662 the glory of Louis's success, celebrated later in the *Oraison* for Le Tellier, but through tempered means: "Il aurait la gloire d'étoffer l'hérésie elle-même par un sage tempérament de sévérité et de patience." When the Coadjuteur d'Arles insisted in 1675 that "entière destruction de l'hérésie" be immediately implemented, he received no answer from Bossuet. And in his eloquent *Sermon sur l'unité de l'Eglise* he pleaded for a cessation of all spirit of contention and reaffirmed his desire to safeguard the unity of the Gallican church through a spirit of irenism that should animate the 1681 Assemblée du clergé. Several months earlier in the same year, Valincour, more modestly and indirectly in his *Vie*, seems to have presented the same plea.

What most probably began as a publishing venture and pure enjoyment for the man of letters almost certainly underwent thoughtful genesis as Valincour, by training a humanist and by temperament an admirer of the *Politiques*, became increasingly mindful of the troubled state of France and aware that writing a life of Guise constituted a political act with incendiary potentiality. As a fledgling academician he later celebrated Louis's zeal from 1697 to 1699 to "affermir de plus en plus la véritable religion, par son exemple & par son autorité." In old age he affirmed categorically to Bouhier that "jamais des sujets soulevés contre leur souverain ne peuvent avoir raison," since "nous sommes dans un Royaume et non dans la République de Platon; or, qui dit Roi et sujets
dit d'un côté le droit de commander, de l'autre le devoir et même la nécessité d'obéir. . . . C'est le seul bon parti à prendre en tout temps et surtout dans les temps fâcheux.” The younger man certainly felt in 1680-81 much the same and that “right” lay on the side of François de Lorraine and the “cause” of the Triumvirat. But the story is, significantly, not so simply told. Following the critical spirit that is always a mark of his writing and guide in the Vie to those qualities praised by Fontenelle, Valincour renounced all explicit propaganda, dogmatism or pragmatism, that could be construed as an apology for violent destruction of “heresy” by power.

Like D'Aubigné and De Thou, Bayle and Voltaire, Valincour regretted that for the sake of “bons Français” Guise’s last words to his son—“Souvenez-vous de moy, sans désirer de venger ma mort, puis que Dieu nous commande de pardonner à nos ennemis”—fell on deaf ears. The Vie ends with the facts of a contrary reality: “Jamais une seule mort n’a tant fait couler de sang, ni entraîné un si grand nombre d’illustres victimes.” With this reality in mind, Bayle later described in the Guises “un mélange de bonnes et de mauvaises qualités . . . propre à bouleverser un état.” Valincour had already found this mélange dramatically presented in a question of La Renaudie that De Thou transcribed: “Demeurons d’accord que le Duc de Guise a fait glorieusement toutes choses dans la guerre; mais les choses qu’il a faites sont-elles de si grande conséquence, qu’elles puissent récompenser & les pertes & les défaites qu’on a reçues dans le Royaume par sa funeste ambition, & qui ont ouvert le chemin aux maux qui estoient déjà prêts d’y entrer, & que ces Princes y ont appelé?” It is this question that the historian explores and focuses in his biography of François de Guise.

III. The Shape of a Life: gloire souillée—souillure du préjugé?

In form, Valincour’s life of a great soldier offers few surprises. “Ce n’est pas l’histoire que j’écrits, mais une vie,” he as-
serts, echoing Plutarch. The humanist adopts an outline traditional to the genre—"vie, œuvres, portrait"—and concentrates his narration on battles and diplomacy.

Moving toward final eulogy, the account of the soldier's soldier "born" at Metz and extinguished at Orléans does so in its own terms. The traditional miscellany of the final portrait begins with a description of popular reaction to Guise's assassination. "Les Catholiques disoient qu'ils avoient perdu leur protecteur, & regarderent sa mort comme un Martyre qu'il avoit souffert pour la défense de la Foy." To the popular mind, kept in constant focus, the historian juxtaposes his own reflection on the evidence: "Il eût toutes les qualitez qui ont jamais fait les plus grands Heros" (p. 164). Rather than the heroism of a martyred knight of the church cut down in his predestined mission of defense of the faith by a fanatical "heretic," Guise is finally eulogized as "le Seigneur le plus honneste de son siecle" (p. 146)—the picture of the soldier of honor and humanity and the "bon Français" that radiates from Brantôme's Vie de M. de Guyze le grand.

But in this history we are not in the realm of Bossuet's oraison formulas describing a Le Tellier "toujours semblable à lui-même, toujours supérieur à ses emplois." "Il faut avouer que tous les temps de la vie des grands hommes ne se ressemblent pas," the historian generalizes, facing the follies of Guise's Italian campaign, "une guerre qui paroissoit manifestement injuste." When it becomes a matter of civil war, he declares: "On ne peut lire sans horreur ce qui fut dit en ce temps-là, & ce qui a esté escrito depuis" (p. 95). Final qualification of method is neither apologetic nor defensive. "Si ses ennemis luy ont reproché quelque chose, c'estoit moins à luy qu'il s'en falloit prendre, qu'au malheur de son siecle, & aux desordres qui sont arriviez durant son temps" (p. 165). Personal interventions by the historian call for understanding of particular circumstances and stress the fact that sources distorted by personal jealousy, popular idealization, and partisan passion render even more elusive any real understand-
ing of the already complex matters of human motivation and historical causation. The historian does not ask for total ab-
solution (as the words underscored [italics above] indicate). 
Nor does he claim to have the final truth of this life. His com-
bative tone issues instead a claim to have gone beyond polem-
ic and to have moved toward the truth of this life in itself 
and within the context of its time.

In these terms the career is made to indicate an evolution, 
three distinct phases in the eleven years whose changing per-
spective must be viewed before the significance of the life 
may be seen and judged. First (pp. 13–71), military glory 
from Metz to Calais, redeeming Italy and establishing Guise’s 
reputation, consecrates the lieutenant-général as “Conserva-
teur du Royaume.” With the death of Henri and accession of 
the pathetic François II the scene changes (pp. 71–121) as the 
man embroiled in court life and civil administration emerges. 
New position and power for the Guises, likened to the “Maires 
du Palais,” require a new perspective as events lead to the for-
mation of the Triumvirat in opposition to Condé. As Guise 
moves (pp. 122–64) from the “signal de la rébellion” that is 
Condé’s possession of Orléans to his own death there, by way 
of Blois, Tours, Bourges, Rouen, Paris, and Dreux, the skills 
and qualities of both soldier and “courtier” are viewed 
against the reality of civil war.

Two-fifths of the Vie is given to what had become for men 
of letters by 1681 the fine art of description of art militaire. The 
armature of the Vie is the series of battles already enu-
merated by Brantôme with first place in praise given to Metz. 
Valincour’s thirty-two-page description of Metz is as precise 
and pertinent as that which is found in Lavisse: the eye-wit-
ness account he usually seeks, here the diffuse Mémoire by 
Salignac, is reduced to clear chronology and narrated with 
scarcely less animation than Bossuet’s account of Rocroi. Ap-
preciating Brantôme’s expansive tribute to Guise, Valincour 
follows to the letter its concluding remark—“Bref, qui vou-
dra bien mettre en ligne de conte tout ce qui s’est faict en ce
siège, dira et confessera que ç’a esté le plus beau siège qui fut jamais.” After elaboration he confirms this judgment soberly: Guise “fit une infinité d’autres reglemens, qui peuvent servir de modéle à ceux qui se trouveront en de pareilles occasions.”

The “model” serves a complex function in the Vie. Careful technique in “model” military description shows Guise’s “model” art of war, the thoroughness established at Metz—of reconnaissance, strategic deployment and maneuver, and post-armistice reconstruction, which came to characterize his military genius more than did incisiveness and speed of attack and withdrawal. Technical precisions are accompanied by other generalized advice for the commander—delegation of subordinate command, treatment of mercenaries in combat and negotiation and of civilians facing war. But description is not purely technical and pragmatic. The chef d’oeuvre functions in a manner not unlike that of the first chef d’oeuvre in Sainte-Beuve’s biographical method. Cohesion of detail in a plan constituting a chef d’oeuvre and revealing the emerging genius yields also the presence of a powerful man. In place of the myth of Providence’s special favor, which Guise’s “miraculous” victories and recoveries suggested in the popular mind and beyond, Valincour visualizes Guise’s control and natural command as causes explaining successes. Nothing is beyond him in planning, “rien est au-dessous de luy” in work necessary to implement it. For all involved at Metz, Guise is the ideal—“un égal, mais un égal d’un prestige supérieur,” both for the soldier who “voulait sentir qu’une pensée supérieure organisait son sacrifice” and for the subordinate commander who wished fitting opportunity and recognition for those qualities of courtoisie that Brantôme most admired.

As Valincour felt and presented it, war is for men like Guise what it was for Brantôme—a superior mode of life, conception of existence, and source of morality. “Jeunes guerres” reveal personality and character that do not change in “normal and natural” circumstances. Brantôme agreed with La Brosse that “qui a fait paretre son courage et valeur en la
chaleur de la jeunesse, il ne le perd jamais, quelque vieil aage qu’il face, si ce n’est par une grand’ disgrace.” For him, Guise was “très-bon en sa jeunesse, très-brave, très-courageux et très-généreux; bref, telz en jeunesse que sur l’aage, et telz sur l’aage qu’en jeunesse.” Part of Guise’s prestige at Metz, the qualities of “clémence, courtoisie, douceur & miséricorde,” Brantôme found greatly promising for the rest of the career. The whole series of anecdotes recounted by Valincour, at Metz and in military activity throughout the Vie, all exemplify these different manifestations of a soldier’s noble code that unaltered deserves in final eulogy “à faire connoistre le caractère de son esprit & de son humeur.”

The qualities of heart and mind seen in the observance of the soldier’s noble code, described by “honorable men,” serve as criteria for judgment both of actions in the last phases of Guise’s career and the verisimilitude of their description by other historians. It is not only in the enthusiasm of Brantôme or the celebratory verse of Michel de l’Hôpital that the historian found the exemplary qualities of the hero of Metz; “clémence” and “douceur” he found acknowledged in one of the most likely, responsible sources of contradiction, in D’Aubigné. Valincour will thus be able to see Guise acting during the civil war with concern for injury to his countrymen, when precautions against looting were taken by him to spare the Rouennais, for example, because he had seen Guise’s concern for the material and spiritual well-being of the citizens of Metz. A massacre at Vassy is a psychological improbability that facts can be seen to illuminate in other terms than those of an armed charge against unarmed Huguenots evoked by some Protestant historians. When it is a question of public proclamation that soldiers demanding favors after the death of Henri II will suffer death, Valincour will no more than Brantôme consent to believe Guise directly responsible in what was the Cardinal de Lorraine’s violent policy. He had seen too vividly from Metz to Calais the soldier’s courtoisie, the respect it offered and received, to believe
in its subordination to fiscal necessity. Similarly, he will not give as the truth a self-serving ambition that allegedly motivated Guise's fatal slowness in aiding Thermes at Gravelines. "Je ne puis croire ce que dit un Auteur célèbre qu'il [Guise] affecta ce retardement pour donner lieu à cette défaite qu'il regardoit comme l'augmentation de son autorité" (p. 70).

Again, insisting typically on the evaluation of evidence as well as on psychological verisimilitude, when Guise is said to have plotted the assassination of Condé, Valincour judges that "quoy-que le seul recit de cette histoire la fasse paroistre incroyable, principalement à l'égard de Guise qui n'estoit pas capable de conseiller un assassinat; j'ay cru estre obligé de la rapporter icy comme je l'ay trouvée écrite dans les Historiens de ce temps-là" (p. 97).

Critical sense gives value to impartiality. There is critical reaction to anonymous broadsides, partisan distortion, and generally dismissed foreign sources by the historian who wants to gain both a reasonably true view and a hearing for it. But opposition comes also to "un Auteur célèbre," De Thou, to whom he owes much in method and critical procedure. The table of contents of Du Ruyer's translation of De Thou's Histoire contains almost an exact outline for the Vie. If the armature of military events and portrayal of Guise's noble code reflect agreement with Brantôme, Brantôme's cursus honorum in war scarcely changes focus with the reality of civil war, and his "socioeconomic defense" of it (if serious) is totally outside Valincour's humanist orientation. Forever the diamond of courtoisie, the beauty of a Spanish charger in motion, Guise is for Brantôme that enviable man who changes events by his actions, the man whose presence in scarlet and black and luster in chivalry set off or expose the merits and faults of a Coligny, a Condé, a Navarre. Ambition that might taint courtoisie by political self-interest is constantly denied. De Thou's Histoire is a middle ground for the historian between the extremes of praise and detraction. Valincour found (for example, in the transcription of La Renaudie's deposition
at Nantes) a steady focus on the infamous ambition of the Guises and the movements of power politics summarily dealt with by Brantôme, a presentation of evidence thus similar to his own, and a justification to reexamine the Histoire itself critically. He found, as Mézeray had, “l'historien De Thou que les bons Français ne doivent jamais nommer sans préface d'honneur.”

For the hearing that he wished on Guise, the historian might thus have described his method as Voltaire does his in a characteristic passage of Le Siècle de Louis XIV, a method similar also to Bayle's tactical preparation for just attention to his point of view. After particular critical evaluation, he opposes as sources De Thou, D'Aubigné, and Bèze, which a hard critic—say a Jurieu—might admit unquestionably, to those like Brantôme and Carle, for example, which he would not.

In his account of the Italian campaign and the first ambiguous signs of “le naturel ambitieux” and political manipulation that belong to Act I of this dramatic life and after decisive peripeteia become compromising in the later stages of the career, Valincour's Vie suggests less the techniques of popular sermon or fiction than it does a discreet adaptation of Corneille's dramaturgy. Guise's career as it is shaped in the Vie is not without some resemblance to the drama of Corneille's Horace. Like the dramatist, the historian will leave complex the historical personality and the motivation/causation when extraordinary virtue under stress of extraordinary circumstances becomes humanly ambiguous. The king's favor, the consecration as Conservateur du Royaume by both Parlement and Parisians when Guise returned from Italy to the panic in the aftermath of the national crisis of Saint-Quentin, and the transformation of the soldier's soldier of Metz into the national hero by the events of 1558–59, all crystallize the hero before the event that brings final consolidation of that power, the death of Henri II, closes Act II of the drama.

Along with the ambition and politics of the Italian campaign, one other fact is recorded in exposition of the “model”
of Metz that prepares the dramatic highpoint of the last phase of Guise's career, the extraordinary circumstances and "testing" by the reality of civil war that might constitute for a classical dramatist the continued action of a fourth act. At Metz, Guise "ordonna une Procession générale pour rendre graces à Dieu; & pour achever cette cérémonie par un Sacrifice agréable, il fit brûler publiquement tous les Livres de Luther qui se trouverent dans la ville." Although there is no direct commentary, Valincour significantly follows De Thou and omits Salignac's observation that this ceremony took place "sans scandale d'aucun." By the time of the ambivalent last phase of Guise's career—by Act IV, as it were—the questions that will create its dramatic ambiguity have been indirectly but certainly implied. Ambition of the king's man and "le seigneur le plus honnête de son siècle"—or the demagogue's drive to power and pretensions to a crown? Piety from miséricorde and humanity—or fanaticism in an outward show of that kind which Bayle will shortly denounce in his *Pensées diverses sur la comète*? With these questions there is also the incrimination of men swayed by fear and the prestige of power to support violence, the "peuple trop crédule," "peuple furieux," denounced by Voltaire in *La Henriade* (2.26-28). Are they not endorsing that disorder which they wish to prevent? "A Paris, le Prévost des Marchands & les Eschevins allèrent au-devant de Guise, & le peuple le receût comme un homme envoyé du Ciel pour conserver sa Religion" (p. 117).

When the field is left for the court, there are always threats of that disgrace which Brantôme envisaged, a new set of extraordinary circumstances in which the soldier is no longer entirely the hero unanimously acclaimed in the field. Valincour implies, first in the miscalculations and misfortunes of the Italian Campaign and then after the death of Henri II, what Lucien Romier later stated: "François de Lorraine n'était pas un politique. Pur type soldat, [il avait] le génie et le tempérament de son art, avec une sorte de naïveté dans la pratique des choses non militaires." His talents and true
gloire are the soldier's; ambition and thoroughness do not work in the context of power struggle when Catherine and Montmorency, Coligny, Condé, Navarre, and Cardinal de Lorraine more than anyone, exert wills of their own that are determined by other codes which force Guise into a different position and light. There is no doubt that the true, military gloire is souillée in Valincour's narration, and there are suggestions from his account of Metz on that this is the result of what Voltaire might call souillure du préjugé. Polemical, impassioned evidence is from the death of Henri II on given more hearing. The spectacle of being manipulated and of a lapse from former virtue is felt by outside observers. Hence, with loss of control comes loss of admiration and division of opinion in polemics that may still only be the result of ever-present jealousy of the great but that have additional justification and significance.

With the accession of François II there is what Corneille might call a "suspension agréable" before the last actions and denouement of the drama: "Jamais les Guises ne s'estoient veus si proche de leur ruine, & jamais ils ne se virent si elevez. Il sembloit que toutes choses eussent conspiré pour les rendre maistres du Royaume" (pp. 74-75). The figures around Guise remain, suggestively, shadowy and thereby vaguely conspiratorial and menacing, abstract terms in a struggle that may be seen to pit simplistically the good (fighting for king and church) against the bad (those rebels fighting for themselves). Only Cardinal de Lorraine, emphasizing his importance, is given some fullness of life. Yet this simplicity of interpretation, partly political orientation and in part the result of classical economy in composition, does not leave Guise in his ideals and gloire any the less compromised in the ambiguous contexts of power struggle and civil war. Lorraine is not the "fiend from Hell" (nor is Catherine the "Italian dissembler") excoriated by D'Aubigné. He is shown rather as the timid man Brantôme describes, acting from weakness with a brashness and aggressive violence that are clearly presented

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as compensatory, misguided emulation of his brother. Emulation in the field by men of arms may have noble results, but this sibling rivalry brings nothing but compromising ignominy when, as Brantôme admits, the man of ambition to power in the cardinal takes precedence over the man of the church. Valincour does not simply follow the line of chroniclers, from Villehardouin on, who absolve responsibility and compromise in leaders by the presence of mauvais conseillers. As men commanding admiration and hatred, Guise and his brother are antithetical. But eschewing the lengthy antithesis that could constitute a rhetorical “beauté de l’Histoire,” it is more subtly similarity of the hero and “anti-hero” of the same blood that the historian suggests. The cardinal is the incarnation of the infamous ambition of the Guises, ambition shared by François, legitimately directed in the field by the soldier’s qualities but darkened in the spheres of the cardinal’s actions. Rather than an absolute antithesis to Guise, the cardinal is presented as the embodiment of his worst quality. A similar function is given to the “rebels.” Their use of religion as a pretext for struggle to power and their apparent blind indifference to the injury done to sovereign and to France represent the temptations and ambiguous reality of Guise in his worst or most questionable moments.

After all the psychological probing and interpretation, there remains at the center of the drama the image of François II, made to ask the Guises pathetically: “Qu’ay-je donc fait à mon peuple pour l’obliger à me vouloir tant de mal? . . . Ne seroit-il point à propos que vous retirassiez? (p. 83). However “right” the defense of king and church by them, the facts remain of disorder, of a suffering France, of a king doubtfully served by them in life and neglected scandalously in the honors of burial.

It is in recounting the details of an alleged master plan whereby the Guises sought supreme affirmation of power by liquidation of the entire royal family that Valincour records his general feeling of horror over confrontations of power us-
ing religion as a pretext. "On ne peut lire sans horreur ce qui
fut dit en ce temps-là, & ce qui a esté écrit depuis. Que les
Guises craignant les ressentimens du Roy de Navarre, & ju-
geant d'ailleurs que leur autorité ne seroit jamais tranquille
ni assurée tant qu'il resteroit un Prince du Sang pour la con-
tester, ils avoient entrepris de s'en défaire" (p. 95). The his-
torian of Metz knows a Guise "doux et modéré," incapable of
such action, who "eut toujours une affection tres-pure & tres-
sincere pour la Religion Catholique" (p. 104). But it is pre-
cisely because he was "doux et modéré," the historian ac-
knowledges, that Guise "se rendoit complice des violences &
des emportmens de son frere, en ne les empeschant pas, &
souvent en l'aidant à executer des desseins auxquels il auroit
deü s'opposer" (p. 78). What is true of Guise's passive respon-
sibility in seconding his brother's pretensions to the papacy
in the Italian campaign, as Valincour interpreted it from anti-
Guise and anti-papal sources, is also true for Vassy and more
generally for events leading to the First War of Religion.

At Vassy, primary responsibility may fall on "une troupe
de ces gens insolens & inutiles qui sont toujours à la suite
des Grands, & qui ne témoignent jamais l'attachement qu'ils
ont à leur Religion qu'en outrageant ceux qui n'en sont pas (p.
113). In this outbreak of violent intolerance, insults are fast
followed by rocks as "domestiques" of Guise avenge an ac-
cidental blow he had suffered. It is the Guises' doubtful for-
tune to arouse passionate admiration and hatred, in the fickle
crowd, "aisé à effrayer [et] qui pour l'ordinaire se consolent
aussi aisément qu'ils s'affligent." But clearly the historian as-
serts that men of arms, at Vassy or in Marillac's dragonnades,
as many feared in 1681, should not allow their code of honor
to be debased by the modes of feeling and violent intolerance
of lesser men, who become all too soon an unprincipled mob.

Even if he has the misfortune of being a catalyst of vio-
ence, a man like Guise faced with this "malheur et désordre"
has the same passive responsibility in loss of control that he
has to bear in tacit consent to the cardinal's violent actions.
For this responsibility there will be the repentance of final general confession. But the historian suggests that something more efficacious might have preceded it. Active participation in the cardinal’s violence is made more precise in the historian’s account of the Conjunction d’Amboise and its aftermath. He depletes the violence of recriminations following Amboise that so moved the young D’Aubigné, whose emotion he transfers and focuses dramatically in the reaction of François II. But he also depletes the design of the princes to assume power and the dissimulation of Condé. “La liberté de conscience qu’ils demandèrent ne leur servit que pour couvrir leurs intentions d’un titre specieux & pour grossir leur parti, en y attirant les Huguenots, qui haïssoient mortellement les Guises, dont ils avoient toujours esté persecuteur” (p. 79).

The fault lies on both sides and incriminates both parties in the causes of war. And once again, of importance for the fanaticism to come, the blame must be shared by the “public, qui dans ses malheurs ne cherche qu’à trouver de qui se plaindre” (p. 78). Both sides lose, as might similar divisions in 1681 if violence in a struggle for political power replaces any reasoned mediation of real issues of religion troubling France.

After Amboise, “quelque soin que prissent les Guises pour persuader au Roy que cette conspiration ne regarde que sa personne & celle de ses frères, ils ne pouvoient empescher qu’il n’entendist parler quelquefois de l’aversion qu’on avoit pour eux” (p. 83). As for Condé, “sans doute le Chef des conjurez, s’estant plaint avec cette audace qui imite si bien l’innocence de ce qu’on avoit voulu donner au Roy de méchantes impressions de sa conduite, . . . il s’offroit de le [Guise] démentir à la point de l’épée.” In Valincour’s account this is not a défi to a duel of honor. It is a gross ruse that Guise counters politically with another. Smarting yet from this and dissatisfied with Montmorency’s report that the Conjunction “ne regarde point la personne du Roy comme ils [les Guises] le vouloient faire croire,” the Guises are justified by him to Parlement in what may be seen to be terms of pure violence: “Si
les Seigneurs particuliers ne pouvoient sans honte souffrir qu'on fist insulte à leurs domestiques... il n'estoit pas étrange que le Roy eust pris une vengeance exemplaire de l'entreprise qu'on avoit osé faire contre les premiers Ministres de son Estat" (p. 87). The ally of policy, always presented as more violent than Guise, already puts into question the very existence of the Triumvirat—Act IV of Guise's drama—formed in part, the historian makes it clear, as a safeguard of personal power vis-à-vis the princes and Coligny. There is no doubt that Valincour lauds the principle of this alliance of 6 April 1561, but he takes care to show that the reconciliation of Guise and Montmorency at Chantilly, where they remained until the coronation of Charles IX, did not put an end either to personal ambition or to the tension of factions. He repeats with the detail of a Saint-Simon a quarrel over precedence at the coronation, and reflects: "Ne pouvant plus souffrir le mépris public qu'on faisoit de la Religion, ni peut-estre la diminution de son autorité, Guise se retira chez luy, après s'estre plaint à la Reine de la protection qu'elle donnoit aux Huguenots" (p. 110). The Triumvirat, Valincour concedes, was an "entreprise qui a conservé la Religion Catholique" (p. 122); but because of it civil war, "très funeste à tous les deux partis," is the final reality, compromise, and denouement of the drama of the Vie.

Valincour emphasizes the fact that the aftermath of Amboise incriminates Parlement, which after Amboise—or in 1681 or in the mid-1720s—may be a hope for mediation and order. "Le Parlement écrivit une Lettre au Roy sur ce qui venoit d'arriver, & une autre à Guise, dans laquelle on luy donnoit le nom glorieux de Conservateur de la Patrie. Quelques services qu'il eust pu rendre à l'Estat en cette rencontre, la reconnaissance du Parlement parut extraordinaire, & un peu au dessous de la dignité d'une si grande compagnie" (p. 88). With factions in political stalemate after persecution and violence, and with Parlement justifying violence in a manner that endorses its future use and foreshadows the Guise Parle-
ment, the breakdown of all reasoned institutional mediation of real problems that might be feared in the first quarter of 1681 is made visible in Valincour’s tensely dramatic presentation of the Assemblée de Fontainebleau, 15 August 1560 (pp. 89–91). Again blame lies on both sides. “Les esprits estoient trop eschauffez, & ni les uns ni les autres ne vouloient l’accommodement qu’ils faisoient semblant de chercher. Les Guises estoient bien résolus de ne rien épargner pour conserver leur puissance; & les autres déterminez à tout entreprendre pour la détruire, & pour se mettre en la place de leurs ennemis” (p. 89). Foredoomed to failure, this confrontation of violent language inviting future violence and adjourning without accomplishment is in Valincour’s account a model warning for the present. He presents a warning against association with fanaticism and violence, which tarnished the gloire of a heroic soldier of the past and may again debase soldiers become dragonnades. With this warning is a plea for present reasoned mediation of real problems that, replacing factionalism and civil violence, will avoid the undermining and erosion of principle by impassioned policy and violent intolerance that had prepared, and then issued from, the acts of the Ligue.

In his account of Guise’s death Valincour, insisting on his documentation, reports—as always without rhetorical display of his own—what he found to be in Guise an easy, natural eloquence. “Je rapporteray icy quelques-unes de ses dernières paroles, non pas telles que je les auray imaginées, comme font la pluspart des Historiens, mais comme elles ont esté écrites par l’Evesque de Ries, qui l’assista jusqu’au dernier soupir.” But there is a significant reordering of his source. Guise is made to turn first to Catherine with the most important counsels the Vie has to offer “bons Français” of 1681.

Il luy conseilla d’employer toutes choses pour faire la paix, que c’estoit le seul moyen d’appaiser les troubles qui divisoient la France; qu’Elle sçavoit bien qu’il ne luy avoit jamais donné d’autre conseil; que dans le temps mesme où il croyoit se dé-
voir rendre maistre d'Orléans, il avoit esté d'avis qu'on fist de nouvelles propositions d'accommodement aux Huguenots; et qu'enfin tous ceux qui conseilloient la guerre, n'estoient ni bons François, ni bons serviteurs du Roy. (p. 158)

In Marillac's tactics Valincour may have felt already what Voltaire will express to the Swiss pasteur Vernes—that the 
dragonnade "a fait le malheur du siècle" (Best. 12705)—and have begun to express a reaction to violent intolerance that looks forward directly to the bolder and more explicit commentary on it five years later of Bayle's Contrains-les d'entrer. He may well have been aware that, from the mid-1670s and especially from 1679 through the first quarter of 1681, Louis XIV had little by little arrived at a hardened policy that was becoming resigned to violence and that in the matter of unification of the faith this tendency ran counter to the progress already made in method and effectiveness of religious controversy. He was certainly aware that the dazzlingly effective results of violent "conversion" might very quickly obscure the example of that progress he saw in Bossuet and its slower alternatives through "l'empressement que tout le monde avait de voir ce grand ouvrage achevé." He may well have known that "Bulletins de victoire" began, in February, to appear regularly in the Gazette de France. The men of arms, intendants or soldiers, who might be given to violence; pious ladies more rigorous than Mme de Maintenon; magistrates less enlightened than Daguessa; members of both confessions to whom Bossuet shortly was to offer the message of his sermon on church unity—all these persons responsible for both force of opinion and its violent direction are among the most likely audience for the kind of book Valincour was writing and seem to be precisely those persons for whom its method and message were intended. If Benoist could record, by the end of 1681, that "honnêtes gens" of the court condemned Marillac's policy for its threat to the integrity of men of arms and the violence of the man himself, Valincour's life of Guise may have played some effective part in influencing the direction of that opin-
ion. But whatever the reality of its effectiveness, the Vie is an act of faith in the efficacy of history, "sage conseillère des princes," by a humanist who makes his history a political act conceived with intellectual probity.

5. RHLF 10 (1903): 672.
7. LA VIE/DE/FRANCOIS/DE LORRAINE/DE GUISE/A PARIS/ Chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy . . . /M.DC.LXXXI./Avec privi­lège de sa Majesté/ 16 avril/. 1 vol. in 12. 174 pp. All quotations are from this printing.
8. On the problematic evidence of the exact training by Bouhours, see Valincour, Lettres à Madame la marquise (Tours, 1972), Introduction, pp. iii-iv.
13. E.g., letters of 19 novembre and 1 décembre 1729 to Bouhier, RHLF 31 (1924): 400-401.
15. For his personal appreciation and reservations, see letter of 22 décem­bre 1729 to Bouhier, RHLF 31 (1924): 402.
16. Variations in format and pagination reveal at least three printings.
19. E.g., from 1717 to 1725: Britism Museum Add. MSS. 20395, pp. 8, 13v, 15v, 25v, 36v, 42, 45v, 60, 61v, 101v, 112, 130v, 133, 176, 226.
22. Cologne, 1681; Maimbourg, “Epistre au Roy,” Histoire du luthé-

23. Mme de Caylus, quoted by Orcibal, p. 108. On the realities, see Benoist, 4:274-82.


25. Especially notorious was J.-B. Adéhmar de Monteil de Grignan, Coadjuteur d'Arles, whose violent remonstrance of 1675 circulated in England (Beinecke Library British Tract, 1677/C28). The remonstrance to the king after the Assemblée of July 1680 was widely denounced. See Burnet, pp. 95-97; Benoist, 4:413; Orcibal, p. 23.


30. Quoted by Orcibal, p. 23.


34. Description of the Italian campaign (pp. 53-60) is strongly antipapal but in calculated contrast to the virulence of Régnier de la Planche.


43. P. 77; Brantôme, *Vie*, pp. 223-25.

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44. E.g., pp. 12, 52.
45. See above, n. 33.
46. Vie de l'Admiral de Chastillon, Œuvres, 4:328-34.
47. Quoted by Saint-Beuve, Causeries (Paris, 1857), 7:224.
49. P. 44. See Le Siège de Metz, Coll. Petitot, 23:401; De Thou, 1:628.
51. Pp. 55, 72; Brantôme, Vie, pp. 229, 276.
54. See Orcibal, pp. 72-74.
56. Lancelot de Carle, Lettre de l'Evesque de Riez... (Paris, 1563).
58. See Benoist, Histoire de la Révocation, 4:503; Orcibal, pp. 73-74, on the general reaction and Louvois, Arrêt du 19 mai.