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Disability, Desire, and the Lyric in Seventeenth-Century France

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DISABILITY, DESIRE, AND THE LYRIC IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Sam Bailey

Abstract:

This thesis asks whether seventeenth-century French lyric poets' depiction of disability challenges entrenched ideals of beauty, gender, sexuality, and form. It contends that by interrogating the rich and varied imagery of disability found in lyric verse, we deepen our understanding of how French writers and readers of this century interpreted desire and the human body.

The primary corpus comprises unpublished manuscripts and printed sources, grouping lyrics thematically rather than by author. This approach treats the poems as a heterogenous collective, enabling a discussion of lesser-known, unpublished, and anonymous poets. Named poets in this corpus include Paul Scarron, Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin, Anne de Rohan-Soubise, Charles Vion d'Alibray, François Maynard, and Théophile de Viau. Some poets write about their personal experiences of disability, while others portray disabled protagonists or draw upon imagery of disability in their verse. This thesis puts their lyrics into dialogue with several theoretical approaches to disability through a Critical Disability Studies framework. The chapters deal with crip theory, metaphor theory, the grotesque and carnivalesque, spatial theory, queer theory, transhumanism, and posthumanism. The poets' negotiation of bodily regimes holds much in common with their concurrent negotiation of the formal constraints of lyric verse, allowing this thesis to ask why poetry – and the seventeenth-century lyric in particular – is so replete with imagery of disability.

Due to its examination of the intersections between disability, gender, and sexuality, this thesis will be of interest to scholars of gender and sexuality as well as those studying disability and early modern French literature. Seventeenth-century authors working under a different set of bodily regimes were more likely to imagine disability in ways unfamiliar to twenty-first-century readers, so this research also questions current assumptions about what disability is and is not, while nuancing existing theoretical frameworks used to read disability in literature.

Disability, Desire, and the Lyric

in Seventeenth-Century France

Sam Bailey

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following manuscript sources will be abbreviated as their call numbers in all citations:

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), **Français 12492**, entitled *Recueil des diférents poètes de vers faicts sur plusieurs sujets du temps passé*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), **Français 12680**, entitled *Recueil de poésies, élégies, stances, sonnets, etc*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), **Ms-4106-4129**, **Ms-5130-5132**, **Ms-5410-5427**, **Ms-2667**, **Ms-3135**, and **Ms-8573-8574**, known collectively as the *Recueil Conrart*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), **NAF 1697**, entitled *Recueil de pièces de vers, odes, épîtres, chansons, etc*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), **NAF 18220**, entitled *Recueil collectif de pièces mélangées de prose et de vers de la fin du XVIIe siècle*

References to these manuscripts will provide page numbers where possible, but in the case of the unpaginated manuscripts Français 12680, Ms-15143, and NAF 1697, fol. numbers will be given instead.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

What might it mean to imagine disability differently? – Sami Schalk[1]

Carnival, 1638. The twenty-seven-year-old poet Paul Scarron is preparing for the celebrations in his hometown of Le Mans. He wants to make a big splash this year, so he strips naked, rolls in honey, and covers himself in feathers from head to toe, before leaving the house to join the parade. He is a majestic eagle, dancing through the streets to the admiration of fellow carnival-goers. But all is not well, for as his dance becomes more vigorous and the crowd brushes against his costume, the feathers begin to slide off. To conceal his modesty, he jumps over the wall into the Huisne river, hiding among the reeds until the crowd disperses.

Scarron felt the effects of this day for the rest of his life: the near-freezing water paralysed his limbs and his poetry soon became coloured by the experience of chronic pain. In November of that same year, he wrote that he was 'En danger d'estre cul de jatte',[2] an epithet that would follow him, for better and for worse, until his death in 1660. Of course, this chain of events probably never happened. An apocryphal origin story of unknown provenance,[3] it was

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[1] Sami Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, race, and gender in black women's speculative fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 2.

[2] Spelling is not modernised in quotations from seventeenth-century primary sources. A verse entitled 'Epitalame du comte de Tessé et de Mademoiselle de Laverdin'. Paul Scarron, *Poésies diverses, tome 1* (Paris: Didier, 1947), p. 59.

[3] This anecdote's first recorded appearance is in La Beaumelle's 1757 biography of Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame de Mantenon, most famous as the uncrowned queen of France and perhaps the second most powerful person in the country after Louis XIV. She was also Scarron's wife until his death in 1660. See Laurent Angliviel de la Beaumelle,

repeated many times by biographers and critics of Scarron's work but has been contradicted as frequently as it has been corroborated.[4] It may even have been invented by the poet himself: just one of many instances where Scarron drew upon his personal experiences of disability, illness, and chronic pain when fashioning his poetic persona in a range of mythologizing yet self-deprecating ways.

The broad topic of my thesis is precisely this: a study of how disability entered into poetic mythologies of seventeenth-century France and played a central role in various lyric poets' efforts at versification, worldmaking, and self-fashioning. Disability as a subject and motif for poetry was by no means limited to the work of disabled poets. Nondisabled poets also included many disabled characters in their lyrics, and attached a range of symbolic connotations to them, both positive and negative. Disability is everywhere in seventeenth-century lyric verse, even in poems that do not at first appear to have much to say about the topic. I contend that by reading with specific attention to disability and by interrogating these myths of disability found in lyric verse, we will deepen our understanding of how French writers and readers of the seventeenth century interpreted romantic desire, gender, the human body, and the self. This introduction situates my work within the context of scholarship on seventeenth-century French literature and disability. It examines key pieces of terminology – 'disability' being the most tangled and potentially problematic in an early modern context. It sets up my poetic corpus and provides a background in how poetry

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Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Madame de Maintenon, I (Maastricht: Dufour and Roux, 1778 [1757]), pp. 125-127.

[4] For the rumoured origins of Scarron's disability, see Ange-Pierre Leca, *Scarron: Le malade de la Reine* (Paris: Kimé, 1999), pp. 34-38.

was produced and circulated in the seventeenth-century. Finally, it forecasts each chapter's role in the ongoing discussion of disability, desire, and the lyric.

Contribution to Scholarship

The seventeenth century was a time of great epistemological and ontological change in France. Mitchell Greenberg summarises that

France in the seventeenth century was situated at the crossroads of epochal changes – changes in epistemology, economies, theology, philosophy, and the arts. It appears to us now as a rich, if often extremely violent, culture where political, sexual, and economic differences commingle, divide, and are reconfigured.[5]

These profound uncertainties complicate the traditional picture of seventeenth-century France as a century of linear hierarchisation, centralisation, and consolidation of power by key authority figures, most notably Richelieu at one end of the century and Louis XIV at the other.[6] This thesis investigates how some of the reconfigurations of knowledge alluded to by Greenberg impacted upon understandings of the human body and, more specifically, the place of disability and disabled people in literature of this period.[7] It poses three main research questions. How did French lyric poets of the seventeenth century imagine disability? Following this, how did disability enable these poets to challenge conventions? And finally, how did poets with specific personal

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[5] Mitchell Greenberg, 'Molière's Body Politic', in *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France,* ed. by Kathleen P. Long (Kirksville, MI: Truman State University Press, 2002), pp. 139-163 (p. 139).

[6] Ibid; Robert A. Schneider also challenges this 'textbook' reading of seventeenth-century France as a time of political and cultural absolutism in *Dignified Retreat: Writers and Intellectuals in the Age of Richelieu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 6-7.

[7] Chloé Hogg tackles similar issues in her investigation into representations of war wounds in seventeenth-century French literature, coining the term 'pathological absolutism' to evoke the paradoxical place of disability in this cultural phenomenon. *Absolutist Attachments* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019), p. 190.

investments in the subject of disability respond to the seventeenth-century discourse surrounding extraordinary bodies?

One reconfiguration of knowledge with particular relevance to the topic of disability was the disenchantment of the human body, said to have occurred in Europe over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[8] This disenchantment refers not to a concerted effort by a single philosophical school of thought, but to a web of distinct yet interconnected ways in which the body began to be uncoupled from the influence of astrological forces and came to be considered as more of a self-sufficient unit piloted by a soul.[9] Examples attesting to this disenchantment include Andreas Vesalius's anatomy treatise,[10] Ambroise Paré's work on monsters and marvels,[11] Giambattista della Porta's physiognomy treatise,[12] and, perhaps most famously, René Descartes's philosophy of dualism.[13] My thesis will draw primarily from physiognomy and Porta's treatise,

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[8] 'On voit ainsi, au cours des XVIe et XVIIe siècles, la figure humaine se désenchanter progressivement et s'imprégner peu à peu d'une dimension subjective nouvelle'. Jean-Jacques Courtine, 'Le miroir de l'âme', in *Histoire du corps: 1. De la Renaissance aux Lumières,* ed. by Georges Vigarello (Paris: Seuil, 2005), pp. 319-325 (p. 324).

[9] Christopher Rivers, *Face Value: Physiognomical Thought and the Legible Body in Marivaux, Lavater, Balzac, Gautier, and Zola* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), pp. 24-26.

[10] Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* (Basel: Oporini, 1543).

[11] The definitive edition of this text was first published in 1585. Ambroise Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015 [1585]).

[12] Translated into French and published in 1655. Giambattista della Porta, *La Physionomie humaine de Jean Baptiste Porta* (Rouen: Berthelin, 1655).

[13] Jonathan Sawday argues that 'the creation of "Cartesian Man", at some point in the early seventeenth century, was […] the moment at which an alienated human subject was born'. Sawday, p. 159. For a nuanced reevaluation of the 'Cartesian Man', we can turn to Elisabeth of Bohemia's correspondence with Descartes, which complicates the schematic idea of Cartesian dualism that has come to dominate discussions of Descartes and the human body. René Descartes, *Correspondance avec Élisabeth de Bohême et Christine de Suède* (Paris: Folio, 2018). For scholarly reassessments of the Cartesian body, see Elizabeth Urban, 'On matters of mind and body: regarding Descartes', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 63. 2 (2018), 228-240; Paola Giacomoni, 'Descartes' Emotions: From the Body to the Body', *Rivista internazionale di Filosofia e Psicologia*, 8. 1 (2017), 14-29; Colin Chamberlain, '"The body I call 'mine' ": A sense of bodily ownership in Descartes', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 27. 1 (2018), 3-24; Claire Graham, 'Descartes' Imagination: Unifying Mind and Body in Sensory Representation' (Durham University, 2013). Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). There is certainly

which I believe to be the most pertinent of these key examples to my project for reasons that I will shortly explain.

Playing a vital yet underexplored role in major epistemological changes in how Europeans understood the human body, of which physiognomy is one key example, the seventeenth-century French lyric provides an opportunity to expand the breadth and depth of existing studies of disability in early modern literature and culture. Despite the fact that Henri-Jacques Stiker's foundational work *A History of Disability* (1999) was originally published in French as *Corps infirmes et sociétés* (1982),[14] there is a relative scarcity of French-language scholarship on disability in literature and culture,[15] and Disability Studies remains an emerging discipline in francophone research institutions.[16] Scholarly works written in English but focusing on disability in French and francophone literature and culture are more numerous, but are a minority in a field that

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space for a rereading of Cartesianism informed by recent developments in Disability Studies and Mad Studies, and I would welcome such an intervention.

[14] Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Henri-Jacques Stiker, *Corps infirmes et sociétés* (Paris: Dunod, 2013 [1982]).

[15] Of the works published in French, those of particular relevance to disability in seventeenth-century France include Stiker (2013 [1982]); Zina Weygand, *Vivre sans voir : Les aveugles dans la société française, du Moyen Âge au siècle de Louis Braille* (Paris: Créaphis, 2013); Marion Chottin, 'Les aveugles des philosophes de l'Âge classique aux Lumières : Aléas d'une pensée de la cécité entre rationalisme et empirisme', in *Discours et représentations du handicap : Perspectives culturelles,* ed. by Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier (Paris: Garnier, 2019), pp. 153-171; Marion Chottin, 'Introduction: Eléments pour une contre-histoire de la cécité et des aveugles', *Corpus: revue de philosophie,* 67 (2014), 11-18; Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier, 'Introduction', in *Discours et représentations du handicap : Perspectives culturelles,* ed. by Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier (Paris: Garnier, 2019), pp. 11-34; Anne Waldschmidt, 'Conceptualiser le modèle culturel du handicap comme dis/ability : Perspectives interdisciplinaires et internationales', in *Discours et représentations du handicap : Perspectives culturelles,* ed. by Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier (Paris: Garnier, 2019), pp. 49-62.

[16] Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier describe works of French literary and cultural Disability Studies as 'novatrices'. Roussel and Vennetier (2019); Hannah Thompson, 'État Présent: French and Francophone Disability Studies', *French Studies,* 71 (2017), 243-251 (p. 243).

remains anglocentric.[17] As it stands, there is currently no book-length study dedicated to disability in seventeenth-century French literature and culture,[18] even though this century saw a series of wide-ranging epistemological and ontological changes that radically altered the way Europeans understood human embodiment.

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[17] Of the works published in English , those of particular relevance to a study of disability in seventeenth-century France include Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon, 'Introduction', in *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance,* ed. by Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 1-17; Simone Chess, 'Atypical Bodies: Constructing (ab)normalcy in the Renaissance', in *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance,* ed. by Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2020); Adleen Crapo, 'Chronic Pain and Illness: Understanding Pain in the Renaissance', in *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance,* ed. by Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon (London and New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 63-81; Maja Bondestam, 'Introduction', in *Exceptional Bodies in Early Modern Culture: Concepts of Monstrosity before the Advent of the Normal,* ed. by Maja Bondestam (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), pp. 11-36; Cécile Tresfels, '"The Most Deformed Woman in France": Marguerite de Valois's Monstrous Sexuality in the *Divorce satyrique*', in *Exceptional Bodies in Early Modern Culture: Concepts of Monstrosity before the Advent of the Normal,* ed. by Maja Bondestam (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), pp. 103-1223; Elizabeth B. Bearden, *Monstrous kinds: body, space, and narrative in Renaissance representations of disability* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2019); Tammy Berberi, 'The Role(s) of Art and Literature in (Re)making Disability', in *Discours et représentations du handicap : Perspectives culturelles,* ed. by Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier (Paris: Garnier, 2019), pp. 37-47; Hannah Thompson, 'Reading Blindness in French Fiction through Critical Disability Studies', in *Discours et représentations du handicap : Perspectives culturelles,* ed. by Céline Roussel and Soline Vennetier (Paris: Garnier, 2019), pp. 231-245; Richard H. and Asa Simon Mittman Godden, 'Embodied Difference: Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World,* ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 3-31; Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood, 'Early Modern Literature and Disability Studies', in *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England,* ed. by Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood (Ohio, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2013b), pp. pp. 32-46; Chapter Five of Hogg (2019), pp. 165-190; C. F. Goodey, *A History of Intelligence and "Intellectual Disability": the shaping of psychology in early modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Katharine Hodgkin, *Madness in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Susan Burch, 'Disability History: Suggested readings', *The Public Historian,* 27. 2 (2005), 63-74.

[18] Though they are not strictly dedicated to the seventeenth century, Kathleen P. Long and Jennifer Row are both researching books that will go a long way to addressing this lacuna. Long's book project is on the relationship between early modern discourses of monstrosity and modern discourses of disability, and Row's investigates the aesthetics of ableism and race in the early Francophone world. Adleen Crapo has recently completed a doctoral thesis that analyses the role of disability in the writings of Paul Scarron, one of the poets central to my own study. Adleen Crapo, 'Citizenship, Authorship, and Disability in Cervantes and Scarron' (University of Toronto, 2020).

Instead of offering a comprehensive study of the literary and social history of disability in seventeenth-century France, this thesis takes French lyric poetry of this century as a precise case study of how premodern authors negotiated bodily regimes that at times appear very alien to our own.[19] These authors' negotiation of bodily regimes holds much in common with their concurrent negotiation of the formal constraints of lyric verse. Seventeenth-century forms, both poetic and bodily, existed in constant tension with a range of conventions, the most significant of which are explored in this thesis. Furthermore, attention to the question of formal convention enables me to investigate why poetry – and the seventeenth-century French lyric in particular – is so replete with imagery of disability. The inextricable link between poetic form and bodily form means that even poems that seem at first glance to have little to do with disability, and certainly do not address it in an instantly recognisable way, have much to contribute to a discussion of this phenomenon. For this reason, there are some readings in this thesis where the interpretation might, at first, seem a little tenuous, but I show how a Disability Studies critical apparatus can reveal the relevance of poems whose connection to disability is more opaque.

Conventions do not always restrict. Indeed, poetic conventions can be positively liberating. Seventeenth-century poets and their readers were lovers of the art of *variatio*, a Latin term referring to the regular reformulation of structure and content, considered by early modern thinkers such as Erasmus as a fundamental feature of skilful writing.[20] One way for a poet to demonstrate *variatio* is to produce a range of very different but equally adroit poetic takes on the same subject. The human body, and disability in particular, were seized

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[19] Bondestam (2020), p. 20.

[20] Daniel Javitch, 'The Poetics of *Variatio* in *Orlando Furioso*', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 66. 1 (2005), 1-19 (p. 3).

upon by seventeenth-century poets as subjects with rich potential for *variatio*,

allowing them to best show off their skill as versatile lyricists. The

experimentation with themes of disability is consequently a central component of

much poetry written in accordance with this convention of *variatio*. There were,

it should be emphasised, poets whose treatment of disability went far beyond an

attempt to master *variatio*, eliciting more complex discussions of gender, desire,

and the self. My readings of these poems contribute to a scholarly study of what

Tammy Berberi refers to as 'disability's worldmaking', which refers to

a collaborative effort to reimagine a world, not just with disability in it (because of course disability is in it!) but wherein the temporalities, inventiveness, and relationships that it both requires and desires give rise to new forms and connections, expanding and multiplying meanings and relational possibilities for everyone.[21]

A study of worldmaking investigates how the phenomenon of disability, along

with disabled authors themselves, can question the givenness of the world and

imagine alternative configurations. As this thesis shows, disability enabled

seventeenth-century lyric poets to reconfigure poetic conventions, rework

frameworks of desire, and transgress the supposed boundaries of the human

subject.

This desire to reconfigure and rework convention was by no means always

in play. Only a small minority of poetry about disability can claim to challenge

the hegemonic bodily regimes of the seventeenth century and participate in

worldmaking. More often than not, representations of disability and disabled

characters in lyric verse served to reinforce the general consensus among

natural philosophers that disability was the result of Nature's deviation from her

proper course, and usually a sign of sinfulness or another unsavoury inner

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[21] Tammy Berberi, '"Car le monde est à créer" : Disability's Worldmaking, Pasts and Futures', *L'Ésprit Créateur,* 61. 4 (2021), 1-14 (p. 2).

characteristic.[22] Some representations did, however, challenge this consensus in various different ways and to a varying degree, though they may of course be highly conventional in *other* ways. Indeed, it is unhelpful, not to mention very difficult, to speak of particular poems as either conventional or unconventional, and a secondary aim of my work is to show that seventeenth-century poets existed in a highly paradoxical relationship to the idea of convention, both bodily and poetic, something brought to light by a study of disability in their poetry.

Critical Disability Studies

I situate my work within Critical Disability Studies, a field in which scholars centre disability in their readings of literary and historical texts, and use a Disability Studies methodology to offer new interpretations of familiar literary and historical phenomena.[23] In so doing, Critical Disability Studies interrogates the host of two-dimensional clichés often applied to disability in literature and culture.[24]

A central tenet of recent theoretical work in Critical Disability Studies upon which my thesis builds is that the phenomenon of disability itself is not a fixed object of inquiry but contingent on any number of historical, cultural, and spatial conditions. In her 2013 book *Feminist, Queer, Crip*,[25] disability theorist Alison Kafer explores a political/relational model as an alternative to both the medical and social models of disability.[26] The political/relational model recognises 'the

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[22] I expand on this proposition in the section entitled 'Deviant Bodies'.
[23] Thompson (2019), p. 231.
[24] Ibid., p. 232.
[25] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).
[26] The medical model locates disability entirely within the body or mind, and 'assumes that any somatic trait that falls short of the idealized norm must be corrected or

difficulty in determining who is included in the term "disabled," refusing any

assumption that it refers to a discrete group of particular people with certain

similar qualities'.[27] It argues that 'the problem of disability is located in

inaccessible buildings, discriminatory attitudes, and ideological systems that

attribute normalcy and deviance to particular minds and bodies. The problem of

disability is solved […] through social change and political transformation'.[28] The

political/relational model neither opposes nor valorises medical intervention,

viewing it above all as a matter of personal choice that should not be influenced

by entrenched social biases about what constitutes normalcy and deviance.[29]

Most importantly for my own work on seventeenth-century disability, Kafer's

theoretical framework recognises that 'what we understand as impairing

conditions […] shifts across time and place, and presenting impairment as purely

physical obscures the effects of such shifts'.[30] Disability is, for Kafer, 'a site of

questions rather than firm definitions',[31] a statement which represents a

particularly useful approach when analysing early modern material.

Linked to this instability is an enduring scepticism of the unconscious

desire to speak of human embodiment in binary terms that Kafer shares with

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eliminated'. The social model emerged in the UK in the 1970s to challenge the medical model. Its central claim is that disability is caused by inaccessible environments and social barriers rather than bodily defects. To articulate this, the social model draws a hard distinction between *impairment* – the neutral fact of having a body that differs from what society deems normal or acceptable – and *disability* – the oppression of those with impairments resulting from having to live in a society designed entirely for the benefit of those without impairments. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: figuring physical disability in American culture and literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 79; Maya Sabatello, 'A Short History of the International Disability Rights Movement', in *Human Rights and Disability Advocacy,* ed. by Maya Sabatello and Marianne Schulze (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 13-24 (pp. 15-16); Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), p. 16.
[27] Kafer (2013), p. 10.
[28] Ibid., p. 6.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., p. 7.
[31] Ibid., p. 11.

other theorists. As Tobin Siebers observes, 'the disabled body seems difficult for the theory of social construction to absorb: disability is at once its best example and a significant counterexample'.[32] It is impossible to separate the physical body from social barriers and the culturally specific meanings that are attached to the word. Consequently, the once-accepted binary relationship between *impairment* – the neutral fact of having a body that differs from what society deems normal or acceptable – and *disability* – the oppression of impaired people caused by a society designed entirely for the benefit of those without impairments – is shown by crip theorists to be unhelpfully simplistic.[33] Just as unhelpful is the urge to pigeonhole a particular poem as either conventional or unconventional in its attitude towards disability.

While rejecting the social model and its binary opposition between impairment and disability as obsolete, crip theorists recognise that disability is, to an extent, dependant on cultural and social factors: the subject position of being visually impaired may be disabling in some social situations but not in others, depending on the accessibility provision. It would be wrong, however, to claim that disability is wholly dependent on cultural construction and social barriers.[34] Chronic pain or depression, for example, would not suddenly disappear in a world where stigma and social barriers had been removed.[35] Kafer emphasises that the categories of disabled and able-bodied (its supposed

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[32] Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), p. 57.

[33] For criticism of the impairment/disability binary, see Tom Shakespeare, 'The Social Model of Disability', in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. by Lennard J. Davis (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 214-221 (pp. 216-219); Kafer (2013), pp. 7-8. For premodern perspectives on this binary, see Anderson and Haydon (2020), pp. 10-11; Bearden (2019), p. 8; Joshua R. Eyler, 'Introduction: Breaking Boundaries, Building Bridges', in *Disability in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Joshua R. Eyler (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1-8 (p. 6).

[34] Siebers (2008), p. 64.

[35] Shakespeare (2013), p. 218; Siebers (2008), p. 64.

opposite number) are far from self-evident, being both 'contested and contestable'.[36] Following this, we must be clear in scholarly work about what we mean when we speak of disability and how we have arrived at that meaning. The all-important question of 'what exactly is disability?' is even trickier to answer when dealing with premodern cultures whose bodily regimes were remarkably different from our own.

Early Modern Disability: A Contradiction in Terms?

Five years ago, my introduction to Disability Studies came in the form of a chapter that begins 'We live in a world of norms'.[37] In this 2013 introduction to the fourth edition of *The Disability Studies Reader*, Lennard J. Davis continues,

Each of us endeavors to be normal or else deliberately tries to avoid that state. We consider what the average person does, thinks, earns, or consumes. […] To understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body.[38]

Davis is correct to direct attention to normalcy and 'normal' bodies as prejudicial concepts that have come to define the category of disability. Without normalcy, he argues, disability would not exist as an operative category into which people can place 'abnormal' bodies and minds.[39] This is by no means a recent innovation in Disability Studies. Davis's introduction is a reworking of Chapter 2 of his 1995 book *Enforcing Normalcy*,[40] which, in turn, references Foucault's

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[36] Kafer (2013), p. 10.

[37] Lennard J. Davis, 'Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture', in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. by Lennard J. Davis (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1-16 (p. 1).

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London and New York, NY: Verso, 1995).

work on controlling discourses as a model for its analysis of normalcy and the body.[41]

The unavoidable centrality of normalcy to theoretical interventions in Disability Studies, and to the very concept of disability itself, poses a problem to my work on seventeenth-century French literature. There appears to be a substantial consensus from both Disability Studies scholars and those working on medical history that the concept of bodily normalcy did not come into existence until the early nineteenth century.[42] Before this point, a norm was a geometric term meaning 'standing at right angles' and was not yet applied to bodily conformation.[43] This consensus seems to have originated in the physician and philosopher Georges Canguilhem's *Essai sur quelques problèmes concernant le normal et le pathologique* (1943).[44] Bolstered by similar arguments made by Foucault (Canguilhem's former student) in *Folie et déraison* and *Les Anormaux*,[45] it is consolidated by Davis in *Enforcing Normalcy*. He writes

I begin with the rather remarkable fact that the constellation of words describing this concept 'normal,' 'normalcy,' 'normality,' 'norm,' 'average,' 'abnormal' – all entered the European languages rather late in human history. The word 'normal' as 'constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard, regular, or usual' only enters the English language around 1840 […] Likewise, the word 'norm,' in the modern sense, has only been in use since

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[41] Ibid., p. 2. Although Davis does not cite it, Ian Hacking's 1990 work *The Taming of Chance* also makes a similar argument with relation to the advent of normalcy but without Davis's focus on disability. See the chapter entitled 'The Normal State' in Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 160-169.

[42] For an overview of scholarship on the history of bodily norms and how it relates to premodernity, see Bondestam (2020), pp. 11-20. For a study of the concept of the normal, see Peter and Elizabeth Stephens Cryle, *Normality: A Critical Genealogy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[43] Waltraud Ernst, 'The Normal and the Abnormal: reflections on norms and normativity', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal,* ed. by Waltraud Ernst (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-25 (p. 3).

[44] Cryle (2017), p. 1; Caroline Warman, 'From Pre-Normal to Abnormal: the emergence of a concept in late eighteenth-century France', *Psychology & Sexuality,* 1. 3 (2010), 200-213 (p. 201).

[45] 1961 and 1974-1975 respectively. Ernst (2006), pp. 6-8.

around 1855, and 'normality' and 'normalcy' appeared in 1849 and 1857 respectively.[46]

Prior to the emergence of normalcy, Davis argues, all bodies were measured against divine or artistic ideals such as the nude Venus.[47] When compared to a premodern ideal, the human body is *always* found lacking because all bodies are lacking when compared to ideals.[48] This is a substantially different regime of classification from the modern norm, which judges some bodies to be acceptable (normal) and others to be unacceptable in their deviance (abnormal).[49]

Davis continues that the norm necessitated the creation of the category called disability, which was used by nineteenth-century medical professionals as shorthand for unacceptable bodily deviance that they believed ought to be minimised, studied, medicated, concealed, and corrected.[50] The idea that a classificatory regime of norms and normalcy dominated from the mid-nineteenth century up to the present day, while pre-nineteenth-century societies measured bodies against unattainable ideals, still holds strong, and evidence suggests that norms as we know them simply did not exist before this date.[51] Ian Hacking remarks that, as a modern ideological tool, the norm has a highly moralising agenda, and 'uses a power as old as Aristotle to bridge the fact/value distinction,

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[46] Davis (1995), p. 24.
[47] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[48] Ibid., p. 25.
[49] Although these ideals could be inverted to the extreme in the form of the grotesque, Davis writes that 'the grotesque was not equivalent to the disabled' given that it was celebrated in some quarters and held up as a kind of ideal itself. Ibid. I will return to this paradoxical concept of the grotesque in my second chapter.
[50] Ibid., p. 3.
[51] The argument is reiterated in Davis's 2013 introduction to *The Disability Studies Reader*. Furthermore, Ernst's introduction to *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal* (2006) likewise locates the emergence of bodily norms in the mid-nineteenth century, as does Lucy Hartley's chapter on physiognomy in that same collection. Finally, Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens's *Normality: A Critical Genealogy* (2017) begins its analysis in the first half of the nineteenth century. Davis (2013); Ernst (2006), p. 2; Lucy Hartley, 'Constructing the Common Type: Physiognomic norms and the notion of "civic usefulness", from Lavater to Galton', in *Histories of the Normal and the Abnormal,* ed. by Waltraud Ernst (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 101-121 (p. 101); Cryle (2017), p. 3.

whispering in your ear that what is normal is also right'.[52] In so doing, Hacking implies that, while the norm is a relatively new invention, the idea that different bodies carry different moral values is far older, a suggestion that opens up the possibility of further investigation into what kind of bodily regimes held sway in various societies before the invention of the all-important medical norm.

In search of a non-anglocentric perspective on pre-normal regimes of classification, we can turn to Caroline Warman's 2010 article entitled 'From Pre-Normal to Abnormal: the emergence of a concept in late eighteenth-century France'.[53] Citing the same references as Davis, namely Canguilhem and Foucault, Warman charts the emergence of the concepts of norm and normalcy in late eighteenth century France. She asserts that these concepts came into use at around the same time as their English equivalents – in the first half of the nineteenth century – but were preceded in late-eighteenth-century works of natural philosophy by a series of inexact predecessors:

Diderot's work makes obvious the need for such a term [as normal]. His revolving binaries, however, dynamically paradoxical, are always playing with concepts that function like the modern ones of 'normal' and 'abnormal', without ever using the words themselves. And perhaps, dancing around with such a multi-metamorphic term as 'natural' instead of using the terms he could be imagined in retrospect to have been searching for was the crucial thing which prevented static binaries of normal/abnormal from being created.[54]

While the normal and abnormal are, to the modern reader, conspicuous in their absence in the philosophical writings she analyses, Warman alludes to this kind of as-yet-unformed binary in her discussion of the opposing categories of the natural and the *écart*, a word meaning both 'swerve' and 'deviation'.[55] She describes how, in the writings of eighteenth-century surgeon and philosopher

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[52] Hacking (1990), p. 160.
[53] Warman (2010).
[54] Ibid., p. 202.
[55] Ibid., p. 204.

Antoine Le Camus, we find the opinion that 'nature has determined a general rule – the sort of thing we might be tempted to call a norm, anything other than which is an *écart*, or deviation'.[56] Warman is more nuanced in her conclusions than Davis, conceding that there were indeed precursors to normalcy that '*did* indicate rules and deviation from them',[57] while maintaining that these precursors cannot be considered evidence of a 'stabilised and moralised binary' akin to our modern concepts of normal and abnormal.[58] She concludes that her investigation broadly confirms Canguilhem and Foucault's hypotheses about the emergence of the norm in the first half of the nineteenth century.[59] Thus, she continues, for eighteenth-century French natural philosophers, the idea of 'what a norm might be, what the normal or the aberrant might be supposed to be, is completely uninteresting and irrelevant'.[60]

Given the centrality of norms to theoretical understandings of disability, Warman's concluding pronouncement on the irrelevance of norms to these eighteenth-century French thinkers is concerning to anyone wishing to study representations of disability in cultures that predate the idea of bodily normalcy. While I do not argue that bodily norms and normalcy, in the modern sense, existed in the seventeenth century, I do intend to further investigate how bodies were measured and regulated in this period. Is it accurate to even speak of disability in the early modern period given that the idea of bodily norms did not yet exist? And if so, what form did disability take and how was it maintained, if not by norms?

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[56] Ibid., p. 205.
[57] Ibid., p. 200.
[58] Ibid., p. 201.
[59] Ibid., p. 209.
[60] Ibid.

Deviant Bodies

The most convincing and rigorous recent approach to the question of norms and disability in the early modern period is that of Elizabeth Bearden's *Monstrous Kinds* (2019). Bearden therein investigates pre-normal classificatory regimes of the body, similar to Warman's identification of the natural and the *écart* in late-eighteenth-century French philosophy as inexact precursors to the normal/abnormal medical binary. She concludes that while it is certainly true that early modern natural philosophers had no classificatory system resembling the normal/abnormal binary, there is substantial evidence that these philosophers understood certain bodies as 'deviants' produced by deviations in Nature's course.[61] Bearden analyses Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum*, published in 1620, some century and a half before the French texts analysed by Warman, and arrives at a similar conclusion:

> Bacon depicts variations in nature as deviants. He views "errors of nature" instrumentally, and the goal of cataloguing such errors is corrective: "For if nature be once detected in her deviation, and the reason thereof made evident, there will be little difficulty in leading her back by art to the point whither she strayed by accident". […] Bacon enjoins us "to make a collection or particular natural history of all prodigies and monstrous births of nature".[62]

As Bearden's analysis highlights, Bacon maintains that in order to learn Nature's ways, one should study her 'deviation'. This emphasis on deviation found in Bacon's natural philosophy correlates with the late-eighteenth-century French conceptualisation of an *écart* away from what is natural. Moreover, as Bearden points out,[63] it has much in common with the concept of the norm. Davis argues that the norm caused certain bodies to be categorised as deviant, and that 'with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations or extremes. When we

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[61] Bearden (2019), p. 82.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants'.[64] Davis's assertion that the concept of deviations emerged alongside the concept of the norm is called into question by both Bearden and Warman's work, which shows that understandings of deviant bodies predated the emergence of the norm by at least two hundred years, and were produced by the study of deviations or *écarts* in Nature's proper course.

The premodern idea of a deviation from Nature's proper course as a way of conceptualising disability will underpin much of my analysis in the chapters to come. It also confirms that the language of disability is not irrelevant to the early modern period, and – despite its anachronism – corresponds quite closely to individuals whose bodies and minds were interpreted by early modern thinkers as evidence of deviations away from Nature's proper course, and who faced negative consequences because of the supposed deviancy of their bodyminds. Despite the lack of a modern norm, the concept of bodily deviance was very much in use in early modern Europe and, as such, it is not counter-productive to speak of seventeenth-century French *disability*, as opposed to, say, monstrosity. My strategic choice to brave anachronism and centre my analysis on disability enables me to mobilise a theoretical framework derived from Critical Disability Studies and demonstrate the advantages of reading disability in seventeenth-century French literature. One may, of course, justly prefer to frame textual analysis in terms of monstrosity when focusing on the more fantastical elements of early modern texts featuring bodily deviance, and/or when reading them alongside theoretical works that deconstruct the

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[64] Davis (1995), p. 29.

concept of monstrosity.[65] Instead of monstrosity, however, my thesis centres

texts that describe bodily deviance in terms aligned more closely with disability

and reads them alongside works of disability theory. Monstrosity conjures up

images of alterity and the fantastic, which are not present in most of my primary

texts, whose authors prefer to depict physical and mental variability as an

everyday experience, tied more to human anxieties and desires than to the

explicitly monstrous. That said, it is neither possible nor desirable to fully

decouple discourses of disability and monstrosity,[66] so there will be occasional

forays into the language of monstrosity over the course of this study.[67] Before

continuing, however, it is necessary to examine exactly how physical variability

was conceptualised and expressed in French thought of this period. These

answers can be found through the study of two essential sixteenth-century

Italian influences: Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano* and Porta's *De humana*

physiognomonia.

Castiglione and *Mediocrità*

Following his central thesis that bodily norms emerged in the early

nineteenth century, Davis argues that prior to the emergence of norms, ideals

were the measure of the human body.[68] He maintains, however, that these

ideals were not normative, insofar as they were not meant to be realised and

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[65] Godden (2019), pp. 5-7.

[66] Tory V. Pearman, 'Foreword: De/Coupling Monstrosity and Disability', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World,* ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. v-x (p. vi).

[67] The literary mode of grotesque realism, for example, represents an instance where disability is deliberately blurred with monstrosity. This is explored at length in Chapter Two.

[68] Davis (1995), pp. 24-25.

people were not punished or excluded from society for falling short of them.[69]

Bearden contends that, on the contrary, early modern ideals did in fact

contribute to the exclusion of certain individuals from rituals of sociability. One

key example is the concept of *mediocrità* found in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il*

Cortegiano (1528),[70] a conduct manual for Italian courtiers that was highly

influential in forming similar ideals of conduct among the social elites of

seventeenth-century France.[71]

In Castiglione's work, *mediocrità* refers to a 'moderation of bodily,

behavioural, and gender roles that rel[ies] on disabled types, such as the

monstrous freak, queer crip, wounded warrior, and deformed female for the

extremes against which mediocrità is measured'.[72] To exemplify this point,

Bearden quotes Gasparo Pallavicino, a character in *Il Cortegiano*, who likens

women to a variety of disabled people, implying that all are defective mistakes

of nature:

Very learned men have written that,[73] since nature always intends and plans to
make things perfect, she would constantly bring forth men if she could; and that
when a woman is born, it is a defect or mistake [*difetto o error*] of nature, and
contrary to what she would wish to do: as is seen too in the case of one who is
born blind, or lame, or with some other defect.[74]

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[69] Ibid., p. 25.
[70] Bearden (2019), pp. 35-54.
[71] Alain Viala, *La France galante* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), p. 369;
Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press,
1980), pp. 20-22; Lewis Seifert, *Manning the Margins: Masculinity & Writing in
Seventeenth-Century France* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), pp.
72-74; Bearden (2019), p. 54; Nicholas Hammond, *Creative Tensions: An Introduction
to Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 1997), p. 81.
[72] Bearden (2019), p. 34.
[73] Early modern European knowledge of the human body was highly patrilineal. It was
rooted in the Classics (especially Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates), and was transmitted
through various Arabic 'commentators' to the European 'teachers' of the thirteenth and
fourteenth centuries. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the
Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), p.
39.
[74] Quoted in ibid., p. 48.

Castiglione's language of *difetto* (*défaut* in French) is pivotal to early modern

understandings of disability and will underpin much of this thesis's analysis. His

second choice of word – *error* – has an etymological link to the French *errer* and

errant,[75] which carry a sense of straying from one's objectives comparable to

that of *écart*. Castiglione's second interlocutor, Ludovico, adds that an ideal

courtier's face should be

> not so soft and feminine as many attempt to have who not only curl their hair
> and pluck their eyebrows, but preen themselves in all those ways that the most
> wanton and dissolute women in the world adopt; and in walking, in posture, and
> in every act, appear so tender and languid that their limbs seem to be on the
> verge of falling apart; and utter their words so limply that it seems they are
> about the expire on the spot.[76]

Here, overly effeminate courtiers are described as approximating disability in

their appearance and conduct. Their bodily integrity is precarious and their

speech patterns make them seem so unwell that they are proximate to death,

characteristics that, according to Ludovico, cause them to resemble women. As

well as attesting to an overlap between femininity and disability in Castiglione's

thought, these passages also demonstrate that *mediocrità* is an ideal.

Castiglione is clear that no courtier can hope to be perfect, and one's adherence

to *mediocrità* is measured on a sliding scale with the imagined ideal courtier at

one end, and a series of disabled archetypes (woman and 'one who is born blind,

or lame, or with some other defect') at the other.[77] A man's failure to adequately

approximate *mediocrità* is equated to an imitation of disabled people and

women. Disability and femininity hang over this conduct manual like threats: if a

courtier fails to get *mediocrità* right, this is what he risks resembling.

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[75] Entries for 'errer' and 'errant' in Émile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française,*
(Paris: Hachette, 1863–72).
[76] Quoted in Bearden (2019), p. 45.
[77] Ibid., p. 49.

Castiglione writes that the ideal of *mediocrità* should affect social behaviour as courtiers try to mould themselves in its image.[78] He likens this practice of moulding oneself in the image of an unattainable ideal to shooting arrows at a target: even if nobody hits the bullseye, the archer who comes closes is judged most favourably.[79] Accordingly, 'the one who comes nearest to [the ideal courtier] will be the most perfect'.[80] This process of moulding is carried out by the practice of *sprezzatura*, a studied performance whose artificiality is carefully concealed so as to give the impression of nonchalant and spontaneous natural grace.[81] Castiglione advises aspiring courtiers to study the ideal carefully and try to replicate it through *sprezzatura*, which he describes as a way for courtiers to 'correct their natural defects'.[82]

Bearden terms *mediocrità* a 'real ideal',[83] that is an ideal that had real effects on people's conduct and how they presented their bodies, in addition to contributing to the coalescence of certain disabled archetypes alongside femininity as *things not to be*. Her analysis of *mediocrità* is useful for my own work on disability in seventeenth-century France because it reveals that things were not as clear-cut as Davis makes out in his assertion that, due to an absence of bodily norms, the concept of disability cannot be applied to the seventeenth century. There were also clear analogues to Castiglione's *mediocrità* in seventeenth-century France, which I will discuss later in this introduction.

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[78] Ibid., p. 37.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Bearden defines *sprezzatura* as 'the action of making something difficult seem easy'. Ibid., p. 56.
[82] Quoted by ibid., p. 39.
[83] She borrows this piece of terminology from Harry Berger Jr. Ibid., p. 34.

Porta and *Médiocrité*

A second key source of seventeenth-century French bodily regimes was

Giambattista della Porta's physiognomy treatise. This treatise was first published

in Latin in 1586 as *De humana physiognomonia*, then translated into Italian and

republished in 1598, and finally translated into French by 'le Sieur Revlt' and

published in 1655 as *De la physionomie humaine*.[84] The translation of Porta's

treatise into French in the middle of the century is evidence that, as Martin

Porter suggests,[85] there was a pre-existing readership of French amateurs with a

keen interest in physiognomy. Inspired by this Italian import, French

physiognomists soon took up the baton. Most notably, Marin Cureau de la

Chambre published his own treatise entitled *L'Art de connoistre les hommes* in

1660, in which he developed many of the ideas found in Porta's physiognomy.[86]

As mentioned above, Porta's treatise is evidence of a disenchantment of the

body in early modern Europe and, as I will now demonstrate, of particular

relevance when discussing disability in seventeenth-century French lyric verse.[87]

Porta's physiognomy hinges on the belief that

par les signes exterieures qu'on voit aux corps des hommes, [la physionomie] découvre tellement leurs mœurs, leurs naturels & desseins, qu'elle semble penetrer dans les plus occultes cachettes de l'ame, & pour ainsi dire dans les lieux les plus intimes du cœur.[88]

The essential physiognomical premise that the conformation of the human body

is indicative of the contents of the soul within is underpinned by a belief that 'le

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[84] Porta (1655).

[85] Martin Porter, *Windows of the Soul: Physiognomy in European Culture 1470-1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 91-92, 97.

[86] Jeffrey N. Peters, 'Is Alceste a Physiognomist?: Toward a Masculinity of Reference in the Seventeenth Century', in *Entre Hommes: French and Francophone Masculinities in Culture and Theory,* ed. by Todd W. Reeser and Lewis C. Seifert (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008), pp. 87-114 (pp. 92-93); Courtine (2005), pp. 319-321.

[87] Rivers (1994), pp. 24-25.

[88] Porta (1655), sig. ã 4ʳ.

corps a esté formé pour le sujet de l'ame'.[89] This is by no means an innovation, building on a long tradition of physiognomical thought that can be traced back to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*.[90]

Porta's treatise is one of the most influential early modern texts on the human body and yet is often side-lined by Critical Disability Studies scholars, perhaps because it has never been translated into English. Its publication in French coincided with a mid-seventeenth-century boom of interest in physiognomical theory in France.[91] Porta's theories about the body were also disseminated and popularised through poetry. To cite two previously documented examples, Jacqueline Plantié names Porta among the 'vulgarisateurs' who brought pseudo-Aristotelean physiognomy to seventeenth-century French culture,[92] providing evidence that writers of literary portraits made extensive reference to his work and displayed physiognomical tendencies in their writing. Similarly, Sandra Cheng identifies Porta's treatise as particularly influential on the birth of caricature in late-sixteenth-century Italy, inspiring early caricaturists.[93] These pictorial caricatures then gave inspiration to literary equivalents in both Italy and France. Early modern French verse describing comically ugly subjects displays many of the same interpretative techniques as the Italian physiognomist, and often hinges on the same essential premise that the visible body can be read to reveal the contents of the invisible soul.[94]

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[89] Ibid., sig. [ã 5ʳ].
[90] Curtis Le Van, 'Body as Text: Physiognomy on the Early English Stage' (University of South Florida, 2017), p. 58; Sandra Cheng, 'The Cult of the Monstrous: Caricature, Physiognomy, and Monsters in Early Modern Italy', *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural,* 1. 2 (2012), 197-231 (p. 203).
[91] Porter (2005), pp. 91-92.
[92] Jacqueline Plantié, *La Mode du portrait littéraire en France, 1641-1681* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2016), p. 147.
[93] Cheng (2012), pp. 205-209.
[94] Cheng acknowledges the similarity of early modern caricature to the literary burlesque. Ibid., p. 198.

More specifically, how does seventeenth-century physiognomy relate to my subject matter of disability? The simple answer is that Porta's treatise is loaded with language of bodily *médiocrité*, translated from the Italian *mediocrità* and Latin *mediocritas*, alongside plentiful imagery of disability. It also leans heavily on the pseudo-Aristotelian tendency to judge conventionally beautiful people as morally upstanding and disabled people as morally defective.[95] For the most part, Porta's treatise comprises examples of physiognomical readings, and one of the very first invokes *médiocrité* to speak of a balanced temperament:

Les signes du temperament moderé, sont quand le teint est meslé de vermillon & de blanc ; les cheveux sont blonds & tirant sur le iaune, mediocrement crespus ; la charnure sera mediocre, au reste le corps de ceux qui sont de ce temperament, n'apparoit pas au toucher ny mol, ny froid, ny denué de poil, ny gros ny graisle.[96]

Médiocre is one of Porta's most commonly used adjectives to describe a vast array of body parts – tongues, necks, chests, stomachs, and feet are all said to be *médiocre* at various points – and, for the physiognomist, it is almost always a good thing to be in possession of a body part described as *médiocre*.[97] A short section entitled 'Du Corps mediocre, de sa chair & de sa chaleur' summarises that 'Nous auons dit comment les Corps sont imparfaits & parfaits, ceux qui excedent en grandeur, & ceux qui sont défectueux en petitesse: un chacun accorde que la nature de ceux qui tiennent le milieu est la meilleure'.[98] The physiognomist is clear: extremes of bodily proportion indicate moral failings, while moderation of proportion indicates a morally upstanding nature. In expressing this belief, Porta mobilises the same language of lack ('défectueux') as Castiglione, adding that excess is also undesirable from a physiognomical perspective.

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[95] Le Van (2017), p. 32.
[96] Porta (1655), p. 17.
[97] Ibid., pp. 242, 287, 325, 331, 373.
[98] Ibid., p. 398.

In the section immediately following this summary of his thoughts concerning *médiocrité*, Porta carries out a physiognomical reading of 'ceux qui sont bien proportionnez de Corps'.[99] *Médiocre* is used five times in this section, as Porta invokes authorities such as Polemon, Adamantius, Celsus, Dares Phrygius, Menelaus, and Justin to extol the virtues of 'le Corps de taille médiocre'.[100] Porta's *médiocrité* constitutes a similar real ideal to Castiglione's *mediocrità*, except Porta's physiognomical theories apply it far more explicitly to bodily conformation rather than primarily to conduct and rituals of sociability. He reaffirms the pseudo-Aristotelean belief that the content of the soul influences the formation of the body and not vice versa: a person who thinks wicked thoughts will see them displayed on their body as a warning to others.[101] Conversely, if one wishes to be beautiful, one should 'pren[dre] soin, que la dignité de son corps ne soit pas soüillee par l'enlaidissement de ses mœurs'.[102] Just like Castiglione's *mediocrità*, Porta's *médiocrité* aspires to influence the way people behave in their day-to-day lives.

To recapitulate a key point put forward by Bearden's analysis of Castiglione, the real ideal of *mediocrità* existed at one pole of a sliding scale, with various archetypes consisting of a mixture of femininity, queerness, and disability the other end as a looming threat of what an aspiring courtier might come to resemble if he fails to adequately approximate *mediocrità* in his conduct. Similarly, Porta's treatise posits disability as just about the worst trait one could possibly possess from a physiognomical standpoint, always indicative

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[99] Ibid., pp. 398-399.
[100] Ibid., p. 399.
[101] Ibid., sig. [ã 5ᵛ], p. 4.
[102] Ibid., sig. [ã 5ᵛ].

of moral corruption. In a passage I return to in Chapter Two,[103] he writes of

hunchbacks that

Pour moy ie tiens tous ceux qui sont mutilez ou imparfaits de Corps, méchants, & principalement les bossus qui sont les pires de tous: veu qu'ils ont un défaut de nature autour du cœur, qui est le principe de tout le Corps.[104]

Like Castiglione and the eighteenth-century natural philosophers discussed by

Warman, Porta invokes this familiar idea of a 'défaut de nature', implying that

disability is the result of an deviation in Nature's proper course and reinforcing

Bearden's theory that 'before normal there was natural'.[105] Moreover, Porta

passes moral judgement on individuals with impairments: not only are they a

deviation from Nature's course but they are 'méchants'. Finally, his use of the

superlative – 'les bossus […] sont les pires de tous' – implies that there may be

a hierarchy in how different physical disabilities were interpreted by the

physiognomist, some being more *méchants* from a physiognomical perspective

than others.

Porta uses *méchants* as a descriptor of character again in a section

entitled 'LES MESCHANS'.[106] His portrait of the typical evildoer is a jumble of

images of disability and deformity:

Leur face est difforme […] leur col est courbé, ils sont bossus, ils ont six doigts en la main, les iambes fort grasles, les pieds bossus, concaues par-dessous, les yeux posez en la longueur du visage : ou ils sont tournez autour de la prunelle, ils se remüent coniointement : ils sont resplendissans comme le marbre, secs : ou ils sont resplendissans, noirs, tressaillans, comme s'ils sautoient ou ils ne cillent point, ils sont pâles, vn peu rouges, & secs.[107]

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[103] See section entitled 'Perfect Deformity'.
[104] Porta (1655), p. 213.
[105] In making this statement, Bearden does not mean to suggest that the normal and the natural were analogous in function, just that early modern ideas of *what is natural* preceded modern ideas of *what is normal* in discourses of bodily deviance and conformity, though the two functioned in very different ways. Bearden (2019), p. 79.
[106] Porta (1655), p. 491.
[107] Ibid.

Here and elsewhere in his treatise, Porta's imagery of disability serves two main purposes. First, it encourages people to judge individuals with deviant bodies negatively as morally corrupt. Second, it encourages readers of his treatise to aspire to *médiocrité* of mind and body, to moderate their inner passions lest these passions manifest themselves on their body in the form of disability. Such uncompromising negative judgement and othering of those with bodies that deviate too sharply from the ideal of *médiocrité* contributes to the creation and enforcement of the social category we can liken to disability. Indeed, Porta goes so far as to urge his readers to avoid associating with such people because socialising with those whose physicality marks them out as morally corrupt can be damaging to one's own health.[108] At this point, it is clear that Porta and Castiglione's understandings of *médiocrité/mediocrità* converge when they discuss bodily deviance: disability threatens to derail the machine of sociability. Porta, for his part, alludes to a belief that disability is contagious, inasmuch as it is an external sign of moral corruption that can be passed on to others through prolonged association with a person. The idea that disability is contagious resurfaces many times in the chapters to follow. The belief that one should avoid socialising with disabled people was by no means confined to physiognomical thought. A mid-seventeenth-century book of illustrated proverbs by Jacques Lagniet includes a depiction of a *borgne*, a *bossu*, and a *boiteux* to illustrate a series of proverbs about disability, several of which warn readers to shun them (Fig. 1).[109] One even paraphrases Porta, positing disability as a sign of sinfulness: 'Boiteux de nature nont d'espines, il ny a meschanceté ny malice qu'il ne machine'. Before moving on from Porta, I will highlight one other important

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[108] Ibid., sig. ã 4ʳ.
[109] Jacques Lagniet, *Recueil des plus illustres proverbes divisés en trois livres* ([Paris]: [n.p.], 1663).

Il ne va que d'une fesse.

On atrappe plustost le menteur que le boiteux.

mieux vaut borgne qu'a veule gle.

Le Bossu ne voit pas sa bosse, mais il voit bien le mal de son compagnon.

Borgnes bossus et boyteux
Ne te fye si tu neueux

Si tu ueux que chascun ton renom glorifie
aux borgnes bossus et boiteux ne te fie

Boiteux de nature nont

d'espines, il ny a meschanceté ny malice quil ne machine

Fig. 1

facet of his treatise impacts my work on disability: the fact that femininity and

disability often go hand-in-hand and are sometimes treated as one and the

same. Bearden remarks upon this in Castiglione's conduct manual and it is just

as present in Porta's physiognomy. For a treatise on human physiognomy, the

word 'femme' and its variants make remarkably few appearances in Porta's text.

When women and femininity do appear, they are used in a similar way to

disabled archetypes such as the hunchback, as throwaway examples of the

worst things an immoral man might come to resemble.[110] Porta's mapping of

disability onto femininity is most explicit in the short section revealingly entitled

'LES IMBECILLES, comparez aux femmes'.[111] The traits listed below this title are

precisely those Porta has already established several times before as inherently

feminine – small hands, skinny arms and neck, stuttering speech – and he

presents them as characteristics shared by intellectually disabled people.[112]

Like *Il Cortigiano*, Porta's treatise exemplifies Rosemarie Garland-

Thomson's assertions that 'Western thought has long conflated femaleness and

disability, understanding both as defective departures from a valued standard'

and 'female embodiment is a disabling condition in sexist culture'.[113] This

conflation is also apparent in the poetry analysed in this thesis, with imagery of

disability weaponised against women in poetry written by men. Female

characters are disabled, rendering them doubly monstrous and excluding them

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[110] For example, men with a very pale complexion ('la couleur fort blanche') 'sont timides & tiennent du naturel des femmes, comme dit Aristote en sa Physionomie : La couleur excessiuement pure en l'homme, comme disent Polemon & Adamantius, designe le naturel effeminé'. These men, Porta goes on to say, are naturally timid and cowardly, having a tendency towards 'la paillardise la plus énorme & la plus monstrueuse'. Porta (1655), pp. 209-210.
[111] Ibid., p. 512.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory', in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. by Lennard J. Davis (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 333-353 (p. 337).

from certain privileged social circles. The language of the *corps médiocre* extends far beyond explicitly physiognomical texts and permeates much seventeenth-century French writing about the human body,[114] including the lyrics in my primary corpus.

Building on the abovementioned work by Bearden and Warman, my analysis of Porta's treatise suggests that Davis's assertions about the lack of norms (and therefore the lack of a category we could term 'disability') prior to the nineteenth century need re-examining. The treatise endorses the idea that physical and mental deviance was a sign of a sinful character, and implies that people exhibiting such deviance *deserved* their embodied condition, while discouraging others from associating with them. This contributed to a category of people whose deviant bodyminds caused them to be met with negative judgement and social exclusion that we could justifiably term *disabled*.[115]

As well as defending my decision to write of seventeenth-century disability, this reading of Porta's treatise alongside theoretical writings about the norm has opened up various methodological questions concerning past bodily regimes. Devoid of the all-encompassing medical notion of bodily normalcy, early modern regimes of classification were often more localised than their modern counterpart, resulting in a great deal of variation in how disability was understood. For example, *Il Cortigiano* only addressed courtiers and those privileged few who aspired to be courtiers. Likewise, although its ideas were disseminated in wider circles though caricature, portraits, and poetry, Porta's physiognomical theories had only a fraction of the influence and reach of the

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[114] Plantié (2016), p. 172.
[115] Following Schalk and Margaret Price, the term *bodymind* 'insists on the inextricability of mind and body and highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern in most cases'. Schalk (2018), p. 5.

modern medical and scientific establishment. Due to the lack of a hegemonic normative regime, there was no one dominant model of early modern disability,[116] but various different and frequently contradictory understandings created by localised bodily regimes (such as those of physiognomy) and governed by real ideals (such as *médiocrité*).

The fact that there was no bodily norm does not mean that disability did not exist in any shape or form at this time, but that early modern understandings and depictions of disability were often more malleable, inconsistent, and broadly-defined than they are today. As Julie Singer remarks, disabled bodies in premodern literature and culture 'manifest a particular potential to perturb existing social categories' at a time when 'the much-vaunted (apparent) lack of a notion of "disabled" identity renders a broader swath of social boundaries permeable to the non-normative body'.[117] Early modern authors working under a different set of bodily regimes were more likely to imagine disability very differently from what is familiar to twenty-first-century readers whose understandings of disability hinge on normativity. For this reason, Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood propose that 'Renaissance cultural representations of non-standard bodies might provide new models for theorizing disability that are simultaneously more inclusive and more specific than those currently available'.[118] In other words, modern theorists of disability stand to learn a lot from premodern understandings of their subject of interest, just as modern theories of disability can aid readings of premodern texts. Incorporating

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[116] Julie Singer makes similar remarks regarding medieval disability. Julie Singer, 'Editor's Introduction: Disability and the social body', *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies,* 3 (2012), 135-141 (pp. 136-137).

[117] Ibid., p. 137.

[118] Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood, 'Ethical Staring: Disabling the English Renaissance', in *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England,* ed. by Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood (Colombus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2013a), pp. 1-22 (p. 10).

more early modern perspectives into theories of disability enables us to denaturalise the present,[119] recognising that disability in its modern form is not a finished product or end point, but an unstable, ever-changing phenomenon – just as it always has been.[120]

Mondain Sociability

Like the human form, seventeenth-century poetry was subject to regulation by various sets of ideals shaped by authority figures and aesthetic trends. Poets adopted different sets of rules to govern their creative outputs depending on the particular demands of each social milieu and its audience. In order to understand the generic and formal regulations of lyric verse, it is essential to understand the social situations that produced and circulated it.

Seventeenth-century *gens de lettres* were supported by distinct but overlapping circles of 'friends of friends', who convened behind closed doors.[121] The people most involved in the writing and circulation of poetry in seventeenth-century France were those belonging to *le monde* – a class of self-selected social elites, based in Paris, that included a large number of amateur poets and was dedicated to the pursuit of aesthetic perfection in several different areas.[122] Seventeenth-century *mondain* poets socialised and shared their work in Parisian

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[119] A phrase borrowed from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), p. 48.

[120] Chess (2020), p. 20.

[121] Robert A. Schneider, 'Friends of Friends: Intellectual and Literary Sociability in the Age of Richelieu', in *Men and Women Making Friends in Early Modern France,* ed. by Lewis C. Seifert and Rebecca M. Wilkin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 135-159 (p. 135).

[122] For the formation and stratification of *mondain* society in the seventeenth century, see Alain Génetiot, *Les genres lyriques mondains (1630-1660) : étude des poésies de Voiture, Vion d'Alibray, Sarasin et Scarron* (Geneva: Droz, 1990), pp. 109-180.

ruelles, named after the space in a high society woman's bedroom in which she could entertain guests.[123] Scholars often collectively refer to cultured gatherings in *ruelles*, *cabinets*, and *chambres* as salons, though this word was never applied to social meetings in the seventeenth century.[124] Among the most prestigious literary gatherings were those of Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet, who received guests in the *chambre bleue* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet from 1610 until her death in 1665,[125] Marguerite de La Sablière, whose philosophical salon was instrumental in the establishment and popularisation of the maxim as a literary genre,[126] and Madeleine de Scudéry, who was a central figure in the codification of *galanterie* as a cultural phenomenon in the 1650s.[127] Her prestigious circle met on Saturdays and became known as 'le party galant'.[128] The prominent role of women in the literary salon led to significant misogynistic backlash, most explicit in the literature satirising the figure of the *précieuse*, which portrayed female salon-goers as pretentious airheads, preferring to talk about literature than have sex with men.[129]

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[123] Marianne Legault, *Female Intimacies in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 127. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, 'Seventeenth-century women writers', in Cambridge History of French Literature, ed. by Nicholas Hammond, Emma Wilson, and William Burgwinkle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 306-315 (p. 307); Alain Génetiot, Poétique du loisir mondain, de Voiture à La Fontaine (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), p. 115.

[124] Harth (1992), p. 15.

[125] Goldsmith (2011), p. 307; Génetiot (1990), p. 17. For a detailed examination of the Rambouillet salon, see Schneider (2019), pp. 212-246.

[126] Goldsmith (2011), p. 307.

[127] Viala (2008), p. 45.

[128] Faith E. Beasley, 'Women's Participation in the Classical Age', in *A History of Women's Writing in France,* ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), (p. 67); Viala (2008), p. 45.

[129] Legault (2012), pp. 127-128.

As a reaction against what men feared was a feminisation of the literary field caused by salon culture,[130] various male-only gatherings also took place.[131] Out of these, the clandestine meetings held by the *homme de lettres* Valentin Conrart (1603-1675) at his house on the rue Saint-Martin were of particular importance with relation to the writing and circulation of poetry.[132] Conrart's male-only literary circle was by no means unique, but it achieved an influence and a posterity like no other when it was co-opted by Richelieu and ratified into the Académie Française in 1635,[133] itself an institution devoted to the pursuit of an ideal: the purity of the French language.[134] Conrart then became the Académie's first *secrétaire perpétuel*.[135] Conrart's circle and, subsequently, the Académie Française were defined in male terms in opposition to the perceived effeminacy of the *ruelles*.[136] Nicholas Faret, one of the founding *immortels*, wrote that he hoped the Académie would rescue his fellow *hommes de lettres* 'de cette oisiveté ils se laissent [] après aller insensiblement à l'estude des choses mauvaises, & à des soins effeminez qui les rebutent de ces honnestes & laborieux exercices, dont ils ne considerent plus la beauté qu'avec horreur ou mespris'.[137] Members of Conrart's circle wanted a male-only space to prevent *hommes de lettres* from becoming lackadaisical and feminised through prolonged immersion in a culture in which women were set up as arbiters of taste.[138] The tension between the perceived effeminacy of *mondain* culture and

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[130] Beasley (2000), p. 70; Delphine Denis, *Le Parnasse galant : institution d'une catégorie littéraire au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2001), pp. 133-134.
[131] Harth (1992), p. 20.
[132] Nicolas Schapira, *Un professionnel des lettres au XVIIe siècle : Valentin Conrart : une histoire sociale* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2003), pp. 74-89.
[133] Schneider (2015), p. 147.
[134] Schneider (2019), pp. 175-177.
[135] Schapira (2003), p. 17.
[136] Schneider (2015), pp. 157-158.
[137] Nicholas Faret, *Projet de l'Académie pour servir de Préface à ses Statuts* (Saint Etienne: Université de Saint Etienne, 1983), pp. 28-29.
[138] Denis (2001), p. 153; Viala (2008), pp. 121-130.

the reassertion of masculinity in all-male literary circles resurfaces many times in the poetry discussed in this thesis. More informal male-only gatherings took place in Parisian cabarets, a space that has been overlooked in scholarship on the production and circulation of poetry in this century. The space of the cabaret had close ties with disability, which shall be examined at length in Chapter Three.

Galanterie and the Seventeenth-Century Lyric

Mondain sociability in the seventeenth century was underpinned by the cultural and literary phenomenon of *galanterie*, which emerged in France around 1650 and remained for at least a century.[139] There has been a wealth of scholarly work on *galanterie* and its influence on seventeenth-century literature.[140] *Galanterie* refers to an ethos, an aesthetic, and an ethics that dominated as a behavioural and representational ideal in mid-to-late seventeenth-century *mondain* circles.[141] It was gendered as a male *art de plaire*, aiming above all to please women of distinction.[142] In the *mondain* spaces of the *ruelle* and the salon, a man who succeeded at this pleasure-giving art was referred to as either an *honnête homme* or a *galant homme*.[143] To succeed at this art, men had to be versatile and dynamic, adapting themselves to new

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[139] Alain Viala, *La Galanterie: une mythologie française* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), p. 37; Denis (2001), p. 19.

[140] Of particular note, Denis (2001); Viala (2008), pp. 40-83; Génetiot (1990), pp. 97-110, 171-191.

[141] Alain Viala, '*Les Signes Galants*: A Historical Reevaluation of *Galanterie*', *Yale French Studies,* 92 (1997), 11-29 (p. 11); Denis (2001), p. 124.

[142] Seifert (2009), p. 100.

[143] For the relationship between these overlapping ideals, see ibid., pp. 40-41; Schneider (2015), p. 156; Viala (2008), pp. 112-114.

fashions, styles and trends to stand a greater chance of pleasing as many women as possible.[144]

In social situations, ideals of *galanterie* required a studied performance: to become a so-called *honnête homme*, for example, a man had to imitate other *mondains* – both men and women.[145] Seifert exemplifies the requirement to imitate women with reference to Vincent Voiture, a salon poet held up as the consummate icon of *galant* masculinity: 'What Voiture purportedly mastered, and what galanterie required of any man, was an appropriation and display of the "feminine".'[146] To a degree, then, *galant* masculinity required the imitation of women in conversation, tastes, and physical appearance, but a man should take care not to exceed the parameters of *médiocrité* in his appropriation of the feminine. Interacting with women in accordance with the aesthetic of *galanterie* was thought to make men graceful and refined, but they had to be careful not to overdo it, or they would risk accusations of *mollesse*, a physiognomical signifier of excess femininity.[147] The art of *galanterie* was paradoxically just as much about standing out from the crowd, and performing to a crowd, as it was about fitting in with a particular crowd by mastering one's body in accordance with a very precise aesthetic ideal.[148] *Galanterie* dealt not with norms but ideals; it was not normal to be an *honnête homme* but exceptional, and in many ways, impossible. To embody this ideal, a man would have to do a countless number of things all at once and to perfection, while appearing as though they came

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[144] This is brought to the fore in Seifert's analysis of Vincent Voiture as a model of *galanterie*. Seifert (2009), pp. 99-101. See also Stanton (1980), p. 133.
[145] Schneider (2019), p. 113; Seifert (2009), pp. 41-42; Stanton (1980), pp. 129-130.
[146] Seifert (2009), p. 101.
[147] Ibid., p. 61.
[148] Hammond (1997), pp. 83-84.

entirely naturally to him.[149] This is just one of the many profound tensions at the

heart of *galanterie*,[150] a second being the paradoxical relationship between the

ideal of able-bodiedness and disability, which shall be explored in Chapter One.

For the first half of the century *galanterie* was an emerging phenomenon

– one whose codes of conduct and prescribed ideals were in the process of being

codified.[151] It borrowed heavily from Italian imports, not least Castiglione's ideals

of courtly conduct and physiognomy's theories of the human body. Alain Viala

identifies Castiglione's text as 'la source italienne majeure' of *galanterie*.[152]

Physiognomy's influence on *galanterie* has not been as well-documented, but is

explored by Jacqueline Plantié with reference to mid-seventeenth-century

mondain ideals of beauty.[153] An adherence to what came to be known as

galanterie was a guiding principle of *mondain* conversations among a 'compagnie

choisie' in *ruelles*,[154] as well as a key feature of *mondain* poetry which was a

'poésie de conversation',[155] intended to be mimetic of the conversations and

tastes of the people who met in those social spaces.

By focusing my attention on the corporeal aspects of *galanterie*, I will

draw out what it meant for the bodies of those who practised it, and how its

bodily and behavioural regimes manifested themselves in seventeenth-century

poetry. As an *art de plaire*, *galanterie*'s primary objective was the giving of

pleasure, and pleasure could be assured only through strict mastery over one's

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[149] The need for a convincing façade of effortlessness is an appropriation of Castiglione's *sprezzatura*. Seifert (2009), p. 28.

[150] Seifert's analysis brings this to the fore. Ibid., pp. 21-56, 98-116. See also, Viala (2008), pp. 195-198; Hammond (1997), p. 80.

[151] Génetiot (1990), p. 17.

[152] Viala (2008), p. 369.

[153] Plantié (2016), pp. 145-173.

[154] Denis (2001), p. 152.

[155] This idea of 'poésie de conversation' is explored at length in Génetiot (1997), pp. 355-429.

body, speech, and gestures. *Galanterie* required bodily regulation or, to use a

familiar seventeenth-century French term, it subscribed to the ideal of

médiocrité. This comes to the fore in Seifert's reading of a mid-seventeenth-

century conduct manual by the salon theorist and aspiring *honnête homme*

Antoine Gombaud, Chevalier de Méré (1607-1684).[156] In Méré's 'Discours de la

vraïe honnêteté', the idealised figure of the *honnête homme* revolves around

controlled moderation. Seifert explains that

the golden mean (*juste milieu*) and the qualities of being moderate (*moderez*) or temperate (*tempéré*) are central to honnêteté, which "shuns the extremes," as Méré puts it. The effect one has on others must hit the happy medium, and in order to achieve this end, one must control one's bearing, actions, and language so that they are neither deficient nor excessive. In both instances, hitting the happy medium is very difficult.[157]

This controlled moderation of one's body, speech, and gestures can be likened to

the Italian concept of *sprezzatura* found in Castiglione's writing. Bearden

explains *sprezzatura* as a kind of prosthesis: a way of covering over one's

imperfections with a keen self-mastery that appeared effortless to onlookers.[158]

Like *sprezzatura*, *galanterie* recommends a 'fake it til you make it' approach

when aspiring to the ideal of *médiocrité*.[159] This approach can, in turn, be

compared to Porta's physiognomy, which calls for moral discipline and a

conscious moderation of one's temperament to approximate a *corps médiocre*.[160]

Physical variability that went far beyond the parameters of the ideal *corps*

médiocre was a disability to the aspiring *honnête homme*, excluding him from

galant sociability or, at the very least, making it very hard for him to succeed in

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[156] Seifert (2009), pp. 21-56.
[157] Ibid., p. 27.
[158] Bearden (2019), pp. 34-35.
[159] Peters (2008), p. 94.
[160] Peters also highlights this connection between *sprezzatura*, *galanterie*, and physiognomy. Ibid.

embodying its aesthetic requirements and avoid being subject to mockery and scorn.

Galanterie's studied performance in the pursuit of pleasure was highly influential on seventeenth-century poetry, which took a great deal of inspiration from ideals of courtly conduct, *mondain* conversations, and literary tastes of the salons.[161] *Galant* poets favoured the lyric and other 'petits genres',[162] and many recognisably *galant* aesthetic motifs are reproduced in seventeenth-century French lyric verse, which was written as part of the pleasure-giving rituals of *mondain* sociability.[163] These motifs include the extensive use of stock characters, the mixing and matching of form and genre, a posture of dilettantism on the part of the poet, a self-reflective lyrical subject, a preference for brevity and frivolity, an adherence to the rules of *la politesse mondaine*, and, most importantly for my thesis, the idealisation of the human body coupled with strict gender roles.[164] Recalling physiognomical *médiocrité*, *galant* verse favours 'le style moyen' (neither overly formal nor overly informal),[165] conceived as 'un idéal de clarté, de mesure et de raison' and intended to facilitate the giving of pleasure.[166]

The *galant* topic *par excellence* was romantic passion. In *mondain* poetry, writes Alain Génetiot, 'l'amour devient une nouvelle religion et la seule chose véritablement sérieuse'.[167] One of the central objectives of Critical Disability Studies is to interrogate the various restrictive binaries that undergird

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[161] Génetiot (1990), pp. 22, 174; Viala (2008), pp. 54-55.
[162] Viala (2008), 51.
[163] Génetiot (1997), p. 355; Renée Winegarten, *French Lyric Poetry in the Age of Malherbe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), p. 48.
[164] Viala (2008), pp. 49-58; Génetiot (1990), p. 77; Schneider (2015), p. 156.
[165] Viala (2008), p. 54.
[166] Ibid., p. 55.
[167] Génetiot (1990), p. 87.

representations of the human body,[168] and seventeenth-century French love poetry is replete with binary thinking. As I have shown, *galanterie* did allow for a degree of androgyny in its encouragement of men to appropriate certain feminine characteristics, but when it came to romance the gender roles were far more binary. Love lyrics most often cast men in vigorously active roles,[169] while women were objectified, passive, and reserved.[170] This binary paradigm was often flipped in more downbeat love lyrics to denote a man's romantic defeat: a *galant* hero who fails to win over his beloved 'is a victim (and not a conqueror), he is wounded by love, enslaved to his beloved, and often on the verge of death',[171] while his beloved is strong and aloof. *Galant* love poetry is replete with various other binary oppositions, such as youth and old age, beauty and ugliness, richness and poverty, to name just a few.[172] Often, the role of the poet is to wittily comment on the fundamentally irreconcilable nature of these binaries and the unlikelihood of finding, in Méré's words, the 'juste milieu'.[173] Perfect moderation is the goal, but it is rarely achievable.

Seventeenth-century poets operating in the *galant* tradition tend to depict a spontaneous, dynamic, and capricious love.[174] Implicit within this love's energy and intensity is an ephemerality. In keeping with the poetic inclination towards brevity, love is a fire that burns brightly and soon extinguishes itself.[175] Adding to the list of binary oppositions, then, love in *galant* verse is a phenomenon of

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[168] Roussel and Vennetier (2019), p. 19.
[169] Viala summarises that 'le galant homme doit agir en une sorte de parade amoureuse répétée'. Viala (2008), p. 157.
[170] This is most pronounced in lyrics drawing from the tradition of the *blason*, discussed at length in Chapter One. Sawday (1995), pp. 190-192.
[171] Seifert (2009), pp. 87-88.
[172] Denis (2001), p. 293.
[173] Seifert (2009), p. 27.
[174] Jean Michel Pelous, *Amour précieux, amour galant: 1654-1675* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1980), p. 138.
[175] Ibid., p. 219.

two extremes: the joyous spontaneity found in some lyrics is counterbalanced by despair in the many others depicting the aftermath of a brief but intense dalliance. Due to the unpredictable nature of romantic passion in the seventeenth-century lyric, many poems adopt a neo-Petrarchan stance in their depictions of unequal relationships between narrator and beloved,[176] in which the object of the narrator's affections is uninterested, absent, cruel, or otherwise unattainable.[177] For the same reason, an equally large number of lyrics depict cuckoldry, jealousy, and competition between rivals over the same beloved.[178] Instability in romantic relationships is often correlated with bodily instability, causing poets to reach for imagery of disability when describing unstable or unequal romantic relationships in their verse.

Crip Theory

The instability of the category we call disability – particularly apparent in literatures and cultures that predate the modern medical norm – calls for a theoretical framework that allows for a flexible and wide-ranging understanding of what can be classified as disability. Crip theory is one such approach, and forms an integral part of the theoretical toolkit I use to read disability in early modern literature. As a framework, it can be situated comfortably alongside the various other theoretical approaches I draw from over the course of this thesis, including the grotesque, queer theory, transhumanism, and posthumanism. Use of the word 'crip' within disabled communities is comparable to how 'queer' has been reclaimed as a positive term of identification within some LGBT+

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[176] Génetiot (1997), pp. 186-205.
[177] Ibid., pp. 195-211; Génetiot (1990), pp. 89-90, 93-96.
[178] Génetiot (1997), pp. 204-206.

communities. Short for 'cripple', the word has historically been used to stigmatise disabled people but became subject to efforts of reclamation by disabled activists, connoting instead defiance, community, humour, and empowerment.[179]

In addition to nomenclature, crip theory and queer theory resemble each other in their radical stance towards concepts of normalcy and their destabilisation of the restrictive binaries imposed upon disabled and LGBT+ people.[180] To replace the normative definition of disability produced by the disabled/able-bodied binary, crip theorists such as Sami Schalk and Alison Kafer propose a coalitional understanding of disability that 'includes illness, disease, and discourse of (dis)ability in its approach',[181] along with 'those who lack a "proper" (read: medically acceptable, doctor-provided, and insurer approved) diagnosis for their symptoms'.[182] This inclusiveness is especially advantageous when dealing with seventeenth-century embodiments that would not necessarily be considered disabilities today and were certainly not diagnosed in the medical sense, nor can they be retrospectively. One example addressed in Chapter Three is seventeenth-century references to madness as a condition that cannot be neatly mapped onto modern understandings of mental health and intellectual disabilities.[183] A second example is syphilis, which is very much spoken of a disabling condition in poetry analysed in Chapter Two,[184] but would most likely not be in twenty-first-century France.

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[179] Eli Clare, 'Thinking about the word crip', (2009) <http://eliclare.com/poems/thinking-about-the-word-crip> [accessed 03/06/2020]
[180] Carrie Sandahl, 'Queering the Crip or Cripping the Queer? Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance', *GLQ,* 9. 1-2 (2003), 25-56 (p. 26).
[181] Schalk (2018), p. 13.
[182] Kafer (2013), p. 12.
[183] See section entitled 'Madness'.
[184] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love'.

A second key tenet of crip theory is that able-bodiedness is not a norm but an ideal: no body is fully able to perform every task demanded of it, its ability to perform these tasks varies greatly from day to day, and, furthermore, as it ages it becomes progressively less able to do so.[185] Able-bodiedness is an idealistic myth against which everyone's bodies are evaluated and found lacking in some way, even people who consider themselves nondisabled. This belief, held at the core of crip theory's framework, dovetails with my previous assertion that human bodies in seventeenth-century France were not measured against norms, but a series of real ideals that were impossible to embody. A central objective of my thesis is to investigate the extent to which real ideals upheld by *galanterie* and physiognomy (such as *médiocrité*) were reinforced or undermined by representations of disability found in seventeenth-century French lyric verse. Crip theory, as a self-avowed critique of bodily *ideals* rather than bodily *norms*, is more appropriate for use alongside seventeenth-century material than theories of disability that heavily rely on the concept of normalcy.

On the level of vocabulary, the word 'crip' finds a counterpart in the seventeenth-century French 'perclus'. I will expand upon the full range of meanings of this word in the chapters to come. For now, it is sufficient to say that it refers, like 'cripple', to a numbness of the limbs,[186] and, like 'crip', it can be used as a noun, verb or adjective. It is historically pejorative, used in many seventeenth-century poems as an insult directed at a disabled person or as part of a negatively charged metaphor. Against this backdrop of social stigma, there is evidence that certain disabled poets attempted to reclaim 'perclus' as an

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[185] Robert McRuer, 'Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence', in *The Disability Studies Reader,* ed. by Lennard J. Davis (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 369-378 (p. 374).
[186] Entry for 'perclus' in Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Islip, 1611).

intrinsic part of their poetic personae. For Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin, whose work forms a central part of my thesis, 'perclus' was worn like a badge of honour, proudly and with a keen sense of humour, as part of a subversion and reclamation of the very same language used to stigmatise him. Saint-Pavin shunned language seeking to minimise or patronise, preferring to draw attention to, even exaggerate, his physical non-conformity as a way of distinguishing himself from his peers and furthering his craft as an entertainer. On a level of language, then, several of my primary texts anticipate the vocabulary, self-descriptions, and ironic linguistic subversion of the crip movement.[187] Finally, the coalitional nature of crip theory as a methodological approach enables me to attend to the intersecting questions of gender, sexuality, and disability in my readings of lyric verse without separating out these concepts that were, as I argue, thoroughly intertwined in the seventeenth-century poetic imagination.

Defining an Unstable Corpus

It is by now clear that instability is a common thread running through this thesis: the instability of disability as a phenomenon, the instability of the real ideals against which it is defined, and the instability of romantic relationships in lyric verse. In keeping with this running theme, my corpus of primary texts is itself highly unstable. The abovementioned *galant* emphasis on dilettantism and modesty meant that publication beyond sharing poetry within a circle of friends was often of secondary concern to seventeenth-century lyric poets.[188] Instead, their poetry was published more informally. Manuscripts were passed between

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[187] Clare (2009).

[188] Denis (2001), p. 132; Isabelle Moreau, *« Guérir du sot » : Les stratégies d'écriture des libertins à l'âge classique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), pp. 220-221.

friends, poems were read aloud in salons, and songs were sung in cabarets and on the Pont-Neuf.[189] It was not unusual for editions to be printed anonymously, without the author's consent, and/or after their death.[190]

There were, of course, instances where it was prudent to shun the printing and circulation of poetry for reasons of self-preservation. The 1623-1625 blasphemy trial of the *libertin* poet Théophile de Viau was particularly effective in reinforcing this point.[191] A crucial piece of evidence at this trial was a poem in praise of sodomy 'Par le sieur Theophille', printed in the 1622 *Parnasse des poètes satyriques*.[192] The trial, to which I return in Chapter Two,[193] served as a warning to authors of blasphemous and seditious poetry: be wary of allowing this poetry to circulate in print and, if you do, never put your name to it.[194] Many authors of more innocuous verse also seemed uninterested in printing their poetry.[195] *Galant* poets took pride in their status as dilettantes and, due in large

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[189] Schapira (2003), pp. 414-428; Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, '"L'illustre débauché" Jacques Vallée Des Barreaux: Un cas d'acceptation restreinte', *Problemata,* 4. 3 (2013), 250-276 (pp. 252-255); Nicholas Hammond, *Gossip, Sexuality and Scandal in France (1610-1715)* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 26; Claire Lynn Gaudiani, *The Cabaret Poetry of Théophile de Viau* (Paris: Place, 1981), pp. 38-39; Nicholas Hammond, *The Powers of Sound and Song in Early Modern Paris* (Philadelphia, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), pp. 20-29.

[190] Saint-Pavin never published his poetry under his own name, though a small number of his poems were published anonymously during his lifetime. Poets who did permit some print publication of their work were not exempt from other unauthorised printings: François Maynard was widely published during his lifetime, but his first single-author collection was printed in 1638 without his permission. Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin, *Poésies* (Paris: Garnier, 2012), pp. 41-43; Adam Horsley, 'Le Président libertin: The Poetry of François Maynard after the Trial of Théophile de Viau', *Early Modern French Studies,* 37. 2 (2015), 93-107 (p. 101). See also Viala (2008), p. 47.

[191] For a detailed analysis of this trial, see Adam Horsley, *Libertines and the Law: Subversive Authors and Criminal Justice in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 251-333; Adam Horsley, 'Strategies of Accusation and Self-Defence at the Trial of Théophile de Viau (1623-25)', *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature,* 85 (2016), 157-177.

[192] Various, *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques*, ([n. p.], 1622), p. 1.

[193] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love'.

[194] Adam Horsley shows how the poet François Maynard took steps to curtail the print circulation of his own *libertin* verse as a result of this public trial of his friend and fellow poet. Horsley (2015), p. 105.

[195] Antoinette Deshoulières, *Poésies* (Paris: Garnier, 2010), p. 8.

part to an aristocratic snobbishness, wanted to avoid being thought of as motivated by vanity or – worse – a career author.[196] The perceived vulgarity attached to the idea of being a career author applied to both genders but was greatly exaggerated for women writers.[197] Sophie Tonolo writes of a tacit rule among seventeenth-century *mondains* that 'une femme, *a fortiori* une aristocrate, ne peut écrire pour vivre'.[198]

Largely as a consequence of the literary landscape and customs into which it was born, my corpus of primary sources is unstable and hybrid in nature. Not many of the poets I consider boast modern scholarly editions, and, in the cases where a scholarly edition is available, it is essential to consider its antecedents – manuscripts and older editions – in order to understand the poet and their work. A single poem may exist in three or four markedly different variants, and scholarly editions cannot always be relied upon to accurately represent the multiple iterations of a single poem. Like human bodies, seventeenth-century poems are works in progress: messy, heterogenous entities that should not be tidied up to facilitate classification or scholarly study.[199] Some of the poems I consider have never been printed and remain accessible to us only in manuscript form, and are often anonymous. There is no reason to exclude these poems from analysis in favour of better-known, more widely-circulated poetry by named authors. To make such a distinction would be to misrepresent the fundamental nature of the seventeenth-century French lyric, which thrived off dilettantism, informal methods of circulation, anonymity, and pseudonymity.

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[196] Moreau (2007), p. 219; Beasley (2000), p. 70; Denis (2001), pp. 15, 132.
[197] Elizabeth C. and Dena Goodman Goldsmith, 'Introduction', in *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France,* ed. by Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), (pp. 2-3). Erica Harth (1992) writes at length on writing, reading, and publishing as a woman in seventeenth-century France.
[198] Deshoulières (2010), p. 9.
[199] Siebers (2008), p. 92.

By far and away the richest manuscript source for seventeenth-century French lyric verse is a compilation known as the *Recueil Conrart*, presently held in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris.[200] This *recueil* was compiled by Valentin Conrart and contains an eclectic mix of forms: poetry, prose, theatre, devotional writing and nonfictional treatises about a huge variety of subjects all rub shoulders in its pages.[201] Some of the works are signed in the manuscript itself, others have since been identified and attributed by scholars, and others still remain anonymous. Perhaps the sole unifying feature is that the attributed pieces appear to be by writers with some personal connection to Conrart himself,

mostly comprising literary works by friends or, failing that, works that Conrart's social circle most likely enjoyed and took inspiration from in their own literary endeavours.[202] The compilation is fifty volumes long, and the volumes are each between 800 and 1,500 pages in length.[203] The handwriting is inconsistent and the volumes appear to have received additions and subtractions over the years. There is no doubt that it would be a highly fruitful (if time-consuming and probably quite frustrating) task to undertake a systematic study of the fifty manuscript volumes from start to finish, transcribing the pieces along with any marginalia. Regrettably, this is beyond the scope of my thesis. I do regularly refer to pieces found in the *Recueil Conrart* and use it at times to highlight the differences between variants of a single poem.

Considerably shorter than the *Recueil Conrart* are my four other manuscript sources, all currently held in the Bibliothèque nationale's

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[200] See list of abbreviations for manuscript call numbers.
[201] Schapira (2003), pp. 414-416.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid., p. 414.

Département des Manuscrits. Français 12492 comprises 642 pages and contains

poetry dating from the mid sixteenth to mid seventeenth centuries. The pieces

are arranged roughly in chronological order, and are a mixture of lengthy

occasional verse and satires, interspersed with a small number of erotic verses.

Most are unsigned. Français 12680 comprises 247 pages and is in worse

condition than the volumes of the *Recueil Conrart*, with several loose or

detached pages. It contains poetry by named seventeenth-century authors,

most of whom belonged to *mondain* circles, a small number of unsigned lyrics,

and one very short unsigned play. NAF 1697 contains poetry in various different

hands and on differently sized pieces of paper that appear to have been glued

together. The poetic forms and subject matters are highly eclectic, and there is

one hand-drawn illustration on folio fifteen. NAF 18220 was acquired by the

Bibliothèque Nationale in 1982 from the private library of Frédéric Lachèvre

(1855-1943), a scholar of seventeenth-century French verse who specialised in

libertin writing.[204] A lot of the pieces it contains are unsigned, but Lachèvre has

written attributions in red pen onto the manuscript itself (Fig. 2). It is 173 pages

long and contains a mixture of verse and prose.

The use of manuscript sources is both liberating and restrictive. On the

one hand, it allows my analysis to move beyond what is available to us in print

publication, a mode of disseminating literature that was significantly less

important to seventeenth-century poets than it is today. It enables me to

consider lyrics in one of their natural habitats – the manuscript page, messily

bound together by a collector such as Conrart. On the other hand, it inevitably

risks restricting my analysis to pieces Conrart himself, or other compilers of

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[204] 'NAF 18220', Bibliothèque nationale de France,
<https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc72923> [accessed 24/11/2021]

24

autre. (pour Mad: de Serigné par Saint-Pavin

Quand on dispute de l'âge
des plus aimables du temps
Pour Clarice on se partage
Si tost qu'elle est sur les rangs

L'un dit qu'elle a le visage
d'une fille de quinze ans
L'autre luy croit d'auantage
a luy voir tant de bon Sens

Sans decider la querelle
Rendons justice a la belle
Traitons la comme les Dieux

on les sert on les adore
et l'on ne Scait pas encore
S'ilz sont ou jeunes ou vieux.

autre

Je fus hier chere Siluie
pour vous rendre un de ces deuoirs
que Je vais vous rendre les Soirs
au peril mesme de ma vie.

Mais enuain, Je perdis mes pas
Car J'apris que de la Soirée
chez vous on ne vous verroit pas
et que vous estiez retirée

Vous estiez toute nue au lit
au moins a ce que l'on me dit
quoyqu'apeine Il fit nuit bien noire

Fig. 2

manuscript *recueils*, deemed worthy of merit. As noted above, Conrart was at the centre of a male literary circle that consciously excluded women, having been established as a reaction against what men such as he feared was a feminisation of the literary field caused by salon culture. To select primary texts *exclusively* from the *Recueil Conrart*, then, would exaggerate the already male-dominated nature of seventeenth-century French poetry. For this reason, I do not restrict my corpus to authors and texts contained within Conrart's *recueil*, and highlight at different points the work of three female poets whose lyrics are relevant to a discussion of disability in a literary landscape hostile to women poets and dominated by male poets who, for the most part, wished it to remain so. This gender imbalance also provides further justification for including anonymous pieces, as there is every reason to wonder whether a significant portion of these were authored by women who, reluctant to put their name to poetry, preferred for it to circulate anonymously in manuscript form.

The abovementioned emphasis on dilettantism and de-emphasis on the printing of poetry, highlighted by both form and contents of my manuscript sources, often make it difficult to work out who wrote what and when, so we should be careful not to put faith in uncertain attributions of poems. Nor should we put too much trust in the lyrical subject. French poets of the seventeenth century were shapeshifting harlequins, showing off a variety of different takes on a single subject and changing their act to suit the tastes of a particular audience or to take full advantage of the latest fad or scandal. We must remember that the pleasure-giving aesthetic of *galanterie* hinged on versatility and *variatio*, making it impossible to identify a consistent belief system underpinning the work of an author of *galant* verse. It follows, then, that the relationship between lyric poetry and autobiography is a slippery one. Nevertheless, there was undeniably

some correlation between authorial self and lyrical subject: Scarron, for example, wrote more poetry about disability than most of his peers and provided some of the most thematically rich and compelling reflections on the subject. It would be inaccurate to claim that his personal experience of disability had absolutely no bearing on this quality of his work. At the same time, however, we must keep in mind that the lyrical subject was, by necessity, highly embellished and ever-changing to embody the effortless versatility expected of seventeenth-century lyric poets. I therefore regard the narratorial *je* with a substantial amount of suspicion and, for the most part, maintain a distinction between the beliefs and experiences of a poem's narrator and those of the poet. There are important exceptions to this rule, such as the literary self-portraits I discuss in Chapter Five. These pieces stake an explicit claim to autobiography but, as that chapter shows, are by no means exempt from the self-(re)fashioning found in other lyric verse, and, furthermore, act as an ironic commentary on the slippery nature of the seventeenth-century lyrical subject itself.

Essential Poets

There are certain seventeenth-century poets whose work is particularly relevant to a discussion of disability and I will take this opportunity to briefly introduce them in order of appearance in this thesis. Introduced earlier, Paul Scarron (1610-1660) was a poet, playwright, and novelist who is best known today for his *Roman Comique* (1651–1657), a picaresque novel detailing the adventures of strolling players. As a poet, he is most notable for his invention of the burlesque mode of writing, about which I will say more in the chapters to follow, and how his personal experience of disability coloured his writing.

Scarron was named Malade de la Reine in 1643, an honorary title he devised and proposed himself to Anne of Austria on the occasion of her husband Louis XIII's passing. This title in theory accorded him an annual pension, but he found himself having to regularly write to the queen reminding her to send him money, then thanking her for her generosity.[205] Scarron is also remembered for 'La Mazarinade' (1651), a satire in verse attributed to him that mounts a homophobic attack on Cardinal Mazarin, the unofficial regent for the young Louis XIV, which founded the polemic genre of the Mazarinade.

François Maynard (1582-1646) was a disciple of François de Malherbe and a practitioner of Malherbian *classicisme*, which prized a stripped-back technical perfection in versification. In his youth, however, Maynard was a member of the 'Confrérie des Bouteilles', a troupe of *libertin* poets led by Théophile de Viau who met in Parisian cabarets prior to 1620. Much of Maynard's verse from this period is vulgar and blasphemous, but still bears the hallmarks of the formal *classicisme* for which he was known. Théophile's 1623-1625 blasphemy trial, discussed at length in Chapter Two,[206] caused Maynard to clean up his image, promoting himself as a good Catholic poet in print while continuing to write *libertin* pieces that he was careful to keep private until his death.[207] Maynard stands out in my corpus for geographical reasons: he spent most of his life in his native Toulouse and acted as Président du Présidial d'Aurillac from 1614, though made frequent trips back to Paris.

Antoinette du Ligier de la Garde Deshoulières (1638-1694) made her name as a poet and playwright in the second half of the century. She surmounted the negative stereotypes surrounding women poets who sought out

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[205] Scarron (1947), pp. 205-207, 235-239, 341-342, 344-345.
[206] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love'.
[207] Horsley (2015).

publication, with a large number of her works printed during her lifetime,[208] and succeeded in male-dominated literary spheres as well as the stereotypically feminine *mondain* spaces such as the *ruelle* and the salon.[209] Her verse is most notable for its expressions of philosophical naturalism and complex metaphysical underpinnings.[210] Despite mastering a remarkably wide range of poetic forms both classical and modern,[211] Deshoulières's language is highly restrained, eschewing the vulgarity of several of her male contemporaries and predecessors. For this reason, there is little discussion of bodily subjects such as disability in her verse, although, as we shall see, she does provide a unique take on the metaphor of fortune as blind.[212]

Isaac de Benserade (1613-1691) was a courtier, poet, playwright, and librettist whose ballets were adored by the king and won him membership of the Académie, but we know very little about his life. Most critical attention is directed towards his portrayals of prodigious lesbian sexuality in the poem 'Sur l'amour d'Uranie avec Philis' and the play *Iphis et Iante*.[213] His lesser-known works surface regularly in my manuscript corpus. Along with Benserade, Jean-François Sarasin (1604-1654) was among the archetypal *mondain* poets at the forefront of the codification of *galanterie* as an aesthetic ideal in the middle of the seventeenth century. In keeping with this nascent *galant* aesthetic, Sarasin shunned publication but was lauded in salons as a master of *mondain* lyric genres and conceits, though his verse is largely overlooked today.

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[208] Deshoulières (2010), pp. 12-17.
[209] Ibid., pp. 17, 25-27.
[210] Ibid., pp. 9, 24.
[211] Ibid., p. 42.
[212] See Chapter One, section entitled 'Fortuna and Fortune Aveugle'.
[213] Legault (2012), pp. 97-112; Joseph Harris, 'Disruptive Desires: Lesbian Sexuality in Isaac de Benserade's *Iphis et Iante* (1634)', *Seventeenth-Century French Studies,* 24. 1 (2002), 151-163.

Despite having contacts in *mondain* social circles, Charles Vion d'Alibray (c.1600-c.1655) was resolutely a cabaret poet in the mould of François Villon, and as such embraced the unruly bodily themes of cabaret verse in his oeuvre. He was a lodger at several notable Parisian cabarets and, out of all the poems in my corpus, his provide us with the most vivid depictions of the cabaret as a carnivalesque utopia and space for literary production. His works have not received much critical attention compared to other seventeenth-century authors of cabaret verse, perhaps because his output is thematically unvaried and does not contain the extreme vulgarity or subversive sexuality found in other cabaret poets' works.

Théophile de Viau (1590-1626) is the best known and most studied poet considered in this thesis. Having made his name as a skilled writer of pastoral verse, he won notoriety as the leader of the cabaret-going Confrérie des Bouteilles, of which Maynard was part in his youth. Unlike d'Alibray, Théophile's cabaret verse demonstrates an unrestrained vulgarity and gleeful blasphemy.[214] Most notorious was his so-called 'sodomite sonnet',[215] a satirical lyric in which the narrator vows to only have sex anally as a way of avoiding syphilis. As two key recurring topics in Théophile's cabaret verse, sexuality and venereal disease are often tied to disability.[216] This poem, signed by the author, was used as evidence in Théophile's abovementioned trial for blasphemy. In hiding at the time, the poet was condemned to death *in absentia* and burned in effigy on August 12, 1623.[217] He was later captured by French authorities while attempting to leave the country on September 15 later that year, and brought to

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[214] Gaudiani (1981), p. 18.
[215] Joan DeJean, *The Reinvention of Obscenity* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 45-47.
[216] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love' in Chapter Two.
[217] DeJean (2002), p. 44.

be tried in person by the Parlement de Paris.[218] After almost two years, during which time Théophile was imprisoned in the Conciergerie, the sentence was announced as permanent banishment.[219] He died soon after, his health irreparably ruined by his imprisonment.

Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant (1594-1661) was a disciple of Théophile and another member of the Confrérie des Bouteilles. Though also skilled at pastoral poetry, Saint-Amant is primarily celebrated by both contemporaries and modern critics as a poet of eating and drinking, writing burlesque pieces extolling the virtues of cheese, Norman cider, and chaotic cabaret meals. He was not high born, nor well-educated, but a legendary bon viveur and an unparalleled social climber whose poetic and musical talents won him the favour of the court and aristocratic patrons such as the Duc de Retz and the Comte d'Harcourt.[220] Saint-Amant cultivated an image of a vagabond, 'un Normand robuste' who travelled far and wide and yet, like his close friend Maynard, still managed to keep one foot in the elite milieus of *le monde*.[221] Along with Scarron, he is credited with pioneering the burlesque mode of writing and,[222] also like Scarron, owes much of his standing as one of the better known poets in my corpus to the rehabilitation efforts undertaken by the Romanticist Théophile Gautier. Gautier published *Les Grotesques* in 1844,[223] comprising a series of ten essays about underappreciated French poets that heaped praise on their verse

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[218] Horsley (2016), p. 161.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Marc-Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant, *Œuvres Poétiques* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1930), pp. v-vi.
[221] Jacques Bailbé, *Saint-Amant et la Normandie littéraire* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), pp. 4, 167-168.
[222] Ibid., pp. 277-289.
[223] Théophile Gautier, *Les Grotesques* (Paris: Lévy, 1856).

and situated them within a tradition of the French literary grotesque that included Théophile and Villon.[224]

Claude de Chouvigny, baron de Blot l'Église (1605-1655), was one of the most notorious epicureans of the mid-seventeenth century. He was an aristocrat in the service and under the protection of Gaston d'Orléans, having been educated at the Jesuit college of La Flèche in Sarthe.[225] Even among other aristocratic poets, Blot was one of the highest-ranking, which goes a long way towards explaining how he was able to gain such notoriety as an atheist and a sodomite with seemingly no fear of repercussions. Unlike Théophile, Blot had an aversion towards print publication, which most likely bolstered his impunity. In a rather unsympathetic overview of Blot's life and works, Frédéric Lachèvre does get one thing right: 'sa philosophie se résume en deux mots: *boire et f.....*'.[226] Although disability is rarely addressed in Blot's *chansons libertines*, the poet's vociferous celebration of bisexuality allows me to draw similarities between disability and queer desire in *libertin* verse of this century.

Also educated at La Flèche, Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin (1595-1670) moved to Paris around 1613 and soon integrated himself into the *libertin* circles centred on the court of Louis XIII and Théophile.[227] Saint-Pavin was extraordinarily well-connected socially. Among others, he befriended fellow members of Théophile's circle Saint-Amant and Blot, along with the atheist poet Jacques Vallée des Barreaux (1599-1673).[228] The latter was Théophile's lover and would become Saint-Pavin's closest male friend and probable lover after

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[224] Ibid., pp. 151-180, 335-400.
[225] Claude de Chouvigny de Blot, *Les chansons libertines de Claude de Chouvigny, baron de Blot l'Église (1605-1655)* ([n.p.], 1919), pp. v-xi.
[226] Ibid., p. v.
[227] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 2.
[228] Marie-Françoise Baverel-Croissant, *La vie et les œuvres complètes de Jacques Vallée Des Barreaux (1599-1673)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001); Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 9.

Théophile's death.[229] As well as these *libertin* circles, Saint-Pavin was thoroughly

engaged in *mondain* culture as a personal friend of the great *épistolière* Marie

de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné,[230] and frequented salons synonymous

with the aesthetic of *galanterie.*[231] Finally, he was close to Conrart,[232] whose

manuscript compilation is rich with Saint-Pavin's lyrics. Many of these lyrics –

particularly the most obscene examples – were not printed during the poet's

lifetime, and were side-lined by critics until Kathleen Clark Collins's 1986

doctoral thesis on Saint-Pavin and Nicholas Hammond's 2012 edition of his

complete poetry.[233] Saint-Pavin's verse reads as an amalgamation of various

defining features of other poets considered in this corpus. Like Scarron, his

disability is front and centre of his oeuvre and a constant source of poetic

inspiration and humour, as well as pain.[234] He combines this focus on disability

with an irreverence and epicurean outlook similar to that of Saint-Amant and

d'Alibray, while adding to the mix an unbridled sexuality and blasphemy as

pronounced as that of Théophile or Blot. For the purposes of this thesis, Saint-

Pavin's most pertinent poems are those in which he connects his disability to his

sexual preference for men. He stands out in my corpus as the poet who most

thoroughly intertwines disability and unconventional sexuality, often portraying

them as mutually constitutive concepts.

Much remains unknown about the poet Madame de Lauvergne (c.1620-?),

including her first name. She was born into the Le Roux family around 1620,

went by the pseudonym Lénodaride in *mondain* circles, and was widowed some

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[229] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 9-10.
[230] Ibid., pp. 13, 33.
[231] Ibid., pp. 12, 32-35.
[232] Ibid., pp. 15, 32.
[233] Kathleen Clark Collins, 'A Libertine in the Salons: The Poetry of Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin' (Catholic University of America, 1986); Saint-Pavin (2012).
[234] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 18-22.

time before 1660.[235] Her 1680 *recueil* of poetry – to this date the only

publication of her work – contains *galant* verse and love lyrics to both men and

women.[236] Most notable among these is a series of seven love poems and one

letter addressing a Mademoiselle Godefroy,[237] about whom I can find no

biographical information. Criticism has yet to address her love poems to

Godefroy, tending to focus its brief comments on her literary portraits and her

advocacy of women's independence from men.[238]

The final key poet is Anne de Rohan-Soubise (1584-1646), the youngest

of three Huguenot sisters from a powerful ducal family in Brittany and Anjou.

Rohan and her mother, Catherine de Parthenay, a noted Huguenot poet, were

both were staunch defenders of the Protestant faith and taken as prisoners at

the siege of La Rochelle in 1627.[239] Her mother died in captivity and Rohan

never married. Her poetry is an eclectic mix of devotional verse, elegies written

to her mother, her eldest sister, and Henriette de Savoie, a poem

commemorating the death of Henri IV, a curious piece that appears to be an

unfinished draft of an ode later attributed to Théophile de Viau,[240] and a series of

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[235] Lauvergne signs the preface of the 1680 edition of her poetry with the name Le Roux, which we can assume was her maiden name. Madame de Lauvergne, *Recueil de poésies* (Paris: Barbin, 1680); Antoine Baudeau de Somaize, *Le Dictionnaire des Précieuses* (Paris: Jannet, 1856), p. 145.

[236] Lauvergne (1680).

[237] For the poems and letter to Godefroy, see ibid., pp. 23-24, 40, 41, 45, 46, 151-158, 165, 166.

[238] Plantié (2016), pp. 582-583; Annamaria Lamarra, 'Love and Be Damned: New Perspectives in Seventeenth-Century Literature by Women', in *Loving Against the Odds: Women's Writing in English in a European Context,* ed. by Elizabeth Russell (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 19-26 (pp. 22-23).

[239] Terry Castle, *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall* (New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 2006), p. 115.

[240] This poem is entitled 'Vers faits par une belle dame, pour elle, sous le nom d'un homme qu'elle aymoit, en 1618' and ends with ellipses. It is difficult to know what to make of this title or the fact it was subsequently revised, doubled in length and as one of Théophile's works. Théophile was close to Anne's eldest sister, Henriette, to whom he wrote a poem on the occasion of her mother's death, so it is not impossible that Anne and Théophile collaborated on this piece, or that Anne had it published under Théophile's name. Anne de Rohan-Soubise, *Poésies d'Anne de Rohan-Soubise, et Lettres d'Eléonore*

Sapphic love lyrics. Her poetry was published for the first and only time in 1862,[241] edited by Édouard de Barthélemy.[242]

Chapter Overview

While broadly adopting an understanding of disability influenced by crip theorists such as Kafer and Schalk, each chapter will have its own specific theoretical framework to help it unpack a particular way in which disability features in my corpus of lyric verse.

Chapter One examines love poetry that broadly conforms to the conventions and regimes of *galanterie* as briefly outlined in this introduction. In *galant* love lyrics, disability frequently appears as a metaphorical conceit used to reinforce able-bodiedness and *médiocrité* as valued ideals and to condemn deviance from these interconnected ideals. Drawing from various theorists of disability as metaphor, I argue that metaphors of disability in *galant* verse can teach us a lot about not only the construction of able-bodiedness in seventeenth-century France, but also about how disability was used to reify gender roles in the *galant* aesthetic. In these poems, metaphorical disability is often inseparable from women and an abstract notion of femininity, while able-bodiedness is situated as a key aesthetic requirement of *galant* masculinity. Men who fail to approximate this *galant* ideal become metaphorically disabled and, as

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de Rohan-Montbazon (Paris: Aubry, 1862), pp. 54-55; Guido Saba, *Théophile de Viau* (Paris: Memini, 2007), pp. 20, 60-61.

[241] Katherine Haas states that Rohan published her Sapphic verse in 1626 but this, to the best of my knowledge, is incorrect. Katherine Haas, 'Walking the Line: Renaissance and Reformation Societal Views on Lesbians and Lesbianism', *Ramifications,* 1. 1 (2019), (p. 11) <https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/ramifications/vol1/iss1/2> [accessed 02/11/2020].

[242] Rohan-Soubise (1862).

a direct consequence, are often feminised. The over-arching picture painted by these metaphors is one of able-bodied anxiety – at once a fear of disability *and* a fear of femininity – expressed by male protagonists and male narrators of love lyrics who fail to win over their beloved.

Chapter Two addresses poetry written in the literary mode of grotesque realism, with its aesthetic preference for unfinished, hybrid, and monstrous bodies, compared to the complete, unitary, and idealised bodies prized by *galant* verse. Following this inversion of *galant* bodily regimes, grotesque realist verse inclines towards representations of embodied disability rather than figurative disability. This chapter engages Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the grotesque and carnivalesque outlined in *Rabelais and His World* to pinpoint how disability operates in grotesque realist poetry as a way of parodying *galant* verse forms,[243] literalising their affected metaphors of disability to describe disabled characters who are disabled in a literal sense. It also complicates Bakhtin's opposition between low and high culture, revealing key similarities between the bodily representational techniques in grotesque realist verse and more canonical verse. Finally, it assesses whether embodied disability in grotesque realist poetry does more to subvert or reinforce the mid-seventeenth-century aesthetic canon of *galanterie*.

Chapter Three addresses the question of physical space in the subgenre of cabaret verse in which the space of the cabaret plays an active role in the formation, transformation, and destruction of grotesque bodies, many of which are evoked through imagery of disability. Seventeenth-century cabarets were often subject to moral condemnation from religious and civil authorities,

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[243] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1984).

portrayed as enabling a multitude of sins, blasphemy and atheism chief among

them. There were, however, many poems written by patrons of cabarets in

defence of these establishments, painting them as carnivalesque utopias where

raucous social interaction centred on drinking and laughter caused bodies to

blend together within their four walls. This chapter's engagement with the

cabaret and disability enters into dialogue with Gaston Bachelard's *La Poétique*

de l'espace, arguing that the cabaret is an 'espace heureux' specific to

seventeenth-century French poetry.[244] As a poetic *espace heureux*, the cabaret

is of particular importance in verse that deals with disability, having a direct

effect on the bodies of those who reside within its four walls.

Chapter Four examines the various ways in which queerness is

comparable to and intersects with disability in my lyric corpus. I establish that

the dominant framework of sexual desire in seventeenth-century lyric verse is

the homosocial triangle, notably theorised by Eve Sedgwick in her book *Between*

Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.[245] This framework is

challenged, reworked and, in some cases, reinforced by the introduction of a

narrator, protagonist, or beloved who is queer and/or disabled. Questions of

gender remain at the core of my analysis, as I investigate how power relations in

poetry depicting homoeroticism between men compare to those in poetry

depicting homoeroticism between women. To initiate a comparison between

queerness and disability, I bring a second of Sedgwick's theories into play:

discursive closeting.[246] Narrators of love lyrics can either take measures to closet

their disability and their queerness or, alternatively, come out of the closet by

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[244] Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la France, 1961), p. 26.

[245] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, NY and Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1985).

[246] Outlined in Sedgwick (2008).

reworking the dynamics of eroticism to bring attention to their difference, even claiming it as advantageous characteristics that make them stand out as superior lovers when compared to more typical *galant* protagonists.

Chapter Five further explores how this assertion of advantageous singularity achieved by a complex embodiment allows disabled poets to interrogate the category of the human in their quasi-autobiographical writing. Transhumanism and posthumanism are two contrasting philosophical disciplines dedicated to rethinking the human. This chapter first assesses the theories of transhumanism and posthumanism, pointing out various pitfalls in their lines of thought and suggesting how they can be adapted for use in an early modern context. It then analyses two self-portraits by Saint-Pavin and Scarron, who both portray their disabilities as alterations or expansions of the human state, productive in some ways and painful in others. This analysis is related back to transhumanism and posthumanism, demonstrating how the two poets anticipate these ways of rethinking the human. The authorial personae outlined in their self-portraits help investigate whether transhuman and posthuman understandings of disability are applicable to seventeenth-century material. This chapter demonstrates that seventeenth-century understandings of the human were far less prescriptive and far more malleable than some several theorists claim. Moreover, through readings of Saint-Pavin and Scarron's self-portraits, I contend that disability is precisely the phenomenon that enables the limitations of the human to be surpassed or redrawn, allowing these poets to fashion captivating and singular authorial personae for themselves.

The conclusion then reflects on the central findings of this thesis as a whole, commenting on its many convergences and divergences. It also turns its attention to critical and scholarly practice, highlighting the most productive

modes of critical inquiry and making recommendations regarding the study of disability in early modern literature, poetry above all. Finally, it anticipates some future lines of inquiry, where scholars might further broaden and deepen our understanding of disability in the early modern period.

1. METAPHORS OF DISABILITY IN LOVE LYRICS

The blind spot is a fearful place – Julia Miele Rodas[1]

Why do metaphors matter? Metaphors of disability permeate seventeenth-century French lyric verse of all kinds and are used to solidify the opposition between ideal bodies and defective, undesirable bodies in this literary corpus. My reading of disability as metaphor in this chapter is informed by the work on metaphorical invocations of cancer by Susan Sontag. Sontag not only analyses metaphors of illness on a functional level but asks how specific illnesses' widespread use as metaphors impacts negatively on people living with those conditions. Reflecting on the writing of *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) and speaking as a cancer survivor herself, she condemns the disease's metaphorical figuration as an 'evil, invincible predator':

the metaphoric trappings that deform the experience of having cancer have very real consequences: they inhibit people from seeking treatment early enough, or from making a greater effort to get competent treatment. The metaphors and myths, I was convinced, kill.[2]

Scholars working in critical disability studies have since adopted similar stances towards metaphors of disability in literature and culture,[3] analysing how

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[1] Julia Miele Rodas, 'On Blindness', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies,* 3. 2 (2009), 115-130 (p. 156/290).

[2] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), p. 7; Susan Sontag, *AIDS and its Metaphors* (New York, NY: Farrar Straus And Giroux, 1989), p. 14.

[3] For critiques of disability as metaphor, see Naomi Schor, 'Blindness as Metaphor', *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies,* 11. 2 (1999), 76-105; Rodas (2009); Amy Vidali, 'Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor', *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies,* 4. 1 (2010), 33-54; Jay Dolmage, 'Between the

disability is evoked, whether implicitly or explicitly, in a range of persistent metaphors, and how this might impact upon both the daily lives of disabled people and their perception by others and by themselves.

At present, the majority of work on metaphors of disability concerns blindness. More than any other disability it would seem, blindness has been most thoroughly mined for metaphorical significance.[4] Naomi Schor proffers the common description of someone or something as figuratively 'blind', 'blinded' or 'blinding' as an example of what she terms 'metaphorical catachresis': an act of misnaming that has negative consequences for disabled people.[5] She does not specify what these negative consequences might be and stops short of Sontag's once-held belief that metaphors 'kill'. This is, however, entirely possible. As Jay Dolmage points out, metaphors are not merely descriptive but also take part in knowledge acquisition. 'We know the world as we metaphorize it,' he writes, 'Metaphors are bridges not between a singular word and a singular meaning, but between entire fields of meaning, alliances of entailment'.[6] Consequently, far from a relatively innocuous act of analogical oversimplification, metaphorical catachresis has a knock-on effect on how nondisabled people assess, categorise and empathise with disabled people, including in potentially life-changing

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Valley and the Field: Metaphor and Disability', *Prose Studies,* 27. 1-2 (2005), 108-119; David T. and Sharon L. Snyder Mitchell, *Narrative Prosthesis: disability and the dependencies of discourse* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Vivian Sobchack, 'A Leg To Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality', in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From A Posthuman Present To A Biocultural Future,* ed. by Joanne Morra and Marquard Smith (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 17-41.

[4] The following represents an overview of publications treating metaphors of blindness: Schor (1999), pp. 37-40. Rodas (2009). Hannah Thompson, *Reviewing Blindness in French Fiction, 1789-2013* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). David Bolt, *The Metanarrative of Blindness: A Re-reading of Twentieth-Century Anglophone Writing* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013). Kate E. Tunstall, *Blindness and Enlightenment : an essay* (New York: Continuum, 2011). Weygand (2013). Vidali (2010).

[5] Schor (1999), p. 77.

[6] Dolmage (2005), p. 110.

situations such as assessment for the Disability Living Allowance.[7] Everyday

metaphors also impact on how the phenomenon of disability is perceived as

symbolically or morally charged in a variety of ways – disability can come to

symbolise emasculation, dishonesty, or sexual depravity, to name just three

examples that will be discussed at length in this thesis. It is not my purpose

here to explore whether or not metaphors do indeed kill, but to show that the

metaphors we use every day affect our comprehension of the world around us,

contributing to the Foucauldian concept of discourse, defined as 'des pratiques

qui forment systématiquement les objets dont ils parlent'.[8] More often than not,

'those who define disability are not those who experience it',[9] and metaphors

help shape the (largely nondisabled) understanding of what disability is and

what disability is not.[10] Consequently, metaphors that put forward a negatively

charged or oversimplified picture of a particular disability are likely to inform

biases relating to that same disability with real effects on the lives of disabled

people.

In modern popular culture, as in seventeenth-century French literature,

we find numerous examples of metaphors of disability. Returning to my initial

example of blindness, a 1972 song by Johnny Nash equates light and vision with

understanding and a positive mental state while darkness and lack of vision

signify ignorance and negativity:

I can see clearly now the rain is gone

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[7] A 2016 article in the Guardian written by a benefits appeal panel member discusses this situation. Anonymous, 'Disabled people are being wrongly denied benefits. I help get them back.', (2016) <theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/12/disabled-people-benefits-appeal> [accessed 28/05/2020]

[8] Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 67.

[9] Dolmage (2005), p. 112.

[10] Shelley Tremain makes a similar remark in *Foucault and Feminist Philosophy of Disability* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017), pp. 17-18.

> I can see all obstacles in my way
> Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
> It's gonna be a bright, bright
> Sun-Shiny day.[11]

Even in everyday speech, we *see* what someone means, we experience brain fog, and we describe books as enlightening. We speak of rhetorical blind spots, we pull the wool over someone's eyes, and we get blind drunk. In each of these sayings, blindness is presumed to be an undesirable state, while vision and enlightenment are desirable. Shor argues that, through the repeated use of locutions like these, 'metaphor and myth mutually inform each other' to create and maintain a rhetorical trope of blindness that overwrites (overshadows, eclipses, obscures, blocks out) the lived experiences of visually impaired people.[12] This rhetorical trope is so ingrained that it is difficult to explain it without resorting to ocularcentric language.

An image that features prominently in my corpus of poetry and in theoretical discussions of metaphor is the figure of Cupid as a symbol of love's blindness.[13] An epigram I analyse in due course portrays love as a blind tyrant who thrashes around inside the narrator's body, causing bodily destruction and possibly death. Other poems depict dispassionate women fulfilling the role of Cupid by arbitrarily firing flaming arrows from their eyes that cause men to fall hopelessly in love with them. When poets write that love is blind, they project an imagined state of blindness onto a nonhuman other (love personified as Cupid) in order to explain the irrational actions of that other. There are two concurrent interpretations of the 'love is blind' metaphor. First, both poet and reader imagine that Cupid cannot see, so his volleys of arrows are capricious and

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[11] Johnny Nash, 'I Can See Clearly Now', in *I Can See Clearly Now,* (Epic, 1972).
[12] Schor (1999), p. 76. Tremain (2017) likewise critiques the language of blindness found in much philosophical writing. See pp. 31-33.
[13] Ibid., pp. 84-94.

unpredictable.[14] We fall in love with the most unlikely of people. Second, the state of being in love renders lovers metaphorically blind, unable to perceive flaws in their beloved and loving them unconditionally, no matter how foolish this love might seem to those who can 'see' it for what it is.[15] It is assumed by the poet that their reader will be able to follow this trail of signification through metaphors of blindness and arrive at these symbolic meanings.

The example of Cupid attests to the existence of what Amy Vidali terms 'an ablebodied "we"' at the centre of both metaphors themselves and of theoretical writing about metaphors.[16] The default embodied condition in such metaphors is able-bodiedness and 20/20 vision, while blindness, symbolised by Cupid and his arrow slings, is an altered, extraordinary condition. Metaphorical blindness relies on an understanding of blindness as an extraordinary state, and as such caters to people who are themselves not blind. It recurs ad infinitum in philosophical and literary works about morality that deploy blindness as a metaphor for knowing or feeling a certain way,[17] many of which can be found in my corpus of seventeenth-century verse. Due to this constellation of metaphorical imaginings of blindness, few of which have anything to do with lived experiences of visual impairment, 'even for actual blind people, blindness is always a mediated experience, informed, even defined by language and culture'.[18] Metaphors of blindness, Rodas argues, have come to overwrite the multiplicity of ways in which visual impairment is experienced, such as the

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[14] Ibid., p. 84.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Vidali (2010), p. 38.
[17] Perhaps the two most prominent examples in the French literary canon are Denis Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient* (1749) and Jacques Derrida's *Memoires d'aveugle* (1990).
[18] Rodas (2009), p. 129.

sensation of losing one's sight and of being partially-sighted.[19] Blindness, as it is commonly understood by those who have not experienced it, does not really exist, and yet it is everywhere in the language we use to describe the world around us and the strange sensations it causes us to feel.[20] Likewise, Vivian Sobchack, a user of prosthetics, does not recognise or identify with the meanings conveyed by metaphors of prosthesis in academic writing, such as prosthetic consciousness, prosthetic territories, and prosthetic memory, to name just a few. She argues that, in the case of these metaphors, 'the literal and material ground of the metaphor has been forgotten, if not disavowed'.[21]

This chapter takes as its starting point the key idea that metaphors of disability reveal a great deal about what was considered ordinary and extraordinary, or desirable and undesirable in a given social context, and reveal a whole host of anxieties surrounding the idea of becoming disabled. Its reading of metaphors of disability in seventeenth-century French love lyrics will not simply locate these metaphors and argue that they are exclusionary to those who do not conform to their imagined 'ordinary' embodied experience (this is self-evident), but instead respond to Vidali's call for a disability approach to metaphor, which

attends to how diverse bodies impact metaphor acquisition and use, [and] which shifts disability away from something only "used" or "represented" by metaphor. Instead, disability interprets, challenges, and articulates metaphors. A disability approach to metaphor must engage the full range of disability; resist the desire to simply "police" or remove disability metaphors; actively transgress disability metaphors by employing a diverse vocabulary; and artistically create and historically reinterpret metaphors of disability.[22]

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[19] Ibid., pp. 118-119.
[20] Ibid., p. 118.
[21] Sobchack (2006), p. 20.
[22] Vidali (2010), p. 42.

Accordingly, this chapter examines the two most frequently recurring metaphorical invocations of disability in the seventeenth-century love lyric, asking what they can teach us about how various aesthetic ideals were conceived of in the literary circles that produced these poems.

Interrogating Able-Bodiedness

One such ideal that is central to this chapter's analysis is able-bodiedness. At the heart of much seventeenth-century French love poetry is an anxiety surrounding an inevitable failure to approximate the able-bodiedness that the *galant* aesthetic demands. Critical Disability Studies scholars have stressed how able-bodiedness – as a polar opposite to disability – is a work of fantasy and does not really exist, but is often treated as the default in literature and culture. It is assumed to be a 'nonidentity' that goes without saying, part of the 'natural order of things'. [23] Robert McRuer likens the ideal of able-bodiedness to that of heterosexuality,[24] while Lindsey Row-Heyveld compares it to whiteness.[25] In so doing, they draw from queer theorists, such as Adrienne Rich and Judith Butler,[26] and from critical race theorists, such as Kim F. Hall and David Sterling Brown,[27] who argue that there should be just as much scholarly attention

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[23] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: cultural signs of queerness and disability* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006), p. 1.
[24] McRuer (2013).
[25] Lindsey Row-Heyveld, 'Careless Arden: Able-bodiedness in *As You Like It*', unpublished paper delivered at the seminar 'Uncommon Bodies' (MacAlester College, 12 February 2021).
[26] In particular, Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality,* ed. by Christine Stansell Ann Snitow, and Sharon Thompson (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 177-205; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).
[27] In particular, Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); David Sterling Brown, 'White Hands: Gesturing Toward Shakespeare's *Other* "Race Plays"', unpublished

devoted to analysing heterosexuality and whiteness as there is to homosexuality and blackness. These scholars maintain that heterosexuality and whiteness should not be taken as given. They are not pre-existing, unchanging norms against which deviance is measured, but just as contingent as the supposedly deviant categories they produce.

A similar argument can be applied to able-bodiedness. One objective of McRuer and Row-Heyveld's work is to show that the ideal of able-bodiedness is no less undetermined than the category of disability, and that a great deal of effort goes into performing it in certain ways that aim to cover over physical and mental difference. Row-Heyveld argues that

Like its counterpart and partner, whiteness, able-bodiedness retains its power by being undetectable, but it stays undetectable by being everywhere. This was true in the early modern period as well as today. Able-bodiedness both constructed and was constructed by whiteness, masculinity, wealth, nobility, heterosexuality, and cisgenderedness. It undergirded early modern concepts of health, beauty, youth, sanity, fertility, wit, strength, wholeness, virtue, skill, productivity, justice and so many more.[28]

Able-bodiedness is just as unstable and ill-defined as disability. 'Emanating from everywhere and nowhere',[29] it is commonly taken to be self-explanatory (the absence of disability) but is in fact very hard to define, and even harder to find unambiguous examples of. The ideal of able-bodiedness also takes a lot of effort to maintain,[30] requiring a sustained and hyperbolic performance of vigour and dynamism of male lyric protagonists, who risk skirting close to disability (and, consequently, femininity) if they should fail at that performance. Expanding on

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conference paper delivered at the Shakespeare Association of America annual conference, (Washington, D.C., 2019).

[28] Row-Heyveld (2021). Though he does not engage with the early modern period, McRuer makes a similar argument in his engagement with Adrienne Rich's notion of compulsory heterosexuality: 'Like compulsory heterosexuality, then, compulsory able-bodiedness functions by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice'. McRuer (2013), p. 371.

[29] McRuer (2013), p. 371.

[30] Row-Heyveld (2021).

Row-Heyveld's analysis of able-bodiedness in *As You Like It*, I contend that both *galanterie* as an aesthetic and *galant* verse as a literary expression of that aesthetic are wholly invested in the performance and maintenance of able-bodiedness. *Galanterie*'s demands for able-bodiedness can be traced back to the language of physiognomical *médiocrité* discussed in my introduction, a rhetorical tool used by both Porta and Castiglione to uphold compulsory able-bodiedness. Many of the love lyrics discussed in this chapter deal with what happens if protagonists fail to approximate this able-bodied ideal of *médiocrité*, and are interested in moments where passion overflows and self-mastery is relinquished. It is in moments such as these where poets reach for metaphors of disability to express the precarity of the *corps médiocre*.

Seventeenth-century French love lyrics – particularly those drawing heavily from the aesthetic of *galanterie* – endorse a series of binary oppositions such as youth/old age, beauty/ugliness, and wealth/poverty.[31] This chapter contends that the binary of able-bodied/disabled should be added to that list. The abovementioned ubiquity of blindness as a rhetorical trope is certainly reflected in my corpus, which contains plentiful riffs on the clichés of *Amour aveugle* and, to a lesser extent, *Fortune aveugle*, both of which will be addressed in the following analysis. In addition to metaphors of blindness, a second disability – *perclusion* – is a far rarer but no less significant poetic motif, providing a point of comparison with the much-documented metaphor of blindness. Centring metaphors of disability allows me to ask why these metaphors are so ubiquitous in the love lyrics of my corpus, and what a disability-centric reading of these texts might teach us about seventeenth-century cultural understandings of love, along with the various social rituals and

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[31] Denis (2001), p. 293.

gender roles it entailed. It also raises questions about the assumptions made in forming contemporary critical practice, particularly regarding the able-body, often assumed to be a standard that exists as bedrock, against which disability is measured. Building on McRuer and Row-Heyveld, the following analysis of metaphors of disability reveals that the able-body is just as precarious and contingent a construction as the disabled body.

Metaphorical *Aveuglement*

The introduction to this chapter posited that metaphors of blindness hold at their core the idea that 'the blind' are a homogenous group and are somehow essentially different from 'the sighted' – they perceive the world differently, they think differently, and they love differently.[32] It also posited that blindness is the disability most often incorporated into metaphorical language. This statement is also true for my corpus of seventeenth-century lyric verse. Most familiar to modern readers will be the clichés that both love and fortune are blind. Seventeenth-century lyric verse provides many examples and reworkings of these familiar tropes, so they are an appropriate springboard from which to begin analysis of metaphor of blindness in love lyrics and the attitudes towards disability that they indicate. I will begin with perhaps the most iconic image of love-as-blindness in Western literature: the figure of Cupid.

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[32] Rodas (2009), p. 117.

Cupid and *Amour Aveugle*

Curiously, blindness was not a feature of Greek or Roman depictions of Cupid but was added to his list of traits in the thirteenth century to underscore the lusty sinfulness of the kind of love he engendered.[33] Cupid regularly appeared in Petrarch's sonnets and accordingly was an equally prominent motif of seventeenth-century French love poetry of Petrarchan inspiration.[34] Also curious is the fact that Cupid in the seventeenth-century French love lyric is very rarely mentioned by name. Rather, poets invoke Cupid by capitalising 'Amour' as a proper noun and pairing it with allusions to blindness, blindfolds, arrows, eyes and the gaze. An anonymous epigram from the *Recueil Conrart* demonstrates this tendency:

> Amour, tyran plein de rigueur,
> Tu es sans yeux, & sans raison ;
> Car si tu logis dans mon cœur,
> Pourquoy brules-tu ta maison?[35]

Readers familiar with the modern meaning of the proverb that love is blind might be surprised by the pessimism on display in this short piece, in which the narrator addresses the anthropomorphised and blind figure of Amour to plead him to stop destroying their body. The optimistic sentiment that love is blind (and therefore lovers do not see faults in their beloved) is reinscribed as a more visceral, violent image to imply that love is blind (and therefore cannot see the devastation it wreaks in the protagonist's heart). The narrator couples *aveuglement* and unreason, positing – as many other poets in this chapter do – that to be without eyes is to be without reason.

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[33] Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1986), pp. 30-31; Jane Kingsley-Smith, *Cupid in Early Modern Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 9.
[34] Kingsley-Smith (2010), p. 1.
[35] Ms-4123, p. 166.

The violence that Sontag previously ascribed to metaphors of illness is evident in this poem's characterisation of *Amour aveugle*. The poet casts disability both as a cause of destruction, personified in the form of *Amour aveugle*, and as an outcome of that destruction, in the sense that the structural integrity of the narrator's own body is threatened by the actions of this tyrannical, blind entity lodged within their heart and intent on burning down his own house. As such, one of the key thrusts of this use of the *Amour aveugle* metaphor is that, in addition to being undesirable and destructive, disability is contagious.[36] Just as Cupid passes on his blindness to those he strikes with his arrow, the figure of *Amour aveugle* in this epigram threatens to destroy the body of the one he inhabits, rendering them disabled. This highly self-destructive interpretation of *Amour aveugle* can be linked to love as a recurring poetic theme in *galant* lyric verse from the mid-seventeenth century. The introduction to this thesis noted that love in the aesthetic of *galanterie* is an intense but transient dalliance, and Cupid's capriciousness is precisely what caused writers of *galant* verse to so frequently reach for him as a metaphor through which to articulate that love. In the epigram above, it is *Amour aveugle*'s violent intensity that causes his self-sabotage. A love that burns so brightly it sets fire to its own house is not going to exist for much longer.

The Lover's Gaze

There are other motifs of the seventeenth-century lyric to which we could attribute the abundance of metaphorical *aveuglement*, namely the centrality of the gaze and the notion that *seeing* one's beloved is often a matter of life and

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[36] The notion of contagion and its intersection with disability is discussed at length in Chapter Two, 'Grotesque Love'.

death. Linked to both of these motifs is the popular notion that the eyes are gateways between the external and the internal. This notion gave rise to the proverb that the eyes are the windows to the soul, one that, in the seventeenth century, was substantiated by a longstanding physiognomical tradition.[37] Just like the seventeenth-century love lyric, Porta's physiognomy treatise holds the eyes and the gaze in particularly high regard, devoting the entirety of Book III to eyes, their size, placement, colour, shape, movement and much more.[38] Beyond the eyes as an object of physiognomical study, Porta's treatise is ocularcentric, advocating visual examination as the key to deciphering the inner workings of the human being. Porta cites Polemon to explain the importance of the eyes to the physiognomist, writing that, according to him,

[les yeux] qui ont les cercles tournez autour de la prunelle & qui se remuent conjoinctement machinent en leur Ame des actions noires, & mettent en exécution leurs desseins pervers aux quels la fureur de l'esprit les porte, & sont comme poussez de quelque demon malin : ils sont haïs de tout le monde, & partant pensant à diverse sorte de chose les unes après les autres ils n'achevent rien, mais ils troublent tout : leurs yeux font connoistre les secrets de leur cœur, parce que les signes, qu'on voit dans les yeux sont les images des actessions [sic] du cœur.[39]

This passage posits the eyes as the most revealing of all bodily signs and, echoing ocular imagery found in lyric verse from the same period, the conduit between the internal and the external. The physiognomist, Porta maintains, can observe a person's eyes, their colour, their movement, their size and the size of their pupils in order to judge the character of that person. Examination of the eyes, Porta believes, reveals any 'actions noires' that they 'machinent en leur

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[37] Porter (2005) maps the trajectory of this tradition and the many iterations of the proverb itself. See pp. 16-72.

[38] Porta (1655), pp. 402-483.

[39] 'Actessions' is a misprint of 'affections', as revealed by a comparison to the corresponding section of Salvatore Scarino's Italian translation of Porta's treatise. Ibid., p. 419. C.f. 'affettioni del core' in Porta, Giambattista della, *Della Fisonomia dell'Huomo* ([n.p.], 1610), p. 201.

Ame', an inner potential for wrongdoing that is projected outward through their eyes and into the physiognomist's own.

A great deal of seventeenth-century lyric verse takes inspiration from the contemporary physiognomical theory that the eyes acted as windows to the soul. An unsigned madrigal in Français 12680 concludes that 'il n'est rien de plus cher au monde que la veüe',[40] a sentiment that is certainly echoed in countless love poems from this century. In addition to stressing the overwhelming importance of seeing one's beloved, seventeenth-century love poetry privileges sight over all other senses, the eyes being intimately connected to the soul.[41] Accordingly, the absence of sight is just about the most dire situation a lover could find themself in. Metaphorical blindness stands for either sensory overload or numbness and is positioned as antithetical to happy and fulfilling romantic relationships. Due to its ocularcentric nature, love can be caught like an illness simply by gazing into the eyes of a beautiful stranger. An anonymous *chanson* in the *Recueil Conrart* forebodingly warns:

> Qui veut garder sa liberté
> Doit bien eviter vostre veuë
> Il n'est ny grâce, ny beauté
> Dont le ciel ne vous ait pourveuë,
> Et la conqueste d'un Amant
> Ne couste à vos beaux yeux qu'un regard seulement.[42]

This poet casts their protagonist as a Medusa-like being whose superlative grace and beauty endows her with the power to imprison unsuspecting lovers within her gaze.

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[40] Français 12680, p. 201.
[41] Dudley Butler Wilson, *Descriptive Poetry in France: From blason to baroque* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), p. 226.
[42] Ms-4129, p. 680.

Other poets develop the supernatural, even monstrous undercurrent of this image, describing women's eyes as erupting with flames that engulf men who look upon them. In 'Stances, Pour un Gentil-homme qui estoit à Bourbon', Scarron connects this ocular flame-throwing to both an arrow, recalling the figure of Cupid, and to bodily disintegration similar to imagery found in previous poems. Scarron's verse begins as follows:

> Cloris, je brusle depuis peu :
> Vos yeux ont embrazé mon ame.
> Jugez combien chaude est ma flame,
> Par mon visage tout en feu.
> Dedans ma poictrine velue
> Si ce feu Gregeois continue,[43]
> Je ne puis éviter la mort.
> O beauté, dont les yeux jettent flame & flameche !
> Regard perçant comme une fleche !
> Avouez que vous avez tort
> De me brusler comme une méche,
> Moy qui vous honnore si fort.[44]

In this opening stanza we find a role reversal of how we might expect a courtship of this kind to be imagined, given that *galanterie* usually casts men as active hunters and women as passive prey. Being in love with an inaccessible lady is depicted not as an active courting of an unresponsive, static individual, but as the precise opposite: the lady's aloof gaze is a fiery blast that enters the narrator's eyes and sets him alight from within. He is powerless to resist, his body fixed in one spot like a candle burning to the ground, the inevitable result of his encounter with Cloris being bodily annihilation. Of particular note in this stanza is the comparison between the lady's 'regard perçant' and a 'fleche', recalling the now-familiar image of Cupid blindly firing off his arrows. Scarron's choice of words implies that the lady is playing host to a blind Cupid, lending him

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[43] Greek fire was an ancient incendiary weapon akin to a modern flamethrower.
[44] Scarron (1947), p. 60.

her gaze as she arbitrarily turns her piercing eyes on unsuspecting men, causing them to become consumed with passion while she feels nothing in return.

This analogy drawn between a lady's gaze and Cupid's arrows is solidified by an anonymous epigram found in the *Recueil Conrart,* entitled 'Le vendeur de Masques, aux Dames':

> Quelle erreur a de son poison
> Troublé des hommes la raison !
> Ils se couvrent tout le visage,
> Laissans à decouvert cêt endroit seulement
> Par où lon void vous traits blesser plus vivement,
> Et par où dans les cœurs vos yeux treuvent passage.[45]

This poet finds it ironic that men should put on masks in order to socialise with women at balls given that love is contracted through the eyes, the one facial feature left exposed by their masks. This leaves them vulnerable to the 'traits' fired their way by Cupid harnessing the power of a lady's gaze, arrows that might ignite within their hearts the kind of all-consuming passion experienced by the narrator of Scarron's verse analysed above. The epigram also serves to corroborate the theory that amorous feeling is born in the eyes: they are understood as the contact point for Cupid's arrows, which then 'treuvent passage' through the victim's eyes and into his heart.

Study of this commonplace metaphor of *Amour aveugle* reveals the physiognomical underpinnings of the love lyrics in my corpus. Rooted in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Physiognomonica*,[46] the primacy of the eyes and gaze as a conduit for passion and a passage from the internal to the external is a quintessential physiognomical principle that is reiterated and reinterpreted by lyric poets in the seventeenth century. Somewhat paradoxically, this primacy of

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[45] Ms-4115, p. 316.
[46] Le Van, p. 58; Cheng, p. 203.

the gaze in both physiognomy and *galant* love brings forth a wealth of imagery related to blindness. In the poetry analysed above, a lady's eyes come to stand for Cupid's bow and metaphors of blindness express the indiscriminate way in which enchanting glances are shot across a room, ensnaring the recipients of these glances and causing their bodies to burn with passion. This particular metaphorical blindness – that of Cupid and of arrows – is overwhelmingly gendered as a feminine phenomenon,[47] pointing towards the issues of gender underpinning my poetic corpus and the feminisation of disability (or disabling of femininity) that I examine further in Chapters Two and Four.[48] Despite the fact that men usually take the active role in *galant* spectacles of courtship, pursuing, competing over, and trying to impress women, it is those women whose Cupid-like gaze gives rise to the passion within these men necessary for such a pursuit.

The Absent Beloved

In the wake of this physiognomically-inflected imagery personifying love as a blind god*,* we find plentiful examples where love is described not so much as blind but as *blinding*. The women described in the lyrics quoted above are not only themselves metaphorically blind, but have the power to blind men by causing them to fall in love with a single glance. Imagery of blindness as a consequence of being in love regularly surfaces in poems about an absent beloved, where a sighted narrator wishes to enter into a state of blindness due

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[47] Naomi Schor makes this point in her analysis of metaphors of blindness in *Beauty and the Beast*. Schor (1999), p. 88. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has written extensively on the age-old association of disability with femininity, one that I will explore in more depth in the following chapter. See in particular Garland-Thomson (2013). For disability and early modern women, see Encarnación Juárez-Almendros, *Disabled Bodies in Early Modern Spanish Literature: Prostitutes, Aging Women and Saints* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

[48] See 'Perfect Deformity', 'Grotesque Love', and 'Femininity and Disability'.

to his beloved's absence or indifference, implying that being forsaken by one's beloved is comparable in some ways to blindness. If we accept the physiognomical premise that the inception and transmission of passion depends on vision – on seeing one's beloved – then it follows that being prevented from expressing or acting upon this passion due to a beloved's absence might be figuratively likened to blindness.

One of the richest examples of this trope can be found in an ode by Maynard in which the poet laments having to share the object of his desires with a rival suitor, likening the resulting predicament to blindness. The poem begins

> Je souhaiterois d'estre né
> Aveugle comme infortuné.
> Ce desir n'est-il pas estrange ?
> Mais si la rigueur d'un Jalous
> Me prive de voir mon bel Ange,
> Mes yeux, à quoy me servez-vous ?[49]

The narrator wishes blindness upon himself, or, more precisely, wishes to have been born blind. He recognises that this is an unusual desire but explains that a jealous rival has caught his beloved's attention and deprived him of seeing her, so he might as well be blind already. It is significant that the narrator should choose the action of *seeing* his beloved, not conversing with her, touching her nor spending time with her, as the experience of which he has been deprived. The prioritisation of vision above all other senses and actions in amorous relationships tallies with the ocularcentrism of both seventeenth-century romantic desire and the early modern physiognomical discourse from which this corpus of poetry draws inspiration. This ocularcentrism is evident in how, after the narrator's desire for blindness, the same poem goes on to associate the narrator's beloved with the ability to grant sight rather than take it away:

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[49] François Maynard, *Poésies de François Maynard* (Paris: Garnier, 1927), p. 173.

> Clorise, dissipez la nuit
> Ou vostre absence m'a réduit ;
> La Raison vous en sollicite.
> Travaillez à changer mon sort ;
> Ma passion est un merite
> A qui vous devez cét effort.
>
> Vostre bel Esprit qui voit tout
> Vient si facilement à bout
> De tout ce qu'il veut entreprendre,
> Que le Jugement le plus clair
> N'a pas d'armes pour s'en deffendre,
> Quand vous le voulez aveugler.[50]

In keeping with her holy sobriquet 'bel Ange', the narrator's beloved is endowed with the supernatural power to 'voi[r] tout' and eliminate the darkness that has engulfed him since her departure from his side. Contrary to Amour who spreads blindness, the personified figures of Raison and Jugement cannot operate in darkness and require illumination, the former pleading Clorise, the heroine of this piece, to grant the narrator's request while the latter is unable to defend itself against her compulsion to render it blind. Clorise is herself in a position of power, able to both take away sight (by leaving the narrator's side) and to grant it (by returning to his side). In this poem, metaphorical blindness signifies a malfunctioning or dulling of the narrator's perceptive faculties, personified by Raison and Jugement, and associates visual impairment with a lack of these qualities, a kind of lovelorn 'ennuy'.[51]

Figurative *aveuglement* is brought on by an excess of passion. It causes the narrator to act unreasonably and suspect his beloved of being unfaithful to him despite a lack of evidence that her absence is due to another lover's attentions:

> Ma peur est qu'un nouveau dessein
> Ne m'ait tiré de vostre sein

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[50] Ibid., p. 174.
[51] Ibid., p. 175.

> Où mon Image estoit si vive.
> Je parle de cette façon,
> Par ce qu'une Amour excessive
> Est toûjours pleine de soupçon.[52]

The imagery of blindness is furthered by the proposition that there used to be a lifelike 'Image' of the narrator in his beloved's 'sein', which synecdochally stands for her inner consciousness or the depths of her heart, but the narrator fears that the image has been erased due to her absence from him and her imagined infidelity. This returns to the physiognomical notion of the eyes as the windows to the soul. When two lovers gaze into each other's eyes, the narrator imagines, images of their inner selves are imprinted onto their beloved's heart. The 'image in the heart' is a longstanding lyrical cliché that holds much in common with the physiognomical premise to the eyes as windows to the soul.[53] In her absence, the line of sight is obstructed and can no longer act as the conduit between hearts, leading to the erasure of that image. The all-important lover's gaze has been blocked, a situation which the poem likens to blindness.[54]

Returning to my theoretical framework, the idea of love-as-blind and love-as-blinding attest to the existence of what Vidali refers to as 'an ablebodied "we"'.[55] That is to say, the various metaphors of *Amour aveugle* found in these poems only function as rhetorical devices if they come from a sighted perspective – or point of view – because they all hinge on blindness being an extraordinary, altered state. They require blindness to be imagined by the reader as an undesirable state of otherness.[56] As Vidali notes in her analysis of

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 85.

[54] Maynard is not the only poet to liken the absence of a beloved to blindness. See, for example Charles de Vion D'Alibray, *Œuvres Poétiques du sieur de Dalibray* (Paris: Sansot, 1906), p. 153.

[55] Vidali (2010), p. 38.

[56] Rodas (2009), p. 117.

theories of metaphor, metaphors necessitate the imagination of a common embodied experience, one that is 'ordinary', 'normal' and 'prototypical', an experience that the speaker believes most people share and can relate to.[57] In the case of *Amour aveugle*, this 'ordinary' embodied experience (being able to see) is compared to an imagined extraordinary experience (blindness). The metaphors of blindness in these lyrics maintain and strengthen the binary opposition between ordinary and extraordinary, and able-bodied and disabled. Blindness is constructed by the sighted imagination as an extraordinary, altered state, experienced by lovers at the height of their passion.

Metaphors of *Amour aveugle* are also testament to the fact that love in my corpus of lyric verse is an ocularcentric phenomenon and, as such, is entirely bound up with imagery of blindness. Implicit within love's ocularcentric nature lies a profound fear of blindness on the part of nondisabled male narrators. This is linked to an equally profound fear of beautiful women as the cause of blindness, evident in several of the lyrics analysed in this section. Schor recognises that such myths of disability are shaped by and reflect the time and place of their production, constantly being adapted and reinvented to suit the tastes and opinions of a particular social moment.[58] The iterations of *Amour aveugle* I analyse here are radically situated and are best understood within the aesthetic framework of *galanterie* that prized ideals of able-bodiedness and, above all, vision in romantic narratives. It is only through this ocularcentric framework that we can start to understand what, specifically, is at stake if a lover is rendered blind. At the same time, the distinctly seventeenth-century French take on the 'love is blind' phenomenon feeds into a long lyrical tradition

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[57] Vidali (2010), p. 36.
[58] Schor (1999), pp. 83-84.

that fixated on the lover's gaze and the notion that love can be caught through the eyes.

A study of *Amour aveugle* also reveals the undertones of precarity lurking beneath the familiar image of mid-seventeenth-century *galant* romance as a light-hearted and frivolous affair.[59] Depictions of love in my corpus of lyric verse that draw upon imagery of blindness are, like Maynard's analysed above, overwhelmingly pessimistic. This pessimism supports David Mitchell and Susan Snyder's assertion that, in metaphorical language, 'disability represents that which goes awry in the normalizing bodily schema' – in this case, the schema of *galanterie*.[60] Metaphorical blindness in love lyrics indicates a deeply-held anxiety on the part of the narrators that their bodies might 'go awry' if deprived of love or overwhelmed with passion. In the poems analysed so far, blindness has stood not only for sensory impairment, but for despair, loneliness, bodily disintegration, and a loss of reason, to name just a few referents. On a similar note, none of the poems quoted in this section depict satisfied and stable relationships. Rather, they depict love that is one-sided and lovers who are dejected, afraid, jealous, wounded, helpless, and desperate in their failure to win over the object of their desires. Metaphorical blindness in these poems is a resolutely undesirable state, ascribed to male protagonists who are unlucky in love and to the cruel women who are considered the cause of this bad luck. This association of blindness with cruel women and the notion of being unlucky in love leads neatly onto the following section in which I move beyond *Amour aveugle* to analyse the different, yet related, metaphor of *Fortune aveugle*.

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[59] Pelous (1980), pp. 204-209.
[60] Mitchell (2000), p. 59.

Fortuna and *Fortune Aveugle*

Returning to the first stanza of Maynard's ode quoted in the previous

section, I would like to highlight the simile he chooses to express a desire to

have been born blind: 'Aveugle comme infortuné'.[61] Blindness is linked in this

poem not just to love, as I have shown, but also to fortune, another concept

commonly embodied in literature in the form of a blind or blindfolded deity. Like

Cupid, the metaphorical figure of Fortuna began to be represented as blind

relatively late in her lifetime in European literature and culture.[62] Art historian

Mosche Barasch writes that 'the medieval Fortuna was the Fortuna with the

wheel, while her blindness remained an abstract statement'.[63] By the

seventeenth century, however, her wearing of a blindfold had been added

alongside her wheel to stand for the concept of chance that she had come to

represent, and soon became a defining trait.[64] The Fortuna/*Fortune aveugle*

metaphor provides a salient point of comparison with Cupid/*Amour aveugle* and

allows me to draw out some commonalities and differences between these two

popular metaphorical figures of blindness.

One notable convergence lies in their pessimistic outlook. *Amour aveugle*'s

overpowering pessimism that casts love as a volatile, cruel, and ultimately self-

destructive phenomenon is matched by similarly pessimistic metaphors of

Fortune as blind. In one of her 'Réflexions diverses', Deshoulières explicitly

connects the blind Fortuna to a fear of death:

> Misérable jouet de l'aveugle fortune,
> Victime des maux et des lois,

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[61] Maynard (1927), p. 173.
[62] Moshe Barasch, *Blindness: the history of a mental image in western thought* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 123.
[63] Ibid., p. 125.
[64] Ibid., pp. 127-129.

>   Homme, toi qui par mille endroits
>   Dois trouver la vie importune,
> D'où vient que de la mort tu crains tant le pouvoir ?
> Lâche, regarde-la sans changer de visage,
>   *Songe que si c'est un outrage*,
>   C'est le dernier à recevoir.[65]

Reminiscent of how a lover was described in the anonymous epigram analysed earlier as beset by a blind and irrational tyrant who burns human bodies from within, Deshoulières's Fortuna strikes fear into her victims, making their lives miserable and ultimately causing the *dernier outrage* of death. Rather than trying to avoid death or cheat Fortuna, the narrator orders the coward to whom this stanza is addressed to 'regarde-la sans changer de visage', with an object pronoun that could refer to the personified figures of both death and fortune. The protagonist can take comfort in the fact that, although his life has been a catalogue of terrible events, he can rest assured that his demise will be the last affront he must suffer, so why be scared of death? When facing a destructive entity who cannot see, the narrator suggests that the only power that a despondent victim of Fortuna can level against his persecutor is the power of the gaze – to look death in the face. This action will do nothing to change his fate, that much is clear by what precedes it, but there is evidently a symbolic power present in this command to stare down a being or beings who cannot stare back. Even though Deshoulières's protagonist is going to die, his ability to see allows him to attain a symbolic superiority over both death and Fortuna, provided that he stands his ground and stares his enemy down, rather than cowering away or searching for an escape route.

This poem bucks the trend we have encountered up until this point where blindness is portrayed as contagious. Its climax involves the narrator urging her protagonist – who stands for all of humanity, or perhaps all men – to resist

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[65] Deshoulières (2010), p. 192.

contagion, directing the power of the gaze at Fortuna when she arrives to take his life rather than looking away and imitating her blindness. The gender dynamics of blindness are at their clearest in this verse, one of the few seventeenth-century French lyrics about disability that we can be certain was penned by a woman. Chance is explicitly feminised and disabled in the figure of the blind goddess Fortuna,[66] while a male protagonist who is passive in all other ways, acting as her 'misérable jouet', can at the very least mobilise the power of his gaze, which she lacks, rather than looking away for an escape route. Acting as if metaphorically blind (exhibiting denial, ignorance, or irrationality) when faced with a hostile blind goddess who has come to take his life is positioned as cowardice, emasculation even, whereas holding one's gaze and staring her down in the face of peril allows the protagonist to attain some dignity in defeat over his foe who cannot bring her gaze to meet his.

Some consolation, we might think, yet this stoic dignity in death attained through the gaze is the only glimmer of hope in the otherwise entirely pessimistic view of Fortuna/*Fortune aveugle* taken by poets in this corpus. Crucially, it is also a hope attained by positioning blindness as a character flaw: while victims of Fortuna can courageously stare down death, Fortuna herself is unable to look men in the eye as she kills them, suggesting cowardice. This general pessimism signified by the figure of Fortuna, along with the random inevitability represented by her blindness, holds true for other poems of this corpus. A sonnet by d'Alibray ties together many of the tropes relating to blindness I have discussed in this section and provides a way of drawing this discussion of *aveuglement* to a close:

> N'use plus, cher Tirsis, de tant de prevoyance,
> Tout se meut icy bas par un secret ressort,

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[66] Death, the end result of Fortuna's intervention, is also a feminine noun.

> Qui nous pousse tantost aux delices du port
> Tantost nous fait perir contre tout apparence.
>
> Ce mouvement caché, cette inique ordonnance
> Qu'autrement nous nommons la Fortune ou le Sort,
> Soubmet également et le foible et le fort
> Sous les bizarres loix d'une aveugle puissance.
>
> Pourquoy donc conçois-tu de si grands deplaisirs
> D'avoir perdu le fruit de tes justes desirs,
> Cesse, crois-moy, Tirsis, cette plainte opportune :
>
> Ne dis plus que ton mal est sans comparaison,
> Car comme bien souvent la fortune a raison,
> Bien souvent la raison manque aussi de fortune.[67]

This sonnet puts forward a comparable argument to that of Deshoulières's

stanza. It affirms that the protagonist (Tirsis) should be under no illusion that he

stands any chance of gaining the upper hand in his struggle against 'les bizarres

loix d'une aveugle puissance'. D'Alibray names this power 'la Fortune ou le Sort',

words whose capitalisation recalls the blind figure of Fortuna personified in

Deshoulières's verse. When faced with Fortuna's obscure manoeuvrings, the

narrator urges his friend to 'N'use plus […] de tant de prevoyance', because

everything in this world is moved by a 'secret ressort' that is both imperceptible

and unpredictable. D'Alibray's narrator adopts a comparable interrogative tone

to Deshoulières's to ask Tirsis why, then, is he so distraught when luck does not

go his way? Furthermore, the narrator continues, he should stop complaining

about an impartial force that he cannot hope to influence: 'Cesse, crois-moy,

Tirsis, cette plainte opportune'. The narrator argues that Tirsis is being treated

much the same as everyone else, and his 'mal' is not 'sans comparaison'. Similar

to metaphors of Cupid/*Amour aveugle*, Fortuna/*Fortune aveugle* is portrayed in

both of these pieces as random, destructive entity who is held responsible for

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[67] D'Alibray (1906), p. 170.

pain, loss and death, yet exercises her power without discrimination, hence her blindness.

The chiasmatic wordplay of d'Alibray's concluding two lines makes a conjecture that complicates the hard-and-fast link between blindness and unreason found in the poetry discussed previously.[68] The narrator assures Tirsis that, despite her blindness, Fortuna may well be justified in causing him the pain that she does, but Tirsis's lack of understanding of her secret powers prevents him from 'seeing' things from her perspective. In short, what he thinks is just and fair is unlikely to correspond to what she thinks is just and fair. Who is metaphorically blind in this poem? Is it Fortuna, the ostensible 'aveugle puissance', or is it her hapless victim who tries and fails to use his 'prevoyance' to observe her hidden movements and understand the 'bizarres loix' of the game of chance that he is playing? Through the establishment of this conundrum, the narrator appears to suggest that reason, and thus metaphorical blindness as an antonym to reason, are both a matter of perspective: 'Car comme bien souvent la fortune a raison, / Bien souvent la raison manque aussi de fortune'. The message of d'Alibray's sonnet can be summarised by François de la Rochefoucauld's maxim that 'La fortune ne paraît jamais si aveugle qu'à ceux à qui elle ne fait pas de bien'.[69] Fortuna's actions in this poem appear unreasonable to Tirsis, who does not understand why he must suffer and judges that she must be blind to cause him to do so. To Fortuna herself, however, these same actions might make total sense and Tirsis may appear unreasonable in his complaints and desire to resist them. After all, the narrator reminds him,

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[68] Particularly Maynard's ode beginning 'Je souhaiterois d'estre né' and the epigram beginning 'Amour, tyran plein de rigueur', both discussed above.
[69] François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 109.

Fortuna's laws are the same for everyone – '[Elle] soubmet également et le foible et le fort' – is that not, in a sense, both just and reasonable?

This brings us back to the statement with which I began this section on metaphors of *aveuglement*. Despite, or rather, because of this final subversion of perspectives contained within d'Alibray's *pointe*, the sonnet taken as a whole underscores the notion that metaphors of blindness centre themselves in the idea that 'the blind' are somehow essentially different from 'the sighted'. Tirsis cannot hope to comprehend Fortuna's reasoning because of her fundamental difference from him, symbolised by both her blindness and her gender. Meanwhile, Deshoulières's stanza exemplifies how fear is the knee-jerk reaction to being confronted by Fortuna. Her protagonist is reduced to a 'lâche' who is terrified of death, reluctant to even look Fortuna in the eye and exercise upon her the one power that she lacks: the power of the gaze. These interpretations of blindness as fundamental difference and as a cause of fear are just as present in the poems about Cupid/*Amour aveugle* I analysed previously. Cupid's arrows render lovers powerless in their own bodies, and they come to fear this 'tyran […] sans yeux, & sans raison' who holds absolute jurisdiction over them.[70] 'The blind' are not, however, presented in these poems as a homogenous group, a symbolic 'dark blank that so many imagine'.[71] What at first seem to be relatively straightforward and familiar metaphors of both *Amour aveugle* and *Fortune aveugle* being blind are in fact interpreted in varied and often contradictory ways by the poets of my corpus.

In lyrics concerning these two symbolic figures, there are multiple indications that blindness is contagious, although, as we have just seen, Deshoulières's stanza suggests that her protagonist holds the power to avoid

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[70] Ms-4123.
[71] Rodas (2009), p. 117.

contagion. Victims of both Cupid and Fortuna are disabled in another figurative sense, described as if glued to the spot and unable to escape their fate. Contrary to the metaphors of blindness analysed by Rodas, there is a definite sense of 'a process of becoming' – as well as being – blind in this corpus.[72] Characters' bodies disintegrate and cannot be controlled, destroyed from within or transformed into static objects: a candle burned to the bottom or Fortuna's plaything, all a consequence of a blind entity's irrational actions upon them. Finally, both love and fortune are feminised as well as blind. Cupid's preestablished association with androgyny is exaggerated when a beautiful but dispassionate woman's gaze is likened to volleys of fiery arrows that ignite passion within the hearts of those they strike – as if Cupid were residing within her in an act of corporeal cross-dressing.[73] Less prevalent than Cupid but still a significant recurring metaphor of blindness in this corpus, fortune's pagan incarnation as the blind goddess Fortuna further strengthens the link between blindness, unreason, and femininity.

Metaphorical *Perclusion*

Having begun by drawing some conclusions from *aveuglement*, the most common and recognisable metaphorical disability found in my poetic corpus, I will now introduce a second that appears less frequently but is no less revealing about how disability shapes seventeenth-century understandings of romantic desire. A piece of early modern terminology that is no longer in use, *perclusion* refers to '*a blasting, lamenesse, or numbnesse in the members*' and is more frequently used in its adjectival form 'perclus', as in the following two examples

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[72] Ibid., p. 119.
[73] For Cupid and androgyny in Renaissance art, see Kingsley-Smith (2010), p. 138.

provided by Randle Cotgrave's 1611 dictionary: 'Perclus de ses membres. *Taken, blasted, striken, benummed, suddenly growne lame, or deprived of the use, of his limmes*. Oeil perclus. *An eye that cannot move because the muskles belonging to it are benummed*'.[74] These examples and translations allow me to draw two preliminary hypotheses about the meaning of *perclusion* in mid-seventeenth-century French: 1) it refers to a lack of movement of a body part or parts that previously moved, 2) following this, one is not born *perclus* but one becomes *perclus*, often quite suddenly it would seem. This adjective can also apply to an eye, suggesting that visual impairment and *perclusion* are conceptual neighbours, and might even overlap at times.

The entry for 'perclus' in Émile Littré's nineteenth-century *Dictionnaire de la langue française* provides an example of the adjective's usage from a poem by Scarron, one of the key named poets in my corpus of seventeenth-century lyric verse: 'Depuis le temps que, perclus de mes membres, / Pour moi Paris est réduit à deux chambres'.[75] Given Gautier's 1844 critical rehabilitation of Scarron,[76] it is unsurprising that a dictionary published in the second half of the nineteenth century should instinctively reach for him as an example of a *perclus*, though it certainly demonstrates the poet's enduring association with this word that he used so many times in his self-descriptive lyric verse. Like Cotgrave's examples, Scarron's couplet quoted by Littré reiterates the notion of *becoming* disabled. Within these two lines, the poet's state of *perclusion* is traceable to a particular time where there occurred a severe reduction in his ability to move himself around. Yet this reduction of movement is expressed not through bodily

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[74] Cotgrave (1611).
[75] Littré (1863–72). The couplet quoted is from Scarron's 'Epistre chagrine à Monseigneur le Mareschal d'Albret'. See Paul Scarron, *Poésies diverses, tome 2* (Paris: Didier, 1960), p. 229.
[76] Gautier (1856).

imagery but through spatial imagery: *perclusion* has caused the physical space around him to reduce so that an entire city shrinks down to just two rooms. I will revisit these notions of spatial reduction and confinement in subsequent chapters.[77] Such notions forecast the social model of disability, casting disability as a result of inaccessible environments, Paris being the agent in this statement, reducing itself from a city to just two rooms. For now, I have established from these dictionary definitions and examples that *perclusion* in the most literal sense refers to an impairment of the limbs where a person is no longer able to move themselves around.

This chapter's focus, however, is on metaphors of disability, and *perclusion* surfaces relatively frequently in my corpus of poetry not as a descriptor of a physical disability but as a metaphor of figurative paralysis, often, like *aveuglement*, due to a surplus of passion. The prevalence of metaphorical *perclusion* is not remarkable in and of itself, 'perclus' having been used in a figurative sense since at least the sixteenth century. A 1552 sonnet to Hélène by Ronsard associates disability with unreason by describing foolish men as 'perclus de raison' (as opposed to the literal sense of 'perclus des membres'),[78] while in the essay 'De la cruauté' Montaigne remarks that being tongue-tied while conversing with women can seem like a disability as a man loses control of his body: 'il leur semble que [...] nostre discours ne sçauroit lors faire son office, tout perclus et ravi en la volupté'.[79] Montaigne's analogy echoes one of the conclusions of my previous section, which demonstrated how various

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[77] In particular, see sections of Chapter Four entitled 'Performance Anxiety' and 'Coming out as Crip, Coming out as Queer'. Chapter Five addresses Scarron's personal account of his disability at length.

[78] Pierre de Ronsard, *Sonnets pour Hélène* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1934), p. 158.

[79] Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p. 451.

protagonists' metaphorical *aveuglement* was frequently caused by beautiful yet unobtainable women.

Perclusion as Conquest

In love poetry, the most common invocation of *perclusion* is through a metaphorical disfunction of the senses as evidenced in an unsigned *chanson* of three stanzas in Ms-4129. Echoing Montaigne's image of speech being 'tout perclus et ravi en la volupté', this piece is entitled 'Ravissemens amoureux':

> Lisis apres de longs combats
> Ayant vaincu Climene
> 	Elle luy dit perdant l'haleine
> 	Au fort des amoureux esbats
> Ah mon ame ah Berger le plaisir me transporte
> 	Tous mes sens sont perclus
> 	Hélas je nen puis plus
> Ah je meurs ah Lisis ah je meurs je suis morte.[80]

The piece continues for two subsequent stanzas, Climène coming back to life – Et puis [elle] revint en vie' – only for her senses to become metaphorically *perclus* as she dies/orgasms all over again when the refrain returns.[81] This *chanson* bears several hallmarks of love in the *galant* tradition. The pastoral setting along with the shepherd and shepherdess protagonists are obvious allusions to Honoré d'Urfée's *L'Astrée* (1607-1627), whose influence on seventeenth-century *galant* verse and *mondain* culture was extensive.[82] The plot of the poem depicts an archetypal *galant* narrative of love as a battle, sex being likened to a series of 'longs combats' in which hero and heroine assume active and passive roles respectively, Lisis attempting to 'vainc[re]' Climène (give her

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[80] Ms-4129, p. 95.
[81] The refrain is the final four lines of the stanza quoted above.
[82] Génetiot (1997), pp. 52, 58; Schneider (2019), pp. 318-325.

an orgasm) and eventually succeeding. As we would expect in a *galant* lyric, love is more dalliance than devotion, a serious of 'amoureux esbats' taking place 'sur l'herbe au fond d'un bois',[83] where Climène, 'perdant l'haleine', is eventually conquered by her lover Lisis. The orgasmic pleasure exchanged between lovers in this moment of sexual conquest is intense yet ephemeral, and then the game begins again: 'Elle mourut pour un moment / Et puis revint à vie'.[84] So intense is this pleasure that Climène describes her senses as 'perclus' each time she orgasms in the refrain.

Rather than being deprived of the use of her limbs, as in the most literal meaning of this word, she is stripped of her perceptive faculties by the intensity of her orgasm, exclaiming 'le plaisir me transporte'. Given the context, the most immediately apparent meaning of *transporter* is the figurative sense of being emotionally moved.[85] Yet disability-centric reading might focus on the second meaning of *transporter* as physical displacement. Climène does not transport herself, in keeping with her state of *perclusion*, but she is transported by an external agent, namely the pleasure she receives from her lover Lisis. When used in conjunction with an image of *perclusion*, this verb this strengthens the *chanson*'s ties to disability, the reader (or listener) imagines its heroine unable to walk, swept up and carried to a new location by an external power. If we now switch back to the figurative meaning of this collection of imagery, a *perclusion des sens* as a result of an amorous conquest might entail any number of further disabilities, implying that Climène is so given over to pleasure that she can no longer see, hear, touch, taste, smell or even think straight. *Perclusion* here is

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[83] Ms-4129, p. 96.
[84] Ibid., p. 95.
[85] In his entry for *transporter*, Littré quotes the Marquise de Sévigné using it in this sense: 'Dieu a permis que Mme la Dauphine [...] s'est transportée d'une telle colère, que le roi fut trois fois chez elle pour l'apaiser, craignant pour sa grossesse'. Littré (1863–72).

thus metaphorically figured as a sensory overload and a total submission to the transporting power of orgasmic pleasure, on the part of a woman engaging in a *galant* picture of sex as a kind of military conquest followed by a surrender.

It is significant that this moment of submission and ecstasy should be described in the refrain by a word that usually connotes physical disability. Unlike the largely despairing metaphors of *aveuglement* analysed previously, this metaphorical *perclusion* is one of joyful, sensual relinquishment on the part of a heroine. Despite these positive connotations attached to the word 'perclus', disability remains just as tied to femininity as it was in previous poems featuring metaphorical *aveuglement*. A figurative *perclusion* is ascribed to Climène as a necessary step towards her fulfilment of how men expect a heroine to act in a *galant* spectacle of courtship: she must resist up to a point but ultimately submit to being 'ravie' once Lisis has adequately proven his vigour and commitment. As part of love in the *galant* poetic tradition, women are metaphorically disabled by men, and this is thought of as a positive thing.

Perclusion as Emasculation

To delve further into the gendered connotations of this word, we can consider a poem by Benserade that assigns a metaphorical state of *perclusion* to its hero rather than its heroine and with a strikingly different outcome. Entitled 'Jalousie', the lyric narrates the plight of a man who worries that his mistress is off cavorting with his rival while he is bed-bound by fever. The first six stanzas explain the dilemma faced by the protagonist:

> J'avois la fièvre ardente, et, comme en frénésie,
> Dedans mon triste lit j'en sentois les assauts ;

> Cependant une jalousie
> Étoit le plus grand de mes maux.
>
> Un rival prend son temps, choisit son avantage,
> Et vient voir la beauté qui cause mon ennuy ;
>   Il est sot et me fait ombrage,
>   Car elle est sotte comme luy.
>
> Bien mieux que ses discours mon mal la persuäde,
> Et si je pers le fruit qui devoit estre mien,
>   C'est par ce que je suis malade,
>   Et que l'autre se porte bien.
>
> Elle ne fit jamais de si grossiére faute ;
> Cet esprit qui ne peut former un bon dessein,
>   Croit qu'un badin qui danse & saute,
>   Vaut un honnête homme mal-sain.
>
> Elle vient à mon lit, elle me pleint sans cesse
> Et voudroit, me voyant de tous mes sens perclus,
>   Me faire passer pour tristesse
>   Son desordre & ses yeux battus.
>
> Pour mieux dissimuler elle en veut à ses charmes,
> Et cependant, au point qu'elle pleure mon mal,
>   Je lis dans ses yeux tout en larmes,
>   Un Rendez-vous à mon Rival.[86]

Imagery of able-bodiedness is juxtaposed with disability to draw a comparison between the narrator and his rival in courtship by way of a play on metaphorical lovesickness compared to literal sickness. The rival is said to be 'un badin qui danse & saute', a characterisation that aligns with the emphasis on vigour and dynamism in rival men wishing to please women in the tradition of *galanterie*. The sexual prowess of this rival is alluded to via his physical activity, implying that, in the framework of *galanterie*, a nondisabled man is thought to make a better lover than a disabled man. The narrator, however, defines himself by his inactivity to the point at which he describes his senses as 'perclus'. Echoing the heroine of the previous *chanson*, this state of *perclusion* refers not to the

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[86] This poem appears twice in my manuscript corpus. In Ms. 4115 it is unsigned and in Français 12680 it is attributed to Benserade. For the section quoted above, Ms-4115, pp. 193-194; Français 12680, fols. 219ʳ-219ᵛ.

protagonist's physical inability to leave his bed but to his numbed senses caused by sickness. Yet, echoing my previous conclusion about the permeability of the eyes, the protagonist is able to read the deception in his beloved's eyes despite his weakened condition. In the final stanza of this extract, he deduces that the circles under those eyes are not the result of lying awake with worry but an illicit nocturnal rendezvous with his rival that he was powerless to prevent.

Furthermore, as the poem continues, we begin to wonder whether the protagonist's bedbound condition is caused more by illness or by jealousy – to what extent is he a *malade imaginaire*? The words 'mal' and 'fièvre' used here to describe his illness regularly refer in love poetry to both literal sickness and metaphorical lovesickness. For example, a *chanson* by a Mr D. B. in NAF 18220 has its protagonist Tircis twice exclaim 'Ah Mon Mal Ne vient que Damour'.[87] Similarly, an anonymous love poem in the *Recueil Conrart*, 'Sur la fiévre de Madelon', describes how the narrator has 'gagné la fiévre amoureuse' by visiting the heroine's bedside while she is afflicted by a genuine fever.[88] The narrator wishes that they could swap afflictions so that Madelon could fall in love with him at the price of his own health: 'Ciel, otez-lui sa fiévre, & luy donnez la mienne!'[89] This ironic concluding outcry relies upon these dual meanings of fevers in love poetry, one literal and one figurative.

If we then return to Benserade's 'Jalousie', we notice that the poet blurs the line between literal and figurative sickness. Regardless of whether the narrator's 'fièvre ardente' is caused by illness or love – perhaps a combination of the two – the first stanza makes it clear that his jealousy, a figurative *mal*, is worse than his fever. The typical militaristic imagery of love as conquest takes

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[87] NAF 18220, p. 290.
[88] Ms-15143, fol. 161ʳ.
[89] Ibid.

hold, but this time it is directed against the hero rather than by him, as he feels the fever's 'assauts' while his rival schemes and strategises: '[il] prend son temps, choisit son avantage'. The narrator has come to believe that his beloved is conspiring against him with his rival, linked in the second stanza by rhyme as the 'beauté qui cause mon ennuy' who is just as 'sotte comme luy'. The tables have been turned and the male narrator, who would usually fulfil the role of virile conqueror, has been emasculated by this 'badin', who uses his physical mobility to his advantage while the narrator himself is unable to move. I revisit this homosocial competition between rival men over a woman in Chapter Four,[90] but for now I wish to highlight that, in expressing this state of emasculated helplessness caused by sicknesses both literal and figurative, the narrator reaches for the very same metaphor of disability as the conquered woman of 'Ravissemens amoureux': 'me voyant de tous mes sens perclus'. For the heroine of 'Ravissemens amoureux', a *perclusion des sens* signified both a joyful consummation of a dalliance and her fulfilment of the *galant* heroine archetype, whereas for Benserade's narrator, it signifies his failure as a *galant* hero and, consequently, sounds a death knell on his own relationship with his beloved.

Perclusion, *Aveuglement*, and Nature

Up until this point, my analysis of disability as metaphor in love lyrics has been focused on the level of the individual: how do metaphors of disability affect or reveal various characters' desires and anxieties within the plot of each poem? Departing from this focus, imagery of *perclusion* now allows me to move beyond the individual and towards the cosmological, asking how metaphors of disability

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[90] See 'Between Men'.

shape the poetic landscape in the pieces of my corpus. 'Galanterie à une dame à qui l'on avoit donné en raillant le nom de Souris' is a whimsical epistle by Sarasin featuring an anthropomorphised mouse as the protagonist,[91] which describes what happens to a world neglected by Venus and Cupid after they fell out with the protagonist:

> Cependant la machine ronde
> Qu'en prose on appelle le *Monde* ;
> Qui par Amour seul se maintient,
> Et que le seul Amour soûtient,
> Des soins de l'Amour délaissée
> S'en alloit bien-tôt renversée.
> Les éléments n'agissoient plus ;
> L'onde & les vents étoient perclus ;
> La terre demeuroit en friche ;[92]

In this section, the dysfunction caused by the familiar motif of love's absence is expressed by a metaphor of *perclusion*. Yet here it is not a human character that is said to be figuratively disabled due to the departure of their lover, but the elements themselves: 'Les éléments n'agissoient plus ; / L'onde & les vents étoient perclus'. This choice of metaphor to describe sudden elemental disfunction as if it were a disability exemplifies the connection between disability and Nature made in my introduction, namely that the seventeenth century commonly understood disability a deviation from Nature's proper course. Various poems analysed previously in this chapter situate metaphorical disability as a result of unrequited or lost love, and this motif reappears here in a poem describing the *perclusion* of water and wind due to Venus and Cupid's neglect. The world is described as 'machine ronde' that has been 'renversée', a catastrophic event described by Sarasin as an instance of *perclusion*, attesting to

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[91] Tallement des Réaux claims that the eponymous *dame* is Mme de Turgis. Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux, *Les historiettes de Tallemant Des Réaux, tome quatrième* (Paris, 1834-1835), pp. 57-58.

[92] Jean-François Sarasin, *Les oeuvres de Mr. Sarasin* (Dunkirk: Mabre-Cramoisy, 1696), p. 369. This poem can also be found in the manuscript Français, fols. 3ᵛ-10ʳ.

a commonality between (male) body and cosmos: when deprived of love the world becomes *perclus* just like the protagonist of Benserade's 'Jalousie'. Body and cosmos, it would seem, both break down in similar ways if deprived of love.

The wide-ranging extent of this cosmological disruption is made clear in what directly follows this instance of elemental *perclusion*. The poem lists a series of animals who no longer love their partners – the stag hides from the doe, the cock hates the hen, the minnow leaves his wife, and so on – all while the world remains a barren wilderness.[93] Eventually, Jupiter steps in and resolves to mend the feud between the mouse and the two gods of love:

> Le grand Jupiter se troubla,
> Et les Dieux au ciel assembla.
> Et leur faisant voir ce désordre
> Tel qu'un aveugle y pouvoit mordre
> Le monde, dit-il, a besoin
> Qu'Amour en reprenne le soin ;
> Et c'est fait de dame Nature,
> Si cette guerre encore dure,
> Guerre fait mal à propos.
> L'Amour nous tira du cahos ;
> Il pourroit bien nous y remettre :
> Mais il ne le faut pas permettre.[94]

The 'désordre' and 'cahos' caused by love's absence from the world is temporary and eventually Jupiter intervenes to restore the old order of things. Before he does so, Sarasin has the gods assemble to observe the extent of this disorder which is said to be so great that even 'un aveugle y pouvoit mordre', an idiom that represents a second instance of disability being figuratively invoked to underscore the dramatic change that has taken place worldwide. This idiom appears in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* to mean that 'la chose dont on parle est tres-aisée à comprendre, & ne demande pas une grande intelligence, & cela se dit ordinairement quand on parle d'un deffaut tres-

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., pp. 369-370.

facile à remarquer'.[95] Once again, the word 'deffaut' reappears in a discourse of disability, positing some connection between bodies that are lacking and a world that is lacking. The poet's choice of idiom – 'Tel qu'un aveugle y pouvoit mordre' – substantiates Rodas's claim that disability is evoked to describe something incommensurable, yet paradoxically taken to be self-evident.[96] Using the poet's chosen language, the great cosmological *perclusion* described in this section of the poem was so seismic, so far beyond ordinary frames of reference, that even a blind person could see it. Disability in this poem is an altered physical state that the able-bodied 'we' of the speaker cannot fathom, but simultaneously is assumed to be plainly obvious to all present.

Disability and Able-Bodiedness

In the poems analysed so far, disability features as a metaphorical stand-in for a certain something that has gone terribly awry, whether it be reason, masculinity, or the elements themselves. A common thread running through them is the endorsement of a clear and distinct difference between disability and the real ideal of able-bodiedness, or a complete and utter absence of disability. Able-bodiedness is sometimes directly alluded to by the imagery of physical activity against which disability is defined: Benserade's 'Jalousie' describes the sickly protagonist's rival as 'un badin qui danse & saute', while Sarasin's verse to the mouse lady narrates that 'Les éléments n'agissoient plus ; / L'onde & les vents étoient perclus', the implication being that prior to becoming disabled, the waves and the wind acted precisely as they should. On a broader scale, Vidali

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[95] Entry for 'Mordre'.
[96] Rodas (2009), p. 16.

remarks in a passage quoted near the beginning of this chapter that metaphors of disability usually situate disability as an undesirable state of alterity.[97] The poems analysed above largely endorse this reading of alterity, but there are examples in my corpus where disability and able-bodiedness are portrayed as overlapping, and disability as a desirable trait, undercutting the binary opposition found in many love lyrics.

The *Blason*

The poetic genre of the *blason* demonstrates how an attempt to evoke the Petrarchan ideal produces a body that approximates disability, suggesting that poetic idealisation can in fact result in images of disability rather than able-bodiedness, which is usually assumed to be the desirable ideal state. A *blason* is a descriptive verse in praise of a single object, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that object was most often a beautiful part of a woman's body.[98] The poet's task was to find a series of appropriate metaphors to properly capture the beauty of the chosen body part, competing with other poets who would try to outdo each other in the ingenuity of their metaphors and versification.[99] *Blasons* can be related to physiognomy insofar as they typically represent physical beauty as indicative of moral worth just as *contreblasons*,

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[97] Vidali (2010), p. 38.

[98] Nancy J. Vickers, 'Members Only: Marot's Anatomical Blazons', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe,* ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York, NY and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. pp. 3-21 (p. 4). For definitions of the genre, see I. Silver, T. F. Brogan, and C. Alduy, 'Blason', in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* ed. by Stephen Cushman et al (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 150-151 (p. ,150); Wilson (1967), p. 10. For an in-depth study of the genre in sixteenth-century France, see Alison Saunders, *The Sixteenth-Century Blason Poétique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981). Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon, 'Introduction', in *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance,* ed. by Susan and Liam Haydon Anderson (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 2-17 (p. 9).

[99] Sawday (1995), p. 194.

studied at length in Chapter Two, interpret physical ugliness as indicative of an immoral inner character.[100] Though he did not originate the genre, Clément Marot (1496-1544) is the French poet most associated with the *blason*, having kickstarted its initial period of great popularity in the mid-sixteenth century with his 'Blason du beau tetin', composed in 1535 and printed alongside other *blasons* in 1536.[101] As a genre, the *blason* is commonly taken as idealising of the female body.[102] I argue, however, that it demonstrates how disability and bodily variability were not marginal but central to such representations of idealised female beauty written from the perspective of male onlookers. It also demonstrates the overlap between disability and able-bodiedness in love poetry of the era, and the difficulty in telling the two apart.

A *blason* by d'Alibray enables us to further investigate this vexed relationship between disability and the ideal of able-bodiedness:

> Bien-heureux les souspirs qui passent par ta bouche,
> Si quelque chose au moins t'oblige à souspirer ;
> Bien-heureux le doux air que tu veux respirer ;
> Et bien-heureux le vent que ton haleine touche ;
>
> Bien-heureux le sousris qui sort tout couronné
> De perles d'orient au point de sa naissance ;
> Et bien-heureux encore, bien-heureux le silence,
> Qui dessous ces rubis se tient emprisonné ;
>
> Bien-heureux qui vous void, belles levres de roses,
> Bien-heureux qui vous oid, quand vous estes decloses,
> Plus heureux qui sur vous peut sa flamme appaiser.
>
> L'une de vous paroist un peu plus avancée,

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[100] Plantié notes how these essentially physiognomical ideas surface again and again in seventeenth-century French verse. Plantié (2016), pp. 147-149.

[101] Saunders (1981), p. 114; Wilson (1967), p. 10. Jeffery Persels, 'Masculine Rhetoric & the French *Blason anatomique*', in *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France,* ed. by Kathleen P. Long (Kirksville, MI: Truman State University Press, 2002), pp. 19-35 (p. 19).

[102] Jonathan Sawday acknowledges this common reading of *blasons* but argues, as I do, that there are more complex issues at play than straightforward idealisation of the female body. Sawday (1995), p. 192. See also Wilson (1967), pp. 37-40.

> Mais je l'en aime mieux d'estre ainsi rehaussée,
> Car elle en est aussi la plus proche du baiser.

Reaching himself for ocularcentric language, Alain Génetiot dismisses this sonnet as largely unremarkable, possessing a 'lexique […] réduit et peu varié' and a 'vision myope qui détaille une partie – noble – du corps de la Dame pour en généraliser la perfection',[103] all typical characteristics of a *blason*. Génetiot's choice of wording – *myope* – ascribes disability to the poet, implying that his piece is lacking in ambition and devoid of artistry. While some of the above may be true, Génetiot is overly dismissive of this sonnet which, upon close examination, has much of value to contribute to a discussion of disability. The metaphors contained within its clichéd praise of female beauty demonstrate the centrality of imagery of disability and physical variability in the formation of an able-bodied ideal. As Génetiot notes, this poem certainly ticks all the boxes of the archetypal *blason*. It adopts a male gaze, zooming in on the unnamed and objectified female subject's mouth, cutting it off from the rest of her body and carrying out a voyeuristic dissection of each component part associated with that mouth, enlisting a series of commonplace metaphors to evoke their loveliness. Her lips are cut off from the rest of her body and she is surrounded by an imaginary crowd of captivated admirers watching and listening to her mouth's every action, wishing they could kiss it.

D'Alibray's sonnet exemplifies what Jonathan Sawday terms the 'culture of dissection' in *blasons*, where the poet acts rather like the anatomist depicted on the title page of Vesalius's 1543 *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, carrying out a metaphorical dissection of the de-personified female body for the benefit of

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[103] Génetiot (1990), p. 88.

other men.[104] Where Vesalius's anatomist dissects the womb, d'Alibray's narrator

targets the mouth with his surgical knife, both conducting demonstrations of

male technical brilliance exacted upon the female body for the admiration (and

titillation) of male viewers or readers.[105] Sawday correctly links this to Eve

Sedgwick's theory of homosociality, a reference point upon which I will expand

in Chapter Four.[106] The poetics of fragmentation in descriptions of the beautiful

female body is Petrarchan in nature,[107] drawing on Petrarch's renowned

portrayal of Laura in his *Rime Sparse*,[108] in which her individual body parts are

isolated and described separate from the whole. As Nancy Vickers notes, 'Laura

is always presented as a part or parts of a woman',[109] and 'a composite of

details' that ultimately leads to distortion of the human female form.[110] This

Petrarchan fragmentation of the female body was a well-worn representational

technique adopted by countless Renaissance *blasonneurs*, and is present in

d'Alibray's isolation of the mouth from the rest of the female body to insist upon

its superlative beauty and focus on its actions of sighing and smiling.[111]

The poet's process of dissection systematically takes us through a series

of actions, centred on the mouth, that he finds laudable. First, there is sighing,

commonly taken to be an expression of love in French verse of this era and more

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[104] Sawday (1995), pp. 192-194.

[105] For more on the relationship between Vesalius and *blasons*, see ibid., pp. 95-96. Chloé Hogg remarks that the seventeenth-century French representation of and fascination with war wounds is a further example of this culture of dissection. Hogg (2019), p. 182.

[106] See section entitled 'Between Men'.

[107] Nancy J. Vickers, 'Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme', *Critical Inquiry,* 8. 2 (1981), 265-279 (p. 272).

[108] Critics have stressed the Italian sources of many of the motifs found in early modern French *blasons*. Saunders (1981), pp. 131, 134; Wilson (1967), p. 11.

[109] Vickers (1981), p. 266.

[110] Ibid., p. 267.

[111] Nancy Vickers argues that the body parts described in *blasons* existed in space, cut off from the bodily whole to which they belonged, referring to the illustrations accompanying sixteenth-century blasons that showed a single body part in isolation. See Vickers (1997), p. 9.

generally as an indicator of passion.[112] He then moves to the very act of breathing itself before describing his beloved's smile, another action understood as indicative of surplus passion.[113] At this point in the poem, these actions are entirely hypothetical, as signalled by the conjunction *si*. The line 'Si quelque chose au moins t'oblige à souspirer' is evasively vague, noting that the lady might hypothetically be obliged to sigh by an unnamed force, perhaps her passion or the sight of a lover. She is described as inanimate, the narrator wishing that something or someone might come along and animate her. This anonymous, faceless beloved can be brought to life and made lovely (or loveable) by these two simple actions by her mouth, cut off from the rest of her body. Yet, crucially, these actions are deferred – her mouth *might* smile and sigh if given cause to do so – casting doubt on her ability to perform the requisite actions expected of beautiful women in the Petrarchan lyric tradition.

The third stanza makes us aware that the poet's beloved is not the only actor here: 'Bien-heureux qui vous void […] / Bien-heureux qui vous oid'. An unknown number of onlookers are made happy by their ability to see and hear the lady in question, or, more accurately, to see and hear her mouth. The present tense of these verbs insinuates that something or someone did eventually succeed in causing her mouth to smile and sigh, though we are not told what or who. The emotional exchange in this poem therefore hinges on

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[112] Porta affirms that 'le soupir est le signe commun de l'amour'. Porta (1655), p. 248. Carla Mazzio writes of the 'inarticulate sighs, stammers and groans of lovers' in the Petrarchan poetic tradition to which the *blason* belongs. She argues that, in medical and poetic discourses of Renaissance England, 'loving was often a matter of having one's breath literally taken away'. Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: language trouble in an age of eloquence* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), pp. 142-143.

[113] Cartesian thought relating to the passions was put into images by Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's court painter, who regarded the movement of the lower part of the face as indicative of extreme passion. Colin Jones, *The Smile Revolution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 50-54.

ability: ability of the lady's mouth to (eventually) perform the typical expressions of love and the onlookers' and listeners' ability to observe and hear these smiles and sighs. The characters are defined by their ability to carry out the actions required of them in this spectacle of courtship, but this ability is far from guaranteed, as underscored by the narrator's initial uncertainty as to whether the lady's mouth would in fact smile and sigh on cue.

To further complicate the distinction between ability and disability, there are two striking images of disability and physical variability that stoke the narrator's passion for his beloved. On line seven the narrator exclaims 'Et bien-heureux encore, bienheureux le silence, / Qui dessous ces rubis se tient emprisonné'. This particular image is highlighted within the sonnet by virtue of its placement, occurring exactly half-way-through the poem, along with the words 'bien-heureux *encore*' (emphasis mine) that precede the caesura, situating this as the happiest of all the happy things hitherto described. This image of disability is then followed by one further repetition of 'bien-heureux' to underscore the superlative nature of the silence's happiness. Of particular note, then, is the fact that despite her eventual ability to perform the sighs and smiles that love requires, d'Alibray's beloved does not speak. Or rather, in the narrator's words, the very personification of silence itself is imprisoned within her mouth, amounting to a rather elaborate metaphorical rewriting of the misogynistic fantasy of a beautiful woman who is seen and not heard. Read literally, d'Alibray's heroine has no other features. She is a disembodied, lovestruck pair of lips with the personified figure of silence imprisoned 'dessous ces rubis'. Unsurprisingly, the herione's silence is posited as the most alluring of all her traits. Further to this silence that can be read as disability, the final stanza notes that one of the lady's lips 'paroist un peu plus avancée', a remark

that implies she has an overbite, or that one of her lips is more prominent than the other. Far from criticising her overbite as imperfection, however, the narrator says that he prefers her lip 'ainsi rehaussée' because it is easier for him to kiss. Physical variability also plays a significant enabling role in courtship, positioned as an advantage rather than a defect, a proposition that I will return to in Chapter Four.[114]

A cliché-ridden idealisation of female beauty such as this has a lot to contribute to a discussion of disability, perhaps despite its author's intention. In trying to make his heroine fit the mould of the Petrarchan female beloved, d'Alibray succeeds in creating a protagonist who approximates disability, having been rendered non-verbal by the misogynistic constraints of the *blason*. Though he was not a *galant* poet, d'Alibray's piece demonstrates how poetic efforts to regulate bodily form, such as the genre of the *blason*, can inadvertently lead to the opposite effect, producing a beloved whose primary traits evokes disability and deformity. Such a reading supports the conclusion that the idealised able body is inherently precarious and may share some features with bodies thought of as disabled.

The poem complicates the physiognomical interpretation of disability found in Porta's treatise as a resoundingly negative characteristic, especially when paired with femininity. From the perspective of a male narrator who wishes women to remain passive objects to be scrutinised and longed for by men, a beloved who never speaks yet whose lip sticks out slightly as if reaching for a kiss is an ideal, exemplifying Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's point that 'female embodiment is a disabling condition in sexist culture'.[115] It conforms to the

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[114] See section entitled 'Coming out as Crip, Coming out as Queer'.
[115] Garland-Thomson (2013), p. 337.

misogynistic expectations of heroines in *blasons* while at the same time valorising disability and physical variability as advantageous characteristics in this specific literary context. This reading can be linked to Vidali's call, quoted in my introduction to this chapter, for a disability approach to metaphor that moves away from understanding disability as something merely 'used' or 'represented' by metaphor. Metaphorical disability is not used by d'Alibray. Instead, it is an integral – though perhaps accidental – component in the formation of his version of the idealised Petrarchan heroine. Authorial intent is unclear: we cannot know whether d'Alibray intended for his beloved to be read as unable to speak and in possession of an overbite, or if these characteristics are accidental consequences of the process of poetic dissection he undertakes.

The reading of these metaphors as disabling *as well as* enabling demonstrates how, far from being mutually exclusive, able-bodiedness and disability overlap and are frequently indistinguishable from one another. Robert McRuer expands upon this idea that disability is always inherent in the idealised body in his reading of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. He argues that

everyone is virtually disabled, both in the sense that able-bodied norms are "intrinsically impossible to embody" fully, and in the sense that able-bodied status is always temporary, disability being the one category that all people will embody if they live long enough.[116]

According to McRuer's re-inscription of Butler's theorisation of heterosexual norms, what we think of as the norms of able-bodiedness are, in fact, equally impossible to embody, making them more appropriately thought of as ideals, comparable to Castiglione's ideal courtier or d'Alibray's ideal Petrarchan heroine. Consequently, nobody (and no body) can live up to the able-bodied ideal and everyone is therefore somewhere on the verge of what we would call disability

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[116] McRuer (2013), p. 374. For the passage of Butler's work that he quotes, see Butler (2007), p. 166.

when measured against these ideals. McRuer does not mean to suggest that everybody is disabled in some way, rather he exposes the binary of disability and able-bodiedness as fallacious. Able bodies and disabled bodies are not binary opposites but overlapping and sometimes impossible to tell apart due to the often-contradictory nature of the ideals to which they try and inevitably fail to live up. The precarity of able-bodiedness and its proximity to disability is demonstrated by d'Alibray's *blason* of a mouth, specifically in the narrator's anxiety over whether his heroine will be able to perform the smiles and sighs required of her, and in his depiction of her as unable to speak and in possession of an overbite. Furthermore, the heroine's disability is presented within the misogynistic framing of the poem as a wholly positive trait. It is unclear in this poem whether able-bodiedness or disability is the ideal.

There is a paradox at the heart of the poem: d'Alibray's ideal women is both able-bodied and disabled. Able-bodied in that her mouth eventually succeeds on line ten to perform actions indicative of love (sighs and smiles), but disabled in that she does not speak and, crucially, is all the more desirable because of this. Likewise, her overbite is not viewed negatively as a deformity but as an advantageous characteristic that enables the act of kissing, bringing her mouth that little bit closer to the narrator's. These two images are paradoxically seen by a male narrator as enabling rather than disabling: the end result of the *blason* is a heroine who is disabled by and for the male gaze. The piece is an example of Petrarchism folding in on itself – the ideal Petrarchan heroine ends up approximating disability as she is made to conform to the various misogynistic fantasies of the *blasonneur* and his audience.

Able-Bodied Anxiety

When Rodas wrote that the blind spot was a fearful place, she argued that metaphorical language of disability points towards a fear of alterity, symbolised by the imagined experience of disability on the part of the assumed-to-be nondisabled speaker. The poems analysed in this chapter support her hypothesis, with disability referring to a host of negative embodied states, whether it be lovesickness, heartbreak, despair, or loneliness, from a largely male nondisabled perspective. In so doing, they expose the precarity of that perspective, its proximity to disability and, ultimately, the fallacious nature of able-bodiedness itself as a concept. Excluding the supernatural Cupid and Fortuna, the poems analysed above do not depict characters who are visually impaired in any realistic or literal sense, preferring to represent *aveuglement* as a figurative state of sensual confusion or overwhelming passion. Likewise, the imagery of *perclusion* discussed in this chapter is, at the very most, ambiguous as to whether it ever refers to a physical disability rather than a surrendering in amorous conquest or a state of emasculation. Finally, the imagery of disability displayed by d'Alibray's idealised heroine is compounded by her objectification and dissection through the Petrarchan lens, leaving her a disembodied pair of lips that smiles and sighs, but cannot speak. Why is it that disability has come to be this metaphorical shorthand for fear and alterity, both in my corpus of seventeenth-century lyric verse and the various literary sources referenced by Rodas?

To answer this, we must return to the governing system of real ideals under which these poems are written: the burgeoning aesthetic of *galanterie*. As my introduction put forward, in order to successfully embody this aesthetic, an

individual would have to affect a countless number of gestures, intonations, and styles, all at once and to perfection while appearing as though these things come entirely naturally. Their body must be perfectly regulated – conforming to the *galant* models of the vigorous, dynamic hero and the beautiful yet statuesque heroine who eventually gives in to his charms. This is, of course, utterly impossible, *galanterie* being an unattainable ideal. It was, however, an ideal that, like Castiglione's courtier, had a real effect on how those in *galant* circles behaved, dressed, spoke, and wrote. Metaphors of disability in love poetry written in the *galant* aesthetic can be read as expressions of able-bodied anxiety in the face of such unattainable ideals. Failure on the part of a male protagonist to embody the *galant* ideal results in an approximation of disability. That failure is metaphorised via imagery of *aveuglement* and *perclusion*, metaphors that express the protagonists' fears that they will come to be regarded as disabled if they fail at amorous conquest as part of the pursuit of *galanterie*.

In an article I quoted in my introduction to this chapter, Amy Vidali called for a 'disability approach to metaphor' that 'attends to how diverse bodies impact metaphor acquisition and use, which shifts disability away from something only "used" or "represented" by metaphor [and] engage[s] the full range of disability'.[117] I contend that the poems analysed in this chapter tell us more about the imaginary ideal of able-bodiedness than disability. Specifically, that the ideal of able-bodiedness can be envisaged and portrayed by poets in ways that are close to – even indistinguishable from – disability. This chapter's examples of metaphorical catachresis that ascribe disabled subjectivity to nondisabled protagonists also carry out an act of counterfeiting. A nondisabled protagonist is described in a way that dresses them up as a disabled protagonist

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[117] Vidali (2010), p. 42.

to the point at which it is sometimes difficult for readers to tell the difference. In a 2020 article on able-bodied fragility in medieval France, Julie Singer writes that 'the prospect of a counterfeit disabled body alerts able-bodied onlookers to their own vulnerability'.[118] The metaphors of disability found in the seventeenth-century French love lyric fulfil a similar function, provoking an uncomfortable question of the precarity of able-bodiedness, itself an imaginary ideal that is ultimately impossible to embody and might at any time begin to approximate disability.

It is by now evident that disability in these poems carries almost uniformly negative connotations – lovesickness, heartbreak, despair, and loneliness are four I mentioned previously – however, that is not to say that disabled people are exclusively portrayed as vulnerable, passive victims. Indeed, the two most common blind stock characters, Cupid and Fortuna, are tyrannical gods. Moreover, there are plentiful examples of able-bodied vulnerability in narratives featuring Cupid and Fortuna, disabled gods who inevitably succeed in disrupting the bodies and desires of nondisabled protagonists. The relationship between disability and able-bodiedness in these poems is highly paradoxical to say the least. Nondisabled protagonists imagine themselves as disabled, even wishing disability upon themselves, as a metaphorical expression of their vulnerability, while at the same time they are terrorised by two disabled gods who threaten them with disability.

Able-bodiedness and disability are transposed onto one another in these pieces, with able-bodied protagonists becoming metaphorically disabled, while two recurring blind characters are omnipotent. The overall picture of

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[118] Julie Singer, 'Able-Bodied Fragility', *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures,* 9. 1 (2020), 47-68 (p. 38).

metaphorical disability in these poems is of systems breaking down and folding in on themselves, and of ostensibly nondisabled protagonists losing control over their bodies and coming to approximate disability. Sarasin's verse to the mouse-lady portrays a world without love as a disabled world where nothing functions as it should, as disability is universalised to stand for elemental disfunction. Such a world is the end product of able-bodied anxiety born from a recognition of the precarity of the ideal of an able body. Bodies assumed to be nondisabled cannot always be governed and controlled, often approaching a state analogous with disability, even if just for a short while, and this is, for these poets and their protagonists, an utterly terrifying thought.

There are two distinct fears of disability at work in these poems. The first is a male fear of becoming disabled by failing to achieve success in amorous conflict and live up to the able-bodied ideals of *galanterie*. Various male protagonists are metaphorically *aveuglés* by their beloved's absence and *perclus* by lovesickness. Failure to live up to the vigorous, able-bodied ideals of *galant* masculinity is expressed figuratively as disability. The second is a fear of an independent, abstract notion of disability itself – embodied by Cupid and Fortuna – that stands for an omnipotent, indecipherable other who operates apart from the protagonists and works upon them in ways they can neither comprehend nor resist. Cupid and Fortuna's disabilities are contagious, as these gods are also established as the root cause of a protagonist's becoming disabled. Cupid shoots his arrows and Fortuna turns her wheel, both causing passions to swell in protagonists' hearts that drive them to a state of unreason comparable to *aveuglement*.

In a great number of these poems, disability is also presented as intersecting with femininity.[119] A heroine's senses suddenly becoming *perclus* in orgasm is very much in keeping with how women in *galant* love poetry feign indifference before eventually giving in to the worthiest suitor in an intense release of passion. Yet when a hero in another poem exhibits the same *perclusion des sens* he forfeits his mistress who uses his state of figurative disability to go find herself a more vigorous lover. In a different way, the poems about metaphorical *aveuglement* position women as doing Cupid's work by shooting his darts out of their eyes and 'disabling' any man who dares look their way by filling him with passion and imprisoning him within their gaze. The subject of d'Alibray's *blason* of a mouth is metaphorically disabled, as the figure of silence imprisoned within her mouth prevents her from speaking, and this is put forward by the narrator as her loveliest trait.

The reading of femininity as contiguous with disability correlates with Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's argument, quoted in my introduction, that 'Western thought has long conflated femaleness and disability, understanding both as defective departures from a valued standard'.[120] Female characters in the love lyrics quoted in this chapter are often shown to be the cause of metaphorical disability in male protagonists as wells as being metaphorically disabled beings themselves. Consequently, we can add to the list a fear of femininity and a fear of becoming like women, which is, in many love lyrics, equated through metaphor to the fear of becoming disabled. In Chapter Two, I delve deeper into this notion that disability was thought of as a threat to order, both natural order and the regulated aesthetic of *galanterie*, and explore how

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[119] As mentioned previously, this is also a key takeaway from Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and Porta's *De la physionomie humaine*.
[120] Garland-Thomson (2013), p. 337.

that imminent disorder was expressed not through metaphor but through the

mode of grotesque realism.

2. GROTESQUE REALISM AND EMBODIED DISABILITY

The images of the grotesque body are precisely those which are abjected from the bodily canons of classical aesthetics. – Mary Russo[1]

As Renaissance urban legend has it, a Roman antiquarian working on the late-fifteenth-century restoration of St. Peter's Basilica was scaling the Esquiline Hill when the ground gave way beneath him. He fell into what appeared to be an enormous cavern whose walls were covered in frescoes depicting all manner of contorted monsters: winged cats blended with women's features and plants sprouting from their heads, hippogriffs whose tails spiral into acanthus, disembodied faces glaring outwards, and men with leaves for legs. The rediscovery of what we now know to be Nero's Domus Aurea prompted artists such as Raphael and Michelangelo to lower themselves into its cavernous interior and study its frescoes by candlelight.[2] The frescoes inspired plentiful imitations

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[1] Mary J. Russo, *The Female Grotesque : Risk, Excess, and Modernity* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), p. 8.

[2] The spreading of this 'rediscovery' story is credited to the Italian painter and writer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). For a more details of this account, see Michael Squire, '"Fantasies so Varied and Bizarre": The Domus Aurea, the Renaissance, and the "Grotesque"', in *A Companion to the Neronian Age,* ed. by Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 444-464 (pp. 444, 446-449); Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. xv; Brad Epps, 'Grotesque Identities: Writing, Death, and the Space of the Subject (Between Michel de Montaigne and Reinaldo Arenas)', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28. 1 (1996), 38-55 (pp. 41-42).

throughout the Renaissance and beyond in what came to be known as the *grottesche* style – literally of, or pertaining to, caves.[3]

Though most likely apocryphal, at least in part, it is appropriate to introduce the fanciful topic of the grotesque with the equally fanciful legend of its rediscovery at the beginning of the Renaissance. The story of Renaissance painters lowering themselves down into a cave to study the monsters on its walls also emphasises the grotesque's earthy nature and its sense of enclosure – of bodies within bodies. These key aspects will underpin much of this chapter's analysis, and serve as links between the grotesque and the cabaret, studied at length in Chapter Three. The grotesque as an art style achieves its effect through the manipulation of ideals and norms,[4] deliberately striving to depict bodies that, under a given bodily regime, would be considered abnormal or, to return to Porta's early modern terminology, a *défaut de nature*. The topic of this chapter is written grotesques, or how these patchwork monsters, in equal parts ridiculous and menacing, made their way into literature about disability and, particularly, how they reinforce or disrupt the seventeenth-century bodily regimes essential to physiognomy and *galanterie*.

The most prominent scholar of the literary grotesque is Mikhail Bakhtin, who wrote in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) that 'the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity'.[5] For Bakhtin, the mode of grotesque realism is a parody of supposedly 'high' literary productions that distorts and debases them through the addition of incongruous bodily and earthy elements

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[3] Squire (2013), pp. 448-449; Epps (1996), p. 41; Russo (1995), p. 1.
[4] Cheng (2012), p. 219; Russo (1995), p. 10.
[5] Bakhtin (1984), pp. 19-20.

while retaining some of their original characteristics. As my examples in this chapter attest, there is nothing particularly realistic about grotesque realism. In Bakhtin's formulation, 'realism' refers to an allegiance to the material, earthy, and bodily realm, coupled with an outright rejection of florid abstraction and lofty spiritualism. As a parodic, parasitic way of writing, grotesque realism has a lot in common with the seventeenth-century French mode of the burlesque, whose aim was to create a 'disconvenance de l'idée qu'on donne d'une chose d'avec son idée véritable', usually achieved 'en parlant bassement des choses les plus relévées, et l'autre parlant magnifiquement des choses les plus basses'.[6] Paradigmatic examples of the burlesque such as Scarron's *Le Virgile travesti* and Saint-Amant's 'Le Melon' also contain plentiful grotesque imagery.[7]

Joan DeJean considers the burlesque and the grotesque interchangeable concepts in this century, both chimerical phenomena consisting of a 'juxtaposition of forms belonging to two different realms' which 'at the same time emphasizes and eliminates the differences between these two kinds of forms, subverting the natural order of things'.[8] In this chapter, however, I have chosen to speak primarily of the grotesque rather than the burlesque because it is theoretically richer and not tied to specific mid-seventeenth-century poets such as Scarron, whose 1643 poetry collection entitled *Recueil de quelques vers burlesques* was the first self-identified work of burlesque,[9] making it tricky to

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[6] This description is from Charles Perrault, a seventeenth-century writer of burlesque quoted in Joan DeJean, *Scarron's* Roman comique*: A Comedy of the Novel, A Novel of Comedy* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1977), p. 18.
[7] Paul Scarron, *Le Virgile travesti* (Paris: Garnier, 1988); Marc-Antoine de Gérard de Saint-Amant, *Œuvres II* (Paris: Didier, 1967), pp. 14-31.
[8] DeJean (1977), pp. 21, 31.
[9] Leca (1999), p. 49.

speak of burlesque literature before his time.[10] This chapter compares Bakhtin's

formulation of grotesque realism to seventeenth-century French lyric poetry,

demonstrating how grotesque realist imagery in this corpus can function to

either reassert or undercut the aesthetic bodily ideals of *galanterie*, depending

on both the poet's intent and the reader's interpretation.

The grotesque in literature, as in art, describes a process of manipulating

the human body as well as the product of that manipulation – the incongruous

bodies it produces are referred to as grotesques. The grotesque realist mode

enacts this methodology of chaotic degradation upon what Bakhtin refers to as

'the literary and artistic canon of antiquity, which formed the basis of

Renaissance aesthetics'.[11] According to the ideals of this classical aesthetic

canon, the human body was

first of all a strictly completed, finished product. Furthermore, it was isolated,
alone, fenced off from all other bodies. All signs of its unfinished character, of its
growth and proliferation were eliminated; its protuberances and offshoots were
removed, its convexities (signs of new sprouts and buds) smoothed out, its
apertures closed.[12]

These essential characteristics of this classical body – its completion, isolation,

congruity and closedness – are not only eliminated but inverted to produce a

grotesque form that makes a mockery of everything the classical body stands

for. Consequently, the grotesque body is in a constant state of becoming,[13]

forever outgrowing itself and spilling beyond the inadequate confines of its skin.

It eats and drinks at an alarming rate and, at an equally alarming rate, shits,

pisses, pukes, burps, farts, orgasms, gives birth, bleeds and is dismembered. It

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[10] Bakhtin recognises the similarity between the burlesque and the grotesque but
considers the former more simplistic. I concur with this assessment. Bakhtin (1984), pp.
305-309.
[11] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[12] Ibid., p. 29.
[13] Ibid., p. 24.

is blended with other bodies, both animate and inanimate. It swallows the world and is itself swallowed up by the world. Bodily features that are eliminated or diminished in the classical body are exaggerated in its grotesque equivalent, which privileges what Bakhtin terms the 'lower stratum of the body': mouths gape open, noses jut out, bellies hang low, breasts are bared, and enormous genitals are proudly displayed.[14]

And finally, writers of the grotesque have made frequent use of imagery of disability to further the incongruous nonconformity of the grotesque bodies they describe. Despite his emphasis on incongruity, nonconformity and heterogeneity, Bakhtin does not adequately consider the place of disability in relation to grotesque aesthetics. He does, however, acknowledge at several points in *Rabelais and His World* that disability is conceptually linked to the grotesque realist mode, and that it plays a part in rendering a body grotesque.[15] Bakhtin's brief engagements with the topic suggest that disability features most prominently in Rabelais as part of injury-inflicting spectacles. These injuries may take the form of symbolic name-calling, Rabelais favouring 'nicknames of an abusive nature founded on various physical disabilities, monstrosities, or signs of uncleanliness' in his novels,[16] or physical beatings, such as the frenzied, ritualistic thrashing of the Catchpoles in the Fourth Book of *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*, which results in 'torn flesh' along with 'sprained shoulders, black eyes, crippled legs and arms, [and] injured genital parts'.[17] Limiting a discussion of disability to one of verbal abuse and physical punishment, as Bakhtin does, is to downplay its importance and complexity as a

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[14] Ibid., p. 21. For body parts, see pp. 163, 316-320.
[15] See references to 'physical disabilities', crippling, and lameness. Ibid., pp. 166, 204, 207, 460.
[16] Ibid., p. 460.
[17] Ibid., p. 207.

concept integral to the early modern French grotesque. Part of this chapter's objective is to investigate more comprehensively the relationship between disability and the grotesque, and how this ties in with other bodily motifs found in my corpus of lyric verse.

The Carnival

The grotesque body has a social function as part of the carnivalesque, which Bakhtin theorises with reference to the medieval carnival. Bakhtin's depiction of the carnival is as a ritualised, immersive marketplace spectacle where hierarchy is suspended and reversed in order to mock the ruling classes and temporarily elevate lowly townspeople to take their place: 'the jester was proclaimed king, a clownish abbot, bishop, or archbishop was elected at the "feast of fools," and in the churches directly under the Pope's jurisdiction a mock pontiff was even chosen'.[18] These spectacles enacted the grotesque degradation of something 'high' (for example papal authority) by mingling it with something 'low' (the jester). The resultant grotesque hybrid is a jester dressed in papal garb who is then treated by all present as if he were the Pope. We find similar hybrids in lyric poetry: the *contreblason*, which is discussed at length in this chapter, typically uses elegant language and a form associated with female beauty to describe hideously ugly subjects.

The Bakhtinian carnival is associated with collectivity – the people in attendance whoop, laugh, drink, eat and cheer as one body.[19] As a result of this collectivity, the carnival-goers laugh raucously at the grotesque bodies on stage

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[18] Ibid., p. 81. See also Alastair Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), p. 131.
[19] Bakhtin (1984), p. 188.

and, in so doing, they become a grotesque body themselves.[20] The grotesque multiplies. Its degradation is contagious, and before long the grotesque becomes the new ideal form, and the classical body is stigmatised as a defective deviation from the grotesque ideal. This 'world inside out' cannot last, however.[21] The carnival must end, the grotesque must unmake itself, and order must be restored in time for the moderation of Lent. The carnival and its grotesques amount to an ephemeral flash of joyful absurdity before the drudgery of everyday life regains its hold.[22] The rebellious spirit of the carnival does not translate into actual rebellion and, as long this is so, its reversal of social order and degradation of the classical body remains temporary.

Galanterie and the Grotesque

One conclusion of my previous chapter was that disability in lyric verse is invoked through metaphor as a symbol of things gone awry with the moderated aesthetic of *galanterie*. The theories of the carnivalesque and the grotesque will help to expand on that conclusion. In the context of mid-seventeenth-century French literature, Bakhtin's classical body can be compared to the pristine and orderly bodies idealised in the emerging aesthetic of *galanterie*, covered at length in this thesis's introduction. The literature of *galanterie* had a regulatory effect, holding up the *corps médiocre* as the ideal while taking a resoundingly negative stance towards disability (or indeed any extremes of bodily proportion).

Chapter One explored how both *galant* protagonists and the verse they populate were expected to conform to the specific formal and aesthetic

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[20] Ibid., pp. 255, 291.
[21] Ibid., p. 11.
[22] Ibid., p. 89.

considerations of *galanterie* and related ideals like *honnêteté*. *Galant* poetic

forms and bodies cannot simply be equated with *classicisme* in the seventeenth-

century sense of the word, since *galanterie* was largely opposed to the formal

classicisme championed by poets such as Malherbe, Maynard, and Boileau-

Despréaux.[23] Instead of formal *classicisme*, *galanterie* favoured nonclassical

forms such as the sonnet, the *chanson* and the madrigal, the mixing and

matching of forms, and, above all, dilettantism. *Galanterie* did, nonetheless,

comprise a set of aesthetic ideals relating to bodily form and conduct to which its

practitioners were expected to aspire, and can therefore be likened to classicism

in the Bakhtinian bodily sense. Poets wishing to parody *galant* verse and its set

of ideals could then inject exaggeratedly grotesque content into the *galant* poetic

framework to degrade it and establish a kind of parasite aesthetic in their

cabaret verse that has much in common with the Bakhtinian mode of grotesque

realism. This grotesque, parasitic counterpoint to *galanterie* developed alongside

it over the course of the seventeenth century, relying upon and ultimately

perpetuating *galant* structures just as much as it sullied them.

Grotesque Degradation / Grotesque Perpetuation

When asked in a 2012 interview about whether she considers how people

may react to her work, the photographer Cindy Sherman answered

I really don't consider that. My attitude is they're just going to have to take it.
There have been times when I made work in response to what was going on,
when I began to feel like I was the flavor of the month for a new group of
collectors in the early '80s. That's what inspired the pictures with vomit and all
that. Because I thought to myself, "Well, they think it's all cute with the
costumes and makeup, let's see if they put this above their couch." And it

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[23] Deshoulières (2010), p. 131.

worked, they didn't. It took a long time for that stuff to be accepted, much less sought after.[24]

Sherman's turn towards photography of grotesque things, a word she uses in that interview, was motivated by a desire to flagrantly contravene a canonical style of photography that she herself had helped establish.[25] Like Sherman, many seventeenth-century French poets spent as much time contributing to *galanterie* as they did degrading it and parodying it. *Galanterie* and its adherents were targets for these poets' satire, but also things they relied upon for their continued success as authors. Bakhtin's theories of the carnival and the grotesque can help explore the mechanics of the simultaneous perpetuation and degradation of *galant* ideals of beauty and the body by the grotesque realist lyrics of my corpus. Sherman ends her answer by acknowledging that, after quite some time, her grotesque photography was both 'accepted' and then 'sought after' by the art collectors whom it had originally intended to scandalise. Inspired by Sherman's comments, this chapter also explores whether the result of grotesque degradation is, eventually, acceptance and reincorporation within the very social system it set out to subvert.

When introducing Bakhtin earlier, I touched upon how the degradation of the classical body in the various spectacles and rituals of the carnival is, by necessity, temporary. Taking the example of the feasts held during carnival, Bakhtin stresses that

the feast was a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers. For a short time, life came out of its usual, legalized and consecrated furrows and entered the sphere of utopian freedom.

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[24] Kenneth Baker, 'Cindy Sherman: Interview with a Chameleon', in *Sightlines,* (The Walker Art Gallery, 2012).

[25] Mary Russo highlights this in her discussion of Sherman's grotesque photographs. Russo (1995), pp. 2-3.

The very brevity of this freedom increased its fantastic nature and utopian radicalism, born in the festive atmosphere of images.[26]

This degradation of official order may be tacitly tolerated or even encouraged by the powers that were, provided that it remained contained and did not last for long.[27] And so, Bakhtin writes, over time 'carnival became the symbol and incarnation of the true folk festival, completely independent of Church and State but tolerated by them'.[28] In Bakhtin's framework, the carnival might even serve to consolidate the hegemonic social order by purging any seditious feelings of the lower classes in a flash of chaotic energy.[29] Erica McWilliam recognises this potential for complicity, highlighting how the carnival 'was strongly sanctioned by the very officials and hierarchies it parodied'.[30] A carnival, reasoned both secular and religious authorities, was vastly preferable to a full-blown rebellion. This tacit tolerance is, however, a fine line to tread. If the carnival is seen to become licenced by or complicit with the powers that be, it loses its ability to, on the one hand, solidify bonds between participants forged in opposition to established social order and, on the other hand, remind those in power of the transient, precarious nature of that power.[31]

At the centre of this chapter's analysis, therefore, sits the question of whether the grotesque realist imagery of disability found in the poems of my corpus aims to reinforce or destabilise the status quo. In other words, what sort of bodily canons do these poems endorse? Are they complicit in the very same

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[26] Bakhtin (1984), p. 89.
[27] Ibid., pp. 9, 14, 220.
[28] Ibid., p. 220.
[29] Russo (1995), pp. 56-58; Renfrew (2015), p. 135.
[30] Erica McWilliam, 'The Grotesque Body as a Feminist Aesthetic?', *Counterpoints,* 168 (2003), 213-221 (p. 221).
[31] Renfrew (2015), pp. 134-135.

aesthetic ideals they appear to contravene,[32] *galanterie* itself placing a great deal of importance on authorial versatility and poetic *variatio*? If we take the aesthetic of *galanterie* as establishing itself as an influential representational paradigm for bodies in mid-seventeenth-century French lyric poetry, then we must be clear whether grotesque realist depictions of disability actually threaten the authority of that aesthetic.

The *galant* love lyric tends to avoid the overtly corporeal. In scenes of seduction, the body is implied rather than explicitly represented, as words such as *graces*, *douceur*, *caresse*, and *agrément* give the impression of a 'corps fantasmé'.[33] This, as my previous chapter argued, extends to representations of disability in love lyrics in the *galant* tradition, which prefer metaphorical disability to embodied disability. The poetry analysed in the present chapter, however, turns this preference on its head as part of a parody of the *galant* love lyric: the affected metaphors of *aveuglement* and *perclusion* found in the poems analysed in the previous chapter are supplanted by protagonists who are caricatures of embodied disability written in the mode of grotesque realism. Like the mock rituals performed at carnival feasts, the literary grotesque is parodic in nature, and much of its imagery of disability does indeed appear to be parodying the kind of cliché-ridden *galant* love poems analysed in Chapter One.[34] But a parody is not automatically subversive of the institution or set of principles that it parodies. That is to say, the aesthetic of *galanterie* did allow for a fair degree of self-parody and grotesque imagery in its literature, so long as that imagery served to reinforce those all-important ideals of conduct and physical

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[32] Lewis Seifert underscores the importance of asking this question in his study of seventeenth-century French songs and poetry dealing with sodomy. Seifert (2009), p. 169.
[33] Denis (2001), p. 310.
[34] Bakhtin (1984), p. 20; Renfrew (2015), pp. 135-136.

appearance. Conversely, there are other poems that more convincingly take aim at *galant* ideals, toppling the idealised *corps médiocres* from their pedestals and replacing them with the disabled bodies that *galanterie* deems worthy of only pity or contempt.

Perfect Deformity

Intended as a counterpart to and mirror image of the *blason,*[35] the *contreblason* focuses again on women's bodies, yet here the objective is not to evoke their perfect beauty but their perfect deformity. The phrase *perfect deformity* originates in the writings of Annibale Carracci, a leading artist of the Baroque style and one of the first caricaturists.[36] *Contreblasons* have much in common with early Italian caricature, both light-hearted parodies seeking to distort proportion by exaggerating distinctive facial features and body parts in search of an ideal of ugliness antithetical to canonical beauty.[37] *Contreblason* and caricature each make use of disability as a way of effectuating that carnivalesque degradation of the canons of beauty,[38] and draw upon grotesque imagery to do so.

A further key commonality between the *contreblason* and the caricature is the inspiration they draw from theories of physiognomy. Porta's treatise was

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[35] Clément Marot, whose 'Blason du beau tétin' kickstarted the *blason*'s initial period of popularity in early modern France, encouraged aspiring poets to write both *blasons* and *contreblasons* on comparable subjects. Marot's own 'Contreblason du laid tétin' demonstrates this exercise in versatility. Persels (2002), p. 19; Saunders (1981), pp. 140-143.

[36] The word 'caricatura' was first used in writing by Giovanni Atanasio Mosini to refer to Annibale's *Diverse figure* (1646), describing the artist's method of 'overloading or charging the features of a likeness, which makes out of it a "charged" portrait, a *ritratto carico*'. Davide Stimilli, *The Face of Immortality: Physiognomy and Criticism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 41.

[37] Ibid., p. 49.

[38] Ibid.

particularly influential, having captured the imagination of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists and poets thanks to its analogies between human and animal. These zoomorphic analogies are best expressed by the striking illustrations accompanying the treatise that shared many features with early caricatures, and were a source of inspiration for early caricaturists.[39] To take one example, in a section entitled 'De la face charnuë', a fleshy-faced man is compared to an ox,[40] or rather he is semi-metamorphosed into an ox, sharing its large forehead, widely spaced eyes, fleshy jaw, thick lips, bovine nose, wrinkly forehead, and scowling, slanted eyebrows (Fig. 3).[41] This caricature-like image is juxtaposed with that of an ox, to hammer home the zoomorphic analogy being made in Porta's accompanying text: he who physically resembles an ox shares some of its behavioural characteristics.[42] Similar interpretive principles are at work in Porta's treatise, caricature, and *contreblason*, namely the grotesque exaggeration and distortion of human form to resemble animals, and the notion that physical features are indicative of inner characteristics. Writers of *contreblasons* also took inspiration from Porta's misogyny, particularly the sections of his treatise that suggested women's bodies were inherently defective as an undesirable departure from the masculine ideal. A manuscript satire entitled 'Vers satyriques contre les femmes en lan 1653' even uses the

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[39] Cheng (2012), pp. 205-206, 208.

[40] Jennifer Montagu incorrectly identifies this animal as a bull. The French *bœuf* and the Latin *bou*, as it is rendered in the original, most commonly referred to oxen rather than bulls. The importance of this distinction between ox and bull will soon become apparent, as Porta ascribes very different qualities to each, looking far more favourably upon the bull. Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The origin and influence of Charles le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression Générale et particulière* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 20. Also see definition for 'bœuf' in Cotgrave (1611).

[41] Porta (1655), pp. 187-188.

[42] Ibid.

Fig. 3

same terminology as Porta to express this inherent feminine bodily deficiency, beginning by addressing its targets as 'Femmes defectueuses, Femmes qui redoutes / de voir paroistre au iour vos sales verites'.[43] As my introduction demonstrated, the physiognomist uses the language of *défaut* to compare women to disabled people, both being defective entities produced by deviations in Nature's proper course. Satirical verse aimed at women was no different.

An unsigned but thematically rich example of a *contreblason* written in the grotesque realist mode can be found in the *Recueil Conrart*, entitled 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë'. This piece takes inspiration from the assumed equivalence between women and disabled people:

> Si l'œil n'est que l'image etroite
> De l'esprit, soit bon ou pervers,
> Son ame ne peut estre droite,
> Puis-que ses yeux sont de travers.
>
> Nôtre ame est du corps revêtuë
> Comme un glaive l'est du fourreau,
> Voyant cette gaine tortuë
> Que jugez-vous de son couteau?
>
> Ceux qui l'ont faite estoyent grans maîtres,
> Et je treuve qu'ils ont raison
> De luy avoir fait les fenêtres
> Aussi crottés que la maison.[44]

This poem's subject is the archetypal female grotesque,[45] whose body may be described in *contreblasons* either in part or in its entirety, as it is here.[46] The anonymous poet riffs off the physiognomical axiom of the eyes as windows to the soul, judging that because this lady's eyes are crooked, then her soul too must be deviant. She is physically disabled, with her curved spine seen as

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[43] Français 12492, p. 536.
[44] Ms-4123, p. 189
[45] Russo (1995), p. 1.
[46] For more on the *contreblason*, see Saunders (1981), pp. 140-152.

indicative of inner aberrance. Finally, the narrator wonders why she is made this way, sceptical that these two signs of disability are purely coincidental and affirming that whoever made her must have had good reason to place these marks on her body as warnings of her sinful character. The poem can be situated comfortably within the grotesque realist mode of writing due to its fixation on caricatured ugliness, light-hearted parody and, above all, the blending of its subject's body with objects, an animal, and the earth.

While undertaking this parody of canonical beauty, the poet twice invokes disability. The first image of disability we encounter in this poem is the lady's eyes, described as 'louche[s]' and 'de travers', two characteristics suggestive of visual impairment. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the notion of the eyes as a passage from the external to the internal is a central tenet of seventeenth-century French love poetry that, in turn, draws upon a long tradition of physiognomical writing attesting to the eyes' power to reveal the inner machinations of the soul.[47] Just as the *blason* reads external beauty as indicative of moral integrity, the *contreblason* is underpinned by similar physiognomical reasoning. In his typical declamatory style, Porta summarises his physiognomical hypothesis that 'ce qui est monstrueux au Corps, est aussi monstrueux en l'Ame'.[48] In accordance with Porta's reading of disability as indicative of inner sinfulness, the lady's crossed eyes, an outward sign of visual impairment, are interpreted by the poet as a sign of a deviant soul. The narrator then extends this physiognomical rule to the rest of her body. She is described as 'bossuë', likening her back to that of a 'tortuë' and in so doing mimicking Porta's zoomorphic tendency to compare unusually shaped human physical features to

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[47] Plantié (2016), p. 147.
[48] Porta (1655), p. 426.

those of animals, the implication being that the human takes on some of the behavioural characteristics of whichever animal they resemble (in this case a tortoise).

What might these two signs of disability present in this *contreblason* mean from a physiognomical standpoint? I will begin with the statement that the lady's curved spine causes her to resemble a tortoise. Porta, whose treatise specialises in precisely the kind of zoomorphic analogy made by the anonymous author of this *contreblason*, mentions the tortoise only once in his treatise, deeming it 'rusée & cauteleuse' because of its small eyes – a negative judgement, to be sure, but not a particularly detailed one.[49] On hunchbacks he has more to say, beginning by citing Polemon and Adamantius who both agree that 'l'Homme bossu n'a aucune bonté en lui' while Scot 'dit que le dos bossu denote l'Homme prudent & aduisé, ingenieux, trompeur, malicieux & de grande memoire'.[50] Porta then adopts an altogether more subjective tone rarely found in this treatise which leans so heavily on received knowledge:

Pour moy je tiens tous ceux qui sont mutilez ou imparfaits de Corps, méchants, & principalement les bossus qui sont les pires de tout: veu qu'ils ont un défaut de nature autour du Coeur, qui est le principe de tout le Corps.[51]

He singles out *bossus* as the most severe example of people who are 'mutilez ou imparfaits de Corps', declaring them to be 'méchants' and reiterating the common seventeenth-century explanation of disability as evidence of a 'défaut de nature'. The author of the *contreblason* echoes Porta's sentiments that external deformity such as a curved spine is the sign of internal fault as part of the poet's belief that 'Nôtre ame est du corps revêtuë'. As such, he concludes

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[49] Ibid., p. 410.
[50] Ibid., p. 313.
[51] Ibid.

that whoever made this woman were right to make windows 'aussi crottés que la maison', for both a curved spine and crossed eyes are signs that 'Son ame ne peut estre droite'. The *contreblason*'s pejorative conclusion hinges on the exact same physiognomical principle as the *blason*'s valorisation of canonical beauty as indicative of moral worth: human bodies that deviate too sharply from that ideal of beauty are read as indicative of sinfulness. Porta does not go so far as to set up a hierarchy of disabled archetypes from most to least evil, yet this moment of candour makes it clear that, if he were to attempt such a thing, *bossus* would be situated right at the top of that hierarchy as 'les pires de tout'.

Close behind, it seems, would be those whose visual impairments result in the appearance of crossed eyes, the second sign of disability ascribed to the *contreblason*'s subject. Porta's short chapter on 'Des Yeux de travers' begins with the unequivocal statement that

c'est la commune opinion des Physionomes que les bigles ont l'esprit pervers, et que ce sont monstres de nature : car elle a manqué en leur formation; & parce qu'elle a peché à l'endroit du cerveau, de qui les yeux sont formés, c'est un très-grand défaut, veu que le cerveau est une des plus nobles parties de l'Homme : & partant ce sont mauvais signes.[52]

When assessing crossed eyes from a physiognomical standpoint, it is significant that Porta's treatise should use 'pervers', translated from the Latin 'perversæ',[53] the same word that the author of the *contreblason* rhymes with 'ses yeux sont de travers'. The word 'pervers′ communicates a notion of deviation from the proper moral course, just as Nature has deviated from her proper course in forming bodies with curved spines and crossed eyes, once again strengthening the association between deviant physicality and deviant morality. Previously, *bossus* were said to have 'un défaut de nature autour du Coeur, qui est le

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[52] Ibid., p. 481.
[53] Giambattista della Porta, *De humana physiognomonia libri. III* ([n.p.], 1586), p. 226.

principe de tout le Corps',[54] and Porta reuses this same lexis to describe people

with crossed eyes as having a 'très-grand défaut', located in the brain this time,

which said to be 'une des plus nobles parties de l'Homme'.

Elsewhere, crossed eyes are considered by Porta one of the 'signes de la

paillardise',[55] likened to those of a billy goat. For the physiognomist, this

paillardise is not necessarily a negative trait in women, noting that poets often

describe Venus as being cross-eyed.[56] When coupled with the innate sinfulness

of the *bossue*, however, as is the case in this poem, the lady's crossed eyes

seem to imply a sexual impropriety antithetical to the chaste protagonist of

d'Alibray's *blason* of a mouth analysed towards the end of Chapter One.[57]

Seventeenth-century dramatist and poet Georges de Scudéry summarised the

popular physiognomical analogy between beautiful body and beautiful soul when

he wrote that 'le bon et le beau ne se quittent gueres'.[58] This *contreblason*

argues that the same can be said for disability and wickedness. Furthermore, the

specific disabilities assigned to the old lady of the *contreblason* are seemingly

just about the two worst disabilities one could have from a physiognomical

standpoint. A hunched back and crossed eyes are the disabilities that Porta

spends by far the most amount of time condemning in his treatise.

Physiognomist and poet are in accordance with the link between disability and

sinfulness, even using similar language and examples to express this link.

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[54] Porta (1655), p. 313.
[55] Ibid., p. 482.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Other *contreblasons* such as Théophile de Viau's 'Contre une vieille', analysed later in this chapter in the section entitled 'Grotesque Love', exaggerate this connotation of sexual impropriety so that it becomes the defining characteristic of the *vieille*. Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.
[58] Plantié (2016), pp. 148-149.

Taken as a whole, this is all fairly unsurprising. The idea that disability is suggestive of moral failure dates back to the Classics,[59] and is still pervasive in modern society in the many ways in which disabled people are encouraged not to 'give in' or let their disability hold them back, as if these two things indicated a weakness of character. While d'Alibray's *blason* analysed in Chapter One had hints of the grotesque in its image of a disembodied mouth holding silence prisoner between its ruby lips, the genre of the *contreblason* embraces grotesque imagery, particularly the concept of the 'open body' as described by Bakhtin:

The unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born) is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements.[60]

The lady's body is alternately figured as a sheath, a tortoise and a house, whose permeability is ensured by the presence of its windows (the eyes), which allow outsiders to perceive the malevolent character of what lies within. Her entire body is *crotté*, meaning either muddy or shit-stained, signifying a blending of boundaries between the body, the earth and excrement, the former being coated with the latter two. In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French, an alternative

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[59] Thersites, for example, is a villainous minor character in the *Iliad* who is a caricature of disability much like the *vieille* of the *contreblason*. Ibid., p. 150. Another classical example of this moral reading of disability can be found in Sophocles' depiction of Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*. Finally, Hephaestos/Vulcan's disability is frequently associated with his jealousy and consequent emasculation via cuckoldry (see section entitled 'Vulcan and the Corruption of Mythology' in Chapter Two for a seventeenth-century French lyrical take on this subject. Michael J. Flexer and Brian Hurwitz, 'Two Troubles: The dramatic tragedy of Western medicine', in *Disability Studies and the Classical Body: The Forgotten Other*, ed by Ellen Adams (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 41-66 (p. 46). For an exploration of how to use 'the Classics' in historical studies of disability, see Helen King, A History of Our Own? Using Classics in disability histories', in *Disability Studies and the Classical Body: The Forgotten Other*, ed by Ellen Adams (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 237-263.
[60] Bakhtin (1984), pp. 26-27.

spelling of *grotesque* was *crotesque*,[61] strengthening the homophonic

relationship between the grotesque and the lady's *corps crotté*.

The imagery of the muddy body found in the final stanza has similarities

with the Judeo-Christian account of Creation, except it is distorted: God is not

the driving force but an indistinct group of 'grans maîtres' who have deliberately

left their work unfinished, still covered in the filth of Creation to warn of the

perverse soul contained within. This reading correlates with the physiognomical

notion of disability as Nature gone awry, and the poet hypothesises that Nature's

deviations from ideal human form are not so much random mistakes as

warnings. The lady's eyes are crossed, her back is bent, her soul is corrupted,

and the process of Creation has been deliberately left incomplete. The unfinished

body that does not function as it should is left as a warning of the perversity

contained within.

Having established the close links between the *contreblason* and Porta's

physiognomy treatise based on how they treat two particular disabilities, I can

now address whether the grotesque realist imagery of disability found in this

contreblason challenges the hegemonic regime of real ideals found in the *blason*

and, more broadly, the aesthetic of *galanterie*. Mary Russo's *The Female*

Grotesque (1995) presents a theoretical framework for interpreting grotesque

imagery of female bodily nonconformity. Russo identifies the Crone as one of the

archetypal female grotesques, resurfacing throughout history and across

cultures as a symbol of the unruly woman.[62] She also highlights the lack of

rigorous attention Bakhtin gives to gender in his theoretical formulation of the

carnivalesque and the grotesque, an especially conspicuous omission given that

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[61] Epps (1996), pp. 41-42.
[62] Russo (1995), 14.

women's bodies have, historically, been regular recipients of and sources of inspiration for grotesque imagery.[63] In a similar vein to his few passing references to disability, Bakhtin appears to acknowledge the importance of femininity in the formation of the grotesque, but only implicitly – one of the first examples of the grotesque body he provides are the figurines of senile pregnant hags in the Kerch terracotta collection.[64] He does not consider the significance of the timeworn conceptual link between femininity and the grotesque, and how, in this case, grotesque imagery is used not to liberate but to constrain, imprison, and exclude women.[65] It would be hard to dispute Amy Staples's conclusion that 'women simply do not exist for Bakhtin', either as characters in Rabelais's novels or as readers of his work.[66] As I suggested previously, the same could well be said of disabled people.

Returning to my example of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë', the protagonist does in many ways appear to fulfil the role of the Bakhtinian grotesque, being a figure who is at once ridiculous and frightening, who exists to sully the aesthetic canon and is met with laughter. Yet the poem is also a prime example of degradation that is licenced and condoned by the very thing it is degrading, namely the aesthetic of *galanterie* and its adherents. Its purpose is not to subvert the aesthetic tenets of *galanterie*. To do that it would need to portray the disabled female grotesque as something to be admired as an antithetical equivalent to the *blason*'s veneration of the chaste and statuesque woman as an ideal of femininity. Rather, it draws from the same physiognomical

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[63] Ibid., pp. 63-64.
[64] Bakhtin (1984), p. 25.
[65] Ibid., p. 25.
[66] Amy Staples, 'Primal Scenes/Primal Screens: The Homosocial Economy of Dirty Jokes', in *High Anxiety: Masculinity in Crisis in Early Modern France,* ed. by Kathleen P. Long (Kirksville, MI: Truman State University Press, 2002), pp. 37-54 (p. 40).

tenet that external beauty is indicative of moral worth, carrying out an interpretive reading of the old lady's body in accordance with this theory.

It comes as no surprise that prominent *galant* poets such as Sarasin dabbled in the grotesque, one example of which is discussed in the next section. Just as the *blason* polices what women *should* be according to the aesthetic of *galanterie*, this grotesque *contreblason* uses the very same physiognomical tenets to police what women *should not* be. The end result of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' is not a celebration of the grotesque, as per the carnival, but an abjection of it, specifically the abjection of a disabled, female grotesque. In an act of boundary maintenance and scapegoating, this woman's body, symbolic of the concept of bodily deviance itself, is 'put out of circulation' and the aesthetic of *galanterie* is further consolidated.[67] As a symbolic mechanism for jettisoning disorder and avoiding contamination,[68] the process of abjection works in service of the dominant aesthetic canon.

Vulcan and the Corruption of Mythology

A contestatory relationship between the *galanterie* and the grotesque body is more explicitly indicated in a satirical sonnet by Sarasin entitled 'A un laid galant d'une dame qui avait un beau mari':

> Vous dont le visage falot
> Est le thrône de la grimace,
> Vous qui prétendez prendre place
> Dans les crotesques de Calot.
>
> Serieux comme un Sibilot

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[67] Russo (1995), p. 67.
[68] I return to the notion of disability and contamination when I discuss the cabaret poetry of Théophile de Viau later in this chapter.

       Qui se mire dans une glace,
       Galand comme un homme de Classe,
       Et civil comme un Matelot.

       Lubin, vous corrompez la Fable
       Avec la Venus agréable,
       Dont vous étes le Favory:

       Car l'on peut dire en cette affaire
       Adonis en est le mary,
       Et Vulcain en est l'adultere.[69]

This verse addresses a grotesque man, Lubin, who has against all expectations succeeded in seducing a woman who has a handsome husband. His name is borrowed from a covetous monk stock character dating back to the Old French *Roman de la Rose* – an archetypal wolf in sheep's clothing.[70] The third and fourth stanzas detail this improbable relationship with reference to Vulcan, the disabled Roman blacksmith-god of fire and husband to Venus, goddess of love. The parodic element of the poem hinges on the fact that the myth of Vulcan's relationship with Venus has been inverted. In Classical mythology, Vulcan was described as physically disabled and unlucky in love: his wife had numerous affairs, most notably with Adonis and Mars – the youthful hunter and the god of war – each standing for a different kind of idealised masculinity.[71]

Lubin's grotesque nature is evoked in a uniquely seventeenth-century fashion. He is not exactly described as grotesque but said to be worthy of a place among 'les crotesques de Calot'. Jacques Callot was an engraver based in the Duchy of Lorraine active in the first half of the century, known for the anti-

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[69] Sarasin (1696), p. 406. This sonnet also appears twice in my manuscript corpus with the slightly modified title of 'A un laid Galand de la femme d'un beau Mary'. Français 12680, fols. 185ᵛ-186ʳ; Ms-4124, p. 462.

[70] Gilles Ménage, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue françoise, tome second* (Paris: Briasson, 1750), p. 139.

[71] Sarasin was likely drawing from the Ovidian versions of these myths. See *Metamorphoses* Book IV, 167–189 for Venus and Vulcan, and Book X, 503-559 for Venus and Adonis. Ovid, 'The Metamorphoses', Poetry in Translation, (2000) <https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Ovhome.php>

war sentiment of his *Les Grandes misères de la guerre*,[72] engravings of battlefields and atrocities committed in the name of war, and *Varie figure gobbi*,[73] to which Sarasin is alluding. This series of twenty-one etchings was completed in 1616 and published between 1621 and 1625. Otherwise known as *Les Gobbi*, *Les Bossus*, *Les Pygmées*, and *Les Nains Grotesques*,[74] the engravings depict a range of disabled male figures, many of them entertainers. As if to announce its allegiance to the grotesque, the frontispiece of Callot's collection positions a bare arse front and centre, privileging the lower bodily stratum above all (Fig. 4). Callot wears his Italian influences on his sleeve, taking inspiration from troupes of disabled performers he saw during his time in Italy, and naming the collection after the Italian word 'gobbo', meaning hunchback.[75] Furthermore, his work demonstrates how the emerging Italian artistic genre of the *caricatura* was imported into France in the seventeenth century. The engravings are caricatures *avant la lettre*, exhibiting the typical technique of focusing on a particularly distinctive or unusual body part and exaggerating it beyond proportion.[76] Consequently, along with their short stature, most of Callot's figures are defined by one or two body parts: an enormous stomach, an enormous nose, an enormous hump, an impossibly round face, a twisted arm (Figs 5 and 6). In Sarasin's sonnet, Lubin's defining feature

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[72] Jacques Callot, *Les Grandes misères de la guerre*, 1633, etching and engraving, 18 plates, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
[73] Jacques Callot, *Varie figure gobbi*, 1621-1625, etching and engraving, 21 plates, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.
[74] Anonymous, 'Notice d'ensemble éditorial', Bibliothèque nationale de France, <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb42565976s> [accessed 25/10/2021]
[75] Ibid.
[76] Cheng (2012), p. 208.

Fig. 4

Den.

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

is his grimacing mouth 'dont [son] visage falot / Est le thrône', the mouth being the quintessential feature of the Bakhtinian grotesque.[77]

In addition to demonstrating a clear bridge between pictorial and literary caricatures, Sarasin's sonnet helps us draw out the mechanisms of inversion inherent in the grotesque. The irony of the situation, emphasised by the *pointe*, hinges on how Venus begins the narrative already married to Adonis and yet, incomprehensibly, has chosen to have an affair with Vulcan, symbolised by the poem's grotesque male protagonist. This is a reversal of the abovementioned plight of the mythological Vulcan, in which the disabled blacksmith-god's wife has affairs with Adonis and Mars. In Classical mythology, Vulcan was emasculated by his disability in two key ways. In addition to his beautiful wife's numerous affairs, his physical condition meant he was unable to go to war.[78] In this sense, Adonis and Mars, a lithe hunter and the god of war, are the polar opposites of Vulcan: idealised figures of masculinity who can wear armour in battle, fight, hunt, and seduce beautiful women. Given Vulcan's mythological status as an avatar for physical disability and emasculation, we can understand the narrator's astonishment that a wife of a handsome husband should want to initiate an affair with the Vulcan-like Lubin.[79] He exclaims 'Lubin, vous corrompez la Fable', a statement that directly addresses the corrupting, degrading nature of the grotesque as theorised by Bakhtin. This act of corruption by the grotesque figure of Lubin has been exacted upon Classical mythology, a body of work that was itself thought of as a literary ideal. This is not the way the narrative of Vulcan is supposed to play out.

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[77] 'The most important of all human features for the grotesque is the mouth. It dominates all else, the grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth; the other features are only a frame encasing this wide-open bodily abyss'. Bakhtin (1984), p. 337.

[78] G. Jobba, 'What Could Have Cause the Limping of Hephaestos?', *British Journal of Rheumatology,* 29 (1990), 451-453 (p. 451).

[79] For more on blacksmiths and physical disability, see ibid., pp. 451-452.

Sarasin, himself an icon of *galanterie*, pokes fun at his protagonist who has overstepped the mark by successfully courting the wife of a man deemed his aesthetic superior. The role of 'adultere' was made for Adonis, not Vulcan. The overall message of the poem as far as disability is concerned is that disabled men ordinarily have no place in the *galant* aesthetic and its frameworks of desire. Following both the *galant* framework of desire and the myth of Vulcan, they are inferior, emasculated, unworthy of love and fit for little more than comic relief. Like the subject of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë', Lubin is marked as grotesque and subsequently abjected from the *galant* aesthetic. He is considered by Sarasin's narrator to be a corrupting influence contrary to everything *galant* masculinity stands for, one who must be removed if things are to proceed as they should.

Grotesque Love

The question remains of whether seventeenth-century lyric poets ever used grotesque imagery of disability to subvert the *galant* aesthetic rather than simply to abject the grotesque body and, in so doing, reassert the dominance of *galanterie* and the compulsory able-bodiedness that it entailed. In search of grotesque imagery of disability that challenges *galanterie*'s dominance, we will need to leave the *galant* spaces of literary production and circulation – the salon and the *ruelle* – and take up residence in one of Paris's cabarets. As I suggested above, cabaret verse developed alongside and acted as a parasite to *galant* verse and its aesthetic principles, entirely reliant upon the very thing it degrades. Having discussed two poems in which grotesque imagery of disability is used to reassert the ideals of *galanterie* by abjecting protagonists who

symbolise bodily deviance, I will now explore whether cabaret verse uses grotesque imagery of disability to establish an alternative to *galanterie*.

To facilitate a comparison with the *contreblason* of the old woman discussed above, I will now analyse a *contreblason* attributed to Théophile de Viau that presents a markedly different take on the same subject.[80] This will also help highlight aspects of Théophile's cabaret verse that undermine the aesthetic canon sustained by *galanterie*. The poem comprises six stanzas and is entitled 'Contre une vieille'. It begins in a familiar fashion, describing its protagonist as a figure of abjection, a living carcass 'qui des tombeaux, / Chasse les vers et les corbeaux'.[81] Théophile's portrayal of the *vieille* in this first stanza is in keeping with the myriad of old crones depicted in satirical *contreblasons* as decaying zombie-like creatures with one foot in the grave.[82] The poet uses events depicted in Homer and Ovid to highlight her decrepitude, having been born one hundred years before the siege of Ilion and before Deucalion repopulated the earth after Zeus's destructive flood.[83] This narrative set-up is similar in tone and content to the previous *contreblason*, both introducing female protagonists described as hideous grotesques blended with the earth and stressing their decrepitude. The poems then sharply diverge due to the levels of vulgarity and the narrator's position with regards to each protagonist.

There was nothing particularly vulgar about the poem 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë'. Its narrator instigates a vicious misogynistic and disablist attack against the titular character, but does not violate *la politesse mondaine*

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[80] Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., p. 25. See chapter entitled 'The Disabling of Aging Female Bodies: Midwives, Procuresses, Witches and the Monstrous Mother' in Juárez-Almendros (2017), pp. 83-115.
[83] Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.

that characterised the vocabulary of *galanterie*.[84] The adjective *crotté* is as close to obscenity as that poem comes, yet its secondary meaning of shit-stained refers exclusively to animal excrement and was unlikely to offend salon-going *mondains*.[85] This lack of vulgar vocabulary is consistent with the message of that poem: that disability is indicative of moral corruption and should be shunned, a message which upholds the physiognomical ideal of *médiocrité* and ultimately reasserts *galanterie* as the dominant aesthetic. Théophile's 'Contre une vieille dame' does none of these things. First, and most strikingly, its vocabulary soon shifts into unbridled vulgarity:

> Un jour, ceste vilaine là
> Dans un benestier distilla
> Les pleurs de son œil hypocrite;
> Depuis le diable, qui la vid,
> Craignant de gaigner mal au vit
> N'osa toucher à l'eau benite.[86]

While the author of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' abided by *la politesse mondaine*, this stanza of Théophile's was singled out during the author's 1623-1625 blasphemy trial along with several others as particularly offensive.[87] As well as the word 'vit', itself frequently censored in seventeenth-century print editions,[88] the image of a sinful woman, implied later in the poem to be a sex worker, desecrating a font with her diseased tears while the Devil looks on clearly sets out to offend polite, Christian sensibilities. On 29th April 1624, Pierre Guibert, a witness for the prosecution, claimed in his deposition to have overhead Théophile recite part of this poem and claim authorship of it while 'à

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[84] Viala (2008), pp. 116-120.
[85] Entry for 'crotte' in Anonymous, *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française 1694* (Paris: Coignard, 1694).
[86] Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.
[87] Frédéric Lachèvre, *Le procès du poète Théophile de Viau : 11 juillet 1623 - 1er septembre 1625* (Geneva: Slaktine, 1968), p. 450.
[88] DeJean (2002), p. 35.

table' with friends in a drinking establishment, most likely a cabaret, in the Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs neighbourhood some seven or eight years previously.[89] In his statement, Guibert quoted from memory this particular stanza of 'Contre un vieille' as evidence of the poet's impiety.[90] Responding to Guibert's testimony, Théophile admitted that he had recited some of his poems to his friends at the stated location but denied having written or recited that particular stanza or any of the others quoted by Guibert.[91]

Despite the vulgar vocabulary and blasphemous imagery, there is one notable similarity with the previous *contreblason*: disability. Théophile's poem draws attention to the lady's eye – singular – implying that she possesses just one of them. Once again following the physiognomical function of eyes as windows to the soul, her eye is shown to be indicative of sinfulness. More precisely, the eye *itself* is said to be hypocritical. The expression *œil hypocrite* may be a biblical reference to Luke 6.42:

Ou comment peux-tu dire à ton frère : Frère, laisse-moi ôter la paille qui est dans ton œil, toi qui ne vois pas la poutre qui est dans ton œil ? Hypocrite, ôte premièrement la poutre de ton œil, et alors tu verras à ôter la paille qui est dans l'œil de ton frère.

Such an allusion would befit Théophile's casually blasphemous style as well as the plot of this poem. In addition to demonstrating the propensity of *blasons* and *contreblasons* towards dissection, isolating the body part from the whole, the syntax of this line imbues the *vieille*'s eye with moral worth, even an agency of its own to do wrong or think duplicitous thoughts. Given that this eye is hypocritically crying into a font, the reader can assume that the protagonist is in

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[89] Lachèvre (1968), pp. 449-450. Horsley (2021), p. 303.
[90] Ibid., p. 450. For more information on Guibert's testimony and Théophile's response to it, see Horsley (2016), pp. 171-174; Horsley (2021), p. 303..
[91] Lachèvre (1968), p. 450.

a church, perhaps having gone there to repent for sins that she has no intention

of giving up, hence the hypocrisy. Her eye is hypocritical because it is feigning

remorse by exaggerating or faking tears to give the impression that the rest of

her body is repentant when it is not.[92]

The motif of disability as contaminating found in Sarasin's grotesque

protagonist who corrupted the myth of Vulcan resurfaces in a very literal

manner, as her eye's hypocritical tears have infected the holy water to such an

extent that the Devil is afraid to touch it, not because it remains holy but

because he fears it will give him 'mal au vit', implying that she may be carrying

a sexually transmitted infection, later confirmed to be syphilis.[93] Venereal

disease is transmitted, in this instance, not through sexual activity but through

the tears of her hypocritical eye. This curious detail attests to the connection

between disability and venereal disease in the seventeenth-century mindset,

implying that the woman's missing eye may be a result of syphilitic infection, an

infection that can be transmitted by her remaining eye. Théophile's grotesque

parody of a *blason* literalises the *blason*'s propensity for ocularcentrism in love,

and its attachment to the cliché that love is caught through the eyes. The only

thing an onlooker might catch from the crone's *œil hypocrite* is syphilis.

The grotesque trope of bodily permeability is taken to extreme lengths by

the following stanza:

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[92] A similar image is found in an epigram by d'Alibray:
> L'un des yeux de Lise est de verre,
> L'autre pleur un Espoux en terre
> Qu'elle aima peu pour ses defauts ;
> L'œil vray n'est-il pas le plus faux ?

D'Alibray (1906), p. 129.

[93] Russell Ganim translates *mal au vit* as 'a sore cock from the clap', 'the clap' referring in American English to syphilis. Russell Ganim, 'Pissing Glass and the Body Crass: Adaptations of the Scatological in Théophile', in *Fecal matters in early modern literature and art: studies in scatology,* ed. by Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 66-84 (p. 71).

> Ceste vesse, quand on la fout,
> Descoule de sueur par tout:
> Elle rotte, pette, et (se) mouche;
> Si par fois, elle vesse aussi,
> On ne sçait lequel a vessi,
> Du cul, du nez, ou de la bouche.[94]

As I highlighted in my introduction to this chapter, Bakhtin's grotesque body is defined by its open, cyclical, and unfinished character: it is a 'body in the act of becoming' and 'a death that gives birth'.[95] Théophile's *vieille* exemplifies the grotesque body, but for different reasons to the lady depicted in 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë'. In the latter poem, the protagonist's grotesque nature primarily lay in her blending with the elements and with animals. Covered in animal shit, her body was likened to a tortoise and a sheath for a crooked dagger. Théophile's protagonist does not so much exemplify the earthy, animalistic aspects of the open body, although these are by not entirely absent, but its maternal qualities: leaky, permeable and cavernous. Building on Bakhtin's brief discussion of senile, pregnant hags,[96] both Julia Kristeva and Russo identify the archaic maternal body as the ultimate horror zone in grotesque art and literature, as well as one of the grotesque body's oldest figurations.[97] Théophile's *vieille* best represents this version of the female grotesque. She is impossibly old and on the verge of death, yet produces matter from all of her orifices, involuntarily belching, sweating, farting, and blowing her nose.

In a second departure from the desexualised 'Dame louche & bossuë', Théophile's *vieille* is highly sexualised, fetishized even, as the *vieille* often is in

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[94] Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.
[95] Bakhtin (1984), pp. 25, 317.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Julia Kristeva, *Les pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 20; Russo (1995), p. 10.

cabaret verse, attesting to continuum between the stock characters of the 'sick

prostitute' and the 'emaciated hag' found in early modern lyric poetry by

embodying both personae at once.[98] The way in which Théophile's *vieille* is

sexualised is particularly noteworthy. In the stanza quoted above, the sexual act

is carried out in the third person singular: 'on la fout'. In the following stanza,

however, there is a shift in agent, as the narrator continues describing the many

secretions of her body during sex:

> Son foutre jaune, verd, et bleu,
> De morve, de cole, et de gleu,
> Sentoit le souffre et le bytume,
> Qui descouloit sur mes couillons,
> Comme deux pestilans caillons,
> Qui jaillissent d'une apostume.[99]

In this stanza, it is no longer the impersonal *on* who is fucking the *vieille*, but the

narrator himself: 'sur mes couillons'. If the plot of 'Contre une Dame louche &

bossuë' involved the casting out of the disabled female grotesque, reading her

body as a warning sign for others to stay away, Théophile's 'Contre une vieille'

beckons her back and places her in bed with the narrator. The poem begins with

her isolated in an empty church crying tears from a hypocritical eye so infectious

that even the Devil shuns her, yet by the fourth stanza it is clear that she has

been sexually intimate with the poem's narrator. Claire Gaudiani highlights how

the narrator's posture of (auto)biography makes Théophile's poem stand out

among the many depictions of the *vieille* in seventeenth-century French cabaret

verse:

From that point on, the disgusting sensual abomination he describes takes on
new intimacy because he is apparently reporting personal experience rather than

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[98] Juárez-Almendros (2017), pp. 11-12, 72.
[99] Gaudiani (1981), p. 71.

simply conjuring a mental image designed to insult the woman as his contemporaries tended to do.[100]

Further to this, unlike the anonymous author of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë', Théophile does not exaggerate the woman's grotesque nature to morally condemn her and assert the superiority of *galant* ideals of beauty. Instead, through the voice of the narrator, he lowers himself to her level and confesses not only his attraction to the *vieille* but repeated sexual intimacy with her.

Despite the poet's refusal to morally condemn the *vieille*, the grotesque maternal imagery becomes more explicit as the poem progresses. The fifth stanza describes her 'con vilain' as

> Cizelé de la cicatrice
> De chaude pisse et de poullins,
> Et de mille chancres malins
> Qui percent jusqu'à la matrice.[101]

The poetic dissection continues as her cavernous, diseased body is opened up and its interior examined with perverse fascination. The syphilitic lesions reach her womb, implying that she is infertile: the sick maternal body that produces burps, sweat, farts and mucus, even sustaining 'mille morpions' in its pubic hair,[102] cannot bear children. Encarnación Juárez-Almendros describes syphilis as a 'gendered metaphor of physical and moral decay that functions in opposition both to male embodiment and to the ideal of the integrity of the female body, expressed in the concept of virginity and chastity'.[103] As her own work demonstrates, this statement is true of much early modern lyric verse about syphilis. Théophile's use of the disease, however, does not make such a

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[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., p. 72.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Juárez-Almendros (2017), p. 56.

straightforward equation between physical decay and moral decay. Instead, he uses syphilitic imagery strengthen the affinity between the *vieille* and the narrator. Over the course of their sexual union, the imagery of disease is transmitted from *vieille* to narrator. In the fourth stanza quoted above, his balls are likened to 'deux pestilans caillons / Qui jaillissent d'une apostume' due to the infectious secretions flowing out of the woman and onto him, a choice of simile that posits infection as a routine, even enjoyable part of sex. By the sixth stanza, simile has become fact and the narrator refers to himself in the third person as 'l'onguent verolé', gnawed upon by the colony of crabs whose peace he has disturbed four times,[104] implying that this is his fourth sexual encounter with the *vieille*, who may be a sex worker he frequents. Over the course of these four encounters, her illness has become his illness and, due to the continuum between syphilis and disability already established in this poem, her disability has become his disability.

Russell Ganim comments that Théophile's poem could easily have been titled 'Stances contre un verolé' or 'Stances contre moy-mesme',[105] but for this to be true the narrator would have to exact negative moral judgement upon himself. This is not the case. Not once does its narrator imply that he regrets having sex with the *vieille* and thereby allowing her to infect him. After all, this is his fourth visit to her bedroom and not necessarily his last. Nor does he wallow in self-pity by lamenting his own diseased embodied condition like he does in the poet's most notorious cabaret verse known as the 'sodomite sonnet'.[106] Despite its title, Théophile's poem is not really 'contre' anyone, but a celebration of sex with a grotesque figure of abjection and a fetishization of

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[104] Gaudiani (1981), p. 72.
[105] Ganim (2004), p. 75.
[106] DeJean (2002), p. 46.

disability, disease, and old age. It recasts the grotesque as an erotic

phenomenon centred on its merging of bodies and breaking down of boundaries

between distinct subjects, his protagonist becoming radically intertwined with

the flesh of the abject other.[107] Théophile's grotesque erotics flagrantly

contravenes both physiognomical *médiocrité* and the aesthetic of *galanterie* that

reached its height in the decades following Théophile's death.

The poem also contravenes the satirical purpose of poetry written 'contre'

the figure of the *vieille* or another caricatured stock character. The classical

definition of satire situates it as 'a form of aggression, and its target is made

responsible for corrupting an ideal order. By depicting this corruption, satire is

said to enact a symbolic punishment and to express the desire for return to the

lost ideal'.[108] This is certainly the case in the anonymous *contreblason* of the

'Dame louche & bossuë' and in Sarasin's sonnet ridiculing the grotesque Lubin.

Both of these pieces situate their protagonists as corrupting figures who sully

galant ideals and must be abjected from the aesthetic canon, functioning as

symbolic mechanisms for jettisoning disorder and avoiding contamination. This is

not the case in Théophile's cabaret verse, in which the protagonist welcomes

contamination, having sex with the *vieille* four times and leaving open the

possibility that he will return for more.

As discussed previously, seventeenth-century proponents of both

physiognomy and *galanterie* decry physical characteristics like disability, disease

and excessive physical variability as undesirable and sinful. For Théophile,

however, there is evidently a badge of honour to be gained from stating an

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[107] Sara Cohen Shabot, 'Towards a Grotesque Phenomenology of Ethical Eroticism', *Women: A Cultural Review,* 24. 1 (2013), 62-70 (p. 70).
[108] Seifert (2009), p. 163.

attraction to a grotesque figure of abjection and having sex with a lady so infectious that even the Devil rejects her. The imagery of contagion that subsequently transfers from *vieille* to narrator implies that this grotesque love is self-destructive in nature. The syphilis that consumes her body, rendering her infertile and partially blind, will soon do likewise to his and the result of this sexual union will not be birth but death.[109] Théophile's verse is testament to the fact that the grotesque can provoke both disgust and, resist it though the narrator might, desire.[110] In his analysis of various French *blasons*, Sawday suggests that the *blasonneur* harbours 'hatred for the object of his ostensible veneration',[111] and, as an inversion of this tendency, Théophile's 'Contre une vieille' reads as a declaration of love for the object of its ostensible hatred: a one-eyed, syphilitic crone.[112]

As my analysis of 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' and 'A un laid galant d'une dame qui avait un beau mari' demonstrated, grotesque realist imagery of disability could be employed in service of a dominant aesthetic canon such as *galanterie*. Théophile's piece, however, proves that not all seventeenth-century grotesque realist verse featuring disabled characters strove to this end. As Guillaume Peureux acknowledges, Théophile's objective in his poem is not reassertion but deconstruction, pointedly inverting and debasing the 'discours dominants sur la pudeur, le mariage, la fidélité, la chasteté et l'honnêteté', the last of which was also a key component of the aesthetic of *galanterie*.[113] Following this, was there some kind of alternative set of aesthetic principles put

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[109] Ganim (2004), p. 74.
[110] Sawday (1995), p. 221.
[111] Ibid., p. 206.
[112] Théophile makes a habit of this. See a second love poem written 'contre' an old crone. Gaudiani (1981), p. 156.
[113] Guillaume Peureux, 'L'obscénité satyrique (1615-1622)', in *Obscénités Renaissantes,* ed. by Guillaume Peureux, Lise Wajeman, and Hugh Roberts (Geneva: Droz, 2011), pp. pp. 409-422.

forward by seventeenth-century poets opposed to *galanterie*? If so, what was the place of disability in such an aesthetic? The remainder of this chapter and much of Chapter Three will explore these questions.

François Maynard as Critic of *Galanterie*

Many seventeenth-century French poets were characterised by others or by themselves as endorsing moral values perceived as contrary to those of polite, Christian society, and as such representing a corrupting influence on that society. Most famously, Théophile's blasphemy trial is considered a milestone in both the development of the concept of obscenity and the history of censorship.[114] It had the knock-on effect of causing *libertin* poets to act more cautiously. Henceforth, writes Frédéric Graça, 'la muse libertine se tint désormais dans l'ombre ; les œuvres de cette veine ne circulèrent plus qu'entre amis, et sous forme manuscrite'.[115] While Théophile was evidently positioned by the clerical and legal establishment as a source of moral corruption due to the vulgar and blasphemous content of his cabaret verse such as 'Contre une vieille', a close friend of his, François Maynard, often positioned *himself* as a self-styled outsider who pitched his work in opposition to *galanterie* and wished to offend its practitioners:

> Il est vray. Je le sçay. Mes Vers sont mesprisez.
> Leur cadence a choqué les Galans et les Belles,
> Graces à la bonté des Orateurs frisez,

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[114] DeJean (2002), p. 29. The trial is also reconsidered in Horsley (2021), pp. 251-333.
[115] Frédéric Graça, 'Entre muses gaillardes et muses galantes : les variations du discours licencieux dans les œuvres poétiques de François Maynard', *Dix-septième siècle,* 277. 4 (2017), 587-610 (p. 589). Didier Foucault also supports this interpretation. Didier Foucault, 'Liberté sexuelle contre austérité chrétienne: un combat des libertins du XVIIe siècle', in *Sexe au pouvoir, pouvoirs du sexe,* ed. by Yohann Chanoir and Céline Piot (Nérac: Éditions d'Albret, 2013), pp. 133-146.

Dont le faux sentiment regne dans les Ruelles.[116]

Much like Cindy Sherman's turn to the grotesque in photography, Maynard states here an intention to shock a group of 'Galans' and 'Belles' who made up the seventeenth-century literary establishment and gathered in Parisian *ruelles* to share and discuss poetry conforming to their aesthetic tastes. This establishment, he writes, had been charmed by the 'faux sentiment' of the 'Orateurs frisez': *mondain* rhetoricians and writers of questionable talent who curried favour within these spaces. In many of his poems, Maynard positions himself as a critic of *galanterie* an *mondain* culture, regarding this literary establishment of hypocritical sycophants with scorn and going out of his way to write poetry that would upset them should it ever come into their possession. As a student of Malherbe, Maynard's allegiance to *classicisme* opposed the dilettantism and formal modernism that reigned supreme in *galant* circles, as expressed most clearly in a poem in which he laments the 'Rimeurs […] mal-faits, et mal-apris' who make a mockery of 'les grands Esprits' (Classical authors).[117] Finally, his attachment to Toulouse and civil function as Président du Présidial d'Aurillac left him geographically removed from the Parisian hubs of *galanterie*, though his poetry displays a nostalgia for his misspent youth in the French capital.[118]

As with almost every seventeenth-century French poet, Maynard's poetic persona of a self-styled outsider is to be taken with a pinch of salt and was just one of several personae he wore at different points throughout his career.

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[116] Maynard (1927), pp. 449-450.
[117] Ibid., p. 70. See also Bailbé (1995), p. 179.
[118] For Maynard's commentary on life in Toulouse and nostalgia for Paris, see 'Adieu, Paris, adieu pour la dernière fois', 'Quand doi-je quitter les rochers', 'Que porrai-je écrire de rare', 'Loin du beau sejour de mon Prince' and 'Je traisne ma vie en langueur', Maynard (1927), pp. 46-47, 55, 58-5 9, 67, 74.

Maynard cannot be considered as operating wholly outside of *galanterie*. He was a prolific author of poetry whose subject matters conformed at times to the aesthetic tenets of *galanterie*, perhaps despite his own personal allegiances, had poems featured in many *galant* collections, and had personal friends in *galant* literary circles.[119] Adam Horsley argues persuasively that Maynard's late-career persona of a respectable, Christian poet that emerged after Théophile's trial was a mask to conceal the author's enduring *libertin* proclivities and prevent him from being pursued by the law as his friend had been.[120] Graça likewise acknowledges that Maynard took pains to '[ne pas] passer pour un auteur libertin',[121] yet warns against drawing too firm a distinction between Maynard *galant* and Maynard *libertin*, pointing towards various poems of his that were published in both *galant* and *libertin* collections.[122] For this chapter, however, I am interested in how Maynard's treatment of disability plays into this particular authorial persona who scorned the *galant* literary establishment and its adherents.

Several of Maynard's poems that take an openly hostile stance towards *galanterie* centre disabled characters in their narratives. I will begin with a verse that is comparable to Théophile's 'Contre une vieille' insofar as, despite eschewing Théophile's vulgarity, it is nevertheless a love lyric written to a woman who is blind in one eye:

> Anne, depuis qu'un de tes yeux
> Est couvert d'une ombre éternelle,
> Des Galans peu judicieux
> Me disent que tu n'és plus belle,
>
> Et que je doy faire un effort,

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[119] Graça (2017), p. 596. Bailbé (1995), pp. 167-169.
[120] Horsley (2015).
[121] Graça (2017), p. 598.
[122] Ibid., p. 589.

> Pour tourner vers un autre Port
> Les esperances de mes voiles.
>
> > Je hay leur goust et leur conseil :
> En quel Ciel voit-on deux Estoiles
> Plus lumineuses qu'un Soleil ?[123]

The narrator explains that Anne's recent loss of sight in one eye has caused her to no longer be considered beautiful according to *galant* aesthetic ideals which, as noted previously, place special emphasis on the eyes as conduits for passion and the most revealing of facial features from a physiognomical perspective. Consequently, the narrator says that 'des Galans peu judicieux' are encouraging him to end his efforts to court her, presumably because of her failure to live up to their ocularcentric ideals of female beauty. Implicit within this judgement is a narrator who is more judicious than his fellow poets, able to recognise beauty where they cannot, and evoke that beauty in verse.

The narrator makes it clear that he does not subscribe to these same ocularcentric ideals and his justification for doing so is particularly revealing. Lyric verse lamenting disability, be it metaphorical or embodied, often reaches for natural imagery to depict disability as a disfunction of Nature.[124] In this poem to Anne, however, Maynard uses similar natural imagery to situate visual impairment as an entirely natural phenomenon, deploying Nature against rather than in service of *galant* beauty ideals. The narrator rejects 'leur goust et leur conseil', asking these 'Galans' if they have ever seen two stars in the night sky shine as brightly as the sun, a question implying that Anne's single eye is far lovelier and invokes far more passion in him than any pair of eyes ever have

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[123] Maynard, (1927), p. 103.

[124] One of Maynard's own odes analysed in the previous chapter, for example, describes metaphorical blindness as an eternal night, a Spring that never comes and a 'Nature [qui] / A perdu toute sa beauté'. Ibid., pp. 173-174.

done or ever could. Partial loss of vision is presented not as a reduction in light but an intensification of it, allowing the poet to compare his beloved's eye not to the comparatively weak light of two distant stars, but to blazing sunlight. In this concluding quip, the fact of becoming disabled – losing vision in one eye – represents not an obstacle to love but an augmentation of it. Maynard's description of female beauty *is* ocularcentric, but it is a different kind of ocularcentrism that celebrates visual impairment rather than overlooking it.

This choice to devote a love lyric to a disabled beloved is presented as an explicit challenge to the prevailing *galant* aesthetic which, as I have shown, treats disabled people – and disabled women in particular – as grotesque creatures to be abjected from its canons of beauty and bodily conformity. It also represents a departure from Théophile's hypersexualised *vieille*, whose portrayal does nothing to challenge the dualistic stereotype surrounding disabled people's sexuality, a case of 'either tragic deficiency or freakish excess'.[125] Maynard's piece is a rare example of middle ground. The narrator explicitly discredits the opinions of those 'Galans peu judicieux' who argue that her disability has caused her to lose all her allure, but he stops short of going too far in the other direction and presenting her, like Théophile did, in a fetishistic manner. Instead, Anne is a stock love interest who just so happens to be disabled, and as such requires an alteration of *galant* aesthetic ideals to fully articulate her beauty.[126] A subtext running through this poem's subversion of expectations related to disability is Maynard boasting that he is more ingenious a poet and more skilled at *variatio* than the artless sycophants he derides.

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[125] Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, 'Introduction', in *Sex and Disability,* ed. by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 1-34 (p. 1).
[126] A poem entitled 'La Belle Vieille' performs a similar task with the stock character of the *vieille*. Maynard (1927), pp. 140-143.

Mind Over Matter

My previous chapter on metaphorical disability noted that there was a significant difference in how male and female characters were treated, disability being a highly gendered phenomenon in the seventeenth century and understood as intersecting with femininity. Despite this fact, disabled men frequently fulfil a similar function in Maynard's poetic oeuvre to the female protagonist of the poem analysed above, enabling Maynard to establish an authorial persona as an anti-*galant* poet who scorns the bodily ideals of *galanterie*. The poet's more nuanced and at times subversive take on embodied disability is drawn out in the following epigram:

> Jean, vous croyez avoir donné
> Dans la haute Galanterie,
> Et que le monde raffiné
> Admire vostre raillerie.
>
> Pourquoy donc ne souffrez-vous point,
> Sans faire joüer la menace,
> Qu'on reproche à vostre pourpoint
> D'estre doublé d'une cuirace?
>
> Vostre bosse est visible à tous ;
> Et les Habilles comme vous
> Ne grondent pas quand on les raille.
>
> Mettez votre esprit en repos :
> Pretendez-vous en belle taille,
> Avec les Alpes sur le dos?

In accordance with the poet's iconoclastic authorial persona, Maynard's narrator is positioned as an external observer of *galanterie*, uninvolved himself but offering a sardonic critique of its social rituals. This epigram concerns Jean, a gifted conversationalist, friend of the narrator, and a *bossu*. Jean has known a degree of success in *galant* circles because of his wit and mastery of its

rhetorical games such as *la fine raillerie*.[127] Try as he might, however, he cannot compel his body to conform to *galant* aesthetic ideals. The mockery he receives due to his habit of wearing a breastplate under his doublet to ineffectively conceal his curved spine upsets him greatly. The narrator comments that if Jean is as witty as he claims to be, he should stop grumbling self-pityingly when people make fun of his physicality and fight back with an acerbic riposte: 'les Habilles come vous / Ne grondent pas quand on les raille'. Furthermore, the concluding stanza implies that there is no way for a *bossu* like Jean to pass as someone of good 'taille', a physiognomical term referring to bodily proportion,[128] so he should stop trying to do so.

This poem demonstrates the disruptive potential of physical disability within *galant* circles. It is a loose adaptation of an epigram by Martial about an old man named Marinus who unsuccessfully tries to conceal his baldness by wearing his thinning locks in a combover. Addressing his protagonist, Martial's narrator asks 'Why not be straightforward and admit to being an old man, so that at last you look like *one* man? Nothing is uglier than a bald-head with a lot of hair'.[129] The general message of the two poems is certainly similar: show yourself as you really are rather than trying to fake a more attractive physical appearance. Where Martial's epigram is hostile towards its subject, however, Maynard's is more sympathetic. Martial's Marinus is defined by his physical appearance and scorned by the narrator due to his age and perceived ugliness. Departing from Martial, Maynard's depiction of Jean introduces a comparison between body and mind. Jean's superlative asset is his wit and his ability to hold

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[127] For an explanation of *la fine raillerie*, see Génetiot (1990), p. 145.

[128] For an example of *taille* in a physiognomical sense, see Porta's discussion of 'ceux qui sont bien proportionnez de corps', particularly the 'Corps de taille médiocre'. Porta (1655), pp. 398-399.

[129] Martial, *Epigrams, Volume II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 393.

his own in the urbanely witty conversation of 'la haute Galanterie'. As a result, the narrator reassures him, he has nothing to worry about when people make fun of his unconventional physique, since he will always be able to counter their mockery with witty retorts and prove his worth that way.

Maynard's narrator does not heap scorn on Jean due to his status as a *bossu*, opting instead to take him aside and give him some blunt but well-meaning advice on how to make best use of his natural gift of a superior wit. The narrator tells the protagonist that he is not doing himself any favours by trying to hide his *bosse* under layers of elaborate clothing, and, when faced with rivals who mock him due to his physicality, Jean should show himself as he really is and defend his honour with even wittier put-downs of his own. The narrator seems to respect Jean for not being like the other *galants*, whom he derides as flashy raconteurs with more style than substance, men condemned in another poem of his I touched upon earlier as 'Orateurs frisez, / Dont le faux sentiment regne dans les Ruelles'.[130] He encourages Jean to stop trying to be something he is not in vain pursuit of a particular bodily ideal, wryly advising him in the final stanza to 'Mettez votre esprit en repos : / Pretendez-vous en belle taille, / Avec les Alpes sur le dos?' The brief flash of grotesque imagery in this concluding line – a mountain range carried on the protagonist's back – is not so much an insult as an arch reminder from an old friend not to succumb to the pressure of conformity while socialising with 'le monde raffiné'. With this concluding message, the narrator affirms that one's ability to conform to *galanterie*'s bodily ideals should be thought of as secondary to one's skill as a poet and rhetorician, though, to his dismay, this is frequently not the case. He implies that those *galant* rhetoricians who preoccupy themselves with an ideal

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[130] Maynard (1927), pp. 449-450.

bodily aesthetic only do so because they are inferior wits to Jean. In sum, the protagonist's status as a *bossu* prevents him from passing as nondisabled and conforming to the aesthetic tastes of 'la haute Galanterie', but the narrator assures him that he need not attempt such a thing because he is the superior conversationalist. Mind, he argues, can and should triumph over matter.

Maynard's relatively sympathetic approach to Jean in this epigram, especially when compared to Martial's take on a similar subject, contributes to the poet's general disdain towards hypocrisy and sycophancy in *galant* circles evident elsewhere in his lyric verse. This poem suggests that an alternative to the masculine bodily ideals of *galanterie* is not only possible but desirable. It imagines a disabled protagonist who refuses to cheapen himself by trying to conform to these ideals and who can beat the *galant* charlatans at their own rhetorical games. The narrator urges Jean to be that protagonist. The fact he is wearing armour at the beginning of the poem, which the narrator encourages him to remove, is symbolic of this message. Armour is associated in this poetic corpus with Vulcan and, consequently, with disability. Specifically, the word 'cuirasse' features in one of Maynard's odes as the product of Vulcan's labour:

> Le celeste boiteux, qui forge le Tonnerre
> Pour le Dieu dont le Ciel adore la Grandeur,
> Travaille à ta Cuirasse avec tant d'ardeur,
> Que son Antre en resonne aux deux bouts de la Terre.[131]

The *cuirasse* is made by Vulcan but not worn by him because his disability prevents him from military service.[132] Instead, he creates armour and weaponry for others, in this case Zeus and the 'Grand Heros' to whom this ode is dedicated. Maynard's inclusion of a *cuirasse* in the poem addressing Jean the *bossu* can be interpreted as an allusion to Vulcan and a comment on disability

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[131] Ibid., p. 151.
[132] Jobba (1990), p. 451.

and masculinity. The *cuirasse*, a symbol of able-bodied, warlike masculinity, seems out-of-place on a disabled man and instead represents bodily concealment and reactive defensiveness. The narrator advises Jean to take off his *cuirasse* because it makes him look ridiculous and, besides, he has no need for it. The *pointe* of the epigram affirms that Jean is clever enough, witty enough, and articulate enough to hold his own against the inferior raconteurs who mock him because of his disability, so he has no need for armour to conceal and protect his body. In so doing, the narrator encourages his friend to break the stereotype examined in my previous chapter that male disability is synonymous with submissiveness and emasculation. Jean can and should fight back with his razor-sharp wit rather than assuming a defensive position and hoping his breastplate will be sufficient to deflect the blows.

The Supercrip

For all its praise of nonconformity and the breaking of stereotypes, however, the plot of Maynard's poem bears a close resemblance to the cliché of the supercrip. Jean is remarkable precisely because he is an anomaly: a disabled man who is a brilliant and witty conversationalist *despite* his disability, alluding to a triumph of mind over matter. Drawing on work by Carla Filomena Silva and P. David Howe, Schalk describes the hallmarks of supercrip narratives, namely 'superlative language, scientific examination of the body and mind, and comparison to a nondisabled norm'.[133] Maynard's epigram certainly exhibits the first and third of these key features (albeit with reference to a seventeenth-century real ideal rather than a modern norm), and, though not scientific, the

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[133] Sami Schalk, 'Reevaluating the Supercrip', *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies,* 10. 1 (2016), 71-86 (pp. 76-77).

expression 'les Alpes sur le dos' highlights and exaggerates the protagonist's unusual physique in a caricatured manner. Schalk then breaks down the different types of narrative that display these tendencies towards disabled characters, and Jean's story closely aligns with what she calls the 'glorified supercrip narrative'.[134] His wit is put forward by the poet as a superlative quality with the potential to both triumph over his rivals and surmount the obstacles he faces due to his disability, if only he could stop letting their insults get him down.

Jean is still very much a caricature of a disabled man deployed in service of a particular poet's agenda. Here, Maynard aims to satirise *galanterie* and its practitioners as charlatans who misguidedly value style over substance. This lyric does, however, demonstrate how embodied disability can be valued as a preferable alternative to *galanterie*, just as Maynard's love lyric to Anne aimed to degrade the aesthetic canon of *galanterie* and its accompanying bodily ideals. These two examples from Maynard differ sharply from those discussed earlier in this chapter, 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' and 'A un laid galant d'une dame qui avait un beau mari', which used grotesque imagery of embodied disability to perpetuate *galanterie* by abjecting bodies which contravene its aesthetic canon. As demonstrated in his poems to Jean and Anne, non-metaphorical, embodied disability is frequently valued in Maynard's verse as an advantageous trait or, at the very least, not an automatically negative one.

While it is true that Maynard did write various *contreblasons* of disabled women and *vieilles* that make use of just about every derogatory cliché in the book,[135] he was also responsible for some rather more original takes on disability as part of his frequent desire to contravene the aesthetic of *galanterie* and

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[134] Ibid., p. 80.
[135] See, for example the poems beginning 'Nicole est un mauvais party' and 'Vrayment la Nature est lasse'. Maynard (1927), pp. 71, 100.

offend the sensibilities of its followers. In so doing, Maynard demonstrates a propensity for *variatio* in his treatment of disability. His lyrics go beyond the reiteration of grotesque clichés to uphold *galant* bodily ideals (though he is certainly able to do that if required), and recognise that the subject of disability is a rich opportunity for poetic innovation, reformulation, and subversion of a hegemonic representational aesthetic. Returning to the subject of the grotesque, the present chapter has focused on all things bodily in its discussions of embodied disability and of bodies blended with the earth and each other, but one key aspect of the grotesque that has not yet been adequately covered is its sense of enclosure within a physical space. The following chapter will hold questions of space at the fore as it delves deeper into the grotto-esque to explore how space interacts with bodies and how bodies interact with space.

3. THE CABARET AND BODILY (TRANS)FORMATION

Je suis l'espace où je suis. – Noël Arnaud[1]

Human bodies are experienced differently depending on the characteristics of the space in which they find themselves.[2] Consequently, disability as a phenomenon, while not entirely created by environmental factors, is certainly shaped by the contours of the spaces people inhabit.[3] This chapter will address the role of physical space in my corpus of poetry with special attention to how it impacts upon disability and contributes to the grotesque aesthetic discussed in Chapter Two. That chapter concluded that, in poetry written in opposition to the *galant* tradition, disability is at times understood and portrayed in ways that are antagonistic to its representations in poetry written within that tradition, with poets often drawing upon the grotesque as an inverted set of aesthetic ideals. The aesthetic of *galanterie* is inextricably tied to physical space: the court, the salon, the theatre, the *ruelle*, the *cabinet*, even the rural landscape of the pastoral novel, and the role of these spaces in *galant* literature of the seventeenth century has been well documented.[4] Work remains to be

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[1] Bachelard (1961), p. 131.

[2] Brendan Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 54.

[3] Kafer (2013), pp. 6-7.

[4] Schneider (2019), Denis (2001); Génetiot (1997), pp. 109-180; Viala (2008), pp. 84-110, 174-191, 298-322; Ellen J. Chapco, 'La cour et le cabinet : l'espace-femme dans *La*

done on the spaces integral to the seventeenth-century French literature offering a grotesque alternative to *galanterie*. To give an example from my previous chapter, Théophile's grotesque realist verse is analysed with reference to the cabaret in Claire Gaudiani's *The Cabaret Poetry of Théophile de Viau* (1981). Gaudiani is correct to situate Théophile's cabaret poetry within a tradition of tavern verse dating back to Roman times,[5] and the present chapter expands on her concept of cabaret verse, examining how the imagined space of the cabaret permeates the poetry of some of Théophile's successors, and how the cabaret comes to be an active participant in the formation and transformation of the grotesque bodies contained within it.

Poetics of the Cabaret

In his 1958 book *La Poétique de l'espace*, Gaston Bachelard undertakes a phenomenological study of topophilia in poetry. He considers the various commonly recurring poetic spaces with positive affective connotations as examples of the 'espace heureux', making them 'des espaces de possession, des espaces défendus contre les forces adverses, [et] des espaces aimés'.[6] Among the examples he provides are the house, the drawer, the nest, the shell, and the corner, each carrying a different set of positive symbolic connotations. Expanding upon the protection offered by the *espace heureux*, Bachelard continues:

princesse de Montpensier, *La princesses* [sic] *de Clèves* et *La Comtesse de Tende* de madame de la Fayette', (2001) <http://books.openedition.org/pulm/1349> [accessed 11 March 2018]; Diane Berrett Brown, 'The Female "Philosophe" in the Closet: The Cabinet and the Senses in French Erotic Novels, 1740-1800', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies,* 9. 2 (2009), 96-123; Pelous (1980), pp. 13-34.
[5] Gaudiani (1981), p. 23.
[6] Bachelard (1961), p. 26.

Pour des raisons souvent très diverses et avec les différences que comportent les nuances poétiques, ce sont des espaces louangés. À leur valeur de protection qui peut être positive, s'attachent aussi des valeurs imaginées, et ces valeurs sont bientôt des valeurs dominantes. L'espace saisi par l'imagination ne peut rester l'espace indifférent livré à la mesure et à la réflexion du géomètre. Il est vécu. Et il est vécu, non pas dans sa positivité, mais avec toutes les partialités de l'imagination. En particulier, presque toujours il attire.[7]

Bachelard does not mention cabarets or similar spaces such as taverns and *auberges* in his study, yet I contend in this chapter that the cabaret represents a uniquely seventeenth-century French take on the *espace heureux*. In my corpus of lyric verse, the cabaret fulfils the role of the *espace heureux* in both the protection it offers its clients and the rose-tinted idealism with which poets portray it as a safe refuge in an increasingly authoritarian political landscape.

Though published before Bakhtin's landmark study, Bachelard does briefly consider the grotesque in his discussion of poetic *espace heureux*. The grotesque surfaces in an interpretation of the ammonite's shell, a space that he characterises as a 'tourbillon initial', symbolic of the fact that 'la vie commence moins en s'élançant qu'en tournant'.[8] The image of life turning in on itself is, Bachelard recognises, a quintessentially grotesque one:

Tout est dialectique dans l'être qui sort d'une coquille. Et comme il ne sort pas tout entier, ce qui sort contredit ce qui reste enfermé. Les arrières de l'être restent emprisonnés dans des formes géométriques solides. […] La coquille est une marmite de sorcière où mijote l'animalité. […] Il suffit d'abréger une évolution pour engendrer le grotesque.[9]

The animal that resides within the spiral shell is a composite creature, and, with its back half fused to the inside of its shell, it is only ever semi-visible. The shell creates life, but a grotesque version of life, in which evolution is abridged and the boundary between creature and space is unclear. The birth of the grotesque, according to Bachelard, results from an *abrègement* of evolution, an assertion

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[7] Ibid., p. 27.
[8] Ibid., p. 134.
[9] Ibid., p. 136.

that recalls the early modern belief that disability and the grotesque both result from deviations in Nature's proper course. Prompted by Bachelard's interpretation of the ammonite's spiral shell as a site of grotesque creation, this chapter investigates the cabaret's role in the formation and transformation of grotesque bodies, paying specific attention to imagery of disability in its readings of cabaret verse.

This chapter's interest lies primarily with poetics of the cabaret, or how this idiosyncratic *espace heureux* features as a motif in my corpus of lyric verse with a strong connection to the topics of disability and the grotesque. For lyric poets, the cabaret is imagined as an *espace heureux* where one may speak freely with friends and give oneself over to food, wine and laughter in a joyful frenzy reminiscent of Bakhtinian carnival feasts. Inspired in part by Bachelard's strict focus on symbolic space in poetry, I draw a distinction between imagined cabarets as they appear in my corpus and the real cabarets of seventeenth-century France. I steer clear of reading the cabaret scenes found in lyric verse as historical sources, recognising that, although there may be some truth some truth to the tales of wine-fuelled debauchery spun by cabaret poets, it is impossible to separate fact from fiction. Moreover, it would be contrary to this chapter's purpose as a study of imagined bodies in imagined spaces.

Cabaret: A Disambiguation

Despite my disinclination to read depictions of cabarets in seventeenth-century lyric verse as evidence of historical phenomena, it is nevertheless important to understand what the word 'cabaret' meant in this period. To anyone who is not a specialist in early modern France, it might bring to mind images of

Ewan McGregor, Nicole Kidman, questionable cover versions, and the Moulin Rouge. The cabaret as a venue for musical entertainment in the style of Le Chat Noir was, however, an invention of the late nineteenth century.[10] The seventeenth-century cabaret is best thought of as an antecedent to the *bistrot*: an informal, modest, and above all convivial establishment in which clients were seated at tables to drink wine, dine, and converse with one another.[11] Strictly speaking, the cabaret differed from the seventeenth-century *taverne*, which until 1680 was not permitted to serve food and usually only sold wine *à pot*, meaning to take away and drink at home.[12] In practice, though, the two terms were frequently treated as interchangeable, yet this distinction does go some way to explaining why cabarets, which allowed the consumption of wine *à assiette*, meaning at a table as part of a meal, were more often associated in the seventeenth century with drunkenness, sinful behaviour and economic wastefulness than *tavernes*, which did not.

One of the engravings in Lagniet's book of proverbs takes a moral stance associating economic wastefulness in the cabaret with disability (Fig. 7). It depicts four men in a cabaret, one of whom has 'rien dans son sac', another has dropped his jug of wine and is scrambling around on the floor trying to lick up as much as he can, a third has spent all his money on tobacco, and a final man is begging for food or drink. The first three men whose bodies we can see have numerous tears and patches in their clothes. The first man, who we are told is a manufacturer of horseshoes, has a wooden leg, at once strengthening the association between blacksmithing and physical disability, and placing that

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[10] Lisa Appignanesi, *The Cabaret* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 1-9.
[11] For a general history of French drinking establishments, see Luc Bihl-Willette, *Des tavernes aux bistrots: histoire des cafés* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1997).
[12] Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp. 79-80.

image of physical disability at the centre of the economic wastefulness enabled by the cabaret.

As this engraving suggests, the majority of cabaret customers were men.[13] In art as in poetry, the seventeenth-century cabaret was coded as a male space and a centre for male sociability to the exclusion of women.[14] That is not to say that women were absent from cabarets altogether, but were for the most part present in roles that governed the establishment and served the clientele. Many cabaret owners (*cabaretiers/cabaretières*) were women, as were their staff.[15] There was also a pervasive association between early modern cabarets and sex work, the assumption being that women who frequented or worked at cabarets were sex workers in search of clients.[16] The misogynistic sexualisation of women in seventeenth-century cabarets perhaps accounts for why under ten percent of clients were women,[17] though this is not an insignificant number and more research needs to be done on the role of women in cabarets.

When it came to the establishments themselves, the layout and ambience varied greatly, depending on the individual tastes of the owner, their financial situation, and the kind of clientele they wanted to attract. Thomas Brennan's study of the inventory of the Claude Lardin, a late-seventeenth-century *cabaretier* in the faubourg St. Antoine, gives us an idea of the layout of a suburban cabaret:

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[13] A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 73.
[14] Ibid., pp. 58, 61.
[15] Matthew Jackson, 'A Contested Character: The Female Publican in Early Modern England and France', *The Brewery History Society,* 150 (2013), 16-27.
[16] Martin (2001), pp. 66-73.
[17] Ibid., p. 73.

Ie nescais qui des quatre est le plus a son aise
L'un n'a rien dans son sac l'autre a cassé son pot
L'autre uit de tabac et l'autre a mine niaize
Demande la passade a ce fendeur dergot

tout leur bien s'en ua en fumee

demander la passade

Il a la main legere plustost un
souflet qu'un escu

Il faudroit bien
boire pour deuz
-oir riche

haure sac

viande q gens sous

l'est dans les biens jusques au menton

14 Tel fait la faute q'un autre boit

Fig. 7

His business was modest. The tavern was a bit smaller than average, with only four rooms listed and two of these, on the second floor, had beds as well as tables. This is where the family slept when the customers finally left. The rooms were all sparsely furnished, without wardrobes, food boxes, or mirrors. Only two rooms had tapestries, but these were "old." The cabaret contained ten tables listed in the inventory, which is slightly below average, but there is no sign that it was in financial trouble. There were 592 livres in cash at hand when he died, and his wine cellar held a respectable 4,423 livres worth of wine.[18]

Other cabarets such as Gilles Renard's renowned establishment in the Tuileries were more luxurious, offering multiple spaces to their aristocratic clients, each with a different ambience and varying levels of privacy.[19] In addition to providing rooms for eating and drinking, cabarets frequently doubled as *auberges* and offered lodgings to their clients.[20]

Cabarets were by no means a strictly urban phenomenon, yet most mentioned by name in my corpus were found in Paris, which boasted 1847 cabarets according to a 1670 census.[21] The anonymous poems entitled 'Ode à la louange de tous les Cabarets de Paris' (1627) and 'Le Guidon bachique en *chanson* pour trouver les bons cabarets de Paris' (c. 1646) lead the reader on virtual pub crawls around the city while describing the surroundings and occasionally the clientele of each establishment.[22] For example, the Galère on the rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre and the Croix Blanche on the neighbouring rue de la Savaterie were favourites of the shoe-sellers who worked nearby.[23] The narrator of the ode to cabarets also notes that courtiers were often seen drinking

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[18] Brennan (1998), p. 113.
[19] Juliette Glickman, *La belle histoire des Tuileries* (Paris: Flammarion, 2016), pp. 58-60; Francisque Michel and Édouard Fournier, *Histoire des hôtelleries, cabarets, hôtels garnis, restaurants et cafés, tome II* (Paris: Seré, 1851), pp. 270-271.
[20] D'Alibray (1906), p. xx.
[21] Martin (2001), p. 59.
[22] Both poems are reproduced in Claude le Petit, *Les œuvres libertines de Claude Le Petit* (Geneva: Slaktine, 1968), pp. 209-227.
[23] Ibid., p. 218.

at a cabaret owned by a man named Cormier, who served 'du vin sans eau',[24] implying that his was rather an upmarket establishment.[25] Each cabaret poet had their own preferred haunts, with d'Alibray residing for a time at the Riche Laboureur before moving to the Bel Air, finding the latter a more tranquil and agreeable place in which to compose his lyrics.[26] Saint-Amant names the Fosse aux Lions, the Courmier Fleuri, and the Pomme de Pin as his favourites in his 1629 piece entitled 'Les Cabarets',[27] and wrote an epigram analysed later in this chapter celebrating a cabaret owned by a la Plante, a tobacco dealer from Sauzon on the Breton island of Belle-Île.

The Cabaret and Morality

If drunkenness was considered a sin in seventeenth-century France, and there is ample evidence that it was,[28] then it was not a particularly serious one.[29] It was thought of more as a gateway sin: a comparatively minor infraction but one that sets an individual on a slippery slope towards other more serious sins.[30] This slippery slope is visualised in another engraving in Lagniet's book of proverbs (Fig. 8). In this cabaret scene entitled 'La Debauche', one drunk young

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[24] Ibid., p. 215.

[25] In his entry for *cabaret*, Furetière writes that 'le vin du cabaret est presque toûjours frelaté, & fait mal à la tête'. Albert de La Fizelière claims that *cabaretiers* frequently diluted their wine with well water. Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes* (La Haye: Leers, 1690). Albert de La Fizelière, *Vins à la mode et cabarets au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Princebourd, 1866), p. 48.

[26] D'Alibray (1906), pp. xx-xxii.

[27] Marc-Antoine de Gérard de Saint-Amant, *Œuvres I* (Paris: Didier, 1971), p. 212.

[28] Matthieu Lecoutre, 'Ivresse et ivrognerie dans la France moderne (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)' (Université de Bourgogne, 2010), pp. 54-72.

[29] Émile Magne, *Les Fêtes en Europe au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Martin-Dupuis, 1930), p. 258.

[30] A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder in Traditional Europe* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2009), pp. 2, 15, 30-31; Lecoutre (2010), p. 57; Martin (2001), p. 48; Hodgkin (2007), p. 125.

La Debauche.

L'amour, la bonne chere et les querelles, ont une certaine liaison qui les rendent comme inseparables dautant
que par degrez on va de l'un a l'autre et pour ces raisons ie diray que c'est L'image des Vices, et ce Temple
qui en est esloigné sur L'autel duquel est une Pallas celle de la Vertu, ce Personnage qui tourne le dos
a cette trouppe paroist en auoir tresgrande horreur adressant ces pas en ce lieu.

Fig. 8

man quarrels with another, raising a jug to strike him, a third kisses a woman who we can safely assume is not his wife, and a fourth vomits onto the floor after finishing his meal. The four drunk men demonstrate how excess drinking in cabarets was commonly believed to lead to the sins of wrath, lechery, and gluttony. Meanwhile, a fifth man flees the cabaret, horrified by the scene he has just witnessed and ashamed of having set foot there, heading across the street to the temple of virtue, shown in the top right of the image.

As Lagniet's engraving suggests, the cabaret was an establishment that not only sold wine but allowed customers to drink on the premises, and consequently the target of moral objection from seventeenth-century religious authorities.[31] This section will briefly examine the language used to condemn cabarets and their clients from a moral standpoint by one of their most vocal critics, the Jesuit Père François Garasse (1585-1631).[32] In 1623, Garasse published *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou prétendus tels*, an anti-*libertin* diatribe that depicts the cabaret as an enabling space, supposedly aiding and abetting the corruption of impressionable young men by *libertins* such as Théophile de Viau, whom he mentions by name at several points.[33] Garasse was by no means the only seventeenth-century ecclesiastical critic of the cabaret,[34] but he was certainly one of the harshest and most verbose,[35] and his treatise's use in Théophile's high-profile blasphemy trial cemented him as one of the most influential.[36] Garasse's treatise and its arguments were referred to by the prosecution during that trial,[37] elevating its

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[31] Lecoutre (2010), p. 54.
[32] For a biography of Garasse, see Horsley (2021), pp. 44.45.
[33] Horsley (2021), p. 262; Moreau (2007), pp. 51-61, 865.
[34] Lecoutre (2010), pp. 54-72.
[35] *La Doctrine curieuse* comes in at 1025 pages long.
[36] Horsley (2021), p. 43.
[37] Seifert (2009), p. 182.

importance from just one of many seventeenth-century critiques of the cabaret to a piece of moral writing that had a documented effect on how justice was carried out.[38]

For Garasse, the most dangerous thing about cabarets was their combination of heavy drinking, clandestinity, and social mixing. Drunkenness emboldened *libertins* such as the members of Théophile's Confrérie des Bouteilles,[39] and caused their tongues to loosen:

Il est vray qu'en public & en presence de tesmoins, ils sont reseruez à n'auancer temerairement aucune impieté; mais quand ils sont soubs la Rose, dans vn cabaret d'honneur, teste à teste, en posture d'yurognes, c'est lors qu'ils descouurent entièrement leurs plus mysterieux secrets, & que les impiez, les blasphemes, les obscenitez leur sortent de la bouche quatre à quatre.[40]

The wine-fuelled conversation of the cabaret is characterised by its disorder and its frequent punctuation with impieties, blasphemies, and obscenities that these men would never have the courage to utter in public. Garasse emphasises the cabaret's clandestine nature – these conversations take place 'soubs la Rose', meaning in secret.[41]

Yet the privacy of the cabaret was not absolute. Conversing there was certainly more private than conversing in the street, but a great deal more public than conversing in one's home. Both modern and early modern commentators are inconsistent in their portrayal of it as either a public or private space. Here, Garasse emphasises the clandestinity of cabarets, offering *libertins* the privacy to freely speak whatever obscenities they would not dare utter

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[38] For Garasse's involvement in Théophile's trial and the surrounding debates, see Horsley (2021), pp. 43-61, 251-333; Horsley (2016). Also see DeJean (2002), pp. 29-55.

[39] Garasse uses this nickname himself, though it is unclear who coined it. Horsley (2015), p. 94.

[40] François Garasse, *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux-esprits de ce temps* (Paris: Chappelet, 1624), p. 85.

[41] 'En effect c'est vn prouerbe en Allemagne, Ie vous dis cela sous la rose, c'est-à-dire en secret'. Ibid., p. 84.

elsewhere. Isabelle Moreau writes with reference to Garasse that 'lieu de libertinage, le cabaret est aussi le lieu du secret'.[42] A. Lynn Martin describes the cabaret as a 'public space',[43] but later writes that it was a place of 'relative privacy'.[44] Matthieu Lecoutre, however, includes cabarets in a list of 'lieux publics où l'enivrement se fait au vu et su de tous'.[45] It is unclear whether this uncertainty is due to a shift in perception over time or different understandings of the words public and private, but the cabaret is evidently hard to satisfactorily categorise as one or the other.

Garasse himself implicitly acknowledges the cabaret's uncertain position on the public/private spectrum in a later passage depicting Théophile's group as predatory atheists who seduce unsuspecting strangers:

nos Atheistes […] sçavent que tel ieune seigneur a de l'amour, ils composent vne Ode en laquelle ils comparent sa maistresse à vne divinité raccourcie de toutes les perfections du monde, ils prennent leur temps, ils s'ingerent sur l'heure du soupper; ils se glissent és bonnes compagnies pour dire le mot, la partie se noüe à deux pistolles pour teste dans vn cabaret d'honneur; ils suyvent asséurément, & se rendent officieux mechaniquement, la table se couvre, ils en sont comme l'importun de Regnier, ils payent leur escot, partie en bouffonneries, partie en caiolleries ou en impietez.[46]

The group of drinkers spot a lovestruck young man and promise to write him an ode to his mistress's divine loveliness. He takes the bait and sits down at their table. They then ply him with drink and insist that he joins him for dinner, becoming closer friends with each cup of wine they quaff. Enabled by the cabaret wine, the group 'se noüe à deux pistolles' – literally binding themselves to one another in exchange for a small sum of money. The cabaret facilitates this act of physical and emotional amalgamation, and when the group leaves,

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[42] Moreau (2007), p. 863.
[43] Martin (2001), p. 23.
[44] Ibid., p. 60.
[45] Lecoutre (2010), p. 531.
[46] Garasse (1624), p. 760.

having incorporated the young nobleman into its body, it is babbling and

swearing as one entity. As well as the milieu of the cabaret, the corruption of

this young man is enabled by the poetic text. It is, after all, the initial promise of

a poem about an idealised beloved that grabs his attention. This promise to

create an ideal results in the creation of a grotesque. The formation and

expansion of an impious collective body over the course of a drunken evening at

the cabaret is at the root of Garasse's fears: the semi-public/semi-private nature

of cabarets enables *libertins* to make new recruits.[47] They can speak freely but

be overheard, they can approach strangers, and they can join forces. This

contagion is most threatening for Garasse. The imagined *libertin* body is a

quintessentially grotesque entity, continually growing in size and number,

threatening to overspill the boundaries of the cabaret and leak out to

contaminate Christian society.

The resulting perversion of naïve young men's minds due to spending time

in cabarets with *libertins* such as Théophile is described by Garasse in a similar

way to how Porta described disability: they are 'ames esgarées iusques dans le

fonds d'vn cabaret'.[48] This thesis's introduction explained how disability was

commonly conceived of in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a

diversion in Nature's proper course, with implications of inner sinfulness, a

conceptual mechanism that resurfaces in *La Doctrine curieuse*'s imagery of

égarement. Most importantly, the cabaret is the place in which that *égarement*

takes place, and, as the quotation in the previous paragraph attests, an enabling

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[47] Similarly, Joan DeJean highlights Garasse's horror that 'gens de néant' were both reading and writing indecent literature: it was no longer confined within the *cabinets* of the educated elites. DeJean (2002), p. 52.
[48] Garasse (1624), p. 570.

force in that debasing process. Garasse laments the fact that *libertins* seek

cabarets when they should, presumably, be seeking churches:

Ainsi en pouuons-nous dire du bon-heur & contentemet, c'est vne bonne chose, à laquelle tout le mode vise, voyre mesmes les aueugles : mais le mal-heur est que vous Libertins le cherchez au libertinage, vous Épicuriens, Éscorniffleurs, yurognes, le cherchez das un cabaret, vous impudiques et vilains le cherchez dans le fumier de vos ordures. [...] Vous faictes vn affront au bon-heur de le chercher en des lieux si infames.[49]

The comparison between 'vous Libertins' and 'les aueugles' in the second line of

the above quotation serves to strengthen the connection between cabaret clients

and disabled people from a moral standpoint. Garasse implies that both of these

groups of people less likely to attain 'bon-heur et contentemet', though they

strive for it nonetheless. *Libertins* are then implied to be even more blind than

people who cannot see, because they search for happiness not by coming into

God's divine light but wallowing in their own filth in a dingy cabaret, which

Garasse likens to a dunghill. The earthy supplants the celestial in this analogy

between *libertins* and *aveugles*, drawing upon earthy grotesque imagery to incite

a moral panic among Christians who fear their own sons may be seduced by the

cabaret's empty promise of happiness.

Standing in opposition to this religiously motivated moral condemnation of

cabarets was the fact that the cabaret was deeply ingrained in French culture of

the seventeenth century, and particularly among male political and social elites,

several of whom were patrons of the same *libertin* poets Garasse so severely

condemned, Théophile included.[50] Partly due to elite men's evident appreciation

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[49] Ibid., p. 954.

[50] Maurice Lever, *Les bûchers de Sodome* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), p. 105. Luc Bihl-Willette and A. Lynn Martin also highlight the mixing of the social classes that occurred in seventeenth-century cabarets. Bihl-Willette (1997), p. 39; Martin (2001), p. 61. For more on the complex systems of patronage that protected many libertine poets of the seventeenth century, see Peter William Shoemaker, *Powerful Connections: the poetics of patronage in the age of Louis XIII* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2007).

of and implication in cabaret culture, seventeenth-century civil authorities seemed reluctant to impose legal restrictions that would come down hard on the kind of drunken gatherings in cabarets that Garasse condemned. In fact, in a change of emphasis from Garasse's preoccupation with impiety, civil authorities were more concerned with the financial ruination of those citizens who frittered away their wages in cabarets.[51] Despite these concerns from church and state, the general picture of seventeenth-century laws designed to regulate cabarets is of regional inconsistency and of rules that were difficult to enforce and easy to flout,[52] showing that vociferous moral condemnation by the likes of Garasse did not necessarily lead to decisive legal action.

In Defence of Cabarets

The objects of my analysis in this chapter are poems written in opposition to the moral condemnation of cabarets by seventeenth-century authority figures such as Garasse. The tendency to stereotype cabarets as morally corrupting resulted in many poets coming to the defence of these establishments by claiming them as their own and situating them at the centre of rituals of sociability and artistic creation. The repeated imagining of the cabaret as a safe haven in a hostile world, defended against adverse forces and free from external regulation is precisely what gains it its status as an *espace heureux*. This *espace heureux* enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the bodies of those drinkers who inhabit it, facilitating the blending of human bodies with other human bodies and non-human bodies to create grotesque forms. As poems analysed later in this

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[51] Bihl-Willette (1997), p. 42.
[52] For an overview, see ibid., pp. 42-45.

chapter demonstrate, disability sits at the centre of this transformational process and reifies the link between the cabaret and the grotesque.

The cabaret's status as an *espace heureux* comes to the fore in the anonymous 'Ode à la louange de tous les Cabarets de Paris',[53] a forty-three-stanza-long poem published in 1627 that tells the reader how to locate Paris's best cabarets, with each stanza focusing on a particular neighbourhood. Most stanzas make use of a narrative conceit in which the narrator describes the impressive architecture, stunning scenery, or historical importance of a particular neighbourhood, before admitting that if it were not for the cabarets, they would have no cause to set foot there. In this ode, cabarets symbolise safety, and a running motif is defiance of royal authority through an allegiance to cabarets, one that is most explicit in the stanzas dedicated to the Arsenal and the Bastille:

> L'ARSENAL
> Arsenal où de toutes parts
> L'on void les foudres de la guerre.
> Par lesquels nostre jeune Mars
> A fait trembler toute la terre :
> *L'Escu*, *Le Cerf* et *Le Pigeon*
> Sont plus forts que vostre dongeon ;
> Ny vos poudres ny vos grenades
> Ne troublent point leur vin clairet ;
> Je fais la nique aux canonnades
> Quand je suis dans le cabaret.

> LA BASTILLE.
> Grosses et formidables tours,
> Prisons des âmes criminelles,
> Où l'on renserre tous les jours
> Les factieux et les rebelles ;
> Retraicte des fascheux destins,
> Bastille l'effroy des mutins !
> J'ay tant de peur que l'on m'y traîne,
> Que pour asseurer mon repos,
> J'entre dans *La Croix de Lorraine*

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[53] Reproduced in Petit (1968), pp. 210-225.

Pour me cacher parmy les pots.[54]

Royal authority in these stanzas is represented by 'jeune Mars' (Louis XIII himself), his 'foudres de la guerre' (weapons stored in the Arsenal), and the 'grosses et formidables tours' of the Bastille, recently converted by Richelieu into the state prison which would, over the course of the century, become the ultimate symbol of Ancien Régime despotism and incarceration.[55] At the time of this ode's publication, Louis was tightening his grip on France. Set against the backdrop of a conflict with the Huguenots escalating towards a state of civil war,[56] the young king consolidated his personal power, searched for ways to control the significant influence of the *grands*, and began a programme of fiscal reform in preparation for a war with Spain.[57] The sanctuary provided by the Escu, the Cerf, and the Pigeon cabarets is untroubled by the preparations for war happening outside. Louis's authority is unable to penetrate these fortified spaces that are 'plus forts que [son] dongeon' and his 'cannonades' do not even disturb the surface of the wine in their bottles. The cabarets allow the narrator to openly defy (*faire la nique à*) Louis XIII's authority from within the sanctuary of their four walls.

The cabarets of these stanzas exist outside of Louis's jurisdiction, belonging instead to the narrator who, in the second stanza, likens themself to the 'mutins' who are locked in the Bastille, fearing a similar fate if they dare to remain out in the open much longer. In this stanza, the Croix de Lorraine stands in opposition to the Bastille's imposing towers and is a place of concealment and

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[54] Ibid., pp. 211-212.
[55] Hans-Jürgen and Rolf Reichardt Lüsebrink, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 6.
[56] James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 28.
[57] Ibid., pp. 27, 45-47.

rest, allowing the narrator to avoid capture by hiding among its jugs of wine.

The Croix de Lorraine appears to have had unique connotations of concealment and conspiracy. According to nineteenth-century historian Albert de la Fizelière, it was 'situé sur des terrains vagues, accidentés de décombres, de charpentes, coupés de fossés et replis de fondrières [et] on y montait par un petit chemin entre deux haies'.[58] Fizelière provides no reference for this description of the cabaret's concealed entrance, but there may be some truth to it. In a letter sent to the Marquis de Jonzac, the poet Chapelle recalls having read one of Jonzac's letters with some friends at the Croix de Lorraine.[59] He describes the cabaret as a 'Lieu propre à se rompre le cou / Tant la montée en est vilaine',[60] implying that there was steep and treacherous climb up to its entrance. In addition to the treacherous path leading to it, this cabaret was associated with a different kind of treachery. Rumour had it that conspirators allied to the House of Guise met there during the Wars of Religion,[61] a rumour that could easily have been concocted due to the cabaret's name, the Cross of Lorraine being a symbol of the Guise family, but it evidently persisted nonetheless. Cabarets are established in these two stanzas as symbolic spaces of resistance and of sanctuary. Standing in opposition to the displays of royal authority in the Arsenal and Bastille neighbourhoods, the cabarets become, in Bachelard's words, 'des espaces de possession, des espaces défendus contre des forces adverses, des espaces aimés'.[62]

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[58] Fizelière (1866), p. 60.
[59] Chapelle was the pen name of Claude-Emmanuel Luillier. Chapelle and François Le Coigneux Bachaumont, *Œuvres de Chapelle et de Bachaumont* (Paris: Giraudet et Jouaust, 1854), p. 207.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Fizelière (1866), p. 60.
[62] Bachelard (1961), p. 26.

This anonymous 'louange' of Parisian cabarets does not offer much description of what happens inside the cabarets it names, just directions to them and an indication of what kind of clients they attract. Building on Bachelard, it also presents them as spaces which are imbued with positive affective connotations that attract, though the narrator does not describe the interior of any cabaret in enough detail to explain exactly why it is so attractive. D'Alibray, on the other hand, focuses on the sociability of the cabaret in various poems describing the goings on inside the cabarets in which he stayed:

> Quoy, l'on fait aussi la debauche
> Trois pas au-dessous de mon huys !
> Vrayment, je suis bien où je suis,
> On boit à droite, on boit à gauche.
>
> Dans une sale à costé droit,
> Maint Crocheteur vuide la couppe ;
> Et plus bas en un autre endroit
> On respond tope à cette trouppe.[63]
>
> Au milieu de ce plaisant bruit,
> Qui ne me trouble ny me nuit,
> L'amour de Bacchus me transporte.
>
> Je trinque au ton de ces faquins,
> T'enquiers-tu comme je me porte ?
> Toujours gaillard, entre deux vins.[64]

As d'Alibray's narrator leads the reader downstairs from his bedroom door and into the heart of the cabaret, we are reminded of the Renaissance artists lowering themselves down into the Domus Aurea to study the grotesque frescoes within. The narrator of this sonnet is likewise an observer of grotesque scenes. The initial impressions are of enclosure and intimacy, of rooms on top of rooms and of people on top of people, all acting as if part of one body. Like the carnival, the cabaret engenders collectivity in the simultaneous and continual

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[63] Van Bever's 1906 critical edition of d'Alibray's poetry erroneously places this line at the beginning of the third stanza rather than at the end of the second stanza, which is its position in earlier editions.
[64] D'Alibray (1906), p. 102.

drinking, eating, and laughing of its clients. This particular iteration of the *espace heureux* reasserts the enclosure inherent in the grotto-esque qualities of the Domus in which it was rediscovered.

The irregular rhyme scheme of d'Alibray's sonnet mimics the irregular layout of the building it describes and, most of all, the irregular whooping and chattering the narrator encounters as he descends into it. The reader is led by the first four lines to expect the typical Petrarchan structure of repeating *rimes embrasées* in the octave.[65] They are instead struck by the new *rimes croisées* of lines five to eight, evoking the call-and-response effect of the unseen group of revellers shouting a drinking challenge up the stairs to the table of porters who 'vuide[nt] la couppe'. In couplet beginning the third stanza, isolated from the rest of the poem by its *rimes plates*, the narrator stands surrounded by this commotion on all sides, but untroubled by it. On line eleven he is then transported by the love of (or love *for*) Bacchus, a god whose connotations of, among other things, transcendence, subversion, and disorder contrast with Mars's militaristic masculine authority that reigned over Paris in the anonymous 'Ode à la louange de tous les Cabarets de Paris'.[66]

From the moment he begins this transportation, led deeper into the cabaret by that love, the poem reverts to *rimes* croisées, the same rhyme scheme as the section that first introduced the rowdy group of porters whose 'ton' the narrator replicates as he drinks alongside them. The same recurring sound is simultaneously replicated in the rhyme scheme of those concluding

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[65] For an overview of the fundamentals of French versification, see Clive Scott, *A Question of Syllables: Essays in Nineteenth-Century French Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 198-205.

[66] For bacchic imagery in late-Renaissance French verse, see Nathalie Mahé, *Le mythe de Bacchus* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), pp. 230-234.

couplets. Drinking alone in the cabaret is an impossibility,[67] and by the end of

the poem the narrator is no longer an observer but has been incorporated within

the collective body of the drinkers he describes. The poem ends on the

colloquialism of being 'entre deux vins', meaning well on one's way to

drunkenness but also carrying with it a sense of physical enclosure between two

bottles of wine.[68] The image of enclosure between bottles recalls the narrator of

the anonymous ode to cabarets, who enters the Croix de Lorraine 'pour [s]e

cacher parmy les pots'.[69]

As well as enclosure and intimacy, d'Alibray's *espace heureux* of the

cabaret is defined by its noise and its ability to transport its customers. That

noise is at once debauched – the unseen drinkers yelling up the stairs to the

group of porters – but also unified and unifying. The narrator, initially isolated by

rimes plates, joins in with the porters' chanting and clinking of glasses by the

end of the piece, becoming part of this grotesque scene of excessive

consumption and debauchery. The verb *transporter*, encountered previously in

the *chanson* 'Ravissemens amoureux' analysed in Chapter One,[70] can refer to

both physical transportation, represented by d'Alibray's narrator walking

downstairs towards the centre of the cabaret, and emotional transportation,

represented by the 'gaillard' humour in which he always finds himself when

drinking in the cabaret. In fact, imagery of transportation permeates the entire

sonnet. The narrator begins by descending a staircase, the men whose whooping

'carries' him into this upbeat mood are porters, while the imaginary interlocutor

of line thirteen uses the verb *se porter* to ask him how he feels. As part of its

[67] Matthieu Lecoutre highlights the collectivity of cabaret scenes described in the
seventeenth-century lyric. Lecoutre (2010), p. 410.
[68] When translating this poem, I arrived at 'under the table' as the only English phrase
that goes some way to combining inebriation and enclosure.
[69] Petit (1968), p. 212.
[70] See section entitled '*Perclusion* as Conquest'.

status as an *espace heureux*, the cabaret transports its customers, both physically and emotionally, to a better place, blending their bodies into one and leading them to a Rabelaisian utopia where they can give themselves over to the carnival spirit and *faire la débauche* without interference or regulation.

Presiding over this enclosed utopia is Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, whose presence 'boscul[e] l'ordre établi':[71] a central element of the carnivalesque.[72] The seventeenth century is situated near the end of an 'âge d'or pour Bacchus' in Western Europe,[73] a period running roughly between the late-fifteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, that produced art and literature replete with references to Bacchus and bacchic culture.[74] For the protagonists of cabaret verse, Bacchus frequently appears as a patron who provides them with protection, sustenance, and poetic inspiration. The rest of this chapter will examine how the *espace heureux* of the cabaret, along with Bacchus himself, interacts with the bodies of its clientele, and how those bodies interact with the space within which they are enclosed and the poetry they write. As I will highlight at various points, this interaction between human, spatial, and textual bodies is often expressed with recourse to disability.

Human / Spatial / Textual

Is the cabaret the building or the bodies within? D'Alibray's sonnet shows the two things to be inseparable, acting as one entity to create and maintain this imagined *espace heureux*. This symbiotic relationship between building and

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[71] Mahé (1992), p. 232.
[72] Ibid., pp. 230-234.
[73] Ibid., p. 215. See also Lecoutre (2010), pp. 394-428.
[74] For examples, see Mahé (1992), pp. 215-285; Lecoutre (2010), pp. 394-402.

bodies (both human and textual) is explored further in another of d'Alibray's poems, a verse epistle addressed to his confidant Jacques le Pailleur and entitled 'L'Auberge'.[75] In both this epistle and d'Alibray's sonnet analysed previously, the cabaret is no mere stage but an active participant in the creation, transformation and termination of bodies both human and textual. The cabaret's architecture and the revellers within it lead (or mislead) the composition process, blending human, space, and text. The narrator describes himself sat in his bedroom above the Riche Laboureur cabaret trying to concentrate on poetic composition but he is interrupted by the commotion of the drinkers beneath his room:

> Mais c'est tout, et cela dans une salle basse
> Qui fremit d'un bruit sourd que fait la populace :
> Or, dessus cette salle est mon appartement
> Par une porte à part et par une montée
> Qui de pas un Beuveur n'est jamais frequentée.
> Quelquefois dans ma chambre, ou dans mon Cabinet,
> Je medite à grands pas ou t'escris un Sonnet,
> Quand j'entends tout à coup quelque gueule profane
> Qui crie à plein gosier : *A la Nopce de Jeanne*,
> *Cette Nopce de Chien*, où quelque autre chanson
> Qui renverse mes vers d'une estrange façon.[76]

This disruptive commotion is attributed to 'la populace' who reside in a 'salle basse'. The collective body of the drinkers acts upon the room, making it tremble with a 'bruit sourd'. This expression – meaning a muffled sound – has curious implications in a reading focussed on disability. First, the idea of a *bruit sourd* attributes a state of deafness not to the listener but to the thudding noise itself. It is not deafening but deafened. Second, the *bruit* produced by the drinkers only becomes a *bruit sourd* after travelling upwards, through the cabaret's ceiling and into the narrator's lodgings. The cabaret itself is what

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[75] D'Alibray (1906), pp. 112-115.
[76] Ibid., pp. 112-113.

causes the noise's deafness, transforming the full-throated chatter of the clients into something that simulates deafness.

I will return to the disabling effects of the cabaret later in this chapter, but for now I would like to focus on what happens as the noise from below reaches the narrator. Sometimes, he writes, the deafness of the muffled thuds below is disrupted when 'quelque gueule profane' begins to sing a drinking song he recognises, such as the one beginning 'A la Nopce de Jeanne, / Cette Nopce de Chien'.[77] In instances such as this, the sound of the cabaret interferes with his writing of a sonnet, and 'renverse [s]es vers d'une estrange façon'. An unexpected but not necessarily undesirable intrusion, this *renversement* is a transformative act carried out on the poetic text comparable to the grotesque degradation of the carnival. Try though he might to write a sonnet, the intrusive noise of the cabaret below takes over and causes the narrator to write poetry that closer resembles a rambunctious drinking song. Bakhtin describes the grotesque as a triumph of 'low' over 'high',[78] and in this epistle the spatial dynamics of the cabaret enable a drinking song to rise up and debase d'Alibray's sonnet, which is already a nonclassical form. They reinforce the image of grotesque debasement and of a poet who relinquishes himself to that debasement as he writes directly above the drunkards whose chanting penetrates the cabaret's floorboards.

The narrator continues to describe his lifestyle as a lodger at one of Paris's rowdiest cabarets, before a second interruption arrives in real time and he is cut off mid-sentence:

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[77] Van Bever comments that 'c'est une chanson gaillarde du Pont-Neuf. On peut la lire dans le *Recueil nouveau des Chansons du Davoyard, par luy seul chantées dans Paris* (A Paris, chez la Vefve Jeu Promé, 1665, in-12)'. Ibid., p. 113.
[78] Bakhtin (1984), p. 19.

> Et qu'il n'y pourroit pas entrer sans quelque blâme…
> Le bruit des pots qui met ma cervelle à l'envers,
> M'empesche de trouver une suite à ces vers :
> N'importe, nous irons jusqu'où voudra la rime,
> Mais quoy, ne pas rimer est-ce commettre un crime ?
> Mais quoy, puis-je empescher le monde d'avoir soif ?[79]

This time, it is not singing that disturbs the narrator, but 'le bruit des pots' which – returning to the grotesque image of *renversement* – 'met [s]a cervelle à l'envers'. The precise nature of this noise is unclear, perhaps the jugs are being clinked together or banged on the table during another drinking song. Regardless of its cause, the noise is loud and disruptive enough to prevent him from 'trouver une suite à ces vers'.[80] Rather than resist this intrusion, the narrator allows himself and his writing to be guided by it, relinquishing control over his poem and declaring that 'nous irons jusqu'où voudra la rime'. The cabaret thus becomes an active participant in the composition process, a co-author who guides the narrator's hand into creating inexact internal rhyme: 'Mais quoy, ne pas rimer est-ce commettre un crime ?' The consumption of wine by both revellers and poet ties into the disintegration of the poem's rhyme scheme in the final three lines quoted above: how does a drunkard rhyme his poems? Slightly off. He's drunk. As if defending himself against accusations of being too easily distracted and losing his train of thought, the narrator asks his would-be critics: 'Mais quoy, puis-je empescher le monde d'avoir soif ?' The poem ends here, rather abruptly on a rhetorical question and an unfulfilled rhyme after an anaphora preceded by two lines saturated with rhyme. Perhaps the narrator left with the intention of finishing his verse once the revellers had gone home, or perhaps he gave in to the temptation to go downstairs and join

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[79] D'Alibray (1906), p. 115.
[80] The *pot* was a jug of varying size, usually made of metal or porcelain and used in cabarets for the serving of wine. See Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, 'Le vaisselier du vin (xiiie-xvie siècle). Contribution à l'histoire du goût', *Revue électronique du CRH,* 12 (2014).

them. As readers, we might be tempted to finish the poem ourselves, responding to the narrator's unanswered question, imagining what might rhyme with *soif* – no mean feat! – and finding ourselves drawn into this ongoing work of collaborative authorship between poet and cabaret.

Borgne

The blending of bodies both human and non-human is a key commonality between the cabaret and the grotesque. Indeed, the cabaret can be thought of not so much as a space for grotesques but as part of a grotesque body itself. In a sonnet written to an unnamed traveller departing on their journey,[81] d'Alibray warns of the various mishaps that may befall them while travelling. The final two lines introduce the worst of all possible eventualities: 'Mais pardessus tout Dieu vous garde / D'un borgne et mauvais cabaret'.[82] This statement carries a degree of self-aware irony: we suspect that the poet himself enjoyed spending time in cabarets that would have been judged 'borgne et mauvais' by seventeenth-century moralists, and several of his poems depict and celebrate such establishments. Is this warning more of an enticement?

D'Alibray's choice of wording when issuing this warning-that-is-not-one is worthy of close analysis. The incorporation of the cabaret into a grotesque body centres on this keyword 'borgne', a word that can be applied to both humans and interior spaces. When applied to an individual, 'borgne' as an adjective or noun means '*one eyed, or, that hath but one eye*'.[83] For example, the protagonist of Théophile's 'Contre une vieille' may be read as *borgne* due to the

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[81] D'Alibray (1906), p. 101.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Cotgrave (1611).

reference to tears of her singular 'oeil hypocrite'.[84] Over the course of the

seventeenth century, this word came to be inextricably linked to the cabaret,

specifically the image of a dingy and disreputable one. Definitions of 'cabaret' in

the three major French dictionaries published towards the end of the

seventeenth century all contain this keyword 'borgne':

Cabaret borgne. C'est un méchant petit cabaret. (1680)[85]

On appelle un cabaret borgne, un méchant cabaret qui n'est fréquenté que par
de pauvres gens, qui est obscur, mal propre, & mal servi. (1690)[86]

On appelle, Cabaret borgne, Un cabaret non seulement qui est fort obscur, mais
qui est mauvais. (1694)[87]

Similarly, each dictionary's entry for 'borgne' includes the example of a 'cabaret

borgne', suggesting that the word 'borgne', in the sense of dingy or shady, was

tied to the cabaret in the seventeenth-century French popular imagination. The

connection between 'borgne' and 'cabaret' was so well established that all three

major dictionaries published towards the end of the century include 'cabaret

borgne' in their definitions of both words. Chapter One noted that metaphors of

disability most often contrast blindness with 20/20 vision as one half of an

'either/or' binary. It also noted that *galant* love lyrics hinge on a series of

irreconcilable binaries, of which disabled/able-bodied is just one. Due to its

allegiance to the grotesque, cabaret verse subverts these binaries, favouring

instead the semi-obscurity represented by both meanings of the word 'borgne'.

Following this close association between this disability keyword and the

cabaret, how do the two meanings of 'borgne' interact and inform each other in

seventeenth-century cabaret verse? A sonnet by Saint-Amant, most likely

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[84] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love'.
[85] César-Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois* (Geneva: Widerhold, 1680).
[86] Furetière (1690).
[87] Anonymous (1694).

written during a springtime trip to Brittany in 1625,[88] is dedicated to a *borgne*

named La Plante who owned a cabaret in Sauzon on the island of Belle-Île,[89] and

explores the continuity between body and place implied by the word 'borgne':

Sonnet[90]

Voicy le rendez-vous des Enfans sans soucy,
Que pour me divertir quelquefois je frequente,
Le Maistre a bien raison de se nommer la Plante
Car il gaigne son bien par une plante aussy.

Vous y voyez Bilot pasle, morne et transy,
Vomir par les nazeaux une vapeur errante,
Vous y voyez Sallard chatoüiller la servante,
Qui rit du bout du nez en portrait raccourcy.

Que ce Borgne a bien plus Fortune pour amie,
Qu'un de ces Curieux qui, soufflant l'Alchimie,
De sage devient fol, et de riche indigent :

Celuy-là sent enfin sa vigueur consumée,
Et voit tout son argent se resoudre en fumée,
Mais luy de la fumée il tire de l'argent.[91]

The remoteness of the Breton island on which the cabaret stands furthers the

already otherworldly qualities implied by the *espace heureux*. The narrator jokes

that the *cabaretier* has good reason to go by the name La Plante, since he earns

a living selling tobacco to the customers of his cabaret, including Saint-Amant's

friends Bilot and Sallard. Through the sale of tobacco, the *cabaretier* transfers

his partial blindness, indicated by the noun 'borgne', onto the cabaret itself. The

reader imagines a hazy, smoke-filled room, becoming increasingly more *borgne*

with each exhalation of 'vapeur errante' made by the group of smokers. La

Plante shares his name with the source of his income, but also implicitly shares

his status as a *borgne* with his establishment. The smoking of tobacco was rarely

[88] Saint-Amant (1971), pp. 281-282.
[89] Saint-Amant (1930), p. vi.
[90] In the *Recueil Conrart*, the title includes the dedication 'A La Plante, vendeur de tabac'. Ms-15143, fol. 56[r].
[91] Saint-Amant (1971), pp. 281-282.

mentioned as an activity done inside French cabarets and was officially banned in 1635,[92] so the felicitous combination of La Plante's two occupations of tobacco merchant and cabaret owner must have made his cabaret *un des plus borgnes*.

The poem's central conceit is laid out in the sestet and concerns the transformation of matter carried out by La Plante and his establishment, both of whom are *borgne* and enjoy a symbiotic relationship that hinges on the sale of tobacco. Line nine introduces Fortune, another visually impaired character, previously discussed in Chapter One,[93] who conspires with La Plante to pull off a magic trick. La Plante is compared favourably to an alchemist ('un de ces Curieux qui, soufflant l'Alchimie') whose misguided attempts at matter transformation backfire, resulting in their own transformation from a rich, wise man into a penurious madman whose vigour is entirely spent. For La Plante succeeds where the alchemist has failed, and the narrator jokes that there is an irony to the situation, given how alchemists see all their money go up in smoke, while the *cabaretier borgne* is able to extract money from smoke.

The symbiotic relationship between place and person in this poem centres on the word 'borgne': the cabaret at Sauzon is a smoke-filled *cabaret borgne* run by a *borgne* named La Plante. A plant is coincidentally also the cause of the clouds of smoke hanging in the air that render his cabaret as *borgne* as its owner. In a contrast to the love lyrics analysed in Chapter One, in which total blindness was frequently contrasted with perfect vision as part of a binary, cabaret verse deals in shades of grey when it comes to visual impairment.

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[92] Brennan notes that a relative lack of tobacco smoking was one thing that differentiated early modern French drinking houses from their Dutch counterparts. Brennan (1998), p. 126. Christopher Rolfe comments that the scene depicted in this poem is reminiscent of Adriaen Brouwer's depictions of smokers in Flemish taverns. Christopher D. Rolfe, *Saint-Amant and the Theory of "Ut Pictura Poesis"* (London: MHRA, 1972), p. 104.

[93] See section entitled 'Fortuna and *Fortune Aveugle*'.

'Borgne' is emblematic of this tendency, referring to partial sightedness and/or a room half concealed by shadow. The predominance of the word 'borgne' in fictional and non-fictional accounts of the cabaret implies a close conceptual link between cabarets and visual impairment. Readers interested in disability must be especially attuned to imagery of space, given these inextricable links between disabled bodies and the spaces they inhabit. The cabaret is a key seventeenth-century space that facilitated the formation and transformation of bodies.

Blind Drunk

The transformative effects exacted by the cabaret upon the bodies it contains are often cited as either cause of or cure for disability. One of the most striking examples of a cabaret that causes blindness is introduced in one of d'Alibray's verse epistles to Pailleur, first published in a 1647 *recueil* entitled *La Musette*.[94] It begins:

> Friand Gourmet des nouveaux vins,
> Futur honneur des Quinze-vingts,
> Tircis,[95] m'est-il permis de rire
> Et m'est-il permis de t'écrire,
> Si tes yeux autresfois si bons
> Sont comme deux rouges Charbons
> Et te deffendent la lecture
> D'une si mauvaise escriture ?
> Mais plustot que de ne voir rien
> De ce qu'on t'offre d'entretien,
> En te racontant des sornettes,
> Prends les yeux d'autruy pour lunettes.[96]

The narrator's friend is losing his eyesight, a situation explained with reference to another space of enclosure, the Quinze-Vingts hospice for the blind,[97] to

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[94] D'Alibray (1906), p. 1.
[95] The 1653 edition of this poem replaces 'Tircis' with 'Pailleur'. Ibid., p. 43.
[96] Ibid.

which, the narrator jokes, his friend will surely be confined if his condition persists. Tircis's eyes have the appearance of red-hot coals, and the narrator encourages him to take 'les yeux d'autruy' and use them as glasses so he can read his correspondence. The grotesque blending of human bodies with each other and with the non-human re-emerges.

Punning off *lunettes* and a shared interest in astronomy,[98] the narrator wonders in the lines that follow what might have caused his friend's worsening eyesight:

> Est-ce d'avoir trop sur la brune
> Contemplé le cours de la Lune
> Les mouvements differens
> De ces grands Corps tousjours errans ?
> A force de voir les planètes
> Tes yeux se sont-ils faits Cometes ?[99]

Although presented in a flippant manner as a series of jokes about the two friends' shared stargazing hobby, these rhetorical questions allude to a long tradition of looking to the stars for insight into the conformation and workings of the human body. Astrological readings were, until the late Renaissance, a key interpretive paradigm drawn upon by European thinkers wishing to decode the workings of the human body.[100] For example, Porta's work *La Magie naturelle*, first published in French in 1568, is representative of this attachment to astrological readings in its belief that 'vertu & efficace naist du Ciel & des Astres,

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[97] For a brief history of the Quinze-Vingts, see Edward Wheatley, 'Blindness, Discipline, and Reward: Louis IX and the Foundation of the Hospice des Quinze Vingts', *Disability Studies Quarterly,* 22. 4 (2002), 194-212.

[98] D'Alibray and Pailleur's amateur astronomy is documented by Beverly S. Ridgely, 'Dalibray, Le Pailleur, and the "New Astronomy" in French Seventeenth-Century Poetry', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 17. 1 (1956), 3-27.

[99] D'Alibray (1906), pp. 43-44.

[100] Melissa Percival, *The Appearance of Character: Physiognomy and Facial Expression in Eighteenth-Century France* (Leeds: Maney, 1999), pp. 14-18; Rivers (1994), pp. 23-24; Le Van (2017), p. 22; Porter (2005), pp. 72-73; Courtine (2005), p. 322.

& que de la plusieurs choses adviennent & derivent'.[101] The same author's physiognomy treatise, written nearly thirty years later and discussed throughout this thesis, directly contradicts his earlier astrological work and marks the beginning of a move away from astrology in interpretations of the body and towards a more materialist approach.[102] The facetious tone with which d'Alibray's narrator alludes to astrology is testament to the fact it had somewhat fallen out of favour, yet was still very much part of the popular discourse surrounding disabilities and their origins in the seventeenth century.

Moving from astrology to love, the narrator suggests a second possible explanation for Tircis's worsening eyesight:

> Ou si c'est pour t'estre attaché,
> Ainsi que je t'ay reproché,
> A considérer ces deux Dames
> Qui jettent des traits tout de flames,
> Puisqu'un visage gracieux
> Est, ce dit-on, le mal des yeux.[103]

Here, the narrator elides celestial bodies into earthly bodies. The 'deux Dames / Qui jettent des traits tout de flames' transitions from the comets of the previous section to the notion of beautiful women causing blindness by shooting fiery arrows from their eyes into those of men, causing them to fall hopelessly in love with them. This is can also be read as an allusion to the beautiful women found in *galant* love lyrics who metaphorically blind their lovers by shooting flames from their eyes or disappearing from view, a motif discussed in Chapter One.[104] As a result, the impersonal pronoun *on* to which this idea is credited could easily refer to d'Alibray's fellow poets who draw upon and perpetuate it in their verse.

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[101] Giambattista della Porta, *La Magie naturelle* (Lyon: Rigaud, 1591), p. 36.
[102] Percival (1999), pp. 16-17; Rivers (1994), pp. 24-25; Courtine (2005), p. 323.
[103] D'Alibray (1906), p. 44.
[104] See sections entitled 'The Lover's Gaze' and 'The Absent Beloved'.

It becomes evident, however, that the narrator does not put much stock in either of these clichéd and fanciful readings of blindness. In a section that explicitly links disability to carnival celebrations in cabarets, he continues:

> Ah ! non, ton mal vient d'autre chose
> Et n'a pas de si noble cause,
> Il vient, si j'ai bien deviné,
> D'avoir un peu trop chopiné.
> Le jour de Saint-Martin, je gage
> Qu'à bien trinquer tu faisais rage,
> J'entends, trinquer à tout venant
> Ainsi qu'à Caresme prenant[105]

Alluding to events that neither he nor Tircis remember clearly,[106] the narrator attributes his friend's worsening eyesight to excessive drunkenness on Saint Martin's day. Saint Martin was a patron of winemaking whose feast day on the eleventh of November had, according to Bakhtin, 'a bacchanalian overtone'.[107] Not only was Tircis raising a glass to Saint Martin, he was also celebrating feasts yet to come, such as shrovetide ('Caresme prenant') and, later in the poem, the Pithigies,[108] an ancient Athenian festival marking the end of the wine fermentation period – both usually celebrated in February. D'Alibray's narrator roundly rejects the clichés of astrology and unrequited love as causes of blindness, settling instead on an explanation that is far more bodily and mundane. This comic revelation serves to deride the tendency to read disability as indicative of passionate inner turmoil or as evidence of the world's secret workings, attributing it instead to sheer drunkenness.[109]

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[105] D'Alibray (1906), p. 44.
[106] 'Il m'est avis que je te voy'. Ibid.
[107] Bakhtin (1984), p. 80.
[108] D'Alibray (1906), p. 45.
[109] In a similar vein, Philippot Le Savoyard, the blind seventeenth-century Pont Neuf singer, posits the excessive consumption of alcohol in the cabaret as a factor contributing towards his blindness. He then suggests that Homer's blindness was caused by alcoholic excess. Hammond (2019), pp. 40-42.

How exactly is excessive drinking connected to blindness? For this narrator, it is not simply a case of a person's perceptive faculties becoming increasingly compromised the more they drink. Rather, the characteristics of the wine, and cabaret wine in particular, are transferred to the body of the drinker:

> Et lorsque tu humois le vin,
> Tes yeux avaloient du venin ;
> […]
> Souffre donc avec patience
> La juste et douce penitence
> Qui te fait trouver chaque object
> De la couleur d'un vin clairet.[110]

The idea that drinking cabaret wine was akin to poisoning oneself seems to have originated from the belief that *cabaretiers* watered down their wine with well water, thereby adding all manner of potentially deadly impurities, or otherwise altered their cheapest wines to make them more palatable. Fizelière quotes 'une ancienne description de Paris' which affirms that 'le plus honnête cabaretier est celui qui débite la liqueur le [sic] moins meurtrière, c'est-à-dire abondamment coupée avec de l'eau de puits',[111] while the Académie Française's 1693 dictionary definition of *frelater* reads 'Mesler quelque drogue dans le vin pour le faire paroistre plus agreable à la veuë & au goust, comme font les Cabaretiers. *On ne sçauroit jamais empescher les Cabaretiers de frelater le vin*'.[112] This ingestion of poison served to him in a cabaret is expressed through imagery of bodily transformation as Tircis's eyes have taken on the colour of the tainted wine he was drinking on Saint Martin's day, causing him to 'trouver chaque object / De la couleur d'un vin clairet'. Consuming cabaret wine has altered his body and his perception of the world around him: Tircis is literally seeing red, viewing his surroundings through the rosé-tinted lens of his bloodshot eyes.

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[110] D'Alibray (1906), pp. 45-46.
[111] Fizelière (1866), p. 49.
[112] Anonymous (1694).

Paradox

Despite his friend's worsening eyesight as a result of his consumption of tainted cabaret wine, d'Alibray ends his epistle on an optimistic note. The narrator encourages Tircis to drink at least a little water from time to time – ironic given that water mixed into wine was a likely cause of the illness – and the epistle finishes with the image of Phoebus, hoping that he might bring the clarity and healing of which his friend is in such great need.[113] The epistle's concluding sentiments of drinking water and turning to Phoebus, not Bacchus, for cure are directly contradicted in a sonnet published by d'Alibray in the same *recueil* as the epistle. This sonnet is also written to Pailleur about his eye infection:

> Grand Docteur au fait de la Cave
> Cher Tirsis,[114] qui trinques de mieux,
> Sinon quand ton œil bilieux
> Sous le mal tient ta soif esclave.
>
> Laisse, laisse ton humeur grave
> Et prends de ce jus précieux :
> Pour le mieux recevoir des Cieux
> La vigne avec ses pleurs se lave.
>
> Fais donc laver ton verre aussi ;
> Si ton œil devient obscurcy,
> L'eau de la vigne est salutaire ;
>
> Peux-tu jamais mieux t'enyvrer
> Qu'alors que du mal qu'il peut faire
> Bacchus s'offre à te délivrer ?[115]

This sonnet does much to reverse the narrative arc and contradict the conclusions presented in the previous epistle. While in that previous piece Tircis assumed the passive role of a patient being diagnosed by the poet, here Tirsis –

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[113] D'Alibray (1906), p. 46.
[114] The 1653 edition reads 'Cher Pailleur'. Ibid., p. 17.
[115] Ibid.

note the slightly-modified spelling – is addressed as a 'Grand Docteur au fait de la Cave', able to use his specialist knowledge of wine to combat his own eye infection. This infection 'tient [s]a soif esclave': rather than eliminating the protagonist's thirst, his 'oeil bilieux' has enslaved it, preventing it from quenching itself with Bacchus's reinvigorating liquid and engaging in the free and chaotic inebriation proper to both carnival and cabaret. In the second stanza, wine is a 'jus précieux' that offers divine inspiration and possesses healing powers derived from the supernatural properties of the heavenly tears (rainwater) with which vines purify themselves.

In d'Alibray's epistle to Tircis analysed in the previous section, wine was posited as the likely cause of the protagonist's loss of vision. Here, however, it offers healing. The sestet encourages Tirsis to 'laver [s]on verre', alluding to both a wine glass and the lens of a telescope. I mentioned earlier that Pailleur shared a keen interest in amateur astronomy with d'Alibray, so the poems written to him are consequently rich with puns on astronomy and humorous allusions to astronomical theory and practice. This pun on *verre* hinges on the idea that the wine glass and the telescope are two different ways of receiving insight from the heavens. It also solidifies the links between the two seemingly contradictory poems through a further common theme of astronomy. Wine in this sonnet is described as 'salutaire' for someone whose eye 'devient obscurcy', a remark implying that the divine inspiration it offers may cure Tirsis's infection and allow him to see through his telescope once again. It is unclear if this image of wine-as-cure is to be taken literally or refers instead to the cliché of poets becoming intoxicated in search of creative inspiration. Regardless of whether the *jus précieux* offers literal or figurative vision, the narrator concludes with an

ironic comment that Bacchus is both the cause of and cure for his friend's

disability, just as drinking alcohol in the morning is said to cure a hangover.

The poet seems to acknowledge with this concluding quip about the hair

of the dog that his two verses about Pailleur's loss of vision appear to contradict

each other. How can wine be both the cause of and cure for blindness? In

addition to being an essential component of cultural depictions of

Dionysus/Bacchus throughout history,[116] paradox is central to the grotesque: 'if

the grotesque can be compared to anything, it is to paradox. Paradox is a way of

turning language against itself by asserting both terms of a contradiction at

once'.[117] When alongside each other, d'Alibray's two poems about his friend's

worsening eyesight do not add up to a coherent whole. Instead, they form a

self-contradictory grotesque body, disharmonious in both content and form yet

dedicated to the same person and presented in the same *recueil* published by

the poet shortly before his death. A particularly innovative example of *variatio*,

this love of paradox is to be expected in cabaret poetry. Presided over by

Bacchus, himself a figure of paradox, the cabaret is a grotesque space, taking an

active role in the formation and transformation of grotesque bodies both human

and textual. Spending time in the cabaret causes clients' bodies to become

grotesques, revelling in their disharmony and self-contradiction, exaggerating

physical variability rather than diminishing or disguising it.

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[116] Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus: Myth and Cult* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. xix, 91.
[117] Harpham (1982), p. 23. Bakhtin appears to agree with this statement, quoting L. E. Pinsky's similar belief that 'grotesque in art is related to the paradox in logic'. Bakhtin (1984), p. 32.

Madness

By far the most pervasive example of cabarets and Bacchus acting in unison to create grotesque bodies featuring disability is the imagery of madness. The seventeenth-century French vocabulary of madness was wide-ranging. To name just the most frequent examples from my corpus, words such as *folie*, *fureur*, *rage*, *mélancolie*, and *imbécillité* all refer to what we might broadly term madness. It is clear by now that seventeenth-century disability terminology was deployed inconsistently and in ways that often seem contradictory or do not align with modern categories. It would be impossible to separate these terms from one another and impose an ordered consistency of usage and signification that simply is not present in the primary texts themselves. For these reasons, I have chosen to use the term *madness* to denote the subject of the rest of this chapter because it is, in the words of Elizabeth Brewer, a 'broad church',[118] encompassing a wide range of embodied conditions that have been understood in different ways throughout history. It is not medicalised, unlike, for example, *mental illness*,[119] and, similar to *disability* and to an extent *crip*, it has been reclaimed by activists who affirm that mad is not a bad word.[120] As an emerging field, Mad Studies exists alongside and overlaps with Disability Studies,[121] forging alliances between madness and disability, both states that have

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[118] Elizabeth Brewer, 'Coming Out Mad, Coming Out Disabled', in *Literatures of Madness,* ed. by Elizabeth J. Donaldson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 11-30 (p. 14).
[119] Ibid., p. 16.
[120] Amelia Abraham, 'Remembering Mad Pride, The Movement That Celebrated Mental Illness', Vice, (2016) <https://www.vice.com/en/article/7bxqxa/mad-pride-remembering-the-uks-mental-health-pride-movement> [accessed 07/10/2020]
[121] Elizabeth J. Donaldson, 'Introduction: Breathing in Airless Spaces', in *Literatures of Madness,* ed. by Elizabeth J. Donaldson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), (p. 3).

historically been conceived of as deviant in some way and have carried strong

negative connotations.[122]

Drunkenness and madness have long been considered conceptual

neighbours, the former often being thought of as a precursor to or simulacra of

the latter.[123] A seventeenth-century aphorism attributed to Guillaume Bautru, a

satirical poet and favourite of Richelieu, claims that 'le *cabaret* est un lieu ou l'on

vend la folie par bouteille',[124] while Walter Otto's foundational 1933 work on

Dionysus introduces its subject as 'the mad god whose appearance sends

mankind into madness'.[125] Montaigne's 'De l'yvrognerie' links this wine-induced

madness to the writing of poetry, citing Plato who says that

pour neant hurte à la porte de la poësie un homme rassis : aussi dit Aristote
qu'aucune ame excellente n'est exempte de meslange de folie : Et a raison
d'appeler folie tout eslancement, tant louable soit-il, qui surpasse nostre propre
jugement et discours.[126]

Montaigne posits that the specific form of madness experienced when under the

influence of Bacchus is not only a precondition for poetic composition but

'louable'. He is careful to stress that this praiseworthy quality does not make it

any less of a madness, defining *folie* as 'tout eslancement […] qui surpasse

nostre propre jugement et discours'. Following Montaigne, Lecoutre writes that it

is 'en étant ainsi hors de lui-même [que] l'enivré est donc parfois assimilé à un

fou'.[127] The rest of this chapter will explore how this close relationship between

drunkenness and madness is articulated in seventeenth-century French cabaret

verse.

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[122] Brewer (2018), p. 15.
[123] Hodgkin (2007).
[124] Gustave de Lartique, *Dictionnaire de penséés diverses, extraites des moralistes, législateurs, hommes d'État, magistrats, ecrivains et publicistes, de l'antiquité, du Moyen Age, et des siècles modernes* (Brussels: Tircher, 1829), p. 37.
[125] Otto (1995), p. 65.
[126] Montaigne (2007), p. 367.
[127] Lecoutre (2010), p. 188.

To begin to answer this question, I will briefly return to the anonymous 'Ode à la louange de tous les Cabarets de Paris' with which I began this discussion of how the *espace heureux* of the cabaret is linked to disability and the grotesque. The ode is not devoid of imagery of disability, with one stanza bearing the title of Petites Maisons, a hospice on the rue de Sèvres:[128]

> PETITES MAISONS
> Sejour des Petites Maisons,
> Où mille testes sans cervelle
> Font d'estranges comparaisons
> Quand la Lune se renouvelle ;
> Aille qui voudra devers vous,
> Visite qui voudra les fous :
> Ou bien que l'Empereur sans cesse
> Fasse rire les curieux ;[129]
> Pour moy je n'y mets point la presse,
> *Les Quatre Vents* me plaisent mieux.[130]

The internment of the mad was just one function of this hospice that also held a large number of people infected with venereal disease, and yet, in seventeenth-century parlance, being sent to the Petites Maisons was a euphemism for madness.[131] The language used in this stanza to denote madness is telling: the 'fous' of the Petites Maisons are 'mille testes sans cervelle'. The image of a head without a brain recalls the culture of dissection reflected by much seventeenth-century French poetry about the human body, and was discussed in Chapter One.[132] It also allows me to situate madness within broader discourses of disability. Madness is conceived of as lack, specifically the lack of a brain, and

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[128] Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p. 100.

[129] This is likely a reference to Caligula, the Roman emperor most frequently associated with madness who supposedly had a habit of imposing laughter on the unwilling, most notoriously by executing a man's son and forcing him to laughter immediately afterwards. Mary Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), p. 135.

[130] Petit (1968), p. 219.

[131] 'On appelle à Paris, Petites Maisons, l'Hospital où l'on enferme ceux qui ont l'esprit aliené. *Il le faut mettre, il devroit estre aux Petites Maisons.*' Entry for 'maison' in Anonymous (1694).

[132] See section entitled 'The *Blason*'.

consequently the lack of ability to reason. This conforms to an early modern conceptual framework for understanding disability as lack (*défaut*) that regularly resurfaces in my corpus. Instead of reasoning coherently, these people who lack brains 'Font d'estranges comparaisons' / Quand la Lune se renouvelle'. As an expression of unreason, '[faire] d'estranges comparaisons' involves the juxtaposition of two or more concepts that are incongruous and do not belong together, an action that brings to mind the hybrid creatures found in early modern grotesque art and literature. These grotesque expressions of unreason are triggered by the waxing of the moon, an image harking back to the ancient belief in lunacy, or intermittent periods of madness caused by the full moon.[133] In a departure from Porta's physiognomical body, which was largely self-sufficient and uncoupled from astrological influences, the mad body is shown here to be governed by the moon. Madness entails a loss of individual autonomy.

Unlike the Croix de Lorraine and the Bastille compared in one of the stanzas discussed earlier in this chapter, the Quatre Vents cabaret and the Petites Maisons hospice are not presented as polar opposites. The narrator is given a choice between entering the cabaret or visiting the 'fous' at Petites Maisons, a choice which is made in the final two lines: 'Pour moy je n'y mets point la presse, / *Les Quatre Vents* me plaisent mieux'. The narrator says that they are in no hurry to go to the Petites Maisons, so choose the cabaret instead because it is more pleasing to them. This is a far more equivocal statement than the same narrator's outright fear of the Bastille in the stanza discussed at the beginning of this chapter, leaving open the possibility that they might yet go to

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[133] This term 'lunacy' derives from Luna, the Roman goddess of the moon. Charles L. Raison, Haven M. Klein, and Morgan Steckler, 'The Moon and Madness Reconsidered', *Journal of Affective Disorders,* 53 (1999), 99-106 (p. 99).

the hospice at a later date. Far from presenting the two spaces as opposites, then, the cabaret has the potential to be an intermediate step towards the Petites Maisons hospice for the mad, and the difference between the two spaces is one of degree rather than of kind. This relationship of partial similitude tallies with Foucault's assertion that the Petites Maisons dual functions of the internment of the mad and the *vénériens* attests to a 'parenté entre les peines de la folie et la punition des débauches'.[134] Just as Petites Maisons is a space of madness and debauchery, argues the anonymous poet, so is the cabaret.

The *Chanson à Boire*

A *chanson à boire* by Scarron expands upon this idea that drinking in the cabaret is a step towards madness, picking up on Montaigne's suggestion that drunkenness should be understood as a desirable form of madness, but a madness nonetheless. As a poetic form, the *chanson à boire* encourages group performance, with more people joining in as the song goes on and they become familiar with the refrain. Unlike the largely elite readership of *galant* forms such as the madrigal and the *rondeau*, the *chanson à boire* was enjoyed and performed by both elites and non-elites,[135] further demonstrating its capacity to unite bodies that are usually separate.[136] This is precisely the kind of song that might have penetrated through the floorboards of the cabaret room in which d'Alibray's narrator tried in vain to concentrate on his writing:

CHANSON À BOIRE

Que de biens sur la table

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[134] Foucault (1972), p. 100.
[135] Lecoutre (2010), p. 403.
[136] The issue of elite versus non-elite readership was brought up during Théophile's trial. Horsley (2021), p. 303.

Où nous allons manger !
Ô le vin délectable
Dont on nous va gorger !
Sobres, loin d'ici ! loin d'ici, buveurs d'eau bouillie !
Si vous y venez, vous nous ferez faire folie.
Que je sois fourbu, châtré, tondu, bègue-cornu,
Que je sois perclus, alors que je ne boirai plus.

Montrons notre courage :
Buvons jusques au cou.
Que de nous le plus sage
Se montre le plus fou.
Vous, qui les oisons imitez en votre breuvage,
Puissiez-vous aussi leur ressembler par le visage.
Que je sois fourbu, châtré, tondu, bègue-cornu,
Que je sois perclus, alors que je ne boirai plus.

Et d'estoc et de taille
Parlons comme des fous ;
Qu'un chacun crie et braille :
Hurlons comme des loups.
Jetons nos chapeaux, et nous coiffons de nos serviettes,
Et tambourinons de nos couteaux sur nos assiettes.
Que je sois fourbu, châtré, tondu, bègue-cornu,
Que je sois perclus, alors que je ne boirai plus.

Que le vin nous envoie
D'agréables fureurs !
C'est dans lui que l'on noie
Les plus grandes douleurs.
Ô Dieu ! qu'il est bon ! prenons en par dessus la tête ;
Aussi bien, chez nous, vomir est chose fort honnête.
Que je sois fourbu, châtré, tondu, bègue-cornu,
Que je sois perclus, alors que je ne boirai plus.

Hâtons-nous de bien boire
Devant qu'il soit trop tard,
Et chantons à la gloire
Du Seigneur de Cinq-Mars :
Il est beau, vaillant, courtois, prend plaisir à dépendre ;
Tel fut autrefois défunt Monseigneur Alexandre.
Que je sois fourbu, châtré, tondu, bègue-cornu,
Que je sois perclus, alors que je ne boirai plus.[137]

In this song describing a meal at a cabaret table, the sense of collectivity

previously identified in d'Alibray's two poems about his stay at the Riche

Laboureur comes to the fore. The collectivity of the cabaret goers is established

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[137] Scarron (1947), pp. 226-227.

by the song's repetition of the first-person plural imperative to assert that frenzied drunken disorder is their common goal which they must work together to achieve: 'Montrons notre courage : / Buvons jusques au cou'. As part of this establishment of a collective body, teetotallers and drinkers of boiled water are sent 'loin d'ici': excluded from the collective *nous* to prevent them from working against this common goal.[138] In an inversion of seventeenth-century bodily ideals, bodily disorder in the form of drunkenness, vomiting, and carnivalesque collectivity is prized above all else while bodily order in the form of sobriety is banished. This is particularly evident in the belief that 'vomir est chose fort honnête', a statement that applies the *galant* masculine ideal of *honnêteté* to the grotesque action of vomiting.[139]

The two-line refrain, however, departs from the first-person plural with the only use of the first-person singular in the song, proclaiming that the narrator (*je)* will be dog-tired, castrated, shorn, cuckolded, and *perclus* before he stops drinking. This is a narrator who intends to drink himself into a state of *perclusion* and will only stop consuming wine when this state has been reached. Far from suggesting that an individual has split off from the group to drink alone, the refrain's *je* attests to the fusion of the many separate bodies acting in unison as part of a collective *nous* into one grotesque body. The refrain is, after all, the part of the song that is sung the loudest and by the greatest number of people, so this *je* refers not to an individual drinker but to the collective body of all the drinkers in the imaginary cabaret singing in unison every time the refrain comes back around. We remember from Bakhtin that the grotesque body is never complete but in a constant process of becoming, forever making and

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[138] This sentiment is similar to those found in the poems against 'les poètes buveurs d'eau' quoted by Lecoutre. Lecoutre (2010), p. 397.

[139] For a detailed analysis of the ideal of *honnêteté*, see Seifert (2009), pp. 21-56; Schneider (2019), pp. 112-122.

unmaking itself, giving birth and dying all at once.[140] The verbs' recurring

changes from first-person plural to first-person singular reflect this cyclical

quality of the grotesque body. After the switch to *je* in the refrain, the *nous* of

the individual bodies then returns for the following verse, only to retransform

into *je* with the arrival of the next refrain, and so on.

The repeated transformation and reversion of the grotesque body of the

drinkers is mimicked by the prosody. The first four lines of each stanza alternate

between feminine and masculine *rimes croisées*, seven and six syllables in

length respectively.[141] This initial structure is fairly standard for a *chanson à*

boire given that brevity and punchiness are typical of the form. Halfway through

each stanza, however, the syllable count doubles. Lines five and six comprise

feminine *rimes plates* and are fourteen syllables each: a highly unusual line

length for a seventeenth-century French lyric, let alone a *chanson à boire*. The

longest line commonly found in lyric verse is the *alexandrin* – twelve syllables

with a masculine rhyme, and thirteen with a feminine rhyme – which these lines

overspill by one syllable,[142] just as the grotesque body grows larger and larger,

leaking out as it surpasses its own bodily limits. Thirteen is also the combined

syllable total of the two preceding lines, which comprise seven and six syllables,

underscoring the fusion of forms, both bodily and poetic, taking place in this

piece. The resultant grotesque form then shrinks slightly for the refrain, whose

masculine *rimes plates* reduce it to two thirteen-syllable lines. As the *nous* of the

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[140] Bakhtin (1984), p. 24.

[141] In opposition to post-nineteenth-century French metrics, seventeenth-century poets did consider the final *e muet* of a feminine rhyme as a syllable, though this did not affect the line's classification, which was guided by the syllable count of the lines with masculine rhyme – so these *rimes croisées* would still be considered *hexasyllables*, despite the extra syllable of the feminine lines' *e muet*. See César-Pierre Richelet, *La versification françoise* (Paris: Loyson, 1671), pp. 17-18. C.f. Scott (1986), pp. 199-200.

[142] Pierre Richelet provides an example of a typical seventeenth-century *alexandrin*, comprising twelve syllables in masculine lines, and thirteen in feminine lines. Richelet (1671), p. 20.

following verse returns, the lines revert to seven syllables and the transformative cycle recommences. Just like Bakhtin's grotesques, Scarron's *chanson* is a leaky body, overspilling the conventional boundaries of its own form. It is fundamentally hybrid in its construction, as the poet's voice is mingled with those of imagined drinkers joining in with the refrain and expanding the authorial *je* to a collective *nous*. The grotesque body is not abjected but joyfully embraced by those drinkers participating in its creation and maintenance, cycling round again and again, louder and louder.

As an essential part of this repeated formation of a grotesque body through drink and song is the consumption of wine, an act that is, at various points, linked to madness. There appear to be two different kinds of madness evoked in this song, one desirable and one undesirable. The undesirable madness is introduced first on the sixth line of the first stanza. It is posited as a consequence of 'sobres' and 'buveurs d'eau bouillie' entering the cabaret: 'Si vous y venez, vous nous ferez faire folie'. This usage of *faire folie* refers to the likelihood that the drinkers will commit ill-advised acts caused by the presence of non-drinkers in the group. Perhaps these water drinkers might convert others to their temperance, or perhaps one of the drunks might become enraged at the very sight of water on the table and start a fight. Fighting should be avoided, as it goes against the spirit of the cabaret as imagined by Scarron: 'Que j'aime le cabaret ! / Tout y rit, personne n'y querelle', he proclaims in another *chanson à boire*.[143] Whatever the nature of this undesirable act of *folie*, the presence of sober people would doubtless divert the drinkers from their proper course. In the topsy-turvy microcosm of the cabaret, sobriety is positioned as a cause of

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[143] Scarron (1947), p. 481.

madness insofar as it represents an undesirable diversion from Nature's proper course, namely the unrestrained pursuit of carnivalesque inebriation at the table.

The second kind of madness present in this song is highly desirable, essential even, at the cabaret table. Although Bacchus is not mentioned by name, the bacchanalian nature of this cabaret meal is clear, as the excessive and ritualistic consumption of wine induces a state comparable to madness.[144] The carnivalesque quality of the cabaret meal is underscored in the second stanza with reference to a different kind of *folie*: 'Que de nous le plus sage / Se montre le plus fou'. This moment of degradation closely resembles Bakhtin's description of the reversal of hierarchic levels that took place at medieval folk festivals during which the jester was proclaimed king or Pope.[145] In Scarron's *chanson à boire*, we find a comic demotion rather than a comic promotion, as the wisest man of the group is encouraged to perform madness. The choice of verb – *se montrer* – entails a change in self-presentation that is, at least in part, voluntary. This performance of madness is taken to superlative lengths ('le plus fou') and performed for catharsis and comic effect, but it does not result in any fundamental change in essence. In a similar vein are the similes of the third stanza: 'Parlons *comme* des fous ; / Qu'un chacun crie et braille : / Hurlons *comme* des loups' (my emphasis). The cabaret goers do not become mad wolves, only mimic them. This animalistic ranting and raving is an unmistakable example of carnivalesque degradation, described as a deliberate performance or parody of madness rather than madness itself.

A final evocation of desirable madness in the fourth stanza is less straightforwardly categorised as carnivalesque parody:

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[144] Nathalie Mahé recognises that the seventeenth-century *chanson à boire* inherited the legacy of the *chanson bachique*. Mahé (1992), p. 263.
[145] Bakhtin (1984), p. 81.

> Que le vin nous envoie
> D'agréables fureurs !
> C'est dans lui que l'on noie
> Les plus grandes douleurs.

The drinkers are positioned as objects for the second and final time in this song, and a state of madness is bestowed upon the group. Unlike the undesirable irrational actions triggered by the presence of water-drinkers in the first stanza, the 'agréables fureurs' of this stanza are granted to cabaret goers by Bacchus himself through the medium of wine. Far from being a performance or parody of madness, these *fureurs* really do herald a change in mental state, albeit a temporary one (as is fitting in this carnivalesque milieu). Wine permits cabaret-goers to drown their sorrows, replacing 'les plus grandes douleurs' with this state of pleasant madness. It is significant that this state should occur towards the end of the *chanson à boire*. Through repeatedly simulating madness at various points in previous stanzas, the drinkers are finally able to taste the real thing, even if just fleetingly, experiencing a flash of bacchic bliss during which they cease to care about their troubles.

When these elements are combined, Scarron's song can be read as an account of addiction. It details the social rituals involved in the consumption of alcohol, the total exclusion of those who do not wish to participate, the repetition of said rituals, the loss of bodily autonomy, the fleeting thrill of mood alteration and the irresistible urge to do it all over again. The concept of addiction did not exist at this time – the word 'assuétude' entered the French language in 1885 – so in this song it is articulated with reference to madness.[146] According to this *chanson*, to be an addict is to actively seek out madness as part of a carnivalesque inversion. In the outside world, madness is usually understood as

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[146] Marc-Antoine Crocq, 'Historical and cultural aspects of man's relationship with addictive drugs', *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience,* 9. 4 (2007), 355-361 (p. 359).

a disabling condition,[147] but for drinkers contained within the microcosm of the cabaret and under the care of Bacchus, madness is both a desirable and enjoyable state – an ideal of sorts which they are repeatedly compelled by their addiction to approximate.

The *Fureur Bachique*

The final poem I will analyse with relation to madness is an anonymous ode entitled 'Pour le Vin' found in the *Recueil Conrart*.[148] It is among the longer poems in the *recueil*, comprising fifteen stanzas of ten lines apiece, and begins by detailing the narrator's unshakeable writer's block. In sharp contrast to the collective and carnivalesque inebriation of the *chanson à boire*, this poem's protagonist drinks alone but achieves a similar grotesque melding of forms, blending his body not with other drinkers, but with Bacchus himself. Just as d'Alibray's poems to Pailleur contended that wine was paradoxically both the cause of and cure for his friend's worsening eyesight, poetry about the consumption of wine presents Bacchus as both cause of and cure for madness. This poem describes wine as a 'contrepoison' for a narrator left feeling dejected and unable to write poetry after his beloved Aminte rejects him.[149] After appealing in vain to Apollo, Parnassus, and the Muses in the first two stanzas, the narrator changes his approach in search of a cure for his lack of inspiration, turning instead to Bacchus:

> Muses, je vous fais banqueroute,
> Vos beautez ne me touchent plus,
> Tous vos appas sont superflus,
> Je change d'humeur & de route;

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[147] Hodgkin (2007), p. 125.
[148] Ms-4115, pp. 1001-1008.
[149] Ibid., p. 1006.

> Mon Parnasse est le Cabaret,
> Mes Liqueurs sont blanc & claret,
> Ce jus divin est ma fontaine;
> Ma creuse tasse est mon vallon,
> Mon Pégase est l'Asne à Siléne,
> Ma bouteille est mon Hippocréne,
> & Bacchus est mon Apollon.[150]

This fourth stanza enacts a degradation by, in Bakhtin's words, 'lowering […] all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract'.[151] Parnassus, the home of the Muses and the Classical source of poetic inspiration, is usurped by the cabaret, and the valley between Parnassus and Helicon, the allegorical home of the poets, is replaced with the hollow of an empty wine cup.[152] Silenus's donkey stands in for Pegasus,[153] while the wine bottle stands in for Hippocrene, a spring on Mount Helicon created by Pegasus and a source inspiration for the Classical poets.[154] Aside from demonstrating how grotesque degradation is carried out on the Classics, these images see exteriority – the mountains, the valley, the fountain – replaced by the enclosure of the cabaret, the tankard and the wine bottle. Macro becomes micro, and later in the poem the narrator compares himself to Diogenes in his barrel.[155] Pegasus is literally lowered, replaced by a donkey who carries his drunken master across the ground rather than soaring through the skies with the heroes Perseus or Bellerophon on his back.

Finally, Apollo is replaced by Bacchus. Both gods offer inspiration, but, as Natalie Mahé explains, inspiration from Apollo is commonly conceptualised as a shining light and beautiful music, while inspiration from Bacchus is a kind of madness, causing poets to lose control of their mind and body:

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[150] Ms-4115, p. 1002.
[151] Bakhtin (1984), p. 19.
[152] Anonymous, 'Mount Parnassus', Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Parnassus> [accessed 29/11/2021]
[153] Silenus was one of Bacchus's entourage, commonly depicted being drunkenly carried home on the back of a donkey. Mahé (1992), pp. 222, 224-227.
[154] Anonymous, 'Mount Helicon', Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Helicon> [accessed 29/11/2021]
[155] Ms-4115, p. 1004.

le poète, embrasé par le feu bachique de l'inspiration, comme sous l'emprise de l'ivresse, se trouve la proie de la transe et d'un immense bouleversement physiologique : les genoux, siege de l'équilibre Terrestre, se mettent à trembler, les poils se hérissent sous l'effet de la frayeur, le cœur frémit d'horreur, l'être « rage ».[156]

For poets turning to Bacchus, the resulting 'fureur bachique' endows them with a superior understanding of the world's invisible mysteries,[157] inspiring them to write poetry on subjects they were previously unable to grasp. Out of all the Renaissance authors who represented this *fureur bachique* in their writings, Rabelais and Ronsard were two of the most influential on the seventeenth-century cabaret poets.[158] This *fureur* is mentioned by Scarron in his *chanson à boire* as the desirable form of madness to which the group of drinkers aspire, and it reappears here in the actions of the solitary protagonist of 'Pour le Vin'.

The path to bacchic inspiration is the consumption of wine,[159] and in the stanzas that follow, Bacchus triumphs where Apollo failed, and the narrator finds inspiration at the bottom of a wine bottle. This endorsement of getting drunk to overcome writer's block is a well-worn cliché within the corpus of cabaret verse and in seventeenth-century French literature more generally.[160] There was some received knowledge supporting this idea: the natural philosophy of Platonism believed that wine heated up the body and the soul, smoothing out the soul's folds, making the body penetrable and opening the pores to stimulate the flow of imagination.[161] In this poem, the narrator's encounter with Bacchus after drinking wine is described in the fifth stanza as a melding of bodies. As the wine

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[156] Mahé (1992), p. 231.
[157] Ibid., p. 219.
[158] Ibid., pp. 225-228, 232, 234. On p. 281 Mahé singles out Saint-Amant's verse as particularly bacchic in inspiration.
[159] Ibid., p. 220.
[160] Lecoutre (2010), pp. 413-427.
[161] Ibid., pp. 422-423.

flows into him it implants the very essence of Bacchus – his madness – within

the poet's soul, enabling the god to guide his hand:

> Sans luy ma ryme seroit morte,[162]
> Elle n'auroit point de vigueur,
> C'est de sa boüillante fureur
> Que naist l'ardeur qui me transporte;
> Il me tient les esprits ouvers,
> Il me fait composer des vers,
> Il les polit, il les enflame,
> & par des transports violens,
> Sa divine & puissante flame,
> Coule aveque luy dans mon ame,
> & rend mes esprits plus coulans.[163]

The spatial enclosure of the previous stanza goes hand-in-hand with bodily

enclosure, as Bacchus enters the narrator's body through his mouth as he quaffs

wine, reaches his soul and, from that location, guides his body to write poetry.

Bacchus's effect is transformative, opening the narrator's mind and enabling him

to create literary bodies, refine them and give them life. The effect of

transportation found in previous cabaret verse is reiterated here, and as before

the line between physical and emotional transportation is unclear. Bacchus's

'boüillante fureur' has evidently caused a shift in the narrator's emotional state

to overcome his writer's block, but his bodily movements are also not entirely

under his own control. On lines five to seven Bacchus is the subject, inhabiting

the narrator's body and guiding it from within. Bacchus's 'divine & puissante

flame', along with the god himself, is said to 'coule […] dans [son] ame, / & rend

[s]es esprits plus coulans'. Over the course of these final three lines of the

stanza, the verb *couler*, ascribed to Bacchus and his invigorating flame, then

transfers into the narrator's thoughts, which become 'plus coulans' thanks to the

god's influence, encapsulating the amalgamation of bodies and minds carried out

in this stanza.

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[162] 'Luy' refers to Bacchus.
[163] Ms-4115, p. 1003.

Elsewhere in the poem, the amalgamation of poet and Bacchus is extended to the poetic text, as exemplified by the following extract from the third stanza:

> Que je me veux enfler la veine,
> Je quitte ce fâcheux soucy ;
> Nargue d'une si lâche peine ;
> Pourvu que ma coupe soit pleine,
> Ma veine sera pleine aussi.[164]

The wordplay in this sestet hinges on the word 'veine', which can mean either a 'veine in the bodie' or 'a veine or conceit in versifying'.[165] Both of these senses hold true here, given that the consumption of wine and subsequent communion with Bacchus cause the narrator's veins to swell but also, so he hopes, his poetic genius and the quality of his writing. This hope is realised in the fifth stanza:

> Dieux ! que j'ay la veine facile,
> Quand je l'appercois[166] seulement !
> Que j'écris naturellement !
> Que j'ay l'invention fertile ![167]

Here, 'veine' refers to poetic inspiration and the adjective 'facile' implies a lack of obstacles both mental and physical to the process of poetic composition. The wine has focused the narrator's mind to the extent that he perceives only Bacchus and none of the unhelpful distractions listed in earlier stanzas such as Apollo, the Muses, and his absent beloved. Contradicting the wealth of early modern French writing that cites drunkenness as a source of bodily and mental corruption,[168] turning rational men into 'bestes brutes',[169] the narrator's state of drunkenness only enables what is natural: 'Que j'écris naturellement!' Contrary to what we have come to expect in seventeenth-century discourses of disability,

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[164] Ms-4115, p. 1002.
[165] Cotgrave (1611).
[166] The preceding stanza makes it clear that Bacchus is the object of this verb.
[167] Ms-4115, p. 1003.
[168] For numerous examples, see the section entitled 'Déshumanisation de l'enivré' in Lecoutre (2010), pp. 193-197.
[169] Pierre Boaistuau, *Le Théâtre du monde : où il est faict un ample discours des misères humaines, premier livre* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1558), p. 29.

the drunken poet's cabaret-induced madness puts him back on his natural

course rather than diverting him from it. 'Veine´ could also be read as carrying

sexual undertones, implying that the swelling of the narrator's veins thanks to

Bacchus's wine allows him to attain sexual gratification previously denied to him

by his now-departed mistress.

Towards the end of the poem the narrator addresses that mistress,

Aminte, the ostensible cause of the miserable state in which we found him at the

beginning. With Bacchus's help he is now able to overcome the dejection of

unrequited love:

> Encore un coup de ce bruvage
> Achévera ma guérison ;
> Le Vin est un contrepoison
> Qui chasse l'amoureuse rage ;
> C'en est fait, j'entens ma raison,
> Je remps, à la fin, ma prison,
> Tu ne me parois plus si belle ;
> & dans l'humeur où je me voy,
> Quand mesme je verrois semêle,
> Je n'aurois point d'amour pour elle,
> Comme je n'en ay point pour toy.
>
> Cette frenétique folie
> Ne me tient plus assugety ;
> Grâces aux Dieux, je suis sorty
> De ma sotte mélancolie ;
> Les maux, les tourmens, les ennuis,
> Ne me font plus veiller les nuits
> Dans le désespoir & la rage,
> Je n'ay plus la triste pâleur
> Qui témoignoit mon esclavage,
> Bacchus a mis sur mon visage
> Une bien meilleure couleur.
>
> Je voy, je parle, je respire.
> Je suis Maistre de mes désirs,
> Mon cœur est comblé de plaisirs,
> & je vis sans que je soupire ;
> J'ay brisé mes tristes liens,
> Voy dans la coupe que je tiens
> Bacchus rit de ma délivrance ;
> Tous les travaux que j'ay souffers
> Me reprochent ma patience,
> Je suis honteux de ma souffrance,

> & mon vin rougit de mes fers.
>
> Ne présume pas que tes charmes
> Surprennent ma facilité ;
> Je n'ay plus d'imbécillité,
> Tu n'as plus d'assez fortes armes ;
> Tes yeux pour moy n'ont plus d'appas,
> & desormais je ne croy pas
> Qu'ils me remettent à la chaine ;
> Tu fays d'inutiles efforts,
> Tu me pers, & tu pers ta peine ;
> & pour t'en faire plus certaine,
> Adieu, retire-toy, je dors.[170]

Over the course of these four concluding stanzas, wine is said to be a 'contrepoison' that has cured the narrator of 'amoureuse rage', 'frenétique folie', 'sotte mélancolie', 'maux', 'tourmens', 'ennuis', 'désespoir', 'rage', 'souffrance' and 'imbécillité'. The narrator also claims that the consumption of wine has allowed him to regain self-mastery: 'Je suis Maistre de mes désirs'. The narrator is no longer an impotent, despondent, and unsatisfied lover but a master of his desires, all thanks to Bacchus's intervention on his body.

The sexual undertones of this piece continue: Bacchus's age-old association with transgression and paradox was applied by early modern authors and painters to sexual deviance. A 1673 poem by John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester, extols the virtues of excessive drinking and imagines both Cupid and Bacchus as 'Two lovely Boyes',[171] their limbs 'in amorous folds entwine[d]', thus conjuring 'a vivid Anacreontic scene both for his own and readers' pederastic delight'.[172] Perhaps most famously, Caravaggio presents us with a openly (homo)erotic depiction of Bacchus as a muscular youth with a half-covered chest, offering a glass of wine while gazing at the observer with what can only

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[170] Ms-4115, p. 1006-1008.
[171] Rochester quoted by Joshua Scodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 248.
[172] Ibid.

be described as bedroom eyes.[173] Using Caravaggio as his starting point, John

Champagne charts the longstanding homoerotic connotations of the figure of

Bacchus. These homoerotic connotations may prompt readers of 'Pour le Vin' to

speculate whether the narrator's turning away from his mistress and towards

Bacchus, with whom he then proceeds to form a bodily union, involves a sexual,

as well as creative, reinvigoration.[174]

These remarkably positive results of self-mastery and self-actualisation

contradict what we have learned about wine and madness from not only this

poem, but also from other examples of cabaret verse analysed earlier in the

chapter. As informed readers, we cannot help but wonder whether the narrator's

victorious proclamations of cure and self-mastery are little more than wishful

thinking and self-deception, and come to suspect that the opposite may be

closer to the truth. Most immediately apparent is the fact that the narrator's

words in these concluding stanzas are inconsistent with the idea found in poems

analysed previously that communion with Bacchus in the cabaret engenders a

loss of autonomy in favour of the formation of a collective body. This

contradiction is not necessarily problematic nor surprising given that, as a body

itself, cabaret verse is so heterogenous that it would be wrong to read too much

into inconsistencies between poems. Paradox is, after all, a key component of

both the grotesque and *variatio* in lyrical composition.

More problematic, however, is the fact that this poem breaks its own

internal logic. It seems unlikely that the narrator whose body and soul are

inhabited by Bacchus could be master of his own body and desires: 'Je voy, je

parle, je respire. / Je suis Maistre de mes désirs'. Earlier in the poem, the same

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[173] Caravaggio, *Bacchus*, c.1598, oil on canvas, The Uffizi, Florence.
[174] John Champagne, 'Italian Masculinity as Queer: An Immoderate Proposal', *gender/sexuality/italy,* 1 (2014), 1-15 (pp. 8-11).

narrator described Bacchus entering his body through the ingestion of wine, opening his mind, climbing inside, reaching his soul and proceeding to guide his body from within to write poetry: 'Il me fait composer des vers'. The narrator's repeated affirmations that wine has cured him of madness and that he has been freed from 'esclavage' do not tally with his own first-hand account of Bacchus's entry into and takeover of his body and mind. Due to these internal contradictions, we might doubt whether it is indeed the narrator who sees, speaks, and breathes, or whether it is Bacchus who directs his body to do so. Can that same narrator really have achieved mastery of his desires or has Bacchus achieved mastery over him? We are left to conclude, contrary to the narrator's own conclusion, that this poet who turns to Bacchus to drown his sorrows replaces one form of madness with another, trading servitude to Aminte for servitude to Bacchus.

The triumphant ending to this poem is therefore shown to be rather unconvincing, clashing with the interpretation of madness as a loss of self that is established earlier in this poem and in various others in my corpus. Knowing what we do about the grotesque's ephemeral nature, we suspect that this *contrepoison* may in fact be more of a *césure*, and doubt whether the narrator's jubilant mood will remain when he wakes up the following day. Nathalie Mahé acknowledges that many mid-seventeenth-century burlesque poets, such as Scarron and Saint-Amant, carry out a 'démythification' of the Classical gods,[175] recharacterizing them as laughable buffoons, but the anonymous poet of 'Pour le Vin' does not seem so outwardly derisive towards Bacchus. Instead, readers are left feeling sceptical towards the effectiveness of turning to Bacchus in search of an antidote to writer's block and feelings of dejection. Like many apparent

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[175] Mahé (1992), p. 277.

solutions to emotional distress, this approach is superficially effective but does not last, and, as readers, our lasting impression of this solitary narrator is not one of triumph but self-delusion. This poem can be read as a second depiction of addiction-as-madness, though it is a far less optimistic take on the subject than Scarron's hedonistic *chanson à boire*. It reminds us that there is a self-destructive side to joining a collective body in the cabaret and welcoming madness in ritualistic inebriation.

This chapter has shown how the vocabulary of disability is often applied to the *espace heureux* of the cabaret as well as the bodies of those contained within it. Further, it has demonstrated how the cabaret is an active participant in the transformation of those bodies into grotesque entities. Cabaret verse does not treat disability as something to be hidden or minimised. In fact, it is often front and centre, discussed in a disarmingly frank manner and welcomed as part of the carnivalesque bodily displays of the cabaret. Having discussed the grotesque's sense of enclosure, Chapter Four will explore its erotic potential, touched upon in Chapter Two's discussion of Théophile's verse narrating a man's sexual relationship with a *vieille*.[176] While Théophile depicted a heterosexual relationship, however, the following chapter will explore how the themes hitherto discussed in this thesis enable queer desire.

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[176] See section entitled 'Grotesque Love'.

4. OTHER PLEASURES: ON DISABILITY AND QUEER DESIRE

It's a radical act, a daring act, a brand new act for queer crips to talk about sex.
– Eli Clare[1]

In the early modern period, as today, there were several similarities

drawn between disability and queerness. Most immediately apparent is the fact

that sodomy was deemed a 'péché de la chair contre nature' by religious and

legal authorities of seventeenth-century France,[2] a conceptualisation which may

be compared to how disability, as I have shown, was frequently understood as a

deviation from Nature's proper course and indicative of a sinful soul.[3] Further to

that, sodomy has historically been a 'péché muet',[4] most often indicated not by

name but via euphemism, circumlocution, and insinuation, if at all. Both

disability and queerness have longstanding cultural associations with the

grotesque, and a lot of the key features of the grotesque body are frequently

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[1] Eli Clare, 'Sex, Celebration, and Justice: A Keynote for Queerness and Disability 2002', (2002) <http://www.disabilityhistory.org/dwa/queer/paper_clare.html> [accessed 10/11/2020]

[2] Richelet (1680). For how this definition surfaced in religious and legal discourse surrounding sodomy, see Desmond Hosford, 'Le Vice Italien: Philippe d'Orléans and Constructing the Sodomite in Seventeenth-Century France' (The City University of New York, 2013), pp. 1-2, 23-28, 48, 52-54; Tom Hamilton, 'Sodomy and Criminal Justice in the Parlement of Paris, ca. 1540–ca. 1700', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 29.3 (2020), 303-334 (pp. 327, 330). In the eighteenth century there was a pushback against this notion, with authors affirming that sodomy could not possibly be against Nature and was in fact entirely natural. Robert Purks Maccubbin, *'Tis Nature's Fault: Unauthorized Sexuality During the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[3] Ernst highlights how homosexuality, like disability, was morally condemned as 'unnatural' in many premodern European societies. Ernst (2006), p. 4.

[4] Marie-Jo Bonnet, *Les Relations amoureuses entre les femmes du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris: Jacob, 1995), p. 34.

coded as disabled and/or queer: its openness, its irregularity, its incongruity, its dirtiness, and its excess.[5] Identifying a longstanding historical connection between sexuality and disability, Jason Farr (2019) argues persuasively that 'the British literary history of sexuality is thoroughly reliant on impaired bodies for its discursive contours'.[6] My objective in this chapter is similar to Farr's with relation to eighteenth-century British literature: to investigate the intersections between disability and queer desire in my corpus of lyric poetry.

In their introduction to *Sex and Disability* (2012), Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow recognise that the words 'sex' and 'disability' are incongruous, if not antithetical, in the popular imagination and in cultural representations of disabled people.[7] They remark that disabled people's sexuality is usually depicted in binaristic terms as 'either tragic deficiency or freakish excess'.[8] These extremes came to the fore in the two very different *contreblasons* analysed in Chapter Two,[9] one depicting a desexualised disabled woman who is impossible to love and a figure of abjection, while the other depicted a hypersexual disabled woman whom the narrator finds irresistible. In a social system that rewards conformity to sexual, mental, and bodily norms, 'to have a sexuality that is socially intelligible, much less legitimated, one must meet, along with

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[5] C Marie Harker provides the example of Baron Harkonnen, the primary antagonist of Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965). Herbert heaps grotesque imagery on Harkonnen and makes much of the fact that he is both gay and disabled, details that, it is implied, magnify his villainy. C Marie Harker, 'Fat Male Sexuality: The monster in the maze', *Sexualities,* 19. 8 (2016), 980-996 (p. 987). Epps (1996), p. 50.

[6] Jason S. Farr, *Novel Bodies: disability and sexuality in eighteenth-century British literature* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2019), p. 1. Of particular relevance to the seventeenth century is Farr's reading of Francis Bacon's essay *Of Deformity* (1612), in which Bacon aligns himself with Porta's physiognomy in his theory that 'corporeal difference guarantees social transgression: to be deviant in body is to be deviant in comportment', pp. 11-12, 101.

[7] McRuer and Mollow (2012), p. 1. Also see Robert McRuer, 'Disabling Sex: Notes for a Crip Theory of Sexuality', *GLQ,* 17. 1 (2010), 107-117 (p. 107).

[8] McRuer and Mollow (2012), p. 1.

[9] See sections entitled 'Perfect Deformity' and 'Grotesque Love'.

heteronormativity, the norm of physical and mental ability'.[10] In concert with this assertion, various theorists and sociologists have examined how sexual norms are intertwined with bodily norms, and the parallels between disabled and queer sexualities.[11]

This chapter builds upon their work, along with Farr's study of disability and sexuality in eighteenth-century British literature, to put queer theories into dialogue with seventeenth-century French poetry about disability and same-sex desire. In so doing, it investigates whether there was indeed a fundamental connection between deviant bodies and deviant sexualities, and, if so, how this connection was articulated in poetry. Further to this, it asks how disability and sexuality might help poets challenge, redraw, subvert and, in some cases, reinforce the homosocial dynamics of the seventeenth-century love lyric. I argue that the primary convergence between queerness and disability in the seventeenth-century lyric is found in their relationship to the homosocial paradigm, as articulated by Eve Sedgwick, whose work underpins this chapter's analysis. My thesis has not yet centred queerness in its readings of lyric verse, so it will first be necessary to briefly depart from disability to first establish how queerness was conceptualised in seventeenth-century France and how it appeared in lyric verse from this period. Disability will not be entirely absent from the earlier sections of this chapter, as I will highlight how discourses of queerness overlap with discourses of disability. Moreover, various lyrics that deal with sexual deviance reach for imagery of disability as an analogical point of

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[10] Robert McRuer and Abby L. Wilkerson, 'Introduction', *GLQ,* 9. 1 (2003), 1-23 (p. 8).
[11] To name some key examples: Sandahl (2003); Shelley Tremain, 'Queering Disabled Sexuality Studies', *Sexuality and Disability,* 18. 4 (2000), 291-299; McRuer (2013); McRuer (2006); McRuer (2010); Nancy J. Hirschmann, 'Queer/Fear: Disability, Sexuality, and The Other', *Journal of Medical Humanities,* 34 (2013), 139-147; Tom Shakespeare, 'Disabled Sexuality: Toward Rights and Recognition', *Sexuality And Disability,* 18. 3 (2000), 159-166; Tom Shakespeare, Dominic Davies and Kath Gillespie-Sells, *The Sexual Politics of Disability: Untold Desires* (London: Cassell, 1996); Clare (2002).

comparison. The final section will analyse poetry by Saint-Pavin in which the interconnected nature of disability and queerness is most explicit, and allows me to tie together various themes that underpin my analysis of other poems in this chapter.

An Utterly Confused Category

I began this chapter by stating that sodomy was considered a 'péché de la chair contre nature' by seventeenth-century French religious, legal, and medical authorities.[12] Sodomy, however, does not neatly map onto modern concepts such as queerness, homosexuality, or even same-sex desire, because it referred not to a person's orientation but to an act, or, more accurately, to several possible acts. William F. Edmiston explains that

the French noun "sodomie", like its English equivalent "sodomy", can mean and has meant any number of sexual acts, from the penetration of an anus by a penis to the much broader notion of any form of sexual counter-generality, that is, any form deviating from reproductive, penile-vaginal intercourse (including oral and anal sex between heterosexuals, even married ones).[13]

Academic writing about seventeenth-century sodomy that uses the words 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' for ease of comprehension should not be taken as implying that these categories existed at this time along with their contemporary meanings.[14] The first volume of Michel Foucault's landmark *Histoire de la Sexualité* (1976) theorised that the modern categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality, and consequently the homosexual as an

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[12] This definition from Richelet's 1680 dictionary is quoted an analysed by Desmond Hosford. See Hosford (2013), p. 1; Jeffrey and Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, *Homosexuality in Early Modern France: a Documentary Collection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 1.

[13] William F. Edmiston, *Sade: Queer Theorist* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013), p. 29.

[14] For example Merrick and Ragan (2001), p. 1.

'espèce', came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century.[15] Before

the advent of psychiatry and psychology, his argument goes, civil and

ecclesiastical authorities did not consider homosexual relations as indicative of

an inner 'qualité de la sensibilité sexuelle', as he terms it.[16] Furthermore, before

the establishment of heterosexuality as normative psychiatric construct, there

was nothing against which to define homosexuality as a deviation from a norm.[17]

Instead, sex that did not conform to pious Christian procreation was thought of

by the authorities in terms of the religious infraction of sodomy and the juridical

subject of the sodomite.[18] The Foucauldian account of premodern sexuality can

be compared to Lennard Davis's argument, discussed in my introduction, that

disability, as a normative category, cannot be said to have existed before the

concept of a 'normal' body was established in the mid-nineteenth century.

Summarising Foucault, Desmond Hosford writes that 'in theory, although a

sodomite is only a sodomite when he commits sodomy, a homosexual is a

homosexual whether or not he engages in sexual acts with other men'.[19]

Critiques of Foucault

Foucault's discipline-defining work on the history of sexuality is lacking in

two areas that are particularly pertinent to the subject of this chapter. For one

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[15] Foucault provides the date of 1870, the year that Karl Westphal published a pioneering psychiatric study of a young woman said to be sexually inverted. Ivan Crozier agrees that Westphal 'may be said to be the first to put the study of sexual inversion on an assured scientific basis'. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité 1: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 59; Ivan Crozier, 'The Study of Sexual Inversion', in *Sexual Inversion,* ed. by Ivan Crozier (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 115-123 (p. 115).
[16] 'Foucault (1976), p. 59. For a close reading of this passage, see Hosford (2013), pp. 3-4.
[17] Seifert (2009), p. 155.
[18] Foucault (1976), p. 59.
[19] Hosford (2013), p. 4.

thing, his analysis omits the history of lesbianism, and indeed of women's sexuality more generally.[20] 'What changes in the *History of Sexuality* then,' writes Lynn Hunt, 'is what changes for men'.[21] It is hard to understand how Foucault can confidently affirm that premodern same-sex desire was predominantly thought of in terms of acts by juridical subjects when he only considers acts between men. Foucault is not alone in his refusal to address female homoeroticism. It has been a longstanding trend among the historiography of sexuality to focus overwhelmingly on men's desires.[22]

Despite their omission by Foucault and other historians of sexuality, there is evidence that sex between women was considered by early modern legal authorities to be comparable to sex between men. A 1981 article by Louis Crompton provides evidence that in early modern France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, 'lesbian acts were regarded as legally equivalent to acts of male sodomy and were, like them, punishable by the death penalty',[23] a punishment that was enforced on occasion. Valerie Traub (2002) shows that while sex between women was increasingly included in European sodomy statutes after 1550,[24] 'not all sodomy statutes explicitly mention female-female activities; and in those jurisdictions that criminalize female-female acts, prosecution is the exception rather than the norm'.[25] More specific to France and the seventeenth century, Tom Hamilton's 2020 study of sodomy cases brought before the Parlement de Paris between roughly 1540 and 1700 reports just one

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[20] Legault (2012), pp. 37-39.
[21] Lynn Hunt, 'Foucault's Subject in *The History of Sexuality*', in *Discourse of Sexuality: from Aristotle to AIDS,* ed. by Domna C. Stanton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 78-93 (p. 81).
[22] Legault (2012), p. 39.
[23] Louis Crompton, 'The Myth of Lesbian Impunity Capital Laws from 1270 to 1791', *Faculty Publications -- Department of English,* 59 (1981), 11-25 (p. 11).
[24] Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[25] Ibid., p. 42.

lengthy case involving sex between women, and the word 'sodomie' is never

used to describe their crime.[26] Entirely absent from Foucault's discipline-defining

study, the epistemic differences and similarities between sex between men and

sex between women in the premodern mindset, especially in francophone

contexts, has been underexplored,[27] and more research is required into

instances where the word 'sodomie' was used to describe sex between women.

A second aspect of Foucault's analysis that requires considerable nuancing

is found in the abovementioned section concerning the 'naissance' of the

homosexual, in which he states that

il ne faut pas oublier que la catégorie psychologique, psychiatrique, médicale de l'homosexualité s'est constituée du jour où on l'a caractérisée […] moins par un type de relations sexuelles que par une certaine qualité de la sensibilité sexuelle, une certaine manière d'intervertir en soi-même le masculin et le féminin. L'homosexualité est apparue comme une des figures de la sexualité lorsqu'elle a été rabattue de la pratique de la sodomie sur une sorte d'androgynie intérieure, un hermaphrodisme de l'âme. Le sodomite était un relaps, l'homosexuel est maintenant une espèce.[28]

The mutually exclusive binary opposition between premodern sexual acts by

juridical subjects and modern sexualities is not as simple as this oft-quoted

passage is frequently read as implying. David Halperin argues that this

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[26] Hamilton (2020), pp. 330-331.
[27] A selection of works that have sought to redress this balance with reference to the early modern period: Legault (2012); Bonnet (1995); Amanda Powell, 'Baroque Flair: Seventeenth-century European Sapphic Poetry', *Humanist Studies & the Digital Age,* 1. 1 (2011), 151-165; Joan DeJean, *Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men* (London: The Women's Press, 1985); Judith M. Bennett, '"Lesbian-like" and the social history of lesbianisms', *Journal of the History of Sexuality,* 9 (2000), 1-24; Harris (2002); Susan S. Lanser, 'The Political Economy of Same-Sex Desire', in *Structures and Subjectivities: Attending to Early Modern Women,* ed. by Adele F. and Joan Hartman Seeff (2007), pp. 157-176; Susan S. Lanser, *The Sexuality of History: modernity and the sapphic, 1565-1830* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Dianne Dugaw and Amanda Powell, 'Sapphic Self-Fashioning in the Baroque Era: Women's Petrarchan Parody in English and Spanish', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture,* 35 (2006), 127-160; Traub (2002); Leila J. Rupp, *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love Between Women* (New York, NY and London: New York University Press, 2009); Castle (2006); Gary Ferguson, *Queer (Re)Readings in the French Renaissance : homosexuality, gender, culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Farr (2019); Hunt (1992).
[28] Foucault (1976), p. 59.

'premodern acts by juridical subjects versus modern sexualities' interpretation is incorrect and founded on a misreading of Foucault.[29] Halperin is certainly right to call for more nuance and care in the way historians of sexuality talk about the Foucauldian paradigm, but this does not change the fact that the 'acts versus sexualities' interpretation has been and remains the most widespread reading. Taking a different approach, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick interrogates Foucault's assumption that there is just one 'homosexuality as we conceive of it today'.[30] This search for the 'birth' of the modern homosexual undertaken by Foucault and other queer studies scholars (including Halperin),[31] Sedgwick argues, is ultimately inadequate, relying on transhistorical assumptions and positing a monolithic modern homosexuality as a presupposed end-product, identical in all its forms and understood by everyone to be the same thing.[32] As an alternative to Foucault's approach, Sedgwick wishes to denaturalise the present, asking whether we can really be so sure what 'homosexuality as we know it today' actually is.[33]

As Halperin and Carla Freccero point out, Foucault was more interested in how premodern civil and ecclesiastical authorities categorised sex acts than he was in attitudes of laypeople at any given point in history – and this, to an extent, explains his 'ruthlessly schematic' opposition between premodern legal discourse and modern psychiatric discourse.[34] His study's privileging of law codes, theological tracts, and medical texts over fictional representations and

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[29] David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 27-33.

[30] Sedgwick (2008), p. 45.

[31] Sedgwick compares Foucault's approach to Halperin's which, she shows, is predicated on the same assumptions regarding a monolithic idea of modern homosexuality. Ibid., p. 46.

[32] Ibid., pp. 44-48.

[33] Ibid., p. 48.

[34] Halperin (2002), p. 31; Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 33.

more informal historical sources reflects this overarching agenda.[35] It also leaves plenty of space for period-specific inquiries into attitudes towards queer desire on the part of the people who were actually having sex. Hosford, for example, points towards the seventeenth-century French term *inclination*, which, while not indicative of a sexuality in the modern sense, 'accounts for preferences and proclivities, including that for sodomy' and is 'something with which sodomites may be born'.[36] He argues that this word not only nuances Foucault's account of sodomy as a sexual act by a juridical subject, but provides 'the key to discussing sodomy in seventeenth-century France'.[37]

It runs somewhat contrary to Hosford's claim, then, that none of the poems in my corpus of primary texts discussing same-sex desire ever use the term *inclination* to express an innate preference for members of their own gender. This is perhaps because the term only began to be used this way in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Hosford's thesis concerns representations of Philippe d'Orléans, so most of his evidence for this usage of *inclination* date from the second half of the century, whereas a large part of my corpus of poetry can relatively confidently be dated to before Philippe's rise to prominence.[38] Two of the most prolific authors of seventeenth-century poetry about sodomy, Théophile and the Baron de Blot, had died by this date. This does not, of course, explain its absence from the later poems in my corpus, notably those of Saint-Pavin which I discuss later in this chapter, one of which is on the subject of the Chevalier de Lorraine, Philippe's lover.

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[35] Freccero (2006), p. 41.
[36] Hosford (2013), p. 3.
[37] Ibid., p. 30.
[38] He was officially granted the title of duc d'Orléans on 10 May 1661.

My poets' disinclination to use this word may instead be because it is ungainly at four syllables in length, causing them to favour more succinct alternatives, particularly when writing cabaret verse that generally demands punchiness and shorter line lengths. Without using the terminology of *inclination*, an anonymous epigram most likely addressing the poet and academician François le Métel de Boisrobert (1592-1662) seems to express something similar to an innate *inclination*:

> D'un Bougre, qui faisoit le mot d'amour masculin.
>
> Colin fait, jusqu'à ce jour,
> Masculin le mot amour,
> Et c'est à tort qu'on le blâme,
> Pour n'avoir deux gouts divers,
> Il veut qu'il soit dans ses vers
> Comme il est dedans son ame.[39]

I believe Boisrobert to be the *bougre* in question due to this poem's patent similarity to a manuscript satire entitled 'Le Parnasse alarmé', written by the *académicien* Gilles Ménage, that began to circulate in 1646.[40] In this satire, Ménage accuses a number of his fellow *académiciens* of attempting to feminise the French language by inflecting masculine nouns as feminine.[41] Luckily, Ménage writes, Boisrobert, whose reputation as a sodomite was an open secret at this time,[42] put a stop to these efforts: 'Cét admirable patelin, / Ayman le genre masculine, / S'oppose de tout son courage / A cét effeminé langage'.[43] This probable source of inspiration also allows us to date the poem to roughly 1646, at least fifteen years before the word 'inclination' began to be used to describe Philippe d'Orléans's sexual preference for men.

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[39] Ms-4123, p. 239.
[40] Seifert (2009), p. 178.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., p. 176.
[43] Ibid., p. 178.

Most likely inspired by Ménage's satire of grammatical gender debates in the Académie Française, the anonymous epigram relates a similar quibble, referring to the ongoing debate over whether the word 'amour' ought to be masculine or feminine. In sixteenth-century French, the singular 'amour' was usually feminine, except when it was personified as Cupid (Amour), in which case he/it was always masculine.[44] As the epigram implies, this rule was not always adhered to in the seventeenth century and led to considerable inconsistency and confusion. Littré provides multiple seventeenth-century literary sources, sometimes by the same author, using both masculine and feminine inflections of the word for no apparent reason.[45] The epigram notes that while others inflect it as both masculine and feminine, having 'deux gouts divers', the eponymous *bougre* is single-minded in his masculine inflection of 'amour', wanting the word to be just as masculine in his verse as it is in his soul.

There are two different expressions of sexual preference in this poem. First, having 'deux gouts divers' – inflecting 'amour' as both masculine and feminine – euphemistically implies the existence of a group of people who have sex with both men and women, people whom we might brave anachronism to describe as bisexual. Second is the *bougre*, whose tastes are exclusively masculine and consequently only inflects '*amour*' as masculine, wishing its grammatical gender to match its gender 'dedans son ame', referring to his sexual preference for men. This affirmation of interiority, along with the *bougre*'s wish that the language used to express sexual preference should be adapted to fit his inner character, complicates the Foucauldian binary of premodern acts by juridical subjects versus modern sexualities.

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[44] Freccero (2006), p. 23.
[45] Littré (1863–72).

Furthermore, the precise choice of language – 'dedans son ame' – anticipates Foucault's own description of late-nineteenth-century psychiatric understandings of sexual inverts who were said to possess 'une sorte d'androgynie intérieure, un hermaphrodisme de l'âme'.[46] Granted, it is not expressed using the modern language of homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual, but it is significant that a mid-seventeenth-century epigram should contain an instance of a *bougre* whose sexual preference for men is described as a characteristic of his soul and differentiated by way of comparison to a group of people whose tastes include both men and women. Various other scholars have pointed out the oversimplified nature the Foucauldian binary understanding of the birth of homosexuality,[47] and I will provide further examples later in this chapter in which we can identify seventeenth-century gestures towards sexual preference as an *internal* characteristic that differentiates them from other people.

Although Foucault's account is lacking in these two areas I have indicated, I cannot help but agree with him that sodomy in early modern France was a 'catégorie si confuse',[48] a confusion not helped by his own study's negation of female sexuality and recourse to an overly-simplistic binary. For this chapter, as elsewhere in my thesis, I endeavour as much as possible to use the terminology of the primary texts themselves when talking about individual poems' attitudes towards disability and sexuality, and will avoid becoming bogged down in

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[46] Foucault (1976), p. 59.
[47] I have already mentioned Hosford's example of *inclination*. Other scholars working in premodern literary and cultural studies who critique and/or nuance this aspect of Foucault's account of sodomy include Halperin (2002), pp. 28, 32-38; Seifert (2009), pp. 153-155, 181-182; Bennett (2000); Edmiston (2013), pp. 31, 42-46, 49-54; Traub (2002), pp. 28, 40-44, 214-215; Ferguson (2008), pp. 1-16; David M. Robinson, *Closeted writing and lesbian and gay literature: classical, early modern, eighteenth-century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. i-xx.
[48] Foucault (1976), p. 134.

terminology or preoccupied with trying to unravel its various puzzles and paradoxes.[49] Nor will I ally myself with either continuist or differentist approaches to the history of sexuality,[50] preferring instead to draw from both approaches, which have their individual merits, as and when the primary texts call for them. As I have briefly done with Foucault's narrative of historical change in understandings of sexualities, I aim to critique and nuance theories as I go rather than to apply them wholesale to a given primary text. I do this while recognising, as David M. Robinson does, that 'we have a great many more primary texts to discover, and a great deal more complexity and nuance to appreciate in the texts we think we know' before we can make any grand statements about historical change in categories as utterly confused as sexuality and, indeed, disability.[51]

Finally, my choice to title this chapter 'On Disability and *Queer* Desire' (as opposed to, say, 'Homosexual Desire', 'Same-Sex Desire', or 'Sodomy') reflects an ideological commitment to the indeterminacy and multivalence of queerness, along with a recognition that the homosexual/heterosexual, gay/straight binaries are often deployed in the service of heteronormativity. Furthermore, the primary texts with which I am working do not *themselves* define erotic desire in such mutually exclusive binary terms. More often than not, these texts attest to a reluctance to define one's desires and refusal to be pinned down to one kind of love. I resist the temptation to classify them further as homosexual, gay, or lesbian because the texts simply do not – with a few exceptions – speak of desire in such clear-cut terms or provide sufficient information for a reader to

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[49] I agree with David M. Robinson that 'terminology is one of the many clues to meaning and experience, and not necessarily the most important'. Robinson (2006), p. xx.
[50] For a strongly continuist approach to the history and literature of sexuality, see ibid., For a strongly differentist approach, see Hosford (2013).
[51] Robinson (2006).

categorise them as such. On occasions where it is helpful to analogise

premodern sexual preferences with modern sexualities rather than the broader

umbrella of queerness, I find myself most often reaching for bisexuality as a

descriptor. As we shall see, several poems depict characters or narrators who

currently have sex with members of their own gender but, they imply, not to the

exclusion of other genders. This leaning towards bisexuality in my readings

recalls how, in the epigram about Boisrobert quoted earlier in this section, it is

implied that people typically have 'deux gouts divers' when it comes to love,

whereas Boisrobert's preference for the masculine to the exclusion of the

feminine is extraordinary. Bisexuality is more explicit in one of Blot's *chansons*

libertines and its narrator's indiscriminatory declaration of 'Pour moy, je bois, je

ris, je chante, / Et je f... ce qui se présente'.[52] Whether applied to the

seventeenth century or the present day, queerness also carries with it a sense of

seeking to actively disrupt heteronormative social order.[53] As such, it will be

important in the following analysis to bear in mind *how* disruptive the poetic

portrayals of homoerotic desire actually are, and what exactly, if anything, they

intend to disrupt.

Between Men

Having established how queer desire was conceptualised in the

seventeenth century, I will now establish the dynamics of the same-sex

relationships present in my corpus of poetry. I previously referred to Eve

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[52] Blot (1919), p. 11.

[53] Pierre Zoberman, 'Queer (au) XVIIe siècle ? Stratégies discursives et culture sexuelle dans la France de Louis XIV', in *Queer : écritures de la différence? 2. Représentations : artistes et créations,* ed. by Pierre Zoberman (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 17-33 (p. 26).

Sedgwick as a critic of Foucault in *Epistemology of the Closet*, but it is her earlier work, *Between Men* (1985),[54] that provides the conceptual apparatus for interpreting queer relationships in literature that I will adapt for the purposes of this chapter's argument. In this study, Sedgwick is mainly concerned with nonsexual relationships between men, but her work also serves to disrupt the binary of homosexual and homosocial.

Drawing upon Gayle Rubin's theorising of patriarchal relationships as a 'traffic in women' and René Girard's erotic triangle,[55] Sedgwick defines homosocial relations as the ways that men, through their friendships and intimate collaborations with other men, maintain and defend patriarchy.[56] In such relationships, men view women as objects to be possessed by and passed between them.[57] This classic homosocial system ensures that, in the process of competing over and exchanging women, men bond with each other just as much if not more than they bond with the women they pursue, and patriarchy is perpetuated.[58] One of the clearest examples of a homosocial erotic triangle is the concept of cuckoldry, which Sedgwick explains as 'by definition a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man' but via a woman.[59] The sexual relationship between the cuckolder and the wife is secondary to the cuckolder's relationship to her husband: the cuckolder does not do the action of cuckoldry to the wife, but to a rival man as part of a power-play through encroachment on his property.

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[54] Sedgwick (1985).

[55] Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex', in *Toward an Anthropology of Women,* ed. by Rayna R. Reiter (New York, NY and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210; René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 1-52.

[56] Sedgwick (1985), pp. 21-26.

[57] Ibid., p. 26.

[58] Ibid., p. 21.

[59] Ibid., p. 49.

The present chapter will examine the place of disability in homosocial relations and alongside the queer undertones and overtones that permeate lyrics depicting homosocial relations. For the purposes of this work, Sedgwick's key contribution is her comparison between homosocial relationships and homosexual relationships. She asks whether the homosocial bonds between rival men are in any way comparable to the bond between a gay couple.[60] These two kinds of relationships at first appear to be antithetical to one another, given that much writing about patriarchy characterises it as homophobic by necessity,[61] and the classic homosocial paradigm's perpetuation of the patriarchal system requires both men to compete over an objectified female prize. Sedgwick does not believe, however, that homophobia is a precondition of patriarchal society just because most patriarchies structurally include homophobia.[62] To support this hypothesis, she argues that the Ancient Greek institution of pederasty combined homoeroticism and homosocial mentorship in the service of patriarchy, resulting in the conveying of privileges from older man to younger man, privileges that included 'the power to command the labor of slaves of both sexes, and of women of any class including their own'.[63] Furthermore, Sedgwick observes, in the modern patriarchal system of North America there are

important correspondences and similarities between the most sanctioned forms of male-homosocial bonding, and the most reprobated expressions of male homosexual sociality. […] For a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being "interested in men".[64]

Judged solely on appearances and despite their often-homophobic intentions, scenes of homosocial bonding between men 'can look, with only a slight shift of

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[60] Ibid., p. 3.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., p. 4.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 89.

optic, quite startlingly "homosexual"'.[65] Though Sedgwick does not consider

disability in her analysis of homosocial relationships and homoeroticism, her

language is highly ocularcentric in its talk of 'optics', invisibility, the blurring of

lines, and how relationships 'look', a characteristic it shares with much

seventeenth-century writing about desire and the human body.

Lewis Seifert's research into masculinity in seventeenth-century France

supports Sedgwick's hypothesis of a possible continuum between homosocial

and homosexual,[66] demonstrating that 'the radical distinction between

masculinity and what we now call homosexuality did not enjoy the status of an

unassailable cultural assumption'.[67] Depending on a man's class, social status,

environment, and connections, rumours of sexual relationships with other men

could be met with either protection, tolerance, amusement, indifference,

mockery, scorn, or death.[68] Seifert posits Boisrobert, the likely subject of the

epigram quoted above, as an example of a man whose 'open secret' was tacitly

tolerated due to his social status and patriarchal connections.[69] Moreover, Seifert

demonstrates how Boisrobert carefully managed his reputation as a sodomite,

keenly aware of when he could boast about it 'within circumscribed gatherings'

and when he had to quash potentially dangerous rumours.[70] Boisrobert's

calculated boastfulness suggests that, in certain closed circles in seventeenth-

century elite society, it was socially advantageous for a man to boast to men

about having had sex with other men. If this was indeed the case, then how

might it affect the homosocial paradigm laid out by Sedgwick?

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Seifert (2009), p. 42.
[67] Ibid., p. 153.
[68] Ibid., pp. 151-206.
[69] Ibid., p. 176. Schneider's analysis of Boisrobert's letters shows how he maintained favour with Richelieu during a period of scandal in 1641. Schneider (2019), pp. 185-186.
[70] Seifert (2009), p. 180.

The (Homo)Erotic Triangle

In my corpus, the poet who most extensively explores homosocial relationships with reference to male same-sex desire is Saint-Pavin, accurately described by Collins as a poet who 'plays on the social dynamics of sexual appetites – whether homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual'.[71] For examples of both the homosocial erotic triangle and this not-quite-hidden continuum between 'men promoting the interests of men' and 'men loving men',[72] we can turn to the following epigram by Saint-Pavin:

> – Je ne veux point épouser Célimène,
> – Pourquoi ? – L'on en médit partout ;
> – Tu ne sais donc pas qui la fout ;
> – Qui ? – Le Chevalier de Lorraine ;
> – Je veux épouser Célimène.[73]

This verse relates a conversation between two interlocutors, the first of whom confidently states that he has no interest in marrying Célimène because everyone speaks ill of her ('L'on en médit partout'). This is, at least, until his friend informs him that the Chevalier de Lorraine, a known pinnacle of male beauty,[74] is sleeping with her. This piece of salacious gossip triggers the first interlocutor's competitive nature, and he decides to try and marry Célimène purely to outdo Lorraine. In this expression of mimetic desire that can be understood as both a competition and an exchange of goods between men, Célimène becomes a status symbol. The interlocutor reconsiders his disinterest

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[71] Collins (1986), p. 252.
[72] Sedgwick (1985), p. 4.
[73] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 77.
[74] The Marquise de Sévigné describes him in a letter to her daughter as having 'cette belle physionomie ouverte que j'aime, et vous n'aimez point'. Quoted by Hammond (2011), p. 105.

when he learns whom she's sleeping with: there must be something special about Célimène if Lorraine wants her. This move illustrates what Sharon R. Bird calls the homosocial 'pecking order between males'.[75] The interlocutor wishes to position himself above Lorraine, and sets up a homosocial triangle that follows Sedgwick's paradigm of two rival men competing over the same women to perpetuate patriarchy.

There is a queer subtext to this epigram. It is significant that the first interlocutor's rival should be named as the Chevalier de Lorraine, a real historical figure contemporary to the poet, and not a second stock character such as Célimène. In the 1660s, Lorraine acquired a reputation as a sodomite and a favourite of Philippe d'Orléans.[76] Daniel de Cosnac, a seventeenth-century ecclesiast and memoirist, wrote that during Philippe's marriage to his first wife, Henriette d'Angleterre, 'on reconnut un si grand attachement dans l'esprit de Monsieur pour le chevalier de Lorraine, qu'on le regarda comme un favori déclaré'.[77] Henriette died in 1670 and there were rumours that Lorraine had poisoned her.[78] The inclusion of both Lorraine and Célimène – the heroine of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* – allows us to confidently date this poem to 1666-1670,[79] a time when Lorraine was in the process of acquiring his reputation for sodomy. The rival in this erotic triangle is therefore famous not only as one of the most beautiful men in France, but also as a lover of men. Taking this information on board, the reader might wonder whether the first interlocutor's sudden change of heart about marrying Célimène is not so much due to a desire

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[75] Sharon R. Bird, 'Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity', *Gender and Society,* 10. 2 (1996), 120-132 (p. 128).
[76] Hosford (2013), p. 282. Hammond (2011), pp. 106-107.
[77] Quoted by Hammond (2011), p. 107.
[78] Hosford (2013), p. 84.
[79] *Le Misanthrope* was first performed on June 4, 1666, and Saint-Pavin died in 1670.

to outdo Lorraine as a desire *for him*. Further to this, we might interpret his newfound enthusiasm for Célimène as a strategy to increase his proximity to Lorraine. He cannot have sex with Lorraine, but he does stand a chance of having sex with someone who has done so, and get closer to him in that way. This epigram thus invites both a homosocial reading and a queer reading, and one need not preclude the other.

The presence of male same-sex desire implicit within a poetic expression of homosocial desire reinforces Sedgwick's point that patriarchal systems sustained via homosocial relations between men are not homophobic *by necessity* – a homoerotic reading of this poem is possible and does not disrupt the broader patriarchal power dynamics perpetuated by the exchange of women as part of male bonding.[80] Alongside her theory of discursive closeting,[81] Sedgwick uses the homosocial paradigm to suggest that ostensibly heteronormative texts can be read as having homoerotic undertones. In a departure from Sedgwick, I now turn my attention to verse in which homoerotic desire is not closeted but explicit and, indeed, essential to the plot of the piece. The following reading aims to show that, in such explicitly homoerotic texts, the guiding framework of the heteronormative homosocial paradigm still exerts a considerable influence, albeit in a modified form.

Accordingly, I will first ask whether the poet Saint-Pavin depicts explicit male homoerotic desire as compatible with or antagonistic to the triangular homosocial paradigm. I will then ask whether sodomy between men is paired with an intensification of the misogyny that Sedgwick says is fundamental to homosocial relations. Finally, I will explore the connection that Saint-Pavin draws

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[80] Sedgwick (1985), p. 4.
[81] This is expounded in Sedgwick (2008).

between femininity and disability. An epigram compares sex with a young man

favourably to anal sex with a young woman:

> Caliste, m'ayant aujourd'hui
> Surpris avec son jeune frère
> M'a reproché tout en colère,
> Qu'elle avait un cul comme lui ;
> En vain, ai-je dit, tu proposes
> De donner ce qu'ont les garçons,
> Apprends à mieux nommer les choses,
> Pour nous les femmes ont deux cons.[82]

This poem sets up an erotic triangle with different gender dynamics – a brother

and sister are competing over the same man (the narrator). The sister, Caliste,

surprises the narrator who is having sex with her brother. She is angry at this,

demanding to know why he refuses to have sex with her given that she has 'un

cul comme [son frère]'. The narrator retorts that she cannot provide what boys

do because, as far as he and others of his persuasion are concerned, 'les

femmes ont deux cons'.

Immediately apparent in this epigram is the sense of collectivity and

exclusion, of belonging to a group set up in terms that exclude Caliste – 'Pour

nous les femmes ont deux cons' (my emphasis). This *nous* refers not to men in

general, nor to all sodomites, but to a subset of men who prefer to sodomise

'garçons' such as Caliste's brother. The fact that Caliste observes the act of

sodomy is critical to the formation of this category of person indicated by the

first-person plural pronoun – the category is defined *against her*. The sense of

belonging implied by the pronoun *nous* also excludes Caliste's brother. Similar to

how the two poems analysed previously foregrounded not the men's relationship

with the woman they pursued, but their bond with each other, in this poem the

object of the narrator's sexual appetites is utterly insignificant except for the fact

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[82] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 77.

that he is preferable to his sister as a sex object. He is not named and does not even speak up when his sister bursts in, furious at what she has stumbled upon. The insignificance of the brother in this act of sodomy correlates with other representations of *bardaches*, or passive partners in sodomy between men,[83] in seventeenth-century lyric verse. There was a social stigma associated with being a reputed *bardache* that was not directed at active partners in sodomy,[84] such as the narrator. Seifert's analysis of the figure of the *bardache* in the *Chansonnier Maurepas*, a collection of seventeenth-century street songs, concludes that this was 'a role routinely stigmatized in this period and, moreover, deemed all the more unworthy for those of elevated social status'.[85] It was also a role that led a man to be perceived as 'womanlike, if not effeminate'.[86] In my corpus of lyric verse, the word 'bardache' is mentioned infrequently but, as in Seifert's primary texts, carries a negative connotation. To mention just two examples, an anonymous epigram in the *Recueil Conrart* satirises a valet who 'avoit faict fortune en servant de Bardache',[87] while a *chanson libertine* by Blot heaps scorn on a man so ugly that he is not even worth using as a *bardache*.[88]

The sharp distinctions drawn in this poem between not only sodomite and woman, but also between active and passive sodomite are highly reminiscent of the Ancient Greek practice of pederasty,[89] alluded to by Sedgwick as a

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[83] The word 'bardache' derives from the Italian *'bardassa'*, meaning 'jeune garçon', and is thus applicable to the second man in this piece, who is described as both 'jeune' and one of the 'garçons'. Claude Courouve, *Dictionnaire français de l'homosexualité masculine* (Paris: Payot, 2013), p. 77.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Seifert (2009), p. 165.

[86] Ibid., p. 171.

[87] Ms-4123, p. 945.

[88] Blot (1919), p. 49.

[89] For pederasty in early modern French literature, see Marc D. Schachter, *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008). Randolph Trumbach has worked extensively on pederasty in early modern Europe, though his research does not focus on France. For a summary of

homosocial relationship that incorporated homoerotic desire while remaining resolutely misogynistic.[90] When all is considered, we might suspect that Saint-Pavin's narrator has engineered the encounter by having sex with this unnamed *bardache* at a time and a place where they are likely to be interrupted by his sister. The erotic triangle in this poem is predicated on the narrator's need to distinguish himself from other men as part of a subset of sodomites – *nous* – who prefer to sodomise *bardaches*, alongside his need to reject femininity, symbolised by Caliste and, to a lesser extent, her brother in his role as *bardache*. For either of these things to happen, it was essential that she caught them in the act, otherwise the narrator would not have been able to offer this retort that so scornfully distinguishes himself and a small number of likeminded men not only from women, but also from other men.[91] As the following section will now show, the narrator's desire to reinforce the gender binary relies upon imagery that ties femininity to disability, casting both as 'defective departures from a valued standard'.[92]

Femininity, Sex, and Disability

The feminist poet Marge Piercy memorably described women in a patriarchal system as being 'penis-poor' – their bodies deemed incomplete due

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Trumbach's findings, see Randolph Trumbach, 'The Transformation of Sodomy from the Renaissance to the Modern World and Its General Sexual Consequences', *Signs,* 37. 4 (2012), 832-848; Randolph Trumbach, 'Renaissance Sodomy, 1500-1700', in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages,* ed. by Matt Cook (Oxford and Westport, CT: Greenwood World, 2007), pp. 77-106. Also regarding pederasty, see Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[90] Sedgwick (1985), p. 4.

[91] Edmiston makes a similar overarching argument regarding sodomy in Sade's libertine novels. Edmiston (2013).

[92] Garland-Thomson (2013), p. 337.

to the lack of an organ which, as trans theorists have long argued,[93] is not even a reliable indicator of gender in the first place. The narrator's sardonic retort on the final line of Saint-Pavin's epigram also directs scorn at Caliste's bodily lack, but in quite an unexpected way. Caliste is not monstrous because she lacks a penis, as per Piercy's formulation, but because she lacks an arsehole. This lack is paradoxically expressed through an image of excess: 'Pour nous les femmes ont deux cons'.[94] What might this arsehole-poverty (and cunt-richness) ascribed by the narrator not only to Caliste, but to all women, mean?

The formulation of the narrator's rejection of Caliste harkens back to a thread running through various other poems I have analysed in previous chapters, namely the tendency to posit femininity as a condition that approximates or gives rise to disability.[95] Chapter Two, for example, examined how women in cabaret verse are frequently caricatured as disabled and syphilitic grotesques. As an extension of this gendered trope that combines disability, disease, and femininity, vaginal sex is frequently portrayed as a sure-fire way of becoming infected with syphilis. The most infamous example is Théophile's so-called sodomite sonnet,[96] which begins with the exclamation of 'Phylis, tout est foutu, je meurs de la vérole', and ends with a promise to God 'désormais de ne foutre qu'en cul'.[97] Saint-Pavin himself was a prolific contributor to this subgenre of poems purporting to defend sodomy on health grounds as a way of avoiding

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[93] Leslie Feinberg's 1992 polemical pamphlet includes the memorable slogan of 'Gender: self-expression, not anatomy'. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York, NY: World View Forum, 1992), p. 5.

[94] A similar retort appears in one of Saint-Pavin's madrigals. In this version of the story, a woman called Philis approaches the narrator and asks him why he prefers to have sex with Tircis, arguing, as Caliste does, that she has 'un cul fait de même façon'. The narrator replies that yes, this may be true, but her arsehole 'À [s]on goût sent un peu le con'. Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 73.

[95] Garland-Thomson (2013), p. 337.

[96] DeJean (2002), p. 46.

[97] Gaudiani (1981), p. 87.

the disabling effects of venereal disease. One madrigal advises a friend afflicted by a 'mal' to 'Quitte le con, il t'est fatal',[98] while a sonnet begins

> Fous surement, c'est la leçon
> Que je te donne la première,
> La sureté n'est point entière
> Que chez l'antipode du con.[99]

The advice contained within this stanza is expressed in binary terms. When fucking, one's safety cannot be 'entière' except 'chez l'antipode du con'. In this binarism, safety and wholeness are antithetical to the vagina but guaranteed at whichever location is its opposite (the reader is left to connect the dots).

When read as part of this seventeenth-century lyric tradition, Saint-Pavin's epigram to Caliste shows how an erotic triangle that includes an overtly sexual relationship between men can serve to intensify pre-existing misogynistic motifs we have already observed in lyric verse, allowing the narrator to cut women out of the equation entirely. Misogyny, not queer love, is this poem's raison d'être, and therefore it cannot be claimed as subversive of the homosocial model of desire. Unlike Caliste, the narrator's male beloved gets only a fleeting mention, while the poem's punchline promotes a stereotype of women as vectors of disease and hideous grotesques, characterised by both lack (arsehole poverty) and surplus (cunt richness). Like the anonymous verse 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' analysed in Chapter Two,[100] this poem constitutes an act of boundary maintenance, abjecting a female grotesque from the sphere of the aesthetically desirable. It is also worth underscoring that despite its endorsement of sodomy between men, this epigram reiterates a key homophobic trope present in modern and seventeenth-century literature alike,

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[98] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 73.
[99] Ibid., p. 66.
[100] See section entitled 'Perfect Deformity'.

and acknowledged by both Sedgwick and Seifert. It supports the idea that love between men is 'an epitome, a personification, an effect, or perhaps a primary cause of woman-hating'.[101] As such, while it certainly supports Sedgwick's conjecture that there may be a continuum between 'men promoting the interests of men' and 'men loving men',[102] Saint-Pavin's epigram cannot be proffered as an example of a non-homophobic homosocial relationship. Its perpetuation of the misogynistic social order represented by the homosocial triangle prevents it from expressing anything that could be considered queer.[103]

Between Women

Most discussions of homosocial relations, including Sedgwick's, focus on relationships between men to the exclusion of those between women. Terry Castle writes that 'the lesbian […] has been "ghosted" – or made to seem invisible – by culture itself',[104] glossed over in history books and even underrepresented in notionally supportive fields such as queer studies and gay and lesbian studies. Marianne Legault and Valerie Traub identify a trend among scholars to gesture towards the so-called 'impossibility, invisibility, or unthinkability of female intimacies and homoeroticism in the pre-modern era',[105] adding that this has been more pronounced in early modern French literary studies.[106] In so doing, scholars perpetuate the same prejudices that caused female homoeroticism to be obscured by premodern theologians in the first

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[101] Sedgwick's words. Sedgwick (1985), pp. 19-20. For how this trope appears in seventeenth-century French songs about sodomy, see Seifert (2009), pp. 170-172.
[102] Sedgwick (1985), p. 4.
[103] Zoberman (2008), p. 26.
[104] Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 4.
[105] Legault (2012), p. 5; Traub (2002), p. 3.
[106] Legault (2012), p. 6; Traub (2002), pp. 3, 28-32.

place. Instead of flatly stating the historical invisibility, impossibility or unthinkability of female same-sex desire – an approach that is lazy and inaccurate – Traub proposes that literary scholars should ask *how* this illusion of unthinkability has come about, and turn their attention to instances in which it is shattered by writers who give voice to love between women.[107]

Dianne Dugaw and Amanda Powell have written about English and Spanish Sapphic poetry of the seventeenth century.[108] Expanding on Castle's notion of ghosting, they acknowledge that there has been a tendency to explain away homoerotic desire between early modern women as 'de-sexualised "romantic friendships"' or as 'purely literary'.[109] They identify a double standard in the historiography of sexuality:

But what is a concept that is "purely literary"? A woman poet who writes to another woman and enlists the conventions of erotic discourse explicitly calls up the physical enactments of desire and the centuries-long discursive representations of sexual expression. Scholars do not explain away eroticism in the poetry of Garcilaso or Góngora, Sidney or Shakespeare (except in study of the latter's sonnets, where critics have leaned hard on the "dark lady" to explain away the "young man"). Nor when a male poet addresses a woman do commentators reassure readers that "He didn't mean this 'heterosexually,' not as we use the concept 'heterosexual' today." Fear of anachronism arises especially with the possibility of queer (especially sapphic or lesbian) readings. The poems we consider not only invite, but themselves insist, on such readings, as their parodic reworkings of convention forward a mutual empowerment of speaker and addressee in erotic terms.[110]

As well as calling for more unreservedly queer readings of love poetry written by women to women, this passage acknowledges that same-sex desire between women in early modern poetry can at times appear surprisingly conventional. Often, as their readings demonstrate, women poets enlist Petrarchan clichés that usually express resolutely heterosexual desire and rework them with a parodic

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[107] Traub (2002), p. 6.
[108] Dugaw and Powell (2006); Powell (2011).
[109] Dugaw and Powell (2006), pp. 130, 131.
[110] Ibid., p. 131.

flair to express homoeroticism. In short, they queer Petrarchism. Furthermore, Dugaw and Powell echo Sedgwick in their reminder that eroticism and friendship between women has not been so sharply distinguished throughout history as male equivalents,[111] and critics should be careful not to impose a binary of homosocial versus homosexual on texts that attest to the lack of such a binary.

The following analysis will foreground the work of two women poets whose love poetry addressing women queers Petrarchism in various ways that allow me to investigate the relationship between women's homoerotic desire, disability, and homosocial relations. In their poetic articulations of homoeroticism, both poets reach for imagery that approximates disability. They foreground non-verbal communication, they queer familiar metaphors of disability (such as Cupid), and discuss the phenomenon of closeting, which has important ramifications for both queerness and disability. Due to their status as women who wrote love poetry to other women, both Rohan and Lauvergne have been subject to historiographical ghosting by critics who paper over the homoerotic content of their works. Paul Marchegay omits Rohan's poems addressing women from his 1874 study of the Rohan sisters and their works, arguing that it would be

dépourvu de toute critique pour attribuer à la digne fille de l'une des plus grandes et illustres maisons de France, à l'esprit délicat et élevé qu'admiraient ses contemporains, même hors de son pays, les platitudes composées, par des rimeurs de carrefour, à l'usage d'amoureux peu difficiles en poésie et dont les belles répondaient aux noms d'Isabelle, Aimée, Madelaine, Marie ou Claire.[112]

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[111] Though she does not analyse homosocial relations between women, Sedgwick comments in her introduction that 'the diacritical opposition between the "homosocial" and the "homosexual" seems to be much less thorough and mutually exclusive for women, in our society, than for men'. Sedgwick (1985), p. 2; Dugaw and Powell (2006), pp. 130-131. See also Powell (2011), p. 155.

[112] Paul Marchegay, *Recherches sur les poésies de Mlles de Rohan-Soubise* ([n.p.], 1874), pp. 33-34.

In a similar vein, a section on Lauvergne in Alphonse Séché's 1908 anthology of French women's poetry neglects to mention her love poetry women or include any examples of it in the selection of her work he presents.[113] The editor comments that the verse in her 1680 *recueil* is 'galant, prétentieux et quelque peu licencieux',[114] the final adjective perhaps being an oblique reference to (or warning about) her love poems to the elusive Mademoiselle Godefroy. In what follows, I examine how both Lauvergne and Rohan's poetry to women comments upon the silencing of female same-sex desire, how they give voice to these feelings in a literary landscape that is hostile to love between women, and how they negotiate the homosocial systems in which they unwillingly find themselves. Disability does not take centre stage in these poems, but it is present in the background and, even when not addressing disability, the pieces allow us to draw comparisons between disability and queerness that will be expanded upon in the subsequent section.

Silent Speech and Closeted Desire

I will first consider how two of Lauvergne's poems play with the idea of silent speech to express (semi)closeted female homoerotic desire, and, in so doing, substantially modify familiar Petrarchan conventions and Sedgwick's classic homosocial paradigm. Lauvergne's narrators foreground non-verbal communication as a means of remaining closeted to an extent, while saying without saying. A *chanson* emphasises the difficulty inherent in verbal communication of closeted desire:

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[113] Alphonse Séché, *Les muses: anthologie des femmes-poètes (1200 à 1891)* (Paris: Michaud, 1908), pp. 111-115.
[114] Ibid., p. 111.

> Chanson Pour Mademoiselle Godefroy.
>
> Je voudrois bien vous conter mon martire,
> Mais je craindrois vostre juste couroux.
> Devinez-le Philis, sans vous le dire ;
> Sçavez-vous pas que vos yeux sont si doux,
>   Que tout cede à leurs coups.
>
> Ignorez-vous la force de vos charmes,
> Et le pouvoir qu'ils exercent en tous lieux ;
> Que Lycidas vous a rendu les armes,
> Tirsis, Lisis soupirent pour vos yeux,
>   Et Silvandre comme eux.
>
> Je vous l'ay dit sans penser vous le dire,
> Pardonnez-moy cét insolent aveu :
> Mais lors qu'amour exerce son empire,
> Et qu'il a mis un pauvre cœur en feu,
>   Que l'on se contient peu.[115]

Lauvergne's narrator is afraid to put her feelings into words, perhaps in the form of a more explicit love poem, lest her beloved react with anger. Instead of openly declaring her love, she instead demonstrates the closeting strategy akin to what Robinson refers to as dropping hairpins, 'in which, ostensibly, homosexuality isn't discussed, but listeners who pick up on the speaker's discreetly coded references perceive homo-specific meaning'.[116] Lauvergne's narrator is not nearly as subtle, however, and gives the impression that, either consciously or unconsciously, she wants to be found out by both Philis and Godefroy to whom the poem is dedicated. She conjures up the homosocial system found in much *galant* love poetry, yet Lauvergne's picture of homosociality is markedly different from Sedgwick's paradigm.

Far from being a passive object to be competed over and passed between men, Philis is on the offensive. Alluding to the neo-Petrarchan motif of darts firing from a lady's eyes, the beloved's eyes are paradoxically 'si doux' that 'tout cede à leurs coups'. Philis's gaze is soft and sweet – stereotypically feminine

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[115] Lauvergne (1680), p. 41.
[116] Robinson (2006), p. xiv.

attributes – yet also fundamentally aggressive in how it exerts its power over men, who all surrender to 'la force de [ses] charmes'. This is in direct opposition to the homosocial paradigm found in much *galant* love poetry, such as the unsigned *chanson* analysed in Chapter One entitled 'Ravissemens amoureux'.[117] That lyric saw Lisis, one of the same stock characters used by Lauvergne, vanquishing Climène in a series of 'longs combats' (sex) that result in her becoming metaphorically disabled and surrendering to him (orgasming).[118] In Lauvergne's *chanson*, however, it is the men – Lisis included – who are in a state of surrender after being overcome by Philis's gaze, which is itself given militaristic connotations usually reserved for men in love lyrics that draw heavily from Petrarchism.

In her strategic modification and redeployment of neo-Petrarchan tropes favoured by *galant* verse, Lauvergne exposes the rigidity and self-contradictory nature of these same tropes. For example, Philis's gaze is portrayed as at once innocuously sweet *and* an offensive weapon, while the image of a group of male Petrarchan stock heroes all falling around sighing and dropping their weapons is comically exaggerated, reversing gender roles and thwarting the reader's expectations of how men and women are supposed to act in love lyrics. In establishing a satirical regard towards Petrarchism, Lauvergne's piece 'rewrite[s] the voiceless passivity of the sexualized mistress-as-object',[119] while 'critiqu[ing] a self-serving male self-regard inherent in the Petrarchist paradigm'.[120] These are two key hallmarks of seventeenth-century European Sapphic poetry as defined by Dugaw and Powell, and they demonstrate how, far from completely discarding the misogynistic structures of Petrarchism, Lauvergne manoeuvres

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[117] See section entitled '*Perclusion* as Conquest'.
[118] See section of Chapter One entitled '*Perclusion* as Conquest'.
[119] Dugaw and Powell (2006), p. 128.
[120] Powell (2011), p. 152.

within these structures, adapting them and turning their inherent contradictions to her own advantage.[121]

Having set up this reimagined homosocial paradigm where the men surrender to Philis (and not the other way around), the narrator uses this modified structure of desire to express queer love between women through irony and insinuation rather than direct words. On lines eleven and twelve she stops herself, fearing that she has said too much without meaning to: 'Je vous l'ay dit sans penser vous le dire, / Pardonnez-moy cét insolent aveu'. She does not explain, though, precisely where in the preceding stanzas this impertinent confession might be located. One interpretation is that through the rewriting of the gender roles usually found in homosocial relations, the narrator is able to position herself as one of the men, who are all in a state of surrender to Philis.[122] The reader can then join the dots and arrive at the narrator's unspoken confession: *I am no different from them*.

In addition to closeting her desire for Philis while simultaneously dropping hairpins, this reimagining of the homosocial paradigm has the effect of portraying the narrator in a more sympathetic light. She is not actively pursuing Philis but passively falling for her without meaning to do so, in just the same way as all these men are. To return to Robinson's quotation, Lauvergne's coded references to closeted same-sex desire relies upon the reader's familiarity with the homosocial paradigm, along with various other gendered conventions of Petrarchan love poetry, in order to realise that these conventions have been substantially modified to allow a female narrator to fall for a female beloved and

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[121] Ann Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 15. Jones's book provides plentiful and varied examples of how early modern women poets adapted pre-existing poetic conventions.
[122] Dugaw and Powell (2006), p. 128.

communicate this fact without speaking it. Moreover, her closeting is playful and only ever half-hearted – she wants to be found out by her beloved Philis, challenging her on the third line to take a guess at the unspoken desire she harbours for her. By reimagining the models of homosociality and Petrarchism, the narrator may speak of her closeted desire while remaining silent, silence being yet another Petrarchan cliché Lauvergne's narrator turns to her advantage. On the subject of female homoeroticism in literature, Joan DeJean remarks that 'silences are not easily read',[123] but Lauvergne's narrator is keen to make it as easy as possible for Philis and Godefroy to read her own silence. This can be linked to the sonnet 'Bien-heureux les souspirs qui passent par ta bouche' by d'Alibray, analysed in Chapter One,[124] which explores the Petrarchan cliché of the ideal woman who is not able or permitted to speak. Lauvergne appropriates this misogynistic motif and reworks it in her own lyric to signify unspoken queer desire between the female narrator her beloved Philis, who is encouraged to read the narrator's non-verbal signs and deduce the nature of her desire. An image of disability – the Petrarchan heroine's silence – is reworked by Lauvergne as an indicator of and vehicle for queer desire.

In a sonnet for Godefroy published in the same *recueil* we find a reiteration of several of the modified Petrarchan conventions present in the *chanson*:

Sonnet, Pour Mademoiselle Godefroy.

Aimable Godefroy, vous estes redoutable,
Vos beaux yeux sçavent l'art d'ôter la liberté.
Ils ont de la douceur, ils ont de la fierté,
Et leur brillant éclat n'a rien de comparable.

Le tour de vostre esprit paroist inimitable,
Qui pourroit se lasser d'admirer sa beauté,

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[123] DeJean (1989), p. 2.
[124] See section entitled 'The *Blason*'.

> Il est fin, délicat & remply de bonté,
> Et l'on voit dans vostre air un charme inévitable.
>
> Mon cœur qui tant de fois se deffendit d'aimer,
> Connut que malgré luy vous l'alliez enflamer,
> Par vos attraits puissans, mon ame fut surprise,
>
> Et je sentis pour vous certain je ne sçay quoy,
> Que mes brûlans soûpirs vous dirent mieux que moy,
> Au moment qu'à vos pieds je perdis ma franchise.[125]

Godefroy is a contradictory subject, embodying stereotypically feminine traits – *douceur*, *beauté*, *finesse*, *délicatesse* and *charme* – alongside militaristic imagery of conquest most often associated with men in love poetry – she is 'redoutable', her eyes revoke liberty, and the narrator must defend herself from her. In the third stanza the narrator admits that her heart has at many points forbidden itself from falling in love, all the while knowing that Godefroy, once again taking the active role in courtship usually reserved for men, will set it alight despite itself.[126] The narrator's soul was 'surprise' by this reaction, underscoring the fact that she did not plan for this to happen, but, despite herself, she cannot resist her beloved.

Most pertinent to the present discussion is the sestet's revisiting of unspoken closeted desire that succeeds in speaking while remaining silent. The narrator's feelings for Godefoy are euphemistically articulated on line twelve through an invocation of the *je-ne-sais-quoi*, a 'vogue-word' that reached the height of its popularity in the second half of the seventeenth century to refer to 'a certain something' that could not be put into words.[127] At Lauvergne's time, one of the most common uses of this word was to articulate latent eroticism in

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[125] Lauvergne (1680), p. 166.

[126] The description of her heart as overcome with passion 'malgré luy' bears a similarity to Madame de Clèves's articulation of her own illicit passion in La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678): 'je suis vaincue et surmontée par une inclination qui m'entraine malgré moi'. Marie-Madeleine de La Fayette, *La Princesse de Clèves* (Paris: Barbin, 1689 [1678]), p. 67.

[127] Richard Scholar, *The Je-Ne-Sais-Quoi in Early Modern Europe: encounters with a certain something* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 25.

the polite parlance of *galanterie*,[128] and here she queers this commonplace expression to allude to the unspoken secret of loving another woman. It is not Lauvergne's speech that most clearly conveys her love for Godefroy, but her non-verbal expressions; her 'brûlans soûpirs' articulate that love in far clearer terms than her words are able to. In addition to parodying Petrarchism and queering homosociality, Lauvergne's poems address the semi-silent nature of love between women in the seventeenth century. Both lyrics describe how the narrator who loves another woman can express her love, but most do so love via half-hearted closeting, dropping hairpins, euphemism, and non-verbal signs, rather than the cavalier obscenity found in Saint-Pavin's verse addressing his sexual preference for men. The overall effect is that, despite never being addressed head-on or unambiguously declared by the narrator, the homoeroticism in these poems shows itself to be really the only coherent reading available. Interpreting the coded queerness in these lyrics demands hyper ability from the reader, who must be conversant in the Petrarchan motifs and stereotypes that are reworked and redeployed by Lauvergne to insist upon a queer reading.

Sapphic Vision and Queering Cupid

The homoerotic love poems of Anne de Rohan carry out a similar reimagining of Petrarchan and homosocial conventions to Lauvergne's, but add the extra layer of explicit imitations of Sappho, the Archaic Greek poet venerated as the tenth Muse and the archetypal lyric poetess.[129] Sappho is 'the first known model in female literary production to celebrate love and eroticism

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[128] For examples, see ibid., pp. 183-223.
[129] Legault (2012), p. 119; DeJean (1989), p. 1.

between women',[130] while remaining 'the victim, and prime example, of the silencing imposed on intimate relationships between women'.[131] Historically, her work has been destroyed, ignored or rewritten to erase or downplay its homoerotic content.[132] She has also been the object of homosocial relations, used as a 'mere accessory to a double act of male poetic bonding' such as that between Catullus and Racine.[133] Due in no small part to her posthumous erasure, Sappho's verse corpus is available to us only in a small collection of fragments, several influential examples of which were introduced to French readers in the sixteenth century. Robert Estienne's 1546 edition of Dionysius of Halicarnassus contained the Greek text of Sappho's poem commonly known in French as 'Ode à Aphrodite',[134] or fragment 1. To this day, it is the only known complete poem of Sappho's available to us. That same year, 'À une aimée',[135] or fragment 31, was published in Greek by Francesco Robortello in Basel in his edition of Longinus's treatise on the sublime,[136] and in Venice in Marc-Antoine Muret's commentary on Catullus.[137] The most important developments with regards to the French reception of Sappho came in 1556, when fragment 31 was first translated into French by Rémi Belleau,[138] and Robert Estienne's son Henri

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[130] Legault (2012), p. 121.

[131] Ibid., p. 119. See also DeJean (1989), p. 4.

[132] The most influential example of the latter is Ovid's 15th Heroide, which promotes a resolutely heteronormative reworking of Sappho's life, ending with her suicide after being rejected by Phaon, the man she loves. Legault (2012), p. 119; Bonnet (1995), pp. 11-15.

[133] DeJean (1989), p. 7. See also, pp. 29-30, 37.

[134] Ibid., p. 30. For a modern translation by Édith Mora, see Édith Mora, *Sappho: Histoire d'un poète et traduction intégrale de l'œuvre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966), p. 372.

[135] For a modern translation by Yves Battistini, see Sappho, *Le Cycle des Amies* (Paris: Chandeigne, 1991), p. 1.

[136] DeJean (1989), p. 33.

[137] Ibid.

[138] For a reproduction of Belleau's 1556 translation, see Robert Aulotte, 'Sur quelques traductions d'une ode de Sappho au XVIe siècle', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé : Lettres d'humanité,* 17 (1958), 107-122 (p. 110).

included the two odes along with almost forty fragments and their Latin

translations in his edition of Greek lyric poets.[139]

Returning to my corpus of lyric verse, Rohan's 1617 love lyric, entitled

'Sur une dame nommée Aimée', is believed to be 'the first French poem written

by a woman to make direct allusion to the newly rediscovered verses of

Sappho',[140] specifically fragment 31, with the French title of 'À une aimée'.

Before Belleau's 1556 translation, all allusions to Sappho's poem by French

authors used Catullus's adaptation as their primary point of reference,[141] yet the

similarity of Rohan's title to that of the French translation makes it highly likely

that she was working off that recent translation of Sappho herself. Any possible

real-life inspiration for this poem is unknown, as is the extent to which it was

circulated in manuscript form, if at all, before its eventual inclusion in the 1862

edition of the poet's work:[142]

Sur une dame nommée Aimée

Belle, j'aurais un très grand tort
Si pour votre grâce estimée
J'avais reçu l'amoureux sort,
Pour autre que vous, ma chère Aymée,

Tous les olympiques flambeaux
De leur carrière enluminée
Ne sont point ornements plus beaux
Que les yeux de ma belle Aymée.

Amour, ravi de ses beaux yeux,
La main droite et de flèche armée
Darda dans mon coeur soucieux
L'ardent désir d'aimer Aymée.

Je ne sais s'ils sont cieux ou dieux
Dont la puissance m'est cachée,

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[139] DeJean (1989), p. 31.
[140] Castle (2006), p. 115. DeJean notes that Louise Labé's earlier poetry contains direct references to Sappho as a literary figure and to 'Amour Lesbienne'. DeJean (1989), p. 39.
[141] Aulotte (1958), p. 111.
[142] Castle (2006), p. 115.

> Et qui me contraint en tous lieux
> De mourir pour aimer Aymée.
>
> A les voir ils me semblent cieux;
> Ils sont de couleur azurée,
> Par leur effet je les crois dieux,
> Me forçant d'aymer Aymée.
>
> Bref, je les tiens pour cieux et dieux,
> Par cette force recellée
> Et par leur aspect lumineux,
> N'ayant rien plus cher que mon Aymée.[143]

While Lauvergne's two poems to Godefroy played with the idea of silence and non-verbal communication as expressions of female homoeroticism, this poem centres itself on vision. As Chapter One argued, love in the seventeenth-century French lyric is an ocularcentric phenomena, following the physiognomical premise of the eyes as windows to the soul and conduits for passion. Rohan's verse makes use of similar ocularcentric imagery to the second stanza of Lauvergne's sonnet describing the 'brillant éclat' of Godefroy's eyes. Here, Aymée's gaze is superlative to 'Tous les olympiques flambeaux' and their 'carrière enluminée'. Beholding her eyes, the narrator remarks that they seem both like heavens in their 'aspect lumineux', and like gods in their 'force recellée' that compels her to love Aymée, a dynamic that is itself reminiscent of how Lauvergne emphasised that she did not actively pursue Philis, but passively fell for her. So far so conventional: as Amanda Powell remarks, Rohan's love poetry to women takes the Petrarchist tendency to enthuse on the eyes to almost parodic extremes.[144]

For the purposes of my study, the most revealing part of this poem is the third stanza. The content of this stanza is incongruous among the radiant ocular imagery surrounding it. Rohan evokes another familiar trope of love poetry

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[143] Rohan-Soubise (1862), pp. 46-47.
[144] Powell (2011), p. 157.

written in the Petrarchan and *galant* traditions: that of Cupid as a stock character indicating the random and irrational nature of romantic attraction. In Rohan's verse, however, the familiar figure of Cupid is adapted into an avatar of queer desire. Domna Stanton translates the first line of 'Amour, ravi de ses beaux yeux' as 'Cupid, delighted with those eyes' – referring to Aymée's eyes – but the line could just as easily translate as 'Cupid, deprived of his beautiful eyes'. While these two readings are, as I will show, not mutually exclusive and do in fact complement each other, I would like to focus first of all on the latter, which sets up an opposition between the (exaggeratedly) sighted beloved and the (exaggeratedly) blind Cupid. The well-worn poetic symbol of Cupid is strategically evoked at this point as part of Rohan's defence of female homoerotic desire. We are all acutely aware of Cupid's metaphorical blindness thanks to his appearances in countless love poems in the Petrarchan tradition, she argues, so can we really be surprised when occasionally his capricious arrows should cause a woman to fall for another woman? The narrator claims that she is, just like any other lover, following an irresistible 'ardent désir' that Cupid, for better or for worse, has ignited within her troubled heart.

I will now bring Stanton's alternative reading of the stanza's opening line into effect. If we understand Cupid as at once blind *and* delighted with Aymée's eyes, then the internal logic underpinning Rohan's defence of female same-sex desire becomes clear. She seems to hypothesise that Cupid's arrow-slinging is perhaps, in this case, not as random as it first appears. If Cupid is blind, she argues, then it follows that he should be drawn to someone whose eyes are more luminous than Olympic torches, since he lacks eyes of his own. When we unite the two divergent readings of the line 'Amour, ravi de ses yeux', the narrator's love for Aymée is conceptualised as part of Cupid's search for the

brightest eyes in existence ('Cupid, delighted with those eyes'), in order to counteract his own lack of eyes ('Cupid, deprived of his beautiful eyes'). Cupid's disability is put forward not only as the root cause of same-sex love, but also as the very characteristic that enables Rohan to queer Cupid and present him as evidence for the validity of the narrator's romantic feelings for another woman.

Marriage

A second of Rohan's poems initiates a comparison between her love for a woman and inevitability of the patriarchal institution of Christian marriage:

> Sur le sujet d'une dame nommée Isabelle,
> de 1617
>
> La grâce qui surabonde
> De cette beauté féconde
> Me fait...... mon mieux;
> Il faut donc chère Isabelle,
> D'une amitié mutuelle
> Contenter ici nos voeux;
> Que l'amoureuse braise,
> Qui vit dedans nous s'apaise;
> Offrant chacun le coeur sien
> Dessus l'autel de l'hyménée,
> Nos amitiés récompensées
> Par un conjugal lien.
> Cette beauté qui m'affole
> Fait que mon âme s'envole
> Parmi l'air de mes désirs,
> Et si son absence dure
> Par une agréable usure
> Payer tous mes déplaisirs.
> De nectar, ni d'ambroisie
> N'est pas si douce à la vie,
> Ni l'hespéride saveur
> Ni que les mouches ménagères
> Par leurs recourses légères

> Vont puisant dessus les fleurs.[145]

The plot of this poem involves an erotic relationship entirely dissimilar to Sedgwick's homosocial paradigm. It concerns a female narrator who is in love with the eponymous Isabelle, who reciprocates the narrator's love, and two unnamed men whom the women are due to marry. The narrator is grappling with the thought of having to give up her love for Isabelle in order to fulfil her obligation to her husband-to-be and play her role in the heteronormative, homosocial institution of marriage, something Isabelle herself will also have to do. Going forward, she says, the two lovers must content themselves with 'une amitié mutuelle' and hope that the 'amoureuse braise' within both their hearts extinguishes itself. The narrator puts on a brave face and reassures Isabelle, trying to convince her that this is the only option open to them, and that it might not be so bad: they will be able to remain friends and may, in time, even come to love their future husbands. She conceptualises this as an exchange. Though they cannot pursue their love for each other, both women will be rewarded with 'un conjugal lien' between them and their future husbands.

There is a burgeoning sense of uncertainty running through the poem that causes the reader to become increasingly unsure of whether the narrator truly believes in her own words of reassurance. We, as readers, doubt whether she and Isabelle will ever really be happy if they break off their love affair and settle for friendship in order to submit to the demands of homosocial system that treats them as the property of men. This uncertainty grows upon investigation of the ellipsis on line three. This lacuna is not explained by Barthélemy, the editor of the sole printed edition of Rohan's poetry, so the reader is left to wonder whether it constitutes another allusion by Rohan to Sappho's fragments, an

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[145] Rohan-Soubise (1862), pp. 43-44.

instance of censorship, or simply the sign of an unfinished manuscript draft.

Amanda Powell likewise does not address it in her analysis of this poem, and so

a textual lacuna reproduces itself as a critical lacuna.[146] A return to the

manuscript source gives voice to this curious moment of silence.[147] Line three of

this poem as found in Français 12491 reads 'me fait lacroire mon mieux'.[148] The

missing verb indicated by ellipsis in the print edition is *accroire*, meaning to

intentionally mislead someone by making them believe something that *one

knows to be untrue*.[149] In the context of a poem about homoerotic desire, this

verb's meaning bears a clear similarity to the historical phenomenon of

closeting, one which the narrator herself is reluctantly advocating as an

unfortunate necessity to survive in a homosocial system that views love between

women as an affront to patriarchal hegemony. In her resolution to swap

homoeroticism for friendship and heterosexual marriage, the narrator is not only

deceiving others but, as her verb choice implies, she is also deceiving herself.

On line thirteen she revisits the word 'beauté' with which she begun the

poem. She speaks of a beauty that besots her and blows her soul away, but will

soon be absent from her life. In the precise wording of this image, Rohan's

narrator reaffirms the idea that unattainable female beauty causes disability in

lovers. The verb *affoler* literally means 'to drive mad',[150] affirming that romantic

passion between women that cannot be pursued under a homosocial system is

akin to madness. The reference to imminent absence on line sixteen allows us to

conclude that this *beauté* refers to Isabelle. A beloved's absence, as Chapter

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[146] Powell (2011), pp. 156-158.
[147] The only know manuscript source for Rohan's poetry is Français 12491, pp. 80-83.
[148] Ibid., p. 80.
[149] See entry for 'accroire' in Anonymous (1694).
[150] See entry for 'affoler' in ibid.

One argued,[151] is often associated in love lyrics with disability in the form of figurative blindness, further associating unfulfilled queer love with disability. If she is lucky, the narrator reasons, her 'déplaisirs' caused by Isabelle's lasting absence from her heart may be compensated with nectar, a symbol of immortality that I interpret as standing for heterosexual reproductive futurity: a loving, socially acceptable heterosexual marriage that produces children, contrasting with the intense but regrettably ephemeral relationship with Isabelle. From line nineteen until the poem's end, the narrator lists analogous symbols of permanence: in Greek mythology, ambrosia was a food of the Gods that conferred immortality, while the Hesperides guarded golden apples that did likewise.[152] Finally, the concluding image of a tiny housefly flitting back and forth in search of flowers from which to drain nectar returns to nectar, the symbol that began the list.

These symbols of immortality that can be read as emblems of the perpetuation of the homosocial institution of heterosexual marriage are each negated. Immortality is shown to be inferior to the narrator's superlative passion for Isabelle: 'ni d'ambroisie / N'est pas si douce à la vie', the implicit point of comparison being 'Cette beauté qui m'affole' of line thirteen. The intense yet forbidden passion experienced by Rohan's narrator is a madness, but a desirable one. If she were given a free choice between Isabelle and immortality, the narrator would doubtless choose Isabelle, yet instead she finds herself in the unavoidable position of being coerced into a marriage to a man whom she is uncertain if she can even love. This man waiting in the wings is never named or fleshed out as a character, nor is Isabelle's imagined future husband alluded to

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[151] See section entitled 'The Absent Beloved'.
[152] See 'Ambrosia' and 'Apples of the Hesperides' in David Leeming, *Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

on line nine. They may not even exist as real people, standing instead for all men, along with the patriarchal institution of marriage that facilitates their subjugation of Rohan's protagonists, and stands opposition to female homoeroticism.

On top of attesting to the utter incompatibility of classic homosociality and female homoeroticism via a metaphor of madness, this poem plays out the compulsion towards closeting felt by women who loved women in the seventeenth century as a reaction to this incompatibility. While Saint-Pavin's verse dramatizes a comic coming-out narrative that serves to distance the narrator from both women and other men, Rohan's discussion of closeting involves a smoothing over of queerness in her reluctant decision to remain in the closet and conform to men's expectations of women, urging her former lover Isabelle to do the same. Rohan's take on closeting is also considerably more pessimistic than Lauvergne's, foregrounding the hegemony and inevitability of the homosocial traffic in women through the institution of marriage. While Lauvergne's narrator tentatively hints at her closeted status, positioning herself as one of the men, Rohan's narrator resolves to play the part of the loving and obedient wife so that she and Isabelle might at least remain friends.

This closeting is replicated in criticism. We will never know why Barthélemy chose to replace the crucial verb *accroire* with an ellipsis in his 1862 edition of Rohan's verse. It is not difficult to make out in the manuscript. Indeed, the various other poems in the *recueil* written in defence of love between women remain unchanged and, unlike Marchegay, Barthélemy does not argue that these poems were not Rohan's. Yet despite this, something made him remove what is, ironically, the single word in the poem that best expresses the modern notion of closeting. This poem emphatically restates the silence and silencing that

surrounds queer relationships between women in seventeenth-century lyrics, expressed through the narrator's reluctant decision to remain in the closet so as not to violate the homosocial system that requires women to be possessed by and passed between men. This silencing is exaggerated by the editorial decision to remove the verb 'accroire', which articulates this very notion of making someone believe something that one knows to be untrue.

Cripping Homosociality

Disability has not been absent from the poems analysed above. Femininity is likened to disability by Saint-Pavin whose poem to Caliste about male homoeroticism contained an intensification of this misogynistic motif. Meanwhile, Rohan's verse to Aymée queers an already blind Cupid so he comes to stand as an avatar for female homoeroticism, while she and Lauvergne both, at various points, describe love between women as one that dare not or cannot speak. Furthermore, imagery of male *ability* is essential in the construction and maintenance of the classic homosocial paradigm, as foregrounded in the following piece of occasional verse by Saint-Pavin written in 1667 to celebrate Louis XIV's victory in Flanders:[153]

> Bannissons de notre mémoire
> Les héros des siècles passés,
> Dans le Temple de la victoire
> Leurs grands noms sont presque effacés.
>
> Avec audace, dans l'histoire,
> Ces demi-dieux s'étaient placés ;
> Mais Louis, tout couvert de gloire,
> Les en aura bientôt chassés.
>
> L'Europe, pour lui trop petite,

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[153] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 59.

> Ne pourra servir de limite
> A ses ambitieux projets ;
>
> Il ne saurait se satisfaire,
> Qu'il n'achève, par ses hauts faits,
> Tout ce qui leur restait à faire.

This sonnet puts forward a series of icons of masculinity in the form of the 'héros des siècles passés' and 'demi-dieux' on the one hand – words which might refer to any number of semi-divine Classical heroes such as Achilles, Aeneas, Hercules, Orpheus, Perseus, and Theseus – and Louis XIV on the other. Through successful military conquest, Louis is sure to soon surpass these demigods, chasing them from the Temple of Victory, their names erased by his glory. This evocation of competitive male prowess has clear parallels with Sedgwick's homosocial paradigm. It reiterates the same vocabulary of hypermasculine militaristic competition that I have highlighted in love poetry, except this time it refers to actual military conquest. In both this poem and in love lyrics, competing men are defined by images of militaristic activity: they chase, push, and attack audaciously, vigorously, and ambitiously in a quest for victory.[154] The final stanza of the present poem then predicts that Louis 'ne saurait se satisfaire, / Qu'il n'achève, par ses hauts faits, / Tout ce qui leur restait à faire'. With this concluding remark, the narrator insinuates that the overarching goal of military campaigning is not so much victory over one's enemy, as it is competition with and victory over other celebrated male heroes of centuries past.

As with any seventeenth-century French lyric, this verse demands a high level of ability from its reader, who must be very attuned to irony. Far from endorsing it, could Saint-Pavin in fact be making fun of this hypermasculine

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[154] For a particularly extreme example, see Saint-Pavin's verse beginning 'Deux braves, mais différemment', which depicts men commiting acts of sexual violence in fulfilment of the homosocial triangle. Ibid., p. 95.

jostling and posturing? This poem can certainly be read with a mocking tone as it describes how the latest icon of belligerent masculinity will not rest until he has toppled the Classical icons from their pedestals and asserted his superiority over them. It all seems somewhat pathetic and futile, because before long yet another warmonger is sure to supplant Louis and evict him from the Temple of Victory, just as he evicted the last set of so-called heroes. This poem could certainly be read as an ironic critique of conquest for the sake of appeasing one's fragile male ego but, equally, it functions perfectly well as a sincere hagiography of Louis XIV. Such double meanings and dual interpretations were hallmarks of the *galant* lyric tradition within which Saint-Pavin frequently operated,[155] and so one reading need not cancel out the other. Whether in praise or parody, this poem sets out an able-bodied model of militaristic masculinity that, for better or for worse, each male protagonist tries to measure up to, in love as in war.

Performance Anxiety

Saint-Pavin's poetry about disability puts forward alternatives to this able-bodied model of homosocial masculinity. The final two poems analysed in this chapter fall into this category and describe the effect of the poet's increasing disability on homosocial relations. The first is a *rondeau* that Hammond reads as an instance of Saint-Pavin mocking the 'prétentions de ceux qui se croient supérieurs à lui'.[156] While this is an entirely plausible reading, I propose that the

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[155] Hammond reminds us that while Saint-Pavin's most striking poems deal with disability and same-sex love in unconventional ways, a substantial portion of his work is made up of relatively conventional *galant* verse that eschews these subjects. Ibid., p. 32.

[156] Ibid., p. 20.

poem can also be read as an instance of the poet addressing himself in the second person, as if gazing into mirror:

> Comme je crois, vous êtes amoureux,
> Vous vous mirez, vous poudrez vos cheveux,
> Vous consultez comme on lance une œillade,
> Quoi vous allez seul à la promenade,
> Galantiser le sujet de vos feux.
> Ce dessein est d'un homme vigoureux,
> Pour un perclus le pas est dangereux,
> Puisque l'amour veut toujours qu'on gambade,
>   Comme je crois.
> Mais si ce dieu favorable à vos vœux,
> Vous y laissait venir aux mains tous deux,
> Pourriez-vous bien tirer une estocade ?
> Assurément vous feriez le malade,
> Ou du combat vous sortiriez honteux,
>   Comme je crois.[157]

In my reading, the narrator turns his mocking regard not to 'ceux qui se croient supérieurs à lui' (in Hammond's words), but to himself, admitting with more than a little bitterness that he cannot fulfil the physical requirements of homosocial masculinity because of his disability. Going to the Promenade des Tuileries to court one's beloved is the intention of 'un homme vigoureux', an adjective that recalls the warlike masculine icons of Saint-Pavin's lyric quoted in the previous section. Yet this narrator looks in the mirror and sees an old *perclus* gazing back who finds walking difficult and so has no hope in performing the vigorous activity that love requires of male protagonists in *galant* verse. Furthermore, the narrator is explicitly excluded from homosocial relations, remarking that if he were to go out, he would go 'seul'. His male companions are absent, presumably either having abandoned him, died, or found themselves in similar disabling situations.

The mournful tone of lost youth permeating the poem supports the interpretation that the narrator has come to hold in contempt the male gender

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[157] Ibid., p. 160.

ideals that require vigorous action in amorous pursuits. He goes on to say that even if he does, somewhat improbably, achieve all this, he doubts if he'd even be able to 'tirer une estocade', failing at both militaristic masculinity and, it is implied, sexual performance. In such a situation, he would have to feign illness or risk emerging from combat under a cloud of shame. The narrator's implied sexual impotence is a further obstacle to his ability to perform homosocial masculinity to an adequate standard. Lines ten to twelve introduce a possible object of the narrator's desire: 'Mais si ce dieu favorable à vos voeux, / Vous y laissait venir aux mains tous deux, / Pourriez-vous bien tirer une estocade ?' The adverbial pronoun *y* is ambiguous, referring either to the abstract 'amour' of line eight or to the 'dieu favorable' himself. Due to this ambiguity, it is unclear whether Saint-Pavin's narrator is relying upon the kindliness of this unnamed god (Cupid, perhaps) to cause someone to fall for a *perclus* or, alternatively, whether that narrator wants to have sex with a god, who stands for his dream man. Although he is unable to perform the impious act that brings the juridical subject of the sodomite into being in the eyes of the law, the narrator clearly considers himself a sexual being who longs for the embrace of another man.

Coming out as Crip, Coming out as Queer

The poem can be read as describing a narrator coming to terms with his disability. This notion of *coming to terms with* one's disability by putting it into words that are frank, devoid of idealism, and lightly humorous can be conceptualised as an instance of coming out. Coming out is a performative

speech act whose purpose is to alter reality – the saying of it makes it so.[158]

What, precisely, is Saint-Pavin's narrator coming out *as*? The poem is unclear on whether his inability to adequately perform homosocial masculinity is down to his status as a *perclus*, his age, his impotence, his queerness, or a layered intersection of all four qualities, plus others he has neither the time nor the inclination to mention. Furthermore, to whom is he coming out? I contend that the poem analysed above depicts a narrator coming out to himself.[159] As indicated by the self-reflective refrain of 'Comme je crois' and the narrator's conceit of addressing himself in the second person as if gazing disapprovingly at his own reflection, the poem depicts a man coming to terms with his status as a *perclus*. This disability precludes him from performing the vigorous activity that love requires of men if they are to live up to the ideals of homosocial masculinity, something which evidently leaves him feeling dejected.

The poem ends on a cliff-hanger, leaving the reader to wonder how the narrator will proceed now he has arrived at this moment of self-recognition. The story continues in a second *rondeau*, which describes the narrator coming out to a lover. As well as sharing a poetic form, this poem appears next to the previous *rondeau* in both known manuscript sources,[160] and, I maintain, is best read as a sequel to that poem:

> Si vous voulez, ô beauté que j'adore,
> Bannir d'ici le chagrin qui dévore
> Un vieux perclus qui ne peut en sortir,

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[158] Deborah A. Chirrey, '"I hereby come out": What sort of speech act is coming out?', *Journal of Sociolinguistics,* 7. 1 (2003), 24-37.

[159] Deborah Chirrey notes that coming out is generally regarded as involving two types of activity: 'there is coming out to oneself and there is coming out to others'. The above poem is an example of the former, while the poem I discuss below is of the latter. Ibid., p. 26.

[160] Ms-5426, p. 734; NAF 1697, fols. 134^r-134^v. The two poems are reversed in NAF 1697 but I agree with Hammond in placing them in the order in which they appear in Ms-5426.

> Venez le voir, hâtez-vous de partir,
> A son secours vos bontés il implore.
> S'il n'est pas fait comme Vardes ou Roqu'laure,
> La bonne humeur sa vieillesse décore
> Vous en pourrez faire votre martyre,
>   Si vous voulez.
> Étant chez lui, la contrainte il abhorre,
> Les jeux, les ris que l'amour fait éclore
> S'y trouveront prêts à vous divertir,
> Et je vous puis assurer, sans mentir,
> Que vous aurez d'autres plaisirs encore,
>   Si vous voulez.[161]

While in the previous *rondeau* the narrator addressed himself, in this poem he addresses his beloved, urging them (the gender is unspecified) to come to his house to 'Bannir d'ici le chagrin qui dévore / Un vieux perclus qui ne peut en sortir'. Once again, the narrator refers to himself as a *perclus*, an embodied condition that has resulted in him becoming morose, isolated, and devoid of male companions. We are reminded of Scarron's complaint of 'Depuis le temps que, perclus de mes membres, / Pour moi Paris est réduit à deux chambres'.[162] The spatial reduction entailed by *perclusion* is reaffirmed by Saint-Pavin's *rondeau.* In addition to the collapse of the homosocial triangle upon the introduction of disability, another running theme of these two poems is constraint, brought about both by the narrator's *perclusion* and the able-bodied ideal of masculinity he consequently cannot live up to. This unattainable ideal is represented here by the Marquis de Vardes and the Marquis de Roquelaure, two seventeenth-century *galant* heartthrobs.[163]

Unlike the previous poem, which envisages shame as the only possible consequence of going into amorous combat, the ending of this verse is not hopeless. Accepting that his disability prevents him from fulfilling the ideal of

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[161] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 160-161.
[162] Scarron (1960), p. 229.
[163] See footnote in Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 160-161.

masculinity demanded by the homosocial paradigm, the narrator instead assumes the passive position usually reserved for women or effeminate men such as the *bardache*, urging his lover to take the active role in courtship and come to his house. Instead of trying to pass as able-bodied and compete with Vardes and Roquelaure in a homosocial dynamic, the narrator offers other pleasures that lie outside this paradigm: 'vous aurez d'autres plaisirs encore / Si vous voulez'. This concluding proposition rejects homosocial masculinity, recognising that an alternative to the *galant* masculine ideal it upholds is not only possible but also desirable. Writing about the erotics of disability, Tobin Siebers comments that some disabled people counter the ableist idea of disability as a barrier to sex by representing disability 'not as a defect that needs to be overcome to have sex but as a complex embodiment that enhances sexual activities and pleasure'.[164] Saint-Pavin does just this in his *rondeau*. While he cannot do what other men do, this does not limit or preclude sexual pleasure because the disabled narrator offers pleasures that conventional masculinity cannot.[165]

When taken as a continuous narrative, as I believe they should be, these *rondeaux* attest to a process of self-actualization in which a disabled narrator comes out as crip and, more implicitly, as queer. In the first *rondeau*, he comes out to himself – as encapsulated by the refrain of 'Comme je crois' – coming to terms with his disability and its effect on his capacity to perform ideals of masculinity. In the second, he comes out to a lover – as encapsulated by the refrain of 'Si vous voulez' – announcing that, though he cannot perform the sort

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[164] Siebers (2008), p. 148.
[165] Montaigne's 'Des boyteux' contains a series of anecdotes and philosophical arguments exploring why disabled people are said to make the best lovers. Saint-Pavin's narrator coyly alludes to this received knowledge in his own unconventional seduction. Montaigne (2007), pp. 277-279.

of masculinity expected of *galant* men in a homosocial erotic triangle, he can offer pleasures that they cannot, reinscribing disability as erotic enhancement as opposed to a barrier to eroticism. This attitude, laid out in the two *rondeaux* analysed above, is summarised in an epigram purportedly addressing the Chevalier de Méré,[166] one of the principal proponents of *galant* masculine ideals:

> Chevalier, ne me raille plus
> Sur tous les plaisirs de la vie,
> J'en goûte encore, quoique perclus,
> Qui pourraient bien te faire envie,
> Mais quand les prends, en un mot,
> Crois-moi, ce n'est pas comme un sot.[167]

In this poem as in the second *rondeau*, Saint-Pavin's chosen self-descriptor is 'perclus', a word that, like its modern analogue 'cripple', carried negative connotations but was reclaimed by the poet as a marker of singularity and nonconformity.[168] Despite what the Chevalier might derisively assume, the narrator's disability is no barrier to pleasure. In fact, he boasts, he is able to attain some pleasures that would make the Chevalier seethe with jealousy, if only he knew what they were. In this inversion of the ableist *galant* model of desire, the disabled narrator rejects the tendency to equate disability with a lack of reason – 'Mais quand je les prends […] / Crois-moi, ce n'est pas comme un sot' – and leaves the reader to conclude that it is the Chevalier, the embodiment of *galant* masculinity, who is the fool here.

Like the more recent efforts to reclaim the word 'crip', Saint-Pavin's choice to self-define as a *perclus* and hold it up as an advantageous trait in the pursuit of new pleasures is an outright rejection of the nondisabled tendency to either

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[166] See footnote in Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 91.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Hammond remarks upon the centrality of this word in Saint-Pavin's poetry. Ibid., p. 19.

pathologize and put disabled bodies out of circulation.[169] These poems also attest to the contiguity of disability and sexuality. The indeterminacy of bodily and sexual difference bound up into each other amounts to what Carrie Sandahl calls 'the act of coming out as a crip queer, the public display of sexualized bodily difference, and the process of bearing witness to past and present injustice'.[170] While not quite a 'public display', it is reasonable to assume that these poems were circulated among friends and copied out by Conrart with the poet's permission.[171] Saint-Pavin's lyrics dealing with crip queer sex amount to an announcement of noncompliant intention – a nailing of colours to the mast – addressed to himself, his beloved, and his readers. Inherent within these performative acts of coming out first to himself and then to others is the narrator's refusal to pass as either straight or able-bodied and try to fit into the homosocial paradigm.[172] Instead, the he modifies that paradigm to accommodate his body and tastes, not the other way around, maintaining that a world in which disability is valued is not only possible but desirable.[173] Most apparent in the second of the two *rondeaux*, the narrator's playful concluding offer of *yet other pleasures* posits disability as a potential enhancement of sexual pleasure,[174] forcing us to reconsider the commonplace assumption that where there is disability, there cannot be sex, and where there is sex, there cannot be disability.[175]

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[169] Sandahl (2003), pp. 35-44; McRuer (2006), pp. 35-42.
[170] Sandahl (2003), p. 28.
[171] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 16, 32.
[172] Sandahl (2003), p. 36.
[173] Kafer (2013), pp. 2-4.
[174] Tobin Siebers, 'A Sexual Culture for Disabled People', in *Sex and Disability,* ed. by Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow (London: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 36-53 (p. 47).
[175] McRuer and Mollow (2012), pp. 23-24.

To circle back to Sedgwick's classic homosocial paradigm, Saint-Pavin's poem to Caliste exemplified how male queerness could in fact lead to an intensification of the misogyny inherent in the erotic triangle, further disabling women under patriarchy as physically repulsive. Lauvergne and Rohan's lyrics show female queerness to be utterly incompatible with homosocial relations, which are predicated on the exchange of women between men as property. As a result, these women writing love poems to women substantially modify the existing paradigm to allow for a homoerotic reading, or lament its incompatibility with their closeted desire. As part of this modification, they adapt tropes with specific relevance to disability – a blind Cupid, passion as madness, and non-verbal communication – to articulate that love. Finally, Saint-Pavin's poems focusing on disability demonstrate how disabled men who love men are excluded from homosocial relations, though more as a result of their disability than their queerness. In their verses that, by necessity, operate outside the classic homosocial paradigm, all three of these poets argue that desiring the unconventional can lead to an expansion of the range of erotic possibilities.

5. A PORTRAIT OF A POSTHUMAN

(Certain) bodies don't end at the skin. – Alison Kafer[1]

How does disability cause us to re-evaluate what it means to be human? In their own way, many of the poems discussed so far have tackled this question, some more directly than others. Chapter One examined how metaphors of disability are invoked in love poetry to deal with the unfamiliar metaphysical changes experienced by lovers at the height of their passion and to express a deep-seated fear of losing control over one's body. Chapter Two showed how parodies of that same love poetry blended human, animal, and earth to create grotesques that existed outside *galant* canons of aesthetics, beings that often embodied the same disabilities invoked through metaphor in love poetry. Chapter Three demonstrated how the physical space of the cabaret contributed to the formation, transformation, and deformation of grotesques, while the consumption of cabaret wine was held to be both cause of and cure for disabilities. Finally, Chapter Four investigated the various ways in which disabled bodies were inseparably bound up with queerness, something which Saint-Pavin claims is a positive combination that expands the range of sexual pleasures available to humans. In what follows, I depart from the topic of sexual pleasure to explore how literary self-portraits by Saint-Pavin and Scarron present their disabilities as alterations or expansions of the human state, productive in some ways and painful in others.

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[1] Kafer (2013), p. 124.

The Literary Portrait

Mondains were fascinated by the question of whether an individual's fundamental nature could be captured in writing. This fascination gave rise to the mid-seventeenth-century vogue of the literary portrait, documented by Jacqueline Plantié in her 2013 book, *La Mode du portrait littéraire en France, 1641-1681*. The literary portrait was derided by some of the most celebrated seventeenth-century authors, Boileau and Molière among them,[2] as a vacuous genre, emblematic of the *mondain* propensity for passing fads and self-absorption.[3] Plantié admits that there is some truth to this, questioning her own decision to 'consacrer quelques années de recherches […] à des oeuvrettes galantes, fort souvent insipides, écrites assez fréquemment par d'obscurs écrivains', disparaged by both their contemporaries and modern scholars as 'plagiaires prétentieux'.[4] While the *blason* and *contreblason* fragmented the body, the literary portrait attempted to represent the person as a whole – both body and character. Literary portraits usually aimed to achieve a close resemblance to their models, but there was room for embellishment or disfigurement, depending on the portraitist's agenda.[5] Even more than other *mondain* genres, literary portraits are underpinned by physiognomical theory. According to seventeenth-century engraver Roger de Piles, a good portraitist needed to 'exprimer le veritable temperament des personnes que l'on represente, et à faire voir leur Phisionomie'.[6] The theory goes that, in order to

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[2] Plantié (2016), p. 16.
[3] Ibid., pp. 13-17.
[4] Ibid., p. 14.
[5] Ibid., p. 22.
[6] Ibid., p. 145.

faithfully represent a person's inner character, the artist (or author) needs to accurately, and without flattery, reproduce their physiognomy, which is indicative of the contents of their soul. In portraiture as with physiognomy, writes Plaintié, 'le postulat essential est que le visible révèle l'invisible'.[7]

Not all portraitists aimed for faithful representations, preferring for various reasons to either flatter or denigrate their subject. They did so with reference to the same physiognomical ideal of *médiocrité*, which maintained that the essential characteristic of both inner and outer beauty was 'la proportion des traits'.[8] Consequently, in a flattering portrait, incongruences were smoothed out and any disproportion brought in line with the physiognomical ideal. Following these methods, flattering portraits produced facsimiles of Classical beauty in which 'tous les hommes sont des Catons, ou des Cesars pour le moins, et les femmes des Lucreces, ou des Octavies', commented the anonymous author of a portrait of Mme de la Calprenède.[9] If a portraitist wanted to denigrate their subject, however, minor disproportion was exaggerated to inhuman lengths, often invoking disability and the non-human to further exaggerate that disproportion.[10] Similar to the *contreblason*, this satirical take on the literary portrait that aimed to exaggerate the subject's flaws was considered a kind of counter-genre, known as the *portrait chargé*.[11] For example, an anonymous Dauphinois author portrayed their aunt in the following terms: 'Pour commencer sa taille est sans pareille, car elle est déliée comme le tonneau de vin doux que vous regrettez tant ; sa démarche n'est pas lubrique, mais chancelante comme

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[7] Ibid., p. 147.
[8] Ibid., p. 173.
[9] Quoted by ibid., p. 16.
[10] Ibid., pp. 371-372.
[11] Crapo (2020), p. 174.

une oie boiteuse'.[12] The literary portrait reached the height of its fashion in 1659 with the publication of *Divers portraits* and the *Recueil des portraits et éloges*, two collections of *mondain* literary portraits.[13] The *Recueil Conrart* also contains plentiful examples of the genre, in verse and in prose.

These were the generic conventions alongside which Saint-Pavin and Scarron were working when they came to write their own self-portraits as a way of coming to terms with their disabilities. The resulting pieces are particularly innovative takes on the satirical *portrait chargé* because, unlike much seventeenth-century satirical verse, they do not seek to exact symbolic punishment on their subjects for corrupting moral order.[14] Instead, Saint-Pavin and Scarron seize control over the narrative surrounding their disabilities by presenting a curated self-image to others in a way that rejects the ableist compulsion to minimise physical difference. In so doing, they construct poetic personae that prize rather than punish physical difference as enabling them to perform linguistic feats, tell jokes, self-mythologise, and captivate readers in ways that nondisabled poets cannot. In their self-portraits, both poets respond directly to the common belief that disability signified an unnatural lack of humanity and that disabled people were consequently incomplete humans. This cliché has come to the fore in several of the primary sources analysed previously, and underpins both Porta and Castiglione's characterisation of disability as a *défaut* or *difetto* in Nature. Saint-Pavin and Scarron turn this logic on its head and instead presenting themselves as something more than – or

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[12] Humbert de Terrebasse, *Poésies dauphinoises du XVIIe siècle* (Lyon: Brun, 1896), p. 36.
[13] Plantié (2016), p. 185.
[14] Seifert (2009), p. 173.

other than – human, and this characteristic is precisely what makes them so appealing as poets.

Two prominent philosophical perspectives for rethinking the human that have been conversant with disability studies are those of transhumanism and posthumanism. This chapter's first objective is to assess the usefulness of transhumanism and posthumanism as conceptual tools with which to read disability in seventeenth-century French texts. Following this, the self-portraits I analyse in this chapter allow me to evaluate what we stand to gain and lose by adopting each of these philosophical standpoints in readings of disability in these self-portraits, and how Saint-Pavin and Scarron anticipate both transhumanism and posthumanism in their work. Before tackling these primary texts, however, I will clarify exactly what is meant by transhumanism and posthumanism, and consider how each might be adapted for use in a seventeenth-century context. Given that these two philosophies are frequently conflated by those writing within and about these fields, I will introduce each one separately, explain its relevance to disability, and then suggest which elements arising from this discussion might be useful for my own work on seventeenth-century lyric verse through poetic analysis of these self-portraits.

Early Modern Transhumanism

The idea of being or becoming something more than human can be related to the philosophy of transhumanism. Modern transhumanism cannot, however, be applied uncritically to seventeenth-century self-portraits by Saint-Pavin and Scarron, not least because the most influential iteration of transhumanism takes an extremely negative view of disabled people, and as

such runs contrary to the self-advocacy of these two disabled poets. The transhumanist position advocates the enhancement of the human body through the application of technology and reason, maintaining that enhancement should be available to all who want it. Leading advocates of transhumanism Nick Bostrom and Max More put forward 'continued life and health' and 'exceeding the limitations that define the less desirable aspects of the "human condition" [such as] disease, aging, and inevitable death' as key motivations behind this enhancement.[15] The imagined and hoped-for end product of transhuman enhancement is commonly referred to as a 'posthuman' – an enhanced human who no longer suffers from these 'less desirable aspects'.[16]

Melinda Hall has carried out the most detailed critique of transhumanism from a Disability Studies perspective. In *The Bioethics of Enhancement* (2018), she argues that, though transhumanists maintain that all human bodies are seen as lacking next to the fully enhanced ideal of the posthuman, they certainly do imply that some bodies are more lacking than others:

First, [transhumanism] plays upon fears of disablement [because] the risk of refusing transhumanist aims is the risk of disablement. This makes a disabled body the symbol of a feared outcome and a stand-in for death. Instead of seeing disability as a complex interrelationship between the body, social structures, and social norms, disability becomes the outcome of a too-complacent posture toward death and "technophobia." Second, the transhumanist point of view endorses a hierarchy of value and well-being among lives on the basis of capabilities; that is, *the greater the number of capabilities*, the larger the opportunity range, the better the life.[17]

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[15] Nick Bostrom, 'Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up', in *The Transhumanist Reader,* ed. by Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 28-53 (p. 35); Max More, 'The Philosophy of Transhumanism', in *The Transhumanist Reader,* ed. by Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 3-17 (p. 4).

[16] This transhumanist use of the word 'posthuman' is the root of much confusion between transhumanism and posthumanism.

[17] Melinda G. Hall, *The Bioethics of Enhancement: Transhumanism, Disability, and Biopolitics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), pp. 23-24.

In this way, disability is used as an implicit threat by transhumanists and a means of coercing people into 'choosing' enhancement. As Hall puts it, for transhumanists, 'to rid the world of disability *is* to enhance the human being – enhancement seems to require the rejection of disability and embodiment as risk and limitation'.[18] Prominent transhumanist philosopher Julian Savulescu has argued in favour of eugenics, maintaining that parents, if given the choice, 'have a moral obligation to strive to have disability-free children'.[19] Transhumanism, at least in this iteration, acts in service of compulsory able-bodiedness, which 'functions by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice'.[20]

Savulescu's moralising argument in favour of eugenics is reminiscent of Porta's advice that readers avoid associating with disabled people, whose deviant bodies were deemed morally corrupt and morally corrupting by his physiognomical theories.[21] In their figuring of an ideal human body, both eugenics and physiognomy agree that disability is something to be avoided for moral reasons and for the preservation of social order.[22] Furthermore, this thesis's introduction noted how Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* used imagery of disability as a warning of what a man might become if he failed to adequately

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[18] Ibid., p. 23.

[19] Julian Savulescu, 'Procreative Beneficience: Reasons to Not Have Disabled Children', in *The Sorting Society: The Ethics of Genetic Screening and Therapy,* ed. by Loane Skene and Janna Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 51-68 (p. 51). A similar view expressed more recently in a 2014 TED Ideas article: Julian Savulescu, 'As a species, we have a moral obligation to enhance ourselves', TED Ideas, (2014) <https://ideas.ted.com/the-ethics-of-genetically-enhanced-monkey-slaves/> [accessed 30/01/2020] For a review of eugenicist positions within transhumanism, see Robert Sparrow, 'A Not-So-New Eugenics: Harris and Savulescu on Human Enhancement', *Asian Bioethics Review,* 2. 4 (2010), 288-307.

[20] McRuer (2013), p. 371.

[21] In an article examining the close relationship between the two disciplines, Lucy Hartley argues that 'the conventions of physiognomy, with the emphasis on natural types and unnatural deviations, clearly inform and inflect the development of Francis Galton's theory of eugenics'. Hartley (2006), p. 109.

[22] Ibid., pp. 109-111, 117.

perform the ideals of the courtier, much like how disability is to be minimised or, ideally, eradicated by transhuman enhancement. Using the language of transhumanism, Castiglione's ideal courtier could be compared to a posthuman – the end-product of the transhuman journey – while *sprezzatura* is a behavioural enhancement that allows courtiers to approximate that ideal by correcting their natural defects. Similar to Porta and Castiglione, one key goal of transhumanism in eugenicist manifestations such as Savulescu's is one of assimilation and eradication of physical difference, a goal with troubling implications for disabled people. These expressions of transhumanism are on the extreme end of a spectrum of views but, as Hall notes, they have proven to be the most influential in both academic and non-academic spheres and have come to stand for the concept of transhumanism in its entirety.[23] Given these shortcomings, it merits consideration whether certain aspects of transhumanism can be adapted for use within early modern disability studies in a way that does not follow the medical model of disability in positioning disabled people as a problem that must be overcome.

Forgetting the Cyborg?

The most widespread and recognisable form of transhumanist thought in literary studies is the figure of the cyborg. In 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985), Donna Haraway defines the cyborg as 'a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'.[24] For Haraway, it is a figure of feminist liberation that 'suggest[s] a way out of the maze of dualisms in

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[23] Hall (2018), p. xiii.
[24] Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto', in *The Cybercultures Reader,* ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 291-324 (p. 291).

which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves',[25] not least the

sharp distinctions habitually made in philosophical thought between man and

woman, natural and artificial, and self and other. Haraway argues that these

binary categories are not fundamental truths but mechanisms of domination,

explaining that

> there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not
> even such a state as "being" female, itself a highly complex category
> constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices.
> Gender, race or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the
> terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy,
> colonialism and capitalism. […] To be feminised means to be made extremely
> vulnerable.[26]

Instead of trying to achieve political change by coming together under the

disparate categories defined by the oppressors, Haraway recommends a cyborg

feminist approach, acknowledging that 'by the late twentieth century, our time,

a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorised and fabricate hybrids of machine

and organism. In short, we are all cyborgs'.[27] Although various critics have made

similar arguments to this about the category of disability, emphasising that there

is nothing about being disabled that naturally binds people who hold that identity

position,[28] there are few disability studies pieces that deal with the cyborg in

depth.[29] Likewise, disability occupies surprisingly little space in Haraway's

thought, and in cyborg theory more generally.[30] Indeed, its only mention in the

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[25] Ibid., p. 316.
[26] Ibid., p. 295.
[27] Ibid., p. 292.
[28] Kafer (2013), p. 105.
[29] One notable exception to this is Donna Reeve, 'Cyborgs, Cripples and *i*Crip: Reflections on the contribution of Haraway to disability studies', in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions,* ed. by Bill Hughes and Lennard J. Davis Dan Goodley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 91-111.
[30] For assessments of Haraway's contribution to Disability Studies, see Reeve (2012); Kafer (2013), pp. 11-12; Siebers (2008), p. 63; David T. and Sharon L. Snyder Mitchell, 'Introduction: Disability Studies and the Double Bind of Representation', in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability,* ed. by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 1-31 (pp. 28-29).

manifesto itself comes in the aside that 'perhaps paraplegics and other severely handicapped people can (and sometimes do) have the most intense experiences of complex hybridization with other communication devices'.[31] Haraway does not expand on this statement and it is the sum total of her commentary on disability.

Reacting to this superficial engagement with disability by Haraway and other cyborg theorists, Siebers argues that Haraway's manifesto romanticises cyborgs in a way that runs contrary to the lived experiences of many disabled people with chronic pain. 'I know the truth about the myth of the cyborg', he continues,

about how nondisabled people try to represent disability as a marvelous advantage, because I am a cyborg myself. Physical pain is highly unpredictable and raw as reality. It pits the mind against the body in ways that make the opposition between thought and ideology in most current body theory seem trivial. It offers few resources for resisting ideological constructions of masculinity and femininity, the erotic monopoly of the genitals, the violence of ego, or the power of capital. Pain is not a friend to humanity. It is not a secret resource for political change. It is not a well of delight for the individual. Theories that encourage these interpretations are not only unrealistic about pain; they contribute to the ideology of ability, marginalizing people with disabilities and making their stories of suffering and victimization both politically impotent and difficult to believe.[32]

In his criticism of Haraway, Siebers argues that one cannot simply flip disability to repurpose it as ability, and then state that disabled people are cyborgs par excellence, achieving a level of cyborged existence that nondisabled people have yet to reach – or perhaps never will.[33] Not only does this do nothing to undermine the disabled/able-bodied binary, but it ignores the fact that chronic pain should not (and cannot) be idealised, sexed up, or wished away by critical theorists.

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[31] Haraway (2000), pp. 313-314.
[32] Siebers (2008), p. 64.
[33] Kafer also makes this point. Kafer (2013), p. 118.

Taking on board Siebers's criticisms of the idealism and lack of attention paid to disability in 'A Cyborg Manifesto', Kafer recommends that theorists stop mythologising the figure of the cyborg, querying, too, whether this was even Haraway's intention, and start regarding it with a fair degree of suspicion.[34] Instead of a futuristic superhero (or supercrip), Kafer's cyborg is rather more fallible, with a 'complex and ambivalent relationship with technology' that can be a source of both relief and pain.[35] Following Siebers, she emphasises its complicity in ableism,[36] concluding that 'the cyborg is not innocent. Our metaphors, our tropes, our analogies: all have histories, all have consequences'.[37] The cyborg is no exception to this, and cannot be allowed to be thought of as an emancipatory figure a priori, simply by virtue of being a cyborg.[38]

Disability-Positive Transhumanism

Suspicious of the cyborg, we might wonder what use (if any) it might be in a seventeenth-century context. The essential lessons to be drawn from cyborg theory and Disability Studies engagements with it is that our interactions with and use of technology, inanimate objects, and the built environment change our selfhood in often almost imperceptible ways, for better and for worse. Nobody is exempt from this, though disabled people are likely to be more aware of it and disproportionately disadvantaged by it than nondisabled people. The context of

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[34] Ibid., p. 128.
[35] Ibid., p. 119.
[36] For example, 'the very same technology is alternately described as "assistive" or "time-saving" depending on whether a disabled or nondisabled person is using it'. Also, 'the ability to become cyborg is too often economically determined'. Ibid., pp. 118, 107.
[37] Ibid., p. 128.
[38] Ibid., p. 119.

Haraway's original feminist intervention was late capitalism in 1985, so what shape might a premodern cyborg or premodern transhumanism take?

This question is tackled by Julie Singer, whose work I build upon in my readings of literary self-portraits later in this chapter. She considers whether disability itself is ever portrayed as enhancement rather than a limitation in premodern writing about the body. For her work on late-medieval literature about disability, Singer broadens the purview of transhumanism to uncouple it from its association with modern technology:

The term "transhuman" refers in this [late medieval] context not just to the alteration of the human condition through technological intervention [...], but in a broader sense, to the addition of *something* to the body in order to make it different, to enhance its capacities.[39]

Furthermore, the late medieval texts she reads alongside transhuman theory situate disability not as a defect that must be solved, but as 'an enhancement, a constructive alteration of the human state'.[40] This late medieval transhuman identified by Singer skirts close to the attitude criticised by Siebers that disregards chronic pain in its mission 'to represent disability as a marvelous advantage',[41] trading the caricature of the disabled subhuman for the caricature of the disabled superhuman. Singer is cognisant of this shortcoming of medieval transhuman narratives, comparing them to the modern supercrip narrative, in which a disabled person exhibits superhuman strength, resilience, or determination to overcome their disability.[42]

Singer's primary texts display what could be termed disability-positive transhumanism – a form of transhumanism that positions disability as a constructive alteration of the human, something that, as Siebers and Kafer

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[39] Julie Singer, 'Toward a Transhuman Model of Medieval Disability', *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies,* 1. 1/2 (2010), 173-179 (p. 175).
[40] Ibid., p. 173.
[41] Siebers (2008), p. 64.
[42] Singer (2010), 176.

emphasise, is itself a highly idealised perspective. Singer reads late medieval

dits, an experimental genre featuring first person narrators who are often

disabled or otherwise singled out by their bodily difference. The resulting picture

is one of nonstandard text blended with nonstandard body to create a

transhuman hybrid between human and text, as narrators try to express their

embodied situation in writing:

> the first-person narrators of these fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century French texts tend to express their subjective alterity through a *mélange* of narrative verse, prose and lyric, creating a composite textual body so unlike the shorter thirteenth-century verse *dit* as to seem a different species altogether.[43]

Singer stresses that the resulting *mélange* is not a seamless combination of

body and text, but a rough cobbling together to produce an inexact hybrid. She

likens this inexact hybrid to a premodern cyborg, stripped of its connotations

with modern technology and late capitalism but still a messy, heterogenous

creature created by the blending of human and non-human elements – in this

case, the written word and the printed page.

Singer terms this premodern cyborg resulting from the blending of human

and text a 'book-body', a concept that is mentioned only once in her article but

will underpin key aspects of my analysis of Saint-Pavin and Scarron's self-

portraits.[44] Expanding this line of thought, I would liken these human-plus-text

creatures to grotesques, a more satisfactory point of reference than the cyborg

in a seventeenth-century context, given the grotesque body's premodern origins

and rediscovery in the early Renaissance. Singer's theorisation of the premodern

transhuman suggests that, in a premodern, pre-technological world, the

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[43] Singer (2010), p. 174.
[44] Ibid., p. 178.

grotesque body and the cyborg have more in common than we might think.[45]

They both exist in a constant state of becoming, being human in some respects but forever receiving non-human additions and enhancements in a haphazard, often involuntary fashion. They are both 'ambiguous beings, hybrid creatures, subjects and objects at the same time, inseparable from the different scenarios in which [they] act'.[46] As Sara Cohen Shabot observes, the grotesque's grounding in the unruly material body prevents it from becoming sexed up or disembodied, as the cyborg often is in popular culture.[47] The book-body as a point of convergence between modern cyborgs and premodern grotesques will be particularly useful when reading self-portraits by these two seventeenth-century poets whose bodies do not fall in line with their century's bodily regimes. Saint-Pavin and Scarron maintain that the literary text is part and parcel of their non-standard embodiment as a constructive alteration of the human state. At the same time, disability enhances the literary corpus, enabling both authors to become better poets than they otherwise would have been.

Early Modern Posthumanism

One way of further interrogating a transhumanist understanding of disability is by querying what it takes for granted: the existence of an identifiable human subject. In so doing, we pass from transhumanism to posthumanism. These two similar-sounding philosophical disciplines are in many ways polar opposites when it comes to their understanding of the human, and,

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[45] Sara Cohen Shabot, 'Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs', *Journal of Gender Studies,* 15. 3 (2006), 223-235.
[46] Ibid., p. 228.
[47] Ibid., pp. 225-227.

consequently, have very different approaches to disability. Posthumanism, sometimes referred to as critical posthumanism to distance itself from other uses of 'posthuman', takes issue with the human as a definable category of identity and subsequently its usefulness as a philosophical tenet. Rosi Braidotti explains this position in the following terms:

Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history.[48]

Braidotti suggests that the category of the human is precarious and in a constant state of change, since it is defined with reference to norms, ideals and social conventions that are themselves, as I have demonstrated, subject to change with time. Accordingly, Braidotti writes, 'the human is a normative convention',[49] meaning that its boundaries are set by transient social norms and only certain people are allowed access to this category of the human based on their compliance with said norms.

Dehumanising language is frequently deployed to depict disabled people as less than human or incomplete humans, a view similar to the transhumanist assessment of disability as a problem that must be overcome or eradicated via enhancement and eugenics. This dehumanising language has been criticised by posthumanist thinkers as contributing to the marginalisation of disabled people within society. Pramod Nayar writes that 'impairment and disability become markers of difference with the affected individuals always the Other to "normal" human beings. They are unfinished and "disabled" persons'.[50] Nayar blames this state of affairs on the construction of the human as a category and its

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[48] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 1.
[49] Ibid., p. 26.
[50] Pramod Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2014), p. 100.

application to bodies: '[posthumanism] proposes that the very idea of the universal human (or Human) is constructed through a process of exclusion whereby some of these ethnic and religious groups or races are categorized as less-than-human'.[51] For Nayar, it follows that the philosophical discipline of humanism (and thus transhumanism as an enhancement of humanism) is inherently discriminatory against disabled people due to its presupposition that a 'universal' human exists and, consequently, how individuals such as disabled people who deviate from this imagined universal human are situated as less-than-human.[52] To summarise the difference between the two broad-brushstrokes philosophical perspectives, transhumanism believes that what we consider human exists, is faulty, and therefore can and *should* be improved, whereas posthumanism believes that what we consider human does not exist and we need to deal with that in order to fight various social injustices, discrimination against disabled people being one key example.[53] When viewed in the broadest of terms, then, posthumanism's objective aligns closely with one of the aims of Critical Disability Studies: a re-evaluation of the cultural category of the human, placing emphasis on heterogeneity with regards to bodies and minds. In this way, the various theoretical approaches to disability I employ in this thesis already contribute to a broadly posthumanist stance by calling into question the presupposed boundaries of the human and undercutting the resultant binary of human/non-human.

While posthumanism seems more compatible with disability studies than transhumanism, it is problematic in the way it deals with the early modern period from which my primary texts are drawn, particularly in its portrayal of

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[51] Ibid., p. 11.
[52] Ibid., pp. 11, 102.
[53] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

humanism. These problematic dealings are laid out in Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano's introduction to *Renaissance Posthumanism* (2016) and expanded upon in Kenneth Gouwens's chapter 'What Posthumanism Isn't' in the same volume. I will not repeat their findings in detail. Suffice to say that a large part of posthumanist thought is a reaction against a very specific kind of humanism that originated in the 1933 *Humanist Manifesto* and was then backdated to come to stand for all of humanism from the Renaissance to the present day,[54] usually supported with brief references to da Vinci. Campana and Maisano identify a 'straw Vitruvian Man' in posthumanist writing about Renaissance humanism,[55] before demonstrating how several key stands of Renaissance humanist thought were in fact far more multifaceted with regards to the human than its posthumanist opponents would have us believe. To give one example that was published after Campana and Maisano's collection but nonetheless demonstrates their point, a 2021 book by Dan Goodley on disability and the posthuman asserts that

humanism is a philosophy that was born out of a period of human history that we now understand as the enlightenment. The ideas of enlightenment scholars such as the seventeenth-century philosopher Rene [sic] Descartes (the chap who coined the phrase 'I think therefore I am') celebrated human subjectivity as fundamentally different from the world of natural matter and bodies. […] Western culture soaked up and reproduced this distinction between the rational psyche of the human body and the wild natural body: a distinction sometimes termed the mind – body dualism. Humanism was precisely this: a centring of the human mind.[56]

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[54] Kenneth Gouwens, 'What Posthumanism Isn't: On Humanism and Human Exceptionalism in the Renaissance', in *Renaissance Posthumanism,* ed. by Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 37-63 (p. 44).

[55] Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano, 'Introduction: Renaissance Posthumanism', in *Renaissance Posthumanism,* ed. by Joseph Campana and Scott Maisano (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 1-36 (p. 3).

[56] Dan Goodley, *Disability and Other Human Questions* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2021), pp. 31-32.

While Descartes is not usually considered an Enlightenment scholar, it is uncontroversial to suggest, as Goodley does, that Cartesian dualism was one of the key seventeenth-century building blocks of the eighteenth-century philosophical movement that became retrospectively known as the Enlightenment. This passage exemplifies, however, the tendency among posthumanist scholars to reduce the hugely diverse and contradictory strands of premodern humanism to one or two thinkers and a unified ontological stance towards the human, often represented by a slogan ('I think therefore I am') or, as in the previous example, an icon (the Vitruvian Man). Humanism: *faute à* Descartes or *faute à* da Vinci.

If posthumanism is going to engage with premodern material, then it ought to do so with the appropriate nuance and attention to detail, but this is frequently not the case. The rest of this section will work towards remedying that situation, a necessary intermediate step towards drawing upon posthumanist thought in readings of seventeenth-century material. Building on Campana and Maisano's rebuttal of cursory posthumanist readings of Renaissance texts, we might wonder whether Renaissance humanism paradoxically bore a closer resemblance to what we now recognise as posthumanism than it did to the hyper-rationalist man-as-bedrock caricature of humanism put forward by posthumanist scholars as their foil. A study of disability in the context of premodern humanist thought may go some way towards answering this question. It is telling that several authors frequently referred to as humanists also feature prominently in writing on the grotesque, an aesthetic which, as Chapter Two demonstrated, embraces the non-human, the not-quite-human, and the inexact hybrid, thus roughly aligning itself with a posthumanist world view. I will now briefly focus on two thinkers with particular

relevance to the topic of posthumanism and early modern disability: da Vinci and

Montaigne. They both also feature prominently among the thinkers highlighted

by Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon as essential to understanding the idea of

disability in the Renaissance.[57]

Da Vinci's (Post)Humanism

Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is quickly established in Braidotti's *The*

Posthuman as an avatar for exactly the kind of humanism that posthumanists

wish to leave behind:

The Vitruvian ideal of Man as the standard of both perfection and perfectibility
was literally pulled down from his pedestal and deconstructed. This humanistic
ideal constituted, in fact, the core of a liberal individualistic view of the subject,
which defined perfectibility in terms of autonomy and self-determination. It
turned out that this Man, far from being the canon of perfect proportions,
spelling out a universalistic ideal that by now had reached the status of a natural
law, was in fact a historical construct and as such contingent as to values and
locations.[58]

It is not my intention to argue against Braidotti's overall thesis that imaginary

ideals of the human have, historically, been called upon to motivate and justify

countless acts of discrimination and genocide, but to demonstrate how the

Vitruvian Man is not representative of da Vinci's thought regarding the human,

let alone that of the entire Renaissance.[59] Braidotti elides the 'Vitruvian ideal'

into the 'humanistic ideal' and it comes to stand for a decontextualized,

transhistorical Humanism against which she can pitch her posthumanist project:

My anti-humanism leads me to object to the unitary subject of Humanism,
including its socialist variables, and to replace it with a more complex and

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[57] Haydon (2020), pp. 1-3, 11-15.
[58] Braidotti (2013), pp. 23-24.
[59] Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon also suggest that Leonardo's legacy with regards to
Renaissance ideas of 'the human' is not as clear-cut as Braidotti makes out. Haydon
(2020), pp. 1-3.

relational subject framed by embodiment, sexuality, affectivity, empathy and desire as core qualities.[60]

In establishing this binary of 'Humanism' (symbolised by the Vitruvian Man) against 'anti-humanism', Braidotti does da Vinci a disservice. In this case, the problem is part of the solution, because many of the tenets of posthumanism as delineated by Braidotti are very much present in Leonardo's thought regarding the human.

Da Vinci was, as art historians Martin Clayton, Sandra Cheng, Daniel Arasse, and Bruna Filippi have noted, fascinated with human physical variability.[61] He is considered one of the precursors of the caricature as an artistic genre and a major contributor to the popularity of the grotesque aesthetic, having drawn many grotesques himself.[62] Unlike caricatures, which are produced primarily for the purpose of satirical entertainment, Leonardo's pre-caricatural sketches of non-normative subjects are, above all, aesthetic studies. They demonstrate a desire on the part of the artist to explore a far broader spectrum of human variability than that suggested by the Vitruvian Man, along with the representational challenges this spectrum presents. In her analysis of da Vinci's grotesques, Filippi interprets them as exploratory experiments that aim to test the limits of human proportion:

Léonard cherchait à cerner les moyens par lesquels obtenir une sorte de déformation cohérente des traits, qui lui permettrait de déformer un visage sans pourtant modifier sa ressemblance. […] Cependant, ses travaux

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[60] Braidotti (2013), pp. 23, 26.
[61] Martin Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci: the Divine and the Grotesque* (London: Royal Collection, 2002), pp. 13, 19. Cheng (2012), pp. 216-217. Daniel Arasse, 'La chair, la grace, le sublime', in *Histoire du corps : 1. De la Renaissance aux Lumières,* ed. by Georges Vigarello (Paris: Seuil, 2005), pp. 431-500 (p. 444). Bruna Filippi, 'Le corps blason, ou l'émergence des secrets de l'âme', in *Corps et Interprétation (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles),* ed. by Clotilde Thouret and Lise Wajeman (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 207-223 (pp. 217-218).
[62] For the emergence of the caricature as an artistic genre, see Cheng (2012). For da Vinci and caricature, see Arasse (2005), p. 444. For da Vinci and the grotesque, see Clayton (2002), pp. 73-99.

physiognomoniques cherchent la séduction de la laideur en opérant un renversement grotesque des canons de la beauté : on est encore dans le monde à l'envers du carnaval médiéval, dans l'inversion délibérée des modèles auliques.[63]

Filippi's analysis allows us to carry out a necessary nuancing of the ironically rather caricatured image of da Vinci's understanding of the human put forward by Braidotti and other posthumanists. Leonardo did indeed produce studies of what we might term the canonical human (the Vitruvian Man, for one) but he was just as intrigued by what happened if those canons of beauty and proportion were suspended or inverted, as occurs in the medieval carnival's celebration of the grotesque. When considered alongside his grotesque studies, da Vinci's Vitruvian Man fits into a broader aesthetic project whose aim is not to fix or narrow the parameters of what is considered human, but precisely the opposite – to test them, to push them to their limits, and to move beyond a singular, uniform image of the human.

There is a distinction to be made between da Vinci's grotesques and the posthumanist position, namely that Leonardo was concerned with testing the limits of the category we call human, not with discarding it altogether. Nevertheless, his thought did allow for a large scope for variation *within* what was considered human, and he certainly displayed a desire to explore and experiment with that scope. For example, one sheet of profile studies for *The Madonna and Child with the Infant Baptist* displays a spectrum of human faces ranging from the divine to the grotesque (Fig. 9). Clayton observes that

it would be possible to rearrange the profiles on this sheet into a gradually evolving sequence, from the ideally beautiful to the ideally ugly – from the divine to the grotesque – and this locus was to be the basis of all of Leonardo's investigations into the form of the face.[64]

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[63] Filippi (2012), p. 217.
[64] Clayton (2002), p. 19.

'Investigations' is the key word here: da Vinci's sketches on human proportion, up to and including the Vitruvian Man, were experimental studies and should not be taken as representative of any overarching bodily theory.[65] In any case,

Fig. 9

Clayton notes that the sketches themselves are 'too heterogeneous' to attempt to unify them into a coherent Leonardesque model of the human body.[66] This heterogeneity is absent from most posthumanist discussions of da Vinci, which tend to present the Vitruvian Man as the totality of his input into human proportion and allows it to stand for Renaissance humanism as a whole. In fact, Leonardo was not at all concerned with finding or fixing a proportional norm,[67] rather he experimented with existing norms and ideals of beauty and ugliness, of which the Vitruvian Man is just one example, exaggerating them, inverting them and distorting them as part of an ongoing investigation into the aesthetic potential of the human body.

Montaigne's (Post)Humanism

A second early modern thinker who muddies the distinction between Renaissance humanism and posthumanism is Montaigne, and, like da Vinci, he does so with reference to the grotesque. Montaigne is not often brought up in posthumanist discussions of Renaissance humanism, perhaps because he clearly does not fit the simplistic image of humanism they wish to critique. Yet he is a writer of particular importance in such discussions, especially for the seventeenth century. His situation as one of the 'great French humanists', 'the heir to the tradition of Renaissance humanism', and a proponent of 'late humanism' suggest that he is located at the apogee of Renaissance humanism, however we choose to characterise it.[68]

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[66] Ibid., p. 13.
[67] Arasse (2005), p. 441.
[68] Tzvetan Todorov, *Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 139. George M. Logan, 'The Relation of Montaigne

In Montaigne's *Essais* we find an archetypal example of an early modern literary grotesque.[69] On a formal level the text is an inelegant hybrid – extra-canonical for its time period and overflowing with irregularity, the *Essais* contain untranslated Latin and Greek, are devoid of framing materials and, in one copy, are supplemented by marginal notes.[70] They are envisaged as 'crotesques' by their author when he writes in 'De l'amitié' that inspiration struck when observing a painting:

Considérant la conduite de la besongne d'un peintre que j'ay, il m'a pris envie de l'ensuivre. Il choisit le plus bel endroit et milieu de chaque paroy, pour y loger un tableau élabouré de toute sa suffisance ; et le vuide tout autour, il le remplit de crotesques : qui sont peintures fantasques, n'ayant grace qu'en la varieté et estrangeté. Que sont-ce icy aussi, à la verité, que crotesques et corps monstrueux, rappiecez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayants ordre, suite, ny proportion que fortuite ?[71]

Montaigne makes the transition, as I did in Chapter Two, between grotesque art and grotesque writing. The latter, he explains, is mimetic of the former, but only in its desire for chaotic heterogeneity. Encouraged by art that achieves grace through variety and strangeness, Montaigne undertook to write literature that is empty space populated by grotesques that blend into one another while remaining devoid of any unifying premise. In this sense, his grotesques resemble da Vinci's studies of proportion, since the *Essais* are experimental in nature and should not be taken as indicative of any coherent philosophical approach to the human.

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to Renaissance Humanism', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 36. 4 (1975), 613-632 (pp. 620-621). Warren Boutcher, 'Vernacular humanism in the sixteenth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism,* ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 189-202 (p. 196).

[69] John O'Brien, 'Montaigne and antiquity: fancies and grotesques', in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne,* ed. by Ullrich Langer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 53-73 (p. 56).

[70] Kathleen Perry Long, 'Montaigne on Monsters and Monstrosity', in *The Oxford Handbook of Montaigne,* ed. by Phillippe Desan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 715-731 (p. 723).

[71] Montaigne (2007), p. 189.

Montaigne's conception of the written grotesque is of particular relevance to my corpus of seventeenth-century lyric verse. Assembled haphazardly with no unifying subject matter or philosophical stance, written in several languages and replete with repetition, annotations, corrections, and crossings out, manuscript compilations like the *Recueil Conrart* align closely with Montaigne's notion of the literary grotesque. On an individual level, authors in my corpus refer to the poetic text as grotesque. Saint-Amant describes himself sat in an attic 'écrivant d'une broche / En mots de Pathelin ce grotesque sonnet',[72] while the diplomat and ecclesiast Jean de Montereul writes to Pailleur asking him to 'compose […] quelque grotesque / Qui face rire la Gautray, / Ou le bon Monsieur d'Alibray'.[73] In both cases it is the poems, not the poets, described as grotesques, though like Montaigne their authorial self-images certainly share some of the grotesque characteristics of their text – eccentric bon viveurs in a perpetual state of change, consuming and emitting as they converse with one another.

If anything, Montaigne's most consistent pronouncement regarding the human is this lack of coherency and absence of similitude, one that aligns closely with both grotesque and posthuman modes of thought, demonstrating the overlap between these understandings of how humans relate to the world around them. Anticipating a distinctly posthumanist line of argument, Montaigne once again draws upon art and mimesis for his introduction to 'De l'expérience':

La dissimilitude s'ingere d'elle mesme en nos ouvrages , nul art peut arriver à la similitude. […] La ressemblance ne faict pas tant, un, comme la difference faict, autre. Nature s'est obligée à ne rien faire autre, qui ne fust dissemblable.[74]

Just as trying to perfectly reproduce a painting is a futile objective, trying to categorise the natural world based on apparent resemblance is likewise futile

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[72] Saint-Amant (1971), pp. 290-291.
[73] D'Alibray (1906), p. 192.
[74] Montaigne (2007), p. 1111.

because Nature is incapable of mimesis. Even if two things appear to resemble each other, this does not mean they should be thought of as the same or even more alike than two things that bear no resemblance to one another. For Montaigne,' writes Kathleen Long, 'everyone lives outside the zone of the normal, and any system devised by humans becomes meaningless in the face of natural diversity'.[75]

Far from being perfect, uniform, and separate from the rest of the natural world, Montaigne's human is in fact the quintessential grotesque entity.[76] The boundary between self and other is eroded in diverse ways throughout the *Essais*, but for the purposes of this chapter I would like to highlight one particular example. In the previous section on transhumanism I wrote of the creation human/textual hybrids as a way of writing about disability in a first-person narration. When considering his book's relationship to its author in 'Du desmentir', Montaigne uses similar language to that of the human/textual hybrid:

Et quand personne ne me lira, ay-je perdu mon temps de m'estre entretenu tant d'heures oisives à pensements si utiles et aggreables? Moulant sur moy cette figure, il m'a fallu si souvent me testonner et composer, pour m'extraire, que le patron s'en est fermy, et aucunement formé soy-mesme. Me peignant pour autruy, je me suis peint en moy de couleurs plus nettes, que n'estoyent les miennes premieres. Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre, que mon livre m'a faict. Livre consubstantiel à son autheur : D'une occupation propre : Membre de ma vie : Non d'une occupation et fin, tierce et estrangere, comme tous autres livres. Ay-je perdu mon temps de m'estre rendu compte de moy, si continuellement ; si curieusement?[77]

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[75] Kathleen Perry Long, 'From Monstrosity to Postnormality: Montaigne, Canguilhem, Foucault', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World,* ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), pp. 35-61 (p. 61).

[76] Long (2016), pp. 716,724, 731. Katrina L. Spadaro, 'On Classification and the Grotesque: Theorising Para-Genre in Early Modern Nonsense Verse and Montaigne's *Essais*', *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture,* 66. 1 (2019), (pp. 7-8) <https://doi.org/10.1080/20512856.2019.1595480> [accessed 12/02/2020]. Epps (1996), pp. 42-43.

[77] Montaigne (2007), pp. 703-704.

In a moment of realisation familiar to many Ph.D. students, Montaigne admits that he initially thought he was writing the *Essais* for the benefit of others but can now see that he has been writing and continues to write for himself. In a very literal sense, he is also writing himself, or should that be he is being written *by* himself? Montaigne is unsure on this point. He reaches again for the metaphor of painting, yet finds that the painting is a better likeness than the object it depicts. Although this blending of human and text bears some similarity to the transhumanist depiction of the disabled body as enjoying an almost prosthetic contiguity with the text describing it, Montaigne's hybrid differs in that it is not really even a hybrid at all. In a rare moment of certainty, he positions the *Essais* as a 'livre consubstantiel à son autheur', a designation that does not correspond to the inexact transhuman hybrid of text untidily grafted onto the body, but to a seamless blend of self and other, body and text, subject and object to such an extent that they are one and the same. And, moreover, they always have been thus, having never existed apart from one another. 'Ainsi, Lecteur, je suis moy-mesme la matiere de mon livre,'[78] he writes at the beginning of the *Essais*, attesting to an understanding of the human that is more posthuman than transhuman, entirely discarding the idea of a unitary human self that ever existed apart from the textual body.[79]

Although he does not directly address disability in the passages quoted above, Montaigne's idea of a grotesque body created by the fusion of author and text bears a striking resemblance to Singer's book-body and serves as a model

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[78] Ibid., p. 27.

[79] Further examples of Montaigne questioning human exceptionalism in the *Essais* and eroding the boundaries between the human and the non-human can be found in chapters by Kenneth Gouwens and Pauline Goul. Gouwens (2016), p. 51. Pauline Goul, 'The Vanity of Ecology: Expenditure in Montaigne's Vision of the New World', in *French Ecocriticism,* ed. by Daniel Finch-Race and Stephanie Posthumus (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017), pp. 43-57 (p. 45).

and possible source of inspiration for seventeenth-century disabled poets writing about their complex embodiment, as later sections of this chapter demonstrate. In addition to developing the concept of the book-body in his writing about the authorial self, Anderson and Haydon note that Montaigne's inconclusiveness regarding the human extends to the subject of disability, 'situating disabled individuals well outside the realm of the subject' while also acknowledging 'the frailty of [his] own physical embodiment and its effects on [his] perception and experience'.[80] Disability's potential for transgressing the limits of subjectivity and reflecting on one's own limitations chimes with Saint-Pavin and Scarron's self-portraits, to which I shall shortly turn.

The broad point to take away from this foray into Montaigne and da Vinci's thought is that all this heterogeneity occurs comfortably *within* the parameters of Renaissance humanism, an intellectual tradition whose only unifying goal was the furthering of human knowledge through the *studia humanitas* – the study of Classical antiquity and what we would today term 'arts' subjects.[81] This should not be taken as an indication that Classical ideals such as the Vitruvian Man were put forward as the best or only paradigm for understanding the human being.[82] The Renaissance humanist view of Classical antiquity and its corresponding interpretive models was 'as both a rich legacy and a problematic inheritance'.[83] As I have shown with reference to Montaigne and da Vinci, Renaissance humanism displays a great potential for variability and scepticism with regards to the category of the human, and, consequently, many of the things that Braidotti and other posthumanists identify as emblematic of a

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[80] Haydon (2020), p. 15.
[81] Logan (1975), p. 613. Nicholas Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', in *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism,* ed. by Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-19 (p. 1).
[82] Gouwens (2016), p. 52.
[83] O'Brien (2005), p. 69.

posthuman understanding of the human body and the self were also features of the thought of two leading humanists at either end of the Renaissance.[84] Both and Montaigne and da Vinci's contributions to the Renaissance understanding of what it was to be human are investigational sketches and should not be thought of as evidence of a unifying regime of norms or ideals that held sway over how human bodies were perceived in Renaissance humanist thought. In fact, they point towards a desire to experiment with human form and push at boundaries rather than tighten or fix them. These experimentations with physical variability in Renaissance humanist thought concerning the human present some exciting opportunities to scholars working on early modern disability.

I will now discuss the work of two seventeenth-century poets who pick up on this line of thought, using the literary self-portrait as an opportunity to carry out further experiments with human form and the authorial self in the wake of da Vinci and Montaigne. Disability is situated at the centre rather than the periphery of Saint-Pavin and Scarron's self-reflective experiments in human form. They also exhibit features that bear a resemblance to Singer's premodern transhumanism, exploring what happens when their own disabled bodies are enhanced or altered by non-human additions.

Saint-Pavin

Saint-Pavin's longest and most thematically rich poem is a self-portrait, in which he adopts a self-ironising transhuman perspective to counter the interpretation found in many of his contemporaries' thought and verse that disability is a sinful lack of humanity. The poem is not dated but does contain a

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[84] Gouwens (2016), p. 54.

reference to the Fronde on line 95, allowing me to tentatively date it to the period of civil unrest between 1648 and 1653. As Hammond points out, however, for some time afterwards the word 'Fronde' (capitalised) could refer colloquially to any opposition to authority, which casts some doubt on this approximate dating.[85] There are two known manuscript copies of this poem, one substantially longer than the other. Both are found in different volumes of the *Recueil Conrart*, the shorter version (114 lines) is found in Ms-5426, pp. 729-732, and the longer (142 lines) is in Ms-5418, pp. 343-345. Reproduced in full by Frédéric Lachèvre (1911) and Gustave Michaut (1912),[86] this longer version is truncated in Hammond's most recent – and otherwise most complete – edition of Saint-Pavin's poetry, with lines 108 to 111 missing.[87] Despite including the long version of this poem in its entirety, Lachèvre and Michaut make some unhelpful editorial decisions of their own,[88] which I do not intend to perpetuate, so for the avoidance of doubt I will quote directly from the longest version found in Ms-5418.[89]

The epistle addresses Tyrcis, a companion currently residing in Flanders who has asked for a portrait of the poet. Out of all the stock characters used by Saint-Pavin, Tyrcis carries specific homoerotic connotations. The poet uses this name to write verse to and about his close friend, fellow poet, and probable

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[85] Footnote in Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 189.

[86] Frédéric Lachèvre, *Disciples et successeurs de Théophile de Viau: Des Barreaux et Saint-Pavin* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1911), pp. 350-355; Denis Sanguin de Saint-Pavin, *Poésies choisies* (Paris: Sansot, 1912), pp. 5-9.

[87] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 187-191.

[88] They both correct the poet's spelling on line 49 to turn 'adret' into 'adroit' (Hammond follows this correction too). This modernisation breaks the rhyme scheme and makes it appear as though Saint-Pavin may have made a mistake. Littré informs us that 'adret' was the Norman pronunciation, so correcting the manuscript spelling as the editors do loses this regional pronunciation aid. Lachèvre (1911), p. 352; Saint-Pavin (1912), p. 6; Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 188. See entry for 'adroit' in Littré (1863–72). Michaut also introduces a hypothetical correction that, as far as I can tell, has no basis on any of the known manuscript sources of this poem. See footnote in Saint-Pavin (1912), p. 7.

[89] Ms-5418, pp. 343-345.

lover, Jacques Vallée des Barreaux (1599-1673).[90] Notorious in his lifetime for his outspoken atheism,[91] des Barreaux was rumoured to be Théophile's former lover but allegedly became romantically linked to Saint-Pavin after Théophile's death.[92] Several of Saint-Pavin's explicitly homoerotic verses are addressed to or mention Tyrcis,[93] adding weight to this theory that the two were lovers. The self-portrait begins as follows:

> Mon cher Tyrcis, que t'ay-je fait
> Pour me demander mon portrait ?
> Veux-tu qu'à mon desavantage
> Ma main travaille à cet ouvrage ?
> & qu'avec si peu d'agrémens,
> Je me montre chez les Flamans ?[94]

The narrator builds anticipation by feigning reluctance and emphasising his disinclination to write the self-portrait that Tyrcis has requested. He jokes that his physical appearance and personality are so displeasing that writing such a piece could only succeed in earning him a bad reputation. After a few lines of playful reluctance, he resolves to write the piece because it will make Tyrcis happy: 'Je vay, pourtant, sans me flater, / Me peindre, pour te contenter'.[95] He then embarks upon a self-deprecating physiognomical reading of his own face, about which he comically struggles find anything positive to say:

> Mon visage est fait de maniére,
> Qu'il tient moins du beau, que du laid,
> Sans estre choquant tout-à-fait.
> Dans mes yeux deux noires prunelles,
> Brillent de maintes étincelles ;
> J'ay le nez pointu, je l'ay long,
> Je l'ay mal-fait, mais je l'ay bon,
> & je sens venir toutes-choses,
> De plus loin qu'on ne sent les roses ;

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[90] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 40; Collins (1986), p. 40.
[91] For attitudes towards des Barreaux's atheism, see Cavaillé (2013).
[92] Collins (1986), pp. 35-40.
[93] Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 23-31.
[94] Ms-5418, p. 343.
[95] Ibid.

> En fin, je puis dire, en-un-mot,
> Que je n'ay pas le nez d'un sot.
> Malgré les ans, & la fortune,
> Ma chevelure est encor brune,
> Mon tient est jaune & safrané,
> Du coloris d'un vieux damné,
> Pour le moins, qui le doit estre,
> Ou je ne say pas m'y connoistre.[96]

This section is emblematic of the seventeenth-century French burlesque in its insistence on making diamonds out of dust, describing conventionally undesirable characteristics using overblown poetic language to make them sound better than they are.[97]

Accordingly, the poet's eyes are 'noires prunelles', while the fact that they 'Brillent de maintes étincelles' is perhaps an indication that they are bloodshot. His sallow complexion is 'safrané', and his misshapen, elongated nose rather improbably endows him with an enhanced sense of smell. It is true, he concedes, that his face is less beautiful than it is ugly but, he hastens to add, at least it is not completely shocking to behold and, by some miracle, his hair has retained its brown colour. This passage encapsulates Saint-Pavin's complex and paradoxical relationship to seventeenth-century poetic conventions. His ironic refiguring of physiognomically undesirable facial features constitutes a parody of convention, in which the narrator subverts the reader's expectations, affirming that what we might think is ugly actually benefits him more than most. Simultaneously, however, it closely adheres to the burlesque, a poetic convention predicated on reversing poetic conventions, and whose humour relies on the reader being highly familiar with those same conventions.

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[96] Ibid.
[97] Chapter Two introduces the burlesque and discusses its relationship to the carnivalesque and the grotesque.

The Belltower and the Windmill

Saint-Pavin then applies this burlesque methodology to his equally unconventional body:

> Soit par hazard, ou par dépit,
> La Nature, injuste, me fit,
> Court, entassé, la panse grosse ;
> Au-milieu de mon dos se hausse
> Certain amas d'os et de chair,
> Fait en pointe comme un clocher ;
> Mes bras d'une longueur extréme,
> & mes jambes presque de mesme,
> Font qu'on peut me prendre souvent
> Pour un petit moulin-à-vent.[98]

Instead of reproducing the physiognomical tendency to read disability as a sinful lack of humanity, here the dominant impression of the narrator's body is one of excess. He compares himself through metaphor and simile to two artificial structures: a belltower and a little windmill, objects he resembles due to the extra 'amas d'os et de chair' he carries on his back and his arms and legs, which are said to be 'd'une longeur extréme'. Yet despite this imagery of excess he is paradoxically 'court' and 'entassé'. The reader can only conclude that the poet's arms and legs are comically large, but his overall height is somehow laughably short. We are consequently left clueless when trying to imagine his physicality in any plausibly human way.

This is typical of Saint-Pavin's playful poetic style, which revels in paradoxes, double-bluffs, and masquerades. In his chapter entitled 'Disability as Masquerade',[99] Siebers builds on Joan Riviere's 1929 essay 'Womanliness as Masquerade' and Sedgwick's work on discursive closeting to ask what happens when a person comes out as disabled, but in so doing presents a carefully

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Siebers (2008), pp. 96-119.

curated version of their disability to onlookers. This might be achieved by exaggerating, misrepresenting, or performing one's disability in a particular way to particular ends. Siebers exemplifies this with an anecdote about how, after having a negative experience with an airport gatekeeper who did not believe that he was disabled, he adopted the habit of exaggerating his limp whenever he boarded planes to render his disability conspicuously visible.[100] Such a masquerade can be empowering: it is about explicitly claiming a conspicuous disabled identity then daring people to judge you negatively for it rather than trying to minimise visibility or even pass as nondisabled.[101] Saint-Pavin carries out a similar act of deliberate misrepresentation at this point in his self-portrait. He exaggerates his bodily incongruity in a way that approaches the grotesque caricatures of disability found in *contreblasons*, fragmenting his body and comparing himself to objects as a way of playing up to the stereotypes associated with cabaret poetry about disability. 'You expect me to be a caricature?' he asks the reader, 'OK then, I'll be one'. He proceeds to caricature himself in a hyperbolic, anatomically impossible way that exposes the formulaic nature of caricature as a representational technique and its failure in representing disabled bodies such as his own.

The two physical structures to which to poet compares his body in this caricature-like section merit further consideration. Nearly two hundred years before Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Saint-Pavin associates the belltower with the figure of the *bossu*. In addition to being an ironic joke – that despite his notorious impiety he resembles part of a church – there is some more complex wordplay in this choice of simile. Here, the word 'clocher' is a noun, but as a

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[100] Ibid., p. 96.
[101] Ibid., pp. 118-119.

verb it can also mean 'to limp', and is associated with a seventeenth-century proverb about authenticity: '*Il ne faut pas clocher devant les boiteux*, pour dire, qu'Il ne faut pas se mesler d'un mestier devant les gens qui en sçavent plus que nous'.[102] In addition to a being a moment of blasphemous irony, the word 'clocher' is an assertion of superiority on the part of the disabled narrator, who asserts that he is more authentic and knowledgeable than those who might seek to imitate him by either mocking his disability or parroting his verse.

Next, the narrator chooses a little windmill as a second point of comparison. There are some similarities between the belltower and the windmill: both are vertical artificial structures that are designed to produce (flour and noise). Yet the windmill is reliant on the vicissitudes of nature to perform its function, while the belltower only chimes when operated by bellringers and is intended to help people tell the time and call them to commune with God. In comparing his body to these things, Saint-Pavin constructs an image of himself as a liminal and dynamic structure sitting at the meeting point of the natural and the artificial. Like the belltower and the windmill, the poet is a site of production who is struck by various external forces and, so long as he is working properly, set in motion by them. Due to his singular physicality, the poet resembles these two productive artificial structures and is a better producer – of poetry, of conversation, of entertainment – because of it.

Saint-Pavin is keen to emphasise that this melange of physical features achieves the key objective of *galanterie*: pleasure. He continues:

> Je suis composé de matiére
> Fort combustible, & peu grossiére ;
> J'ay de l'enjouement, j'ay du feu,
> Que j'en aye beaucoup ou peu,

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[102] Entry for *boiteux* in Anonymous (1694).

> N'importe, il se faut satisfaire
> Quand on s'en trouve assez pour plaire.
> Je ne suis point homme borné,
> J'ay l'esprit assez-bien tourné,
> Je l'ay vif dans les reparties,
> & piquant comme des orties ;
> Je ne laisse pas d'estre adret,
> Complaisant, mesme un peu coquet,
> Mais ce n'est pas pour la Coquette,
> Sur elle fort peu je me jette,
> & je croirois passer pour fat,
> Si je n'estois plus délicat.[103]

The first six lines of this section make it clear that he is not going to go into specifics of how much of each desirable character trait such as 'enjoument' or 'feu' he possesses, simply telling the reader not to worry because 'on s'en trouve assez pour plaire'. He prizes his wit above all else, which, like the belltower and the windmill, comes to life when engaged by external forces and produces retorts that sting like nettles. This can be compared to the verse to Jean by Maynard, analysed in Chapter Two.[104] In that poem, Jean was urged by the narrator to use his sharp wit was a way of overcoming his disability in an instance of mind triumphing over matter, whereas for Saint-Pavin, his disability is part of what makes him such a great poet, working in concert with his wit, rather against it, resisting the supercrip narrative present in Maynard's piece.

We remember that, in addition to wit, another key characteristic prized in *galant* circles is versatility, allowing poets to dynamically adapt their tone and style to suit their audience's whims, and produce multiple different poetic takes on a single subject (*variatio*). Saint-Pavin certainly possesses this ability: he never fails to be 'adret',[105] referring to a nimbleness of mind and/or body. He is even a little flirtatious, but he hastens to add that this is not for the benefit of 'la

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[103] Ms-5418, p. 343-344.
[104] See section entitled 'Mind Over Matter'.
[105] See note 88 earlier in this chapter.

Coquette', a licentious female stock character on whom he throws himself 'fort peu'. When combined with this section's concluding couplet, this can be read as a tacit allusion to the poet's sexual preference for men, discussed in Chapter Four.[106] He jokes that people would think him stupid to be so uninterested in women, were he no longer 'délicat'. *Délicatesse*, affirms Porta's physiognomy treatise, is a characteristic associated with women and effeminate, lascivious men – though not necessarily those who desire other men.[107] The physiognomist gives the example of P. Gallus, an 'Homme délicat' who was 'addoné au vin, mais aussi à la paillardise masculine'.[108] Cognisant of the physiognomical implications of *délicatesse*, when Saint-Pavin affirms that he, too, is 'délicat' yet rarely interested in women, the reader is left to wonder how else this lasciviousness might be expressed, if not with other men. Once again he draws an implicit connection between physical variability and queer love.

Like his physicality, the poet's inner character is presented via an abundance of self-ironising paradoxes. He provides no definitive answers or dominant character traits, seemingly far more interested in describing what he is not rather than what he is:

> Je suis tantost gueux, tantost riche,
> Je ne suis ni libéral, ni chiche,
> Je ne suis ni facheux, ni doux,
> Sage, ni du nombre des foux,
> & je suis l'un & l'autre ensemble,
> Sans que personne me ressemble,
> En fin, je trouve tout égal,
> & je ne fays ni bien, ni mal.[109]

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[106] See sections entitled 'The (Homo)Erotic Triangle', 'Femininity and Disability', and 'Coming out as Crip, Coming out as Queer'.
[107] Porta (1655), pp. 510-511.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ms-5418, p. 344.

This sketch of his character is like a negative space portrait, eschewing any pigeonholing and remaining playfully enigmatic. He rejects facile categories – 'je ne suis ni libéral, ni chiche, / Je ne suis ni facheux, ni doux' – in favour of the paradoxical statements that he is neither 'sage, ni du nombre des foux' while simultaneously being 'l'un & l'autre ensemble'. This simultaneity makes it clear that Saint-Pavin is not subscribing to the physiognomic ideal of *médiocrité*, the belief that it is best to be neither one extreme nor the other when it comes to body and character. Conversely, he maintains that he is both *médiocre* and extraordinary at once. Like Montaigne before him, the claim to singularity is the only clear-cut assertion: he is all these confusing, impossible things 'sans que personne [lui] ressemble'. In this transition from body to character, the poet uses physiognomical logic against itself. His body is paradoxical – human in some ways and nonhuman in others – and this paradox projects inwards. It is replicated in his character which, far from being easy to pigeonhole as that of a *méchant*, the word previously used by Porta to describe *bossus*, it is just as unknowable as his physicality.

A Confusion of Kinds

These defining outer and inner features of paradox, singularity, and hybridity conjure images of the grotesque, but unlike the majority of grotesques in my lyric corpus, Saint-Pavin's self-portrait presents this strange combination of features as neither intrinsically positive nor intrinsically negative. They are defining features that fail to define, attesting instead to the uselessness of categories of personhood, categories that Saint-Pavin either discards or exceeds. Regardless, despite his mind and body's disregard for the *galant* ideal of

médiocrité and the strictly defined bodily regimes it demands, he somehow succeeds at winning people over almost effortlessly. He is not, however, without his share of enemies. The narrator continues, addressing some of the rumours that have been circulating about him:

> Ce qu'on dit de moy peu me choque ;
> De force choses je me moque,
> & jusqu'icy, je n'ay pas scû
> Ce que c'est que vice, ou vertu.
> Je confons toutes les espéces,
> Je mets en œuvre toutes piéces,
> & sans constraindre mes desirs,
> Je me donne entier aux plaisirs.[110]

He says he is not particularly shocked by what people say about him, a statement that could be read as a tacit admission of sodomy.[111] During his lifetime, Saint-Pavin's most infamous epithet was 'le Roi de Sodome', given to him by the songs of the *Chansonnier Maurepas* manuscript,[112] a name that he seemingly accepts here and in a sonnet that concludes 'Et je conserve le nom / Que tout le monde me donne'.[113]

These lines could equally be read as allusions to the poet's disability. Second only to his reputed sodomy, Saint-Pavin's status as a *perclus* elicited plenty of gossip and derision. An anonymous song written in 1635 focuses on his 'corps étique' and its reliance on prosthetic mechanisms (a cane and a 'cheval de bois').[114] The rival poet Boileau characterises him as a bitter, disabled blasphemer who cannot leave his chair,[115] while Bautru likewise connects disability with blasphemy in his ironic description of the servants entrusted with

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[110] Ms-5418, p. 345.
[111] This is how Hammond interprets it. Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 24.
[112] A manuscript compilation of seventeenth-century Parisian street songs. See Hammond's introduction in Ibid., p. 24.
[113] Ibid., p. 67.
[114] Ibid., p. 19.
[115] Ibid., p. 18.

carrying him on his chair as 'porte-diables'.[116] Even Blot, a close friend of Saint-

Pavin, situates his disability as a negative attribute and his most identifiable

feature in a poem where he laments his friends' misfortune: 'Le pauvre noble ne

f… plus, / Nostre cher Chevalier succombe, / Le bon Saint-Pavin est perclus, / Et

Francois Coquet dans la tombe'.[117] Ten years after his death, this image had not

worn off. Speaking of her son-in-law's illness, Marie de Sévigné jokes that 'on le

porte comme Saint-Pavin!'[118] It is therefore highly possible that the gossip to

which Saint-Pavin alludes in this section of his self-portrait could refer to his

status as a *perclus* as well as that of a sodomite. These two reputations are

bundled together and linked by others to a sinful character, a facile

interpretation the poet dismisses in his nonchalant remark that up to this point

he has not known 'Ce que c'est que vice, ou vertu'. Rather than trying to quash

these rumours, Saint-Pavin is here calling attention to his *perclusion* and

sodomy, claiming them for himself and presenting them as undeniable facts of

his existence that carry neither virtuous nor sinful valences, they simply are.

While Chapter Four focused on the conceptual link between disability and

queerness that resurfaces here, for the purposes of this chapter I am more

interested in the lines immediately following this admission. Lines four to six of

the section quoted above are absent in Hammond's 2012 edition of this poem,

yet they are crucial when reading it alongside transhuman thought. Particularly

curious is Saint-Pavin's use of the word 'espéces' on the fifth line. This term had

yet to acquire its modern taxonomic meaning and most often referred more

generally to a 'kind' or 'type' of creature or thing.[119] For example, the

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[116] Ibid., p. 19.
[117] Blot (1919), pp. 9-10.
[118] Lachèvre (1911), p. 362.
[119] Cotgrave (1611).

seventeenth-century collector Peiresc's correspondence uses *espèce* to refer to kinds of whales, crocodiles, and chameleons.[120] What could Saint-Pavin mean therefore when he says in the section quoted above that he 'confon[d] toutes les espéces'? It builds on the previous paradoxical statements he made about being neither one nor the other and simultaneously both things at once. According to the 1606 *Thresor de la langue francoyse*, 'confondre' meant to 'mesler ensemble' two or more things.[121] When applied to *espèces*, this is a notion close to Singer's inexact human/non-human hybrid, especially when we consider the artificial objects – the belltower and the windmill – to which the poet compared himself earlier in the portrait. Saint-Pavin confounds, or 'tumble[s] together', in the words of Cotgrave's 1611 dictionary,[122] all available classificatory categories, both human and non-human.

Like the authors studied in Singer's piece, Saint-Pavin views his hybrid embodiment that exceeds the category of human as an enhancement rather than a defect, as evidenced by his unflinching optimism to the point of not considering his physicality a disability at all. He never mentions not being able to achieve something due to the formation of his body, even joking earlier in the poem that his 'nez […] mal fait' endows him with a heightened sense of smell,[123] and that he 'n['est] point homme borné'.[124] In the section above, he appears to find his situation positively liberating, writing that 'sans constraindre [s]es désirs' he is able to give himself 'entier aux plaisirs'. In the lines following this statement, the poet relates how he is able to enjoy the rakish pleasures of gambling, love and good food just like any other *galant* bachelor, doing so 'à

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[120] Nicholas de Peiresc, *Lettres de Peiresc à divers, 1602-1637* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1898), pp. 94, 157, 186.
[121] Anonymous, *Thresor de la langue francoyse*, (Paris: Douceur, 1606).
[122] Entry for 'confondre' in Cotgrave (1611).
[123] Ms-5418, p. 343.
[124] Ibid., p. 344.

[s]a mode'.[125] Despite the excess and heterogeneity that characterises his complex embodiment, all his various contingent parts pull together, united in the unconstrained pursuit of pleasure. In such a transhuman-inflected reading of the Saint-Pavin's embodiment, excess and heterogeneity are repositioned as advantages, opposing the stereotypical interpretation of disabled people's bodies found in physiognomy and *contreblasons*, that of lack, disharmony, and nature gone wrong. When theorised as a transhuman embodiment, Saint-Pavin's focus is on heterogeneity and bodily excess rather than lack, characteristics that cause him to more closely resemble artificial structures than recognisable human form. As per the transhuman cyborg, the non-human additions enhance his ability to entertain, write poetry, and seek pleasure as part of the *galant* tradition, proving once and for all that grotesque excess is preferable to *médiocrité* of body and mind.

Body and Text

This tumbling together of classificatory categories (*espèces*) in the premodern cyborg becomes clearer in the following section of Saint-Pavin's self-portrait:

> Je fuys l'étude, & j'ayme à lire
> Un vieux Roman, une Satyre ;
> Tous les livres plus sérieux
> Sont, à-mon-gré, fort ennuyeux.
> Avec aysance je compose
> Tantost en vers, tantost en prose,
> & quelquefois assez heureux,
> Je réüssis en tous les deux.[126]

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[125] Ms-5418, p. 345.
[126] Ms-5418, p. 345.

The poet makes a playful analogy between body and text. Saint-Pavin's consumption and production of literature is neither orderly nor methodical. He actively avoids scholarly pursuits, finding serious literature 'fort ennuyeux' and turning to 'un vieux Roman' and 'une Satyre' for amusement. The latter refers to the kind of parodic, grotesque realist verse studied in my second chapter – verse that is itself parodied by the present self-portrait. Less clear is the identity of the 'vieux Roman', though it is entirely possible that Saint-Pavin is referring to one of Rabelais's five Pantagruel novels as a source of pleasure and inspiration. In tending towards the grotesque in his reading habits, his self-image in this portrait takes on these same characteristics, showing how a grotesque text can shape a body just as much as a grotesque body can shape a text. In this way, Saint-Pavin subverts the generic conventions of grotesque realist satire by presenting hybrid embodiment as a transhuman asset rather than a defect. His writing likewise crosses genres, as he turns his hand to both verse and prose composition, boasting that 'quelquefois assez heureux, / [Il] réüssi[t] en tous les deux'. The analogy implies that the poet's ability to cross the normative conventions of genre in both reading and writing is enabled by a bodymind that exceeds the normative conventions of the human found in these genres. Like Siebers, Saint-Pavin recognises that 'the concept of the human […] does not involve a fixed definition but must be a work in progress, just as human beings should always be works in progress'.[127] This self-portrait can never be anything *other* than a work in progress, as its subject is in a constant state of change, outgrowing his boundaries and receiving non-human additions with each piece of grotesque literature he consumes and produces.

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[127] Siebers (2008), p. 92.

Saint-Pavin then concludes by allying this poem with his two *rondeaux* analysed in the previous chapter. The final couplet declares: 'De quelque façon que je sois, / Ayme-moy, Tyrcis, tu le dois',[128] circling back to Tyrcis, the stock character who stands for the poet's close friend and probable lover, des Barreaux.[129] On top of being a self-portrait, this verse epistle can also be read as a queer love poem. The poet's instruction to Tyrcis, whom we can reasonably interpret as a male lover, reiterates the affirmation that the disabled male body is worthy of love and, moreover, just as entitled to it as any vigorous *galant* man. This concluding affirmation also harkens back to the broader dynamics of misogyny and homosociality that underpin representations of disability in the French lyric and that, as I have demonstrated, are not disrupted by Saint-Pavin's work. Here, a disabled man may be valued and loved by another man, but a woman with the same disability, as seen in Benserade's *contreblason* of the 'Dame louche & bossuë',[130] is more likely to be represented as a figure of abjection that shares many features with the archetypal female grotesque described by Mary Russo.[131]

This poetic persona Saint-Pavin fashions in this self-portrait through reference to literature matches Singer's conception of the premodern cyborg, whose construction involves 'the addition of *something* to the body in order to make it different, to enhance its capacities',[132] producing an entity with no stable form. Saint-Pavin describes himself not as subhuman but as something more than human, or an enhancement of the human. While retaining the mingling of human and non-human that we find in grotesque realist verse, he refuses to

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[128] Ms-5418, p. 345.
[129] Saint-Pavin (2012), p. 40; Collins (1986), p. 40.
[130] This poem is discussed at length in Chapter Two, 'Perfect Deformity'.
[131] Russo (1995).
[132] Singer (2010), p. 175.

allow his body to be read in a negative way, incorporating disability into his poetic persona as an advantageous trait that he can use to further his craft and give pleasure to the reader. I emphasise 'poetic persona' here because I do not wish to argue that Saint-Pavin found his disability to be an asset in his day-to-day life, or even in every poetic context. Indeed, the prominence of suffering, loneliness, and isolation in many of his other poems about disability suggests the contrary.[133] Yet, in this self-ironising parody of a literary portrait, it suits him to represent his physicality as a transhuman advantage in order to liven up the genre of the *portrait littéraire*, which was by all accounts turgid and repetitive, and one to which he did not initially see the point in contributing.

Scarron

In its various references to how his hybrid embodiment facilitates the consumption and production of grotesque literature, Saint-Pavin's self-portrait recalls Singer's concept of the book-body, a transhuman fusion of body and text. For Saint-Pavin, the book-body is on one level a straightforward analogy made between literary genre-crossing and a disregard for normative bodily regimes. On another level, however, it also raises broader questions of the relationship between disabled author and text. It draws attention to the fact that, like many self-portraits, the first-hand accounts of disability found in seventeenth-century lyric verse are not mimetic of their author's appearance or experiences, and nor

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[133] A counterbalance to the (never entirely serious) optimistic attitude foregrounded in his self-portrait is particularly evident in three sonnets about physical suffering (XCIX, CVII, and CIX in Hammond's edition), a nostalgic verse epistle addressed to des Barreaux, in which the narrator asks to be paid a visit to alleviate his loneliness and wishes the two of them could revisit their debauched youth (CLXXI), and the rondeaux analysed in the previous chapter (CLXXIX and CLXXX). Saint-Pavin (2012), pp. 95, 100, 101, 150-152, 160-161

are they trying to be. They are instead examples of self-mythologisation,

strategic performance pieces that may have an element of truth to them but are

carefully fashioned to please or offend a particular reader or readers that the

author has in mind.

Much has been made of this idea of body/text mimesis, or lack thereof, in

literature written by disabled authors. Adleen Crapo identifies an 'early modern

association between twisted spines and twisted words',[134] which is present in

writing about the poet Scarron by his contemporaries. The seventeenth-century

writer and lexicographer Antoine Furetière described Scarron as 'la plus

burlesque de ses œuvres',[135] implying a degree of similitude and

interconnectedness between body and text. This critical tendency to equate body

with text did not end in the seventeenth century. Théophile Gautier, the

nineteenth-century romanticist and proponent of the critical rehabilitation of

several of the poets in my corpus,[136] wrote in 1844 about Scarron that

les déviations de ses vers se répétaient dans les déviations de son épine dorsale
et de ses membres : les idées, comme les marteaux des orfèvres, *repoussent* la
forme extérieure, et lui font prendre leurs creux et leurs saillies.[137]

Though written in the mid-nineteenth century, the interpretation displayed here

is remarkably similar to that of an early modern physiognomist: disability is

understood as a 'déviation', and a disabled person's body is an outward

projection of the 'idées' contained within it, which pound away at the outer shell

like a blacksmith's hammers.[138] Gautier does not expand on this rather glib

remark, but, as DeJean notes in her assessment of Scarron criticism, such an

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[134] Crapo (2020), p. 117.
[135] Quoted by ibid., p. 116.
[136] Gautier (1856).
[137] Ibid., p. 339.
[138] Note that blacksmithing is again associated with disability.

attitude has been reiterated in critical readings of his work.[139] She rightly points

out that the impulse to relate all of Scarron's writing back to his biography and

his status as a disabled author is 'condescending' and unlikely to have come

about had he not been disabled.[140]

The supercrip narrative (although DeJean does not use this term herself)

is particularly prominent among them. The first images of Scarron that spring to

mind for most critics are 'the cripple in his chair, hopelessly paralyzed and yet

receiving nightly a brilliant circle of literati and court figures that gather in his

home to be dazzled by his wit', and 'an invalid who conquers his infirmity by the

force of laughter'.[141] These images hold strong in some of the most recent

criticism on Scarron's poetry. Alain Génetiot (2011) introduces the poet in the

following terms:

Obsédé par une maladie gravement invalidante qui l'oblige à des prises
régulières d'opium et le fait vivre en grabataire cloué sur sa chaise, Scarron sera
le poète du corps envahissant qui ramène tout à la constante inscription
autobiographique de son corps torturé. Mais si cette dimension intime qui exhibe
la souffrance personnelle pourrait donner lieu à un lyrisme élégiaque […], la
force du génie comique de Scarron est de transmuer la souffrance en rire par
l'autodérision.[142]

In this passage, Scarron is declared the literary supercrip par excellence,

overcoming his 'maladie gravement invalidante', 'corps torturé', and 'souffrance

personnelle' through the power of his comic genius.

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[139] DeJean (1977), pp. 12-13.
[140] Ibid., p. 13.
[141] Ibid., p. 12.
[142] Alain Génetiot, 'Scarron poète lyrique', *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises,* 63 (2011), 135-151 (pp. 137-138).

Cul-de-jatte

Condescending though the ever-popular supercrip reading of the poet's life and works may be, DeJean acknowledges that 'Scarron himself bears a great deal of the responsibility for its creation'.[143] He is a disabled author who, at various points in his work, deliberately played up to clichés associated with his disability much in the same manner as Saint-Pavin's grotesque masquerade and stoking of rumours of sodomy.[144] As critics, we want to eschew lazy clichés when writing about disability, but we must also recognise that seventeenth-century disabled poets incorporate these very same clichés into their poetic personae. Scarron, for his part, assumes the mantle of being, in his own words, 'le plus chetif d'entre les culs de jattes'.[145] The word 'cul-de-jatte' can be translated as 'legless cripple', either in the sense of having had one's legs amputated or, as with Scarron, having lost the use of them. Along with his oft-mentioned title of Malade de la Reine, 'cul-de-jatte' was a sobriquet for the poet. The word was particularly useful whenever he wanted to emphasise the chronic pain and destitution resulting from his condition, usually with a view to winning the sympathy of rich and influential individuals such as Richelieu, to whom he wrote a poem in 1642 hoping to persuade him to treat his exiled father kindly.[146] The word 'cul-de-jatte' is particularly pertinent to a study of transhuman imagery in Scarron's work. Most immediately, it is a fusion of the human with the non-human: a *jatte* is a wooden or porcelain bowl with no elevated base, a *cul-de-jatte* therefore being 'celuy qui estant mutilé des jambes & des cuisses, marche

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[143] DeJean (1977), p. 12.
[144] Crapo also acknowledges this tendency of Scarron's. Crapo (2020), p. 113.
[145] See Littré's definition which includes several examples from Scarron's work. Littré (1863–72).
[146] Scarron (1947), pp. 92-97. See also Crapo (2020), p. 113.

Fig. 10

en effet dans une jatte'.[147] Pieter Bruegel's *The Beggars* (1658), also known as *The Cripples*, depicts a group of people who might unsympathetically be termed *culs-de-jatte* following this definition (Fig. 10).

Used by Scarron to win sympathy through self-depreciation, the *cul-de-jatte* is an image of prosthesis, of a person who gets around by sitting in a container and propelling themself with hand-crutches or with the help of porters. Like Saint-Pavin, Scarron conjures up the supercrip type of cyborg: someone who overcomes their disability through technology to achieve feats that most nondisabled people cannot (being a celebrated author and supreme wit). Yet Scarron's portrayal of cyborg embodiment in his self-descriptive verse is laced with irony and self-depreciation. These essential characteristics of Scarron's embodied condition are never clearer than in a comic description of him travelling the streets of Paris in a verse entitled 'Le chemin du Marests au Faux-bourg sainct Germain'.[148] Though not a self-portait, this piece invites an autobiographical reading and provides a useful point of comparison with Scarron's self-portait, which I subsequently discuss.

The poem is five stanzas in length, and the narrator begins by describing how he is carried the Marais to the Faubourg Saint-Germain by 'deux puissants porte-chaizes' whom he has hired:

> Parbleu bon ! je vay par les rues.
> Mais je n'y vay pas de mon chef,
> Ni de mes pieds, qui par mechef
> Sont parties tres-malotrues :
> Je marche sur pieds empruntez.
> Ceux dont mes membres sont portez
> Sont à deux puissants porte-chaizes
> Que je loue presque un escu.

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[147] Entry for 'jatte' in Anonymous (1694).
[148] Scarron (1947), pp. 53-55.

> Ha ! que les maroufles sont aizes,
> Au prix de moy qui suis toujours dessus le cul ![149]

Although Scarron does not use the word 'cul-de-jatte', the various references throughout this piece to his lack of legs and buttocks and the chair in which he is carried are likely intended to evoke this label. On the tenth line he comments that he is always 'dessus le cul' and so often requires the services of these porters. In this same stanza, he describes his state of embodiment in grotesque terms, insofar as the porters are not described as distinct beings but temporary extensions or enhancements of his own body: 'Je marche sur pieds empruntez'. His own legs are described as having separated themselves from his body and 'par mechef / Sont parties tres-malotrues'. The meta-poetic element of the claim to walk on borrowed feet implies that, like his body, Scarron's lyrics are grotesque bodies themselves, made possible by the fellow poets he appropriates and parodies in his burlesque works and with whom he remains in constant creative dialogue.

In the third stanza he directly addresses his withered buttocks, which cause him great pain when seated:

> Revenez, mes fesses perdues,
> Revenez me donner un cu.
> En vous perdant, j'ay tout perdu.
> Helas ! qu'estes-vous devenues ?
> Appuy de mes membres perclus,
> Cul que j'eus & que je n'ay plus,
> Estant une piece si rare,
> Que l'on devroit vous tenir cher !
> Hé ! que la coustume est barbare
> ` De porter vestements afin de vous cacher ![150]

Just as he alluded to the departure of his legs in the first stanza, the fifth begs his buttocks to return to their former state of voluptuousness: 'Revenez, mes

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[149] Ibid., p. 53.
[150] Ibid., p. 54.

fesses perdues, / Revenez me donner un cu. / En vous perdant, j'ay tout perdu'. This transhuman state of embodiment is thus one of exchange. His legs and buttocks have left and been replaced with his chair and the 'pieds empruntez' of the two porters. His formerly supple arse was once an 'Appuy de [s]es members perclus', a buttress that reinforced his legs and made them stand up straight, implying that its absence has caused them to topple over like a collapsing cathedral. This presents a stark contrast with Saint-Pavin's description of his own transhuman body. While Saint-Pavin likened his to a belltower as a symbol of its productivity and an ironic blasphemy, Scarron's body-cathedral symbolises crumbling deterioration, but it is also one that has been rebuilt, albeit unsatisfactorily, with the addition of his chair and porters. In the fourth stanza he wishes he could walk again, echoing Siebers' argument that cyborg embodiment should not be idealised, fetishized or sought out.[151] Nor is it uniformly bad, as the narrator is able to use his journey to write poetry inspired by his singular embodied situation: he is a *cul-de-jatte* whose arse and legs have abandoned him but been replaced by a chair on which he is held aloft, and this unique vantage point enables him to better observe and document the bustling crowds below.

Scarron's porters are an integral part of both his body and his composition process. It is their body and their poem as well as his. Their 'pieds empruntez' position him so he has the best view and enable him to write about the urban scenes he observes while travelling. Sometimes, however, the porters are more hindrance than help, distracting him with their chatter and causing him to rush his work:

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[151] 'Helas ! que me faut-il donner / Pour pouvoir marcher de sorte !' Ibid.

> Mais je sens ma chazse arrestée :
> Je pourrois bien estre arrivé,
> Et je n'auray pas achevé
> Cette piece un peu trop hastée.
> Achevons au moins ce Dizain,
> Nous ferons le reste demain.
> Porteurs on vous va satisfaire ;
> Taisez-vous donc : vous m'empeschez,
> Vous troublez toute mon affaire.
> Mais ne vous taisez plus : mes vers sont despeschez.[152]

Less optimistic than Saint-Pavin, Scarron's transhuman embodiment is a source of chronic pain and frustration but also affords him an elevated perspective from which to write his burlesque vignettes of everyday Parisian life. This self-image plays up to the supercrip narrative of overcoming one's disability to write exceptional poetry and of turning an obstacle into an advantage. To limit Scarron's entire literary output to such a narrative would be, as DeJean recognises, condescending, yet it is also a narrative that the poet himself promotes. He recognises the potential benefit of fashioning a compelling authorial persona of the transhuman *cul-de-jatte* for the purposes of promoting his poetry.

The Book-Body

The key commonality between Scarron and Saint-Pavin's work is their unpacking and reappropriation of timeworn clichés related to disability, the supercrip being just one example. Another such cliché is the supposedly symbiotic relationship between an author and their literary text, exemplified in Gautier's remark quoted earlier and Montaigne's affirmation that he is 'la matiere de [s]on livre'. Saint-Pavin and Scarron's crip rewritings of this cliché explore the

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[152] Ibid., p. 55.

question of why a disabled writer might, knowingly or otherwise, write literature that reflects their state of embodiment. I have already analysed a portion of Saint-Pavin's self-portrait that deals with how the written text shapes the poet's self-image, and studied how Scarron's status as a *cul-de-jatte* not only permeates his verse but enables him to write it. In his own self-portrait, Scarron offers a far more detailed meditation on the vexed subject of the relationship between body and text. This self-portrait is in prose, and slightly shorter than the longest version of Saint-Pavin's piece. It is inserted as a preface to the author's 1648 burlesque work *La relation véritable de tout ce qui s'est passé en l'autre monde au combat des Parques & des poètes, sur la mort de Voitture*, and is entitled 'Au lecteur, qui ne m'a jamais veu'.[153] In an ironic posture remarkably similar to Saint-Pavin's own feigned reluctance to comply with Tyrcis's request for a self-portrait, Scarron begins his piece by casting doubt on the whole enterprise:

> LECTEUR, qui ne m'a jamais veu, & qui peut-estre ne t'en soucies gueres, à cause qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup à profiter à la veue d'une personne faite comme moy.[154]

He teases the reader, warning us that if we read on, we will only be disappointed with what we find. As with Saint-Pavin's initial hesitancy, Scarron's self-deprecating warning is more of an enticement. He soon reveals the reason why he has overcome this reluctance, admitting that under normal circumstances he would also have no desire to be seen by the reader, but he has recently learned that 'quelques beaux esprits facetieux se resjouissent aux despens du miserable & me depeignent d'une autre façon que je ne suis fait'.[155] Scarron's desire to write a self-portrait stems from a need to set the record straight and dispel the

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[153] Ibid., pp. 359-361.
[154] Ibid., p. 359.
[155] Ibid.

malicious rumours spread about him by certain *beaux esprits* who are determined to depict him inaccurately for comic effect.

The lines that follow contain three examples of the various rumours surrounding his physical appearance and lifestyle. He relates with more than a hint of irritation that

les uns disent que je suis cul de jatte ; les autres, que je n'ai point de cuisses & que l'on me met sur une table dans un étui, où je cause comme une Pie borgne ; & les autres, que mon chapeau tient à une corde qui passe dans une poulie, & que je le hausse & baisse pour saluer ceux qui me visitent.[156]

Scarron begins with his rumoured status as a *cul-de-jatte*, before going on to claim that people say he has no thighs and is placed on a table in a box, where he left to 'cause comme une Pie borgne'. This comparison of the disabled, chattering poet to a partially blind magpie refers to a seventeenth-century practice of gouging out one of a magpie's eyes, which was thought to cause them to mimic certain sounds.[157] In this sense, the simile, still in use today, is founded on another supercrip narrative, alluding to the belief that a magpie, when deprived of its sense of sight, compensates by developing its sense of hearing and its vocal expression to extraordinary levels. Scarron then cites a third rumour, which likewise hinges on the idea of overcoming one's disability. The image of a man whose impaired limbs cause him to require an elaborate pulley system to raise and lower his hat fits comfortably alongside the other supercrip caricatures of this section, caricatures that Scarron decries as untrue and undesired representations of him.

Each of these three rumours contains an image of bodily incompleteness that is overcome or compensated for – therein lies their supercrip nature – and

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[156] Ibid.

[157] Alain Rey and Sophie Chantreau, *Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions* (Évreux: Robert, 1991), p. 715.

the poet's stated objective in this self-portrait is to discredit them by writing an accurate description of himself to 'les empescher de mentir plus long-temps'.[158] It is ironic that Scarron should state a wish to discredit the three supercrip clichés of the *cul-de-jatte*, the *pie borgne*, and the pulley system given that, as the previous poem demonstrated, he endorses precisely this kind of narrative elsewhere in his work. Could it be that Scarron himself is among the malicious *beaux esprits* to whom he refers in the first sentence as having spread these rumours? It is certainly possible that the poet had come to regret promoting a caricatured self-image of the supercrip whose poetry translates bodily suffering into laughter, or that he had decided it was time to leave those clichés behind and try on a new authorial persona for a time. This desire would not prevent him from returning to the *cul-de-jatte* whenever he wanted to win sympathy. In a second, far shorter, self-portrait in verse written the year of the poet's death, Scarron introduces himself as 'Moy, qui suis dans un cul de jatte, / Qui ne remuë pied ny patte / Et qui n'ai jamais fait un pas'.[159] So it may well be that Scarron was happy to make self-deprecating remarks about his own disability whenever it suited him to do so, but did not appreciate other people mocking him using the same words and imagery.

The new authorial persona sketched by Scarron in 'Au lecteur, qui ne m'a jamais veu' closely resembles Singer's concept of the book-body and is a far more detailed example than the brief section of Saint-Pavin's self-portrait addressing the relationship between the literary text and the narrator's disabled body.[160] As explained in this chapter's introduction, Singer's book-body refers to a specific kind of transhuman body created by the prosthetic blending of human

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[158] Scarron (1947), p. 359.
[159] Scarron (1960), p. 264.
[160] Singer (2010), p. 178.

and text, where a textual insertion fills in for a missing body part. Scarron's

creation of his own book-body differs from Singer's model in several key ways

however. This particular aspect of the self-portrait also serves to complicate the

transhuman cyborg perspectives found in the two poems analysed above. There

are four examples in this self-portrait of how Scarron constructs his book-body

through a series of prosthetic connections between body and text. The first is

contained within his initial passage of self-description, which focuses on his

bodily silhouette. The following sentence describes him seated on his chair:

Mes jambes & mes cuisses ont fait premierement un angle obtus, & puis un angle égal, & enfin un aigu ; mes cuisses & mon corps en font un autre, et, ma teste se penchant sur mon estomac, je ne represente pas mal un Z.[161]

Where Saint-Pavin likened his body to artificial structures (the belltower and the

windmill), Scarron's chosen point of comparison in this sentence's concluding

simile is the letter Z.[162] In proffering this unusual signifier for the human body,

he prompts his reader to attempt a feat of geometry to transplant his body onto

a written character, or vice versa. The reader accordingly twists, elongates,

flattens, and reforms Scarron's body, perhaps several times, before arriving at a

satisfactory iteration of the letter Z, finally placing him back on his chair. The

imagined body of the author is altered by the reader to resemble a part of the

very same text that describes it.[163] This first instance of human-text hybridity is

one of analogy rather than synthesis, bringing the human body and the written

character closer together in physical appearance but not blending them together.

We might think an illustration would facilitate this process of bodily

manipulation, and Scarron does in fact include as a frontispiece to his work (Fig.

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[161] Scarron (1947), pp. 360-361.
[162] Crapo also comments on this choice of simile in her analysis of Scarron's self-portrait. Crapo (2020), p. 178.
[163] Ibid.

11). However, much like Saint-Pavin's use of negative space in his own self-portrait, the chosen engraving by Stefano della Bella obscures more than it enlightens. It is first worth noting that the choice of engraver is revealing, as Bella was influenced by Callot's *Les Gobbi* and Lagniet's illustrated proverbs, and worked in the same artistic tradition.[164] While Callot displayed his *bossus*' bodies for all to see, Bella depicts Scarron sat on a chair with his back to us, surrounded by a circle of nine gargoyle-like muses. In the background there sit two satyrs turning to grimace at him, while Pegasus sits atop what we can safely assume is Mount Parnassus. The only piece of descriptive information we can verify is that his head does indeed lean to one side (his right). Other than that, all we must judge by the reactions of the crowd of muses situated in front of Scarron's chair. They can see what we cannot, and their faces are contorted in various reactions ranging from amusement to fascination with a hint of disgust.

Scarron explains this unusual choice to illustrate himself from behind in purely practical terms, saying that 'le convexe de [s]on dos est plus propre à recevoir une inscription que le concave de [s]on estomac, qui est tout couvert de [s]a teste penchante'.[165] The inscription in question reads 'ÆTATIS SVÆ 31', a phrase that commonly denotes the subject's age in a portrait, and constitutes the second occurrence of prosthesis between text and body – the engraved body (itself made up of lines rather than flesh) is a substitute for the page as a recipient for the written word. The reader's imagined picture of Scarron's body is further complicated by the fact that, in his accompanying text, the author says that the inscription is received by the convex of his back, yet in the illustration it is clearly shown written on the back of his chair. This inconsistency between

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[164] Ibid., pp. 182-183.
[165] Scarron (1947), p. 360.

ÆTATIS SVÆ 31°

Fig. 11

image and text can be interpreted as a reference to how, in the poem discussed above, Scarron's chair and the porters who carry it are understood as integral to his cyborg embodiment, rather than as functional tools entirely separate from his own body. As far as the author is concerned, there is no stable and clear-cut distinction between body, text, and chair.[166]

The third instance of body/text prosthesis occurs towards the end of his piece in an aside that alleges to reveal the reason why Scarron has written this self-portrait to preface a book on an entirely unrelated subject: 'Aussi bien, cet Avant-propos n'est fait que pour grossir le Livre, à la prière du Libraire, qui a eu peur de ne retirer pas les frais de l'Impression. Sans cela il serait très-inutile, aussi bien que beaucoup d'autres'.[167] The second sentence of this remark could apply to Scarron's body just as much as his preface. To the uninformed it may appear useless, but in fact it helps him sell books. Whether or not we choose to believe this tall tale of the unhappy bookseller is up to us, but within it the body of the author supplements the body of the text, deemed too slight by the bookseller. In a reversal of Singer's model of the transhuman book-body, the body of the author is inserted into the text to supplement it and render it complete, not the other way around. Moreover, without this need to expand his text by a few pages to satisfy the bookseller, Scarron says that his self-portrait would have been 'très-inutile' and would perhaps not have even been written in the first place, replaced with a shorter and more conventional preface. Rather than one predating the other, as in transhuman embodiment, human and non-human are entirely co-dependent, and without one the other would not even exist – an embodiment that is more posthuman than transhuman.

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[166] The unstable relationship between body and prosthesis is explored in Sobchack (2006).

[167] Ibid., p. 361.

The fourth and final moment of prosthesis between body and text occurs in the concluding sentence of the portrait. When reading Scarron's passages of self-description, it is notable how often he uses the word 'assez'. It occurs eight times in total, all but one instance referring to his body in some way. For example, his face is 'assez plein', his eyesight is 'assez bonne' and he bears his pains 'assez patiemment'.[168] The concluding sentence, however, abruptly transfers this word, hitherto repeatedly associated with the poet's body, into the realm of the textual: 'Et il me semble que mon avant-propos est assez long & qu'il est temps que je le finisse'.[169] Scarron's preface has evidently reached the required length to satisfy the bookseller, and so both body and text come to an end. These third and fourth moments of body/text prosthesis move the piece out of the realm of transhumanism and into that of posthumanism. While a transhuman model of early modern disability would view the disabled body as a kind of cyborg – a human original who is constantly receiving non-human additions and alternations – a posthuman model would do as Scarron does towards the end of his portrait, and show how disability calls into question the existence of a normative human subject in the first place. Scarron recognises that language is the most fundamental prosthesis, and that the words we choose to talk about disability mould our understanding of what the human is and have a very real effect on who is allowed access to that category.[170] To return to one prominent example from Scarron's work, the *cul-de-jatte* is an image of bodily incompleteness that, as I have shown, the poet ironically refigures as one of enhancement and productivity. As such, the elevated perspective provided by

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[168] Ibid., pp. 360-361.
[169] Ibid., p. 361.
[170] Carey Wolfe ascribes this idea to Jacques Derrida. Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. xxv. See also David Wills, *Prosthesis* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 33.

his chair and the two porters who carry it aloft enables him to be a better observer of everyday Parisian life, while in the illustration accompanying this self-portrait, the author's chair is positioned to give him a good view of Mount Parnassus.

As he does elsewhere in his self-reflective writing, Scarron implies that his chair is not separate from his body but an integral part of it. At least, it is at this particular moment. Scarron's broader opinion on prosthesis is ambiguous and inconsistent. There are other instances in his works where the narrator receives unwelcome and disruptive reminders of the prosthetic nature of his embodied condition, such as when the porters' chattering interrupts his writing process. This unwelcome reminder can be understood is an instance where 'the prosthetic resist[s] its formerly organic function in an ensemble of action directed elsewhere. In these moments, it becomes an absolute other'.[171] Sobchack likens the relationship of (dis)harmony between self and prosthesis to metonymy and synecdoche, asking whether her own prosthetic leg is an example of the former or the latter.[172] In other words, is it part of the self or is it related to, but definitely separate from, the self? She concludes, like Scarron with his chair, that the answer varies from moment to moment. Echoing Montaigne, Scarron's piece posits that human and text are consubstantial and symbiotic. Within it we find not an untidy transhuman hybrid but a seamless blend of self and other, body and text, and subject and object, to such an extent that they are one and the same, and always have been. The singular, identifiable human self of transhumanism is revealed by Scarron to be itself a myth: a cyborg with no original, which is, in itself, a distinctly posthumanist conclusion. This is, of

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[171] Sobchack (2006), p. 27.
[172] Ibid., p. 25.

course, only true in this precise moment, for this particular version of the authorial persona, and is liable to change in the ever-shifting relationship between self and prosthesis. It is neither possible nor desirable to separate Paul Scarron the human being from Scarron the self-styled myth, or rather the various different Scarrons imagined by readers of his work and by gossipy *beaux esprits*.

CONCLUSION

My not-so-normal body speaks in poetry, not prose – in sparing words, in careful disarray. – Catherine Frazee[1]

Most explicit in the final chapter, poets have made analogies between *corps* and corpus throughout this thesis. In seventeenth-century *mondain* culture, the strictly regulated bodily regimes of the nascent aesthetic of *galanterie* were matched by equally regulated lyric forms that demanded repetition and refinement as part of the *galant* quest for aesthetic perfection in the pursuit of pleasure-giving. Not much space for innovation, one might think. In fact, as this thesis has shown, the opposite is true. The seventeenth-century lyric was such an effective vehicle for wide and varied representations of disability because of, rather than despite, its highly conventional nature. In poetry about disability, poetic conventions are frequently reinforced, manipulated, parodied, or subverted in much the same way as bodily regimes.

The introduction to this thesis asked how French lyric poets of the seventeenth century imagined disability, and how disability enabled these poets to challenge conventions. The five chapters have shown how seventeenth-century lyric verse is defined by its relationship to convention, and that this relationship is often articulated with recourse to disability. Even while operating broadly within the conventions of the *galant* love lyric, the pieces analysed in Chapter One rework familiar metaphors of love and fortune as blind in various complex ways, all in service of the poetic ideal of *variatio*, itself a convention.

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[1] Catherine Frazee, 'Body Politics', in *Saturday Night,* (2 September 2000), p. 18.

These metaphors reveal the precarity of able-bodiedness as a phantasmal concept underpinning *galant* masculinity, and demonstrate the proximity of disability to femininity in both *galant* and physiognomical discourse. The poems analysed in Chapter Two all strive to evoke embodied disability in the literary mode of grotesque realism, but differ in their attitude towards the aesthetic canon of *galanterie*. Some grotesque realist lyrics abject disabled female protagonists from that aesthetic canon in an act of boundary maintenance, while others profess sympathy for or attraction to similar protagonists as part of a calculated subversion of that canon. Chapter Three delved deeper into cabaret verse that aims to subvert many of the aesthetic ideals of *galanterie*, prizing bodily disorder, exaggerating physical difference, and deconstructing *galanterie*'s strict binarisms to view the world in murky shades of grey. It showed how the cabaret itself takes an active role in facilitating the blending of forms to create disabled bodies that are largely devoid of the negative connotations found in *galant* verse and are at the centre of carnivalesque spectacles of consumption and transformation. Chapter Four brought unconventional desire into the equation, studying how queerness is evoked in this poetic corpus and how it intersects with disability. It also examined how both queerness and disability impact upon the homosocial erotic triangle, a framework of desire found in many seventeenth-century lyrics. It concluded that male homoeroticism was highly compatible with the homosocial triangle, resulting in an intensification of pre-existing misogyny, while women who desired women and disabled men who desired men were excluded. Consequently, they had to reimagine this conventional framework of desire to account for their love and expand the range of erotic possibilities. Finally, Chapter Five centred the genre of the *portrait littéraire*, asking how two disabled poets reworked it in ways that anticipate

transhuman and posthuman philosophies. In these portraits, disability is situated as a productive alteration or challenge to the conventionally human, helping these poets better their craft and stand out from the crowd as captivating entertainers.

It is with some irony, then, that the final primary text discussed in this thesis on lyric verse was a section of prose inserted before a poem – not verse itself, but prosthetic to verse. Scarron's decision to write his longest and most compelling self-portrait in prose rather than verse is more than a little surprising, given what we know about the close connection drawn between disability and verse in critical assessments of his life and works. Such a seemingly counter-intuitive decision by the author highlights the limits of the critical tendency towards prosthesis when discussing literature by disabled authors and/or about disability.[2] From Gautier's remark that 'les déviations de ses vers se répétaient dans les déviations de son épine dorsale et de ses membres' to Génetiot's designation of Scarron as 'le poète du corps envahissant qui ramène tout à la constante inscription autobiographique de son corps torturé',[3] critics have been eager to read his unconventional poetry as a prosthetic extension of the author's body and as part and parcel of his disability. Scarron himself has at times encouraged this reading,[4] recognising that caricatures can be very powerful things if used to one's own advantage. In his self-portrait, however, he defies expectations, refusing to live up to the caricature he himself helped create, and emphasising that he has no wish to be limited to such straightforward interpretations of his body and body of work. Like

[2] Sobchack (2006), p. 19.
[3] Gautier (1856), p. 39; Génetiot (2011), p. 137.
[4] DeJean (1977), p. 12.

Saint-Pavin, he is a heterogenous being who is in a constant state of change, and writes with ease 'tantost en vers, tantost en prose'.[5]

Scarron and Saint-Pavin's unapologetic inconsistency and ironic self-subversion can be extended to all the primary texts in my corpus. The lyrics analysed in this thesis provide no coherent philosophy and no monolithic seventeenth-century understanding of disability. None of them make a claim to consistency, but, just like those two authors, prefer to revel in inconsistency as part of a lyric tradition that delighted in irony, paradox, and parodies of parodies. It would be all too easy to quote selectively and force these primary texts into a seventeenth-century model of disability – perhaps one based on the physiognomical idea of a 'défaut de Nature' – but the fact is that the physiognomical model is satirised or subverted as frequently as it is endorsed.[6] Far from there being a dominant interpretation of disability in the seventeenth century, it was a malleable phenomenon with a rich symbolic heritage that could be made into whatever the poet wanted or needed it to be in that particular moment.

It is easy to understand why disability was so attractive to writers of lyric verse, whose chosen craft demanded constant reinvention of familiar motifs in service of *variatio*. Some of the poets I have highlighted over the course of this thesis go above and beyond *variatio*, offering far more profound and original plays on the subject of disability. Scarron, Saint-Pavin, Rohan, and Théophile are four examples of such poets. It should be emphasised, though, that these authors were not adverse to following convention as and when it suited them, and this should not detract from their moments of striking innovation. Other

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[5] A quotation from Saint-Pavin's self-portrait. Ms-5418, p. 345.
[6] Porta (1655), p. 213.

poets say a lot about disability without intending to. D'Alibray offers perhaps the best example in his *blason* of a mouth, which demonstrates how poetic conventions such as the *blason*'s dissection of the female form reproduce disability as part of a process of idealisation. On a similar note, the regulatory aesthetic of g*alanterie* is found to be highly flexible, enabling a great deal of subversion and self-parody *within* its parameters. For this reason, Bakhtin's binary opposition between 'high' and 'low' culture – or classical and grotesque – does not ring true with my seventeenth-century French lyrical corpus. Eschewing extremes, the aesthetic of *galanterie* is a little bit of both.[7]

One common thread running through all the chapters of this thesis is that disability is thoroughly bound up in mechanisms of desire and ways of expressing passion in the seventeenth-century lyric. Following McRuer and Mollow, we might assume that disability and desire in this lyric corpus would abide by the binary schema of 'either tragic deficiency or freakish excess' of sexuality.[8] There are, indeed, several examples of disabled characters that do fit into this binary, the anonymous verse 'Contre une Dame louche & bossuë' being an example of the former category,[9] whereas Théophile's poem 'Contre une vieille' exemplifies the latter. In *galant* love lyrics, an excess of passion caused by a beloved's absence or indifference is often metaphorised as *aveuglement* or *perclusion*, as lovers are figuratively disabled by their jealousy, despair, or loneliness. Other lyrics work to break this mould, however. Anne and Jean, Maynard's two disabled characters analysed in Chapter Two, are desirable regardless of their disability, the former as a lover and the second as a

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[7] Viala (2008), pp. 54-55. Viala's comparison between *galanterie* and libertinage is particularly pertinent to a discussion of the limits of *galanterie*. See pp. 449-476.
[8] McRuer and Mollow (2012).
[9] Analysed in 'Perfect Deformity'.

superlative wit. Chapter Four showed how poetic expressions of queer desire are often contiguous with imagery of disability. Rohan's queering of Cupid as a metaphorical vehicle for her desire for another woman and Saint-Pavin's claiming of his disability as an expansion or enhancement of sexual pleasure are the two clearest examples. Finally, the self-portraits by Saint-Pavin and Scarron have the goal of making their authors attractive to the reader because of, not despite, their singular physicality, and it is worth repeating that Saint-Pavin's piece doubles as a queer love poem to Tyrcis. The lyrics analysed in this thesis demonstrate that seventeenth-century French lyrical expressions of desire cannot be fully understood without attending to the ubiquitous and varied imagery of disability that articulates their full complexities.

Nor is it possible to understand gender as separate from these intertwined discourses of disability and desire. In a literary landscape dominated by men, it is striking how many poems express a deep-seated fear of becoming like women, or like disabled people, frequently assumed to be one and the same. Men who fail to display the able-bodied vigour necessary to be successful in amorous combat are said to be figuratively *aveuglés* or *perclus*, both words that are repeatedly gendered as feminine and feminising. The old crone – the archetypal figure of abjection – is repulsive due to her combination of grotesque femininity with grotesque disability, and she is feared as a contaminating influence on the aesthetic of *galanterie*. Saint-Pavin intensifies the misogynistic connotations of disability in this corpus to describe a male protagonist who has sex with other men because he finds women's bodies repulsive, expressing this feeling via imagery of disability. The same poet also depicts a narrator coming to terms with his disability and his fear that he can no longer perform the vigorous displays of masculinity expected of men in love, finally adopting a stereotypically

feminine position and asking his lover to take the active role in courting him. Lauvergne and Rohan, the two named female poets in my corpus who address both queerness and disability, are acutely aware of the misogynistic framework of desire within which they operate. They recognise that queer love between women is particularly disabling in a homosocial system that treats women as property to be passed from one man to another. Consequently, their Sapphic verse expresses their sexualities in ways that approach disability – communication between lover and beloved must be non-verbal, and the blind figure of Cupid is deployed in defence of a narrator's love for Aymée, and Isabelle's absent beauty is driving her mad. The precise choice of metaphors and modes of expression in these lyrics can be read as forging a connection between Sapphic love and disability: both are antithetical to the homosocial model designed to sustain patriarchy and guarantee heterosexual reproductive futurity.[10]

As well as having implications for scholars who work on disability and seventeenth-century French literature, this thesis will be of interest to scholars working more broadly on the literary history of gender and sexuality. These topics are, as my work has shown, inseparably tied to disability in this lyric corpus. Indeed, one of the main implications of this thesis is that scholars of gender and sexuality have a lot to gain from incorporating a Critical Disability Studies methodology into their work, just as Feminist Studies and Queer Studies played a pivotal role in stimulating earlier work in Critical Disability Studies.[11] This thesis posits that seventeenth-century French understandings of gender and sexuality depended on disability for their construction and perpetuation – not

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[10] Farr (2019), p. 1.
[11] Garland-Thomson (2013); McRuer (2006).

just by way of analogy but as concepts that were, for all intents and purposes, mutually constitutive.[12] As a scholarly discipline, Seventeenth-Century French Studies would benefit from more research drawing out the tangled relationship between disability, gender, and sexuality in literature of this period. A study of lyric verse offers a snapshot of just some of the different ways disability was imagined by French authors of this century, and should not be taken as representative of the topic as a whole.

In particular, given that lyric verse was dominated by male authors, it would be a worthwhile project to examine imagery of disability in seventeenth-century women's writing, building on this thesis's analysis of poems by Deshoulières, Lauvergne, and Rohan to consider novels and letters by women authors negotiating bodily regimes that, as we have seen, so readily equate femininity with disability. Another worthwhile future project might investigate the role of religious discourse in seventeenth-century French literature about disability. The poems studied in this thesis are largely secular, and, aside from comic blasphemy and brief allusions to biblical scripture, do not engage with religious texts in any depth. For this reason, it has not been possible to pursue an inquiry into religion in this thesis, but I have no doubt that it would be a fruitful endeavour with other primary texts.

Literary theorists can also learn much from this thesis's approach to reading premodern texts alongside modern theoretical works. It has provided ample evidence in favour of Hobgood and Houston-Wood's idea that premodern representations of non-standard bodies 'might provide new models for theorizing disability that are simultaneously more inclusive and more specific than those

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[12] This remark is indebted to Farr, who argues that 'queer' and 'crip' are 'interconnected and mutually constitutive' in the eighteenth-century English novel. Farr (2019), pp. 1, 9.

currently available'.[13] At the same time, it cautions against the use of strictly defined theoretical models of disability to read premodern material that attests to the lack of such strict models. In order to avoid making theoretical assumptions about disability in the premodern era, this thesis finds that a constellation of different theories working in conjunction with or against each other is more fitting than just one overarching theoretical stance. A heterogenous theoretical framework that welcomes paradox and contradiction better respects the heterogeny of seventeenth-century primary sources and the wealth of different perspectives on disability they offer. To avoid charges of cherry-picking, theories should be carefully selected for their correlation to particular eccentricities of the primary texts in question. In this sense, different theories can be thought of as a range of precise tools kept in a tool box and only brought out when required to attend to a very specific problem presented by a primary text. Primary texts, not theory, should guide readings.

Following this principle, it is intellectually productive to work with rather than against anachronism in theoretical readings of disability. The adaptation and appropriation of modern theoretical frameworks for use alongside premodern primary sources helps to draw out similarities as well as differences between ways of thinking that might at first seem highly incompatible. Saint-Pavin and Scarron's anticipation of transhumanism and posthumanism in their self-portraits is one of the clearest examples. A second is the similarity between seventeenth-century reclaiming of the word 'perclus' and present-day efforts to reclaim 'crip'. A third is the parallels between grotesque seventeenth-century bodies and postmodern cyborgs. In addition to using theoretical approaches specifically designed for reading disability, it is productive to repurpose

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[13] Hobgood and Houston Wood (2013a), p. 10.

theoretical models that do not explicitly account for disability, such as the Bakhtinian grotesque and Sedgwick's homosocial triangle, to discover what happens if they are revisited with disability in mind. The process of revisiting and repurposing not only nuances existing theories but helps to highlight the merits of certain theoretical works that were not written with much attention to disability.

This thesis also raises important considerations for scholars engaged in editing the poems in my lyric corpus. It is a messy, inconsistent, hybrid corpus and editors should take care not to smooth over its many incongruities when producing scholarly editions for publication. While I accept that the modernisation of spelling is often desirable to make texts more accessible to readers unfamiliar with non-standardised seventeenth-century French, I cannot help but feel that lyrics lose some of their idiosyncratic character when modernised this way. In at least one case, modernisation of spelling interferes with the poet's rhyme scheme and makes it appear that they either made a mistake in their versification or deliberately chose an inexact rhyme.[14] Furthermore, a great part of the pleasure to be had in reading these non-standardised texts about non-standard bodies derives from the appreciation of formal incongruities, whether caused by the poets themselves or by the transcribers who committed their pieces of lyrical ephemera to the manuscript page. Though some poets did have single-author collections published during their lifetime, it was far more common for poetry to be compiled as a collective *recueil*, whether in print or in manuscript form, featuring work by a variety of named and anonymous authors. Lyric verse in the seventeenth century was a

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[14] See line 49 of Saint-Pavin's self-portrait. Lachèvre, Michaut, and Hammond all correct the poet's spelling to turn 'adret' into 'adroit'.

collective work undertaken by a grotesque entity of many hands, mouths, ears, and eyes, constantly rewriting, reciting, overhearing, reading, and laughing. As scholars, we take part in this process and it is up to us to do as many of these poets do and embrace the grotesque rather than seeking to minimise or expunge it.

This obligation is all the more pertinent when dealing with the deeply personal depictions of disability in this corpus. Despite pretentions towards nonchalance, disabled poets were constantly engaged in poetic acts of reputational management and self-fashioning.[15] Scarron even stage-managed his own death, writing a series of pieces under the collective title of 'Le Testament de Mr Scaron', which was to be the last of his works published during his lifetime.[16] Printed on 15 June 1660, just 114 days before he passed away,[17] this short collection includes a brief portrait in verse detailing the extreme pain of Scarron's final days,[18] a parodic will that leaves a series of comical objects to his friends (to Benserade: four hundred pounds of pomade, to Saint-Amant: a block of cheese, and to his wife: permission to remarry immediately),[19] a codicil to that will,[20] and a pair of commentaries on his portrait addressing himself in the third person, in which the narrator jokes that Nature must have exhausted herself making Scarron's poetic genius because she evidently had no strength left to finish assembling his body.[21] He also includes an epitaph, which seems a fitting end to this thesis that began with an account of the birth of Scarron as we have come to know him:

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[15] The same could be said of queer poets.

[16] Scarron (1960), pp. 263-279.

[17] Scarron died sometime between the night of the 6 of October and the morning of the 7. Ibid., p. 283.

[18] Ibid., pp. 264-265.

[19] Ibid., pp. 265-271.

[20] Ibid., pp. 271-272.

[21] Ibid., pp. 273-274.

Celuy qui cy maintenant dort
Fit plus de pitié que d'envie
Et souffrit mille fois la mort
Avant que de perdre la vie.

Passant, ne fais icy de bruit :
Garde bien que tu ne l'esveille,
Car voicy la premiere nuit
Que le pauvre Scaron sommeille.[22]

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[22] Ibid., p. 273.

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