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Knowledge and Representation through Baroque Eyes:
Literature and Optics in France and Italy ca. 1600-1640

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of

Romance Languages and Literatures

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Knowledge and Representation through Baroque Eyes:
Literature and Optics in France and Italy ca. 1600-1640

Abstract

The scientific discoveries and inventions of the early seventeenth century, which include Johannes Kepler's inverted retinal image, the refinement of lenses, and the invention of the telescope, transformed the status of vision in the acquisition of knowledge, thus modifying the nature of what is known and even challenging how things are known. Rather than focus on philosophical oppositions between seeing and looking, or on artistic practices such as linear perspective or anamorphosis in literature's engagement with vision, this study privileges instead a dialogue with early modern optics. Deriving a theoretical framework from the scientific debates about vision and its instruments, which brings attention to the historically charged concepts of mediated perception, the visible and the invisible, and natural and mechanical sight, I examine how French and Italian authors in the early seventeenth century engaged with ocular and optical motifs to question the sense of sight and its authority.

My corpus describes vision as indispensable to the observation and knowledge of the world, although the texts also expose the vulnerability of the sense of sight to error because of natural limitations or an inability to recognize the true form behind deceitful appearances. As such, they elucidate a crisis of knowledge and representation that characterizes the earlier decades of the seventeenth century. Based on the dynamics between the eye and visual aids as they appear in the scientific community, I identify two distinct visual modes in the literary texts, which correspond to the natural eye and the instrumentalized one, assisted and enhanced by a lens. The authors considered here, which include Béroalde de Verville, Traiano Boccalini, Agrippa d'Aubigné, and the writers involved in the polemics around Giambattista Marino's *L'Adone* and Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid*, present the two visual modes as existing in tension, which I define as "baroque vision." The analyses of the literary texts demonstrate how the integration of lenses, be it through explicit references to optical devices or through more abstract portrayals that parallel the operations of the eye and the instrument, becomes emblematic of other concerns, from debates regarding discontent about dissimulation to discussions of poetic practice.

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To my parents, Safoura & Saeed

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PART I.

PREMISE

Chapter 1.
Introduction

In the famous tapestry cycle that adorns the walls of the Musée Cluny and whose creation dates to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, a golden-haired maiden and a unicorn figure as protagonists in the representation of the five senses (Figure 1). Against animal and floral motifs that are woven into the red fabric, *La Vue*, which is dedicated to the sense of sight, stages the *dame* with the unicorn at its center and frames them by two trees and a lion bearing the standard of the Le Viste family, who had commissioned the piece. The mythical creature kneels against the young woman, and the allegory is encapsulated by one sole object: the mirror held by the maiden and in which the beholder discerns the reflection of the unicorn's head. We may also be tempted to interpret the presence of the spotted feline or lynx-like figure in the foreground as significant, for while the animal is present in some of the other tapestries in the margins, its central position could be used to highlight the visual acuity associated with it.

By the early decades of the seventeenth century, another "Allegory of the Senses" cycle by Brueghel the Elder and Rubens multiplies the objects and concepts associated with the sense of sight (Figure 2). Countless paintings of various genres – from portraits to biblical scenes – and sculptures share the space with a range of scientific objects and gadgets. Scattered throughout the scene, but mostly concentrated on the left side of the canvas are drawing, surveying, mathematical, and astronomical instruments. The depiction of vision in the tapestry as the act of seeing and representation acquires greater depth in the painting, where the sense's domain expands to include the observation and representation of the natural world, the preservation – through visualization – of textual sources, historical moments and figures, and powerful patrons. The sense of sight becomes the central node in a web that extends not only to the visual arts or to the science of optics (which, prior to the seventeenth century and its more exclusive designation as the study of light, was more broadly associated with vision and considered insperable from perspective[1]), but to areas like architecture, mathematics, astronomy, cartography, history, and literature.

[1] A. Mark Smith, *From Sight to Light*: *The Passage from Ancient to Modern Optics* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Figure 1. La Dame à la licorne: La Vue.Tapestry. 15th-16th c. Musée de Cluny, Paris.

Figure 2. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens Sight. Oil on canvas. 1617. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

It is difficult for the eye to focus on any particular point in such a crowded and richly decorated scene, where the effect of linear perspective draws our attention to the outdoors. The light shining through the opening in the upper-right corner entices us to cast our eyes around the wall, while the sumptuous canvases and the curious collection of objects invite our eyes to explore what is inside the room. Venus and Cupid, though not quite at the center of the canvas, attract our gaze as well, for they are the only two "real" figures populating a space whose other human forms appear inside a frame. Beneath Venus's hands, we find a magnifying glass, and at the feet of the Goddess and her son, two telescopes and a wide array of spectacles. The mirror, which appeared as the unique optical device in the tapestry, is displaced to the margins (Figure 3). It is this aspect of vision – vision and its instruments – that informs my own exploration of the topic, and my treatment of the subject will privilege lenses and lenticular objects over specular ones.

Figure 3. Peter Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens. Sight (detail). Oil on canvas.1617. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Just as this particular detail of the painting is part of a bigger and more complex picture, my discussion of vision and its instruments occurs within a broader network of considerations. The same painting that highlights the importance of the sense of sight in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge also warns the beholder of the eye's limitations and therefore undermines its authority. The inclusion of paintings within the painting raises questions about the relationship between an object and its representation;

the use of linear perspective or *perspectiva artificialis* averts us to the illusion and distortion that underlie the realistic depiction. The peacock cautions us against appearances and ostentation, and the fountain next to it warns of the dangers of trusting images. The painting that occupies the attention of Venus shows Christ healing a blind man, but behind the miracle is a recognition of an ocular pathology. The presence of the telescope also emphasizes the limitations of the natural eye, which cannot see beyond a certain distance, and finally, the variety of spectacles scattered on the floor and at the feet of the two figures recalls not only the deception associated with lenses – reinforced by the monkey who wears them – but also points to the eye's susceptibility to ailments and degeneration. If our first impression of the painting conveys the idea of vision as inseparable from and indispensable to knowledge, a closer examination reveals a crisis of knowledge and representation that subtly hides beneath the seductive images, thus making this depiction of the sense of sight a most suitable emblem of vision's status and authority in the early decades of the seventeenth century.

The publication of Johannes Kepler's *Ad Vitellionem paralipomena* in 1604 and the transformation of lenses from artisanal to scientific objects,[2] exemplified by Galileo's refined telescope and his celestial observations (*Siderius nuncius*, 1610), mark a turning point in the theorization of vision and the application of optical technologies. The eye, which according to Kepler's conclusions functions in an identical manner to a *camera obscura*, is reduced to a pinhole, a lens, and a screen. The image inside the eye, or the *pictura*, whose location Kepler correctly identifies as the retina, is an effect of light and color, and it is also reversed and inverted. The process of vision and the production of the *pictura* is therefore a purely mechanical one, a revelation that dismisses all previous theories of a sentient and selective ocular surface and which eliminates the human subject from this particular step.[3] As for the instruments and their artificial lenses, neither lenses nor eyeglasses are seventeenth-century inventions. The spectacles date back to the late thirteenth century, though improvements in grinding techniques and experimentation with combining lenses over the course of the sixteenth century eventually led to the creation of the telescope in Holland in 1608, which was then

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[2] Johannes Kepler, *Ad Vitellionem paralipomena quibus Astronimae pars optica traditur* (Frankfurt: Claudium Marinum & Joannis Aubrii, 1604).

[3] See David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981). Also see the more recent work by A. Mark Smith, *From Sight to Light*.

enhanced by Galileo, who pointed it to the heavens.[4] The *Sidereus Nuncius* is the fruit of his observations of the Moon, the Milky Way, and the previously invisible bodies circling the planet Jupiter.[5] His findings revealed that the Moon, with its earthlike craters, was more akin to an imperfect and corruptible pearl than to a celestial body, that the nebulous formation seen by the naked eye in the skies was in reality a collection of densely packed stars, and that there were objects that far transcended the visual field of the natural eye and whose existence could only be known through the use of an instrument.

These scientific discoveries and inventions ushered in during the early decades of the seventeenth century transformed the status of vision, thus contesting the nature of what was known and even how things were known. These conclusions challenged previous theories about seeing, they motivated the shift in the discipline of optics from one examining vision to a study of light, and they confirmed the Copernican organization of the universe, thus sounding alarms in both secular and religious spheres as they threatened the validity of long-established world systems. The focus of this study, however, is not on the astronomical and metaphysical consequences of these findings, but on their implications for the authority of visual perception in the acquisition of knowledge. This inquiry is framed by the concepts of mediated perception, the visible and invisible, and the relationship between the different mechanisms of vision, namely the natural eye, the eyeglasses, and the telescope. In "Knowledge and Representation through Baroque Eyes: Literature and Optics in France and Italy ca. 1600-1640," I examine how French and Italian authors in the early seventeenth century engage with optics to portray the shifting relationship between seeing and knowing, and how developing theories and growing tensions between the naked eye and visual aids provide them with a model to interpret, understand, and represent reality in their literary works.

The role played by optical technologies in the mechanization of perception, and the understanding of this process as a mediated one has been duly emphasized among historians of science. In the two-volume

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[4] See Vincent Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision from Spectacles to Telescopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2006); Albert Van Helden, *The Invention of the Telescope* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1977).

[5] Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus nuncius* (Venice: Thomam Baglionum, 1610).

study *La Mutation du visible* whose first volume focuses on the seventeenth century,[6] Philippe Hamou examines the writings and practices in the field of optics, as well as the rise and reception of optical technologies and instruments, illustrating how "la perception instrumentalisée du visible,"[7] solicited a redefinition of the very notion of visibility. Hamou's book remains for the most part within the boundaries of the scientific and philosophical domains, which the more recent *Baroque Science*, co-authored by two historians and philosophers of science, Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, attempts to remedy.[8] Like Hamou, their study focuses on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and though the scope of the science is not limited to optics, the two scholars situate the New Science within a larger historical and cultural setting. In an introduction that underscores the parallels between seventeenth-century science and painting, they qualify the New Science as a "Baroque phenomena,"[9] and they declare that their aim is to dismantle the opposition that pins a "'rigorous,' 'orderly,' and 'logical'" science against a "'sensual,' 'distorted,' and 'paradoxical'" art ,[10] proposing instead to expose the anxieties and tensions within and brought forth by the science and natural philosophy.

The more pictorial notions of linear perspective and its distortion – anamorphosis –, and the connections between looking and seeing, which have been prevalent in the approach of many scholars to the discussion of vision in the literature of the Baroque, are largely absent from my own, where the theoretical framework is informed first and foremost by the history of science rather than psychoanalysis or art. As such, my work is much closer to those of scholars like Enrique García Santo-Tomás,[11] Joanna Picciotto,[12] Eileen

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[6] Philippe Hamou, *La Mutation du visible* : *Essai sur la portée épistémologique des insturments d'optique au XVII siècle,* vol. 1, *Du Sidereus nuncius de Galilée à la Dioptrique cartésienne* (Villenueive-d'Ascq, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion: 1999).

[7] Ibid., 20.

[8] Raz Chen-Morris and Ofer Gal, *Baroque Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2013.

[9] Ibid., 9.

[10] Ibid., 7.

[11] Enrique García Santo-Tomás, *La Musa refractada: literatura y óptica en la España del Barroco* (Madrid: Iberoamerica/ Frankfurt am Main: Vervvuert, 2015).

[12] Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Reeves,[13] Elizabeth Spiller,[14] and the collection of essays in the recent volume edited by Alina Payne,[15] than to those of Jurgis Baltrušaitis,[16] Christine Buci-Glucksmann,[17] or Marco Arnaudo.[18] By embracing the anxieties that emerge from and within the scientific community, the analyses that follow are an exploration of how literary texts treat those same concerns, be it as a result of direct access to and awareness of the scientific material or because of existing preoccupations that coincide and resonate with the scientific findings. In other words, this is not a purely causal relationship where the scientific developments produce the ideas that writers will later express. Instead, the metaphoric language with regard to visual experiences precedes the theories and technologies, but the scientific developments in optics at the beginning of the seventeenth century allow these images – be it the notion of *seeing through* or *seeing beyond* something, or that of a topsy-turvy world – to become literal. The findings in the scientific domain, do not create but fuel prevailing concerns about vision's epistemological role among writers, and the instruments enable writers to give form to their pre-existing ideas and arguments about vision by encapsulating them in a concrete body.

If illusion and the cult of appearances are one of the characterizing elements of the Baroque, as both period and aesthetic, we can understand why vision's authority may be compromised. The discrepancy between exterior and interior, appearance and essence, is one that permeates the texts of the second part: rather than perpetuate the illusion, the authors call for its dismantling by searching for new ways of seeing.

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[13] Eileen Reeves, *Evening News*: *Optics, Astronomy, and Journalism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); *Galileo's Glassworks: The Telescope and the Mirror* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[14] Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[15] Alina Payne, ed., *Vision and its Instruments: Art, Science, and Technology in Early Modern Europe* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

[16] Cf. Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Anamorphoses: ou Thaumaturgus opticus* (Paris : Flammarion, 1984).

[17] Cf. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Folie du voir: De l'esthétique baroque* (Paris: Galilée, 1986). Buci-Glucksmann's much cited text is an archeology of the baroque gaze situated at the intersections of philosophy and psychoanalysis, and it studies the seventeenth century and the Baroque's particular and peculiar relationship to sight.

[18] Cf. Marco Arnaudo, *Il Trionfo di Vertunno: Illusioni ottiche e cultura letteraria nell'età della Controriforma* (Lucca: M. Pacini Fazzi, 2008). This study provides a very thorough and convincing illustration of the presence of *arcimbolderie*, anthropomorphic landscapes and anamorphosis in seventeenth-century Italian literature, demonstrating how the thinkers and writers engage with the artistic tastes and practices of their time.

The same opposition between the eye and the instrument arises in discussions about knowing and judging literature, as growing anti-Aristotelian sentiment and a desire for greater freedom from strict poetic rules polarize readers in their approach to text. During these early decades of the seventeenth century, the role of vision in the acquisition of knowledge, rather than considered in relation to reason, is portrayed by these writers as a tension between the natural eye and an instrumentalized one. This is "baroque vision," and the literary corpus studied here adopts it to represent other concerns, from discontent about dissimulation and hypocrisy to debates about poetic practice.

In the study of instruments throughout the analyses of the literary texts, I consider the telescope alongside the spectacles, even if the latter is not a seventeenth-century invention. One reason for this inclusion is the presence of the eyeglasses in the literary texts themselves, but they also merit attention as a lenticular object in general – a means of distortion and capable of refraction – and as a counterpoint to the telescope, for the two instruments serve different functions and therefore provide us with different theoretical models of instrumentalized vision. The microscope is absent from these pages, for while proto-microscopes did exist during the earlier decades of the seventeenth century, they are more prominent and present in the literature of the second half. Mirrors, too, are relatively rare in these examinations, for if they were the optical emblem of the Renaissance, it is the lens that more accurately characterizes the seventeenth century and the role of literature.[19]

If the study has been limited to the early seventeenth century, it is because the turn of the century coincides with the period that marks a transition from one governing order of thought to another as an intrinsic relationship that once held words and things together – like that between outside object and the *pictura* on the retina – is on the brink of dissolution.[20] Don Quixote may be the hinge that allows Foucault to bridge one episteme to another, but the actual period of transition embodied by the (mis)adventures of the "ingenioso hidalgo" receives cursory attention. The advent of Kepler's theories and Galileo's observations

[19] See Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence,* 15. Picciotto makes an identical claim about English literature of the seventeenth century, even though the literary corpus in her study begins at the endpoint of mine.

[20] Michel Foucault, "Représenter," in *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

instigates a period of flux, and the dynamic between the natural eye and the artificial instrument – whether they are equal or if one is superior to the other – is the subject of contentious debates within the scientific community during these first decades.[21] In effect, this is a transitional space between the "Renaissance imagined mimesis" and the "experimenatalist authors" of Joanna Picciotto's study, a new breed of virtuosi who "transformed the inert looking glass into a penetrating lens."[22] By recognizing telescopes and microscopes as instruments used in the active pursuit and production of knowledge, by associating the eyes of Adam with the two instruments, by suggesting that texts of the 1640s included optical devices on their frontispieces to equate text and lens, Picciotto portrays an overall positive reception of lenticular instruments that does not quite yet correspond to the literary (or scientific) landscape of the earlier decades of the seventeenth century, where faith in the insturment's authority still coexists alongside profound mistrust. In these early decades, despite the increased scientific understanding of the function of lenses and inspite of their benefits to correcting vision and propelling discovery in previously inaccessible and invisible places, their reception remained mixed as lenses and the instruments that were derived from them continued to be associated with deception and illusion. It is precisely in this murky window of time that my study is situated, where one system of thought, while still in existence, begins to unravel, and a second system, while far from being formed, begins to exist in embryonic form.

The tension between the natural eye and the instrumentalized one, as it unfolds in both science and literature, participates in this shift, for the literary texts examined here explore these same dynamics during a pivotal moment of transformation for the authority of vision and for the perception of reality. The integration of instruments in these texts, while at times indicative of a keen understanding of the science behind them, also attests to the power of literature, which infuses them with new meaning and adapts them as emblematic of pre-existing ideas. Furthermore, the inclusionof optical devices also creates a new space for the consideration of the subject. The perception and understanding of reality by a viewing subject, which also implies an act of interpretation, is the thread that weaves the subsequent chapters together. If the seventeenth

[21] Chen-Morris and Gal, *Baroque Science*, esp. ch. 3.

[22] Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence*, 13.

century eliminates the subject from being an agent in the creation of the retinal image,[23] the subject's role then lies primarily in the interpretation of that image. Conversely, the perception of that image, or of reality more generally, depends in large part on the lens through which it is beheld, be it the natural eye or the artificial instrument. The next chapter in this introductory part elaborates on the influence of the object on the subject who uses it.

"Knowledge and Representation through Baroque Eyes" is divided into three parts. In addition to the overall introduction, the first part, "Premise," offers an overview of both the scientific and cultural history of eyeglasses and telescopes and an analysis of *Le Moyen de parvenir* (1614 c.) by the polymath François Béroalde de Verville. By focusing on references to vision and to eyeglasses, this chapter heralds the major threads that the subsequent chapters develop more thoroughly. The examination of glasses and vision in *Le Moyen* emphasizes the contingent nature of knowledge, the changing cultural climate that fosters its democratization, as well as the role of the subject in the interpretation of reality.

Parts Two and Three, "Optics and the Literature of Socio-Political Discontent," and "Optics and Literary Polemics," are in effect two diptychs, comprised of one Italian and one French panel and preceded by a brief introductory chapter that outlines the key historical and theoretical considerations that unite them. The Italian authors and texts of this study are more explicit in their inclusion of and engagement with optical instruments, which should come as no surprise given the prominence of the glass industry in Italy. Moreover, Italy is also the birthplace of eyeglasses and, if not the telescope, then of the colossal figure of Galileo and his observations. All of the Italian writers featured here were familiar with Galileo and his instrument, and some even knew him personally, so their references to visual aids comes from a direct awareness of the instruments and their functions, even if the authors do not always faithfully adhere to these operations. In France, on the other hand, the references are more scarce, and the social network less concrete, but herein lies the value of the comparison to the Italian writers. The juxtaposition of French and Italian texts affirms that the rarity or absence of visual aids in the French texts does not impede them from engaging with similar questions to the

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[23] Raz Chen-Morris and Ofer Gal, "Baroque Optics and the Disappearance of the Observer: From Kepler's Optics to Descartes' Doubt," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 71, no. 2 (2010): 191-217.

Italian works about vision and its authority. Where references to objects may be absent, the opposition between the naked eye and an instrumentalized one as implied visual modes is vividly present.

"Optics and the Literature of Socio-Political Discontent" offers an analysis of *I Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1612-1615) by the *lauretano* Traiano Boccalini, and the Protestant poem, *Les Tragiques* (1616) by Agrippa d'Aubigné. Both texts share a sense of disenchantment with contemporary society and the prevalence of artifice, and both use an aesthetic of refraction to represent the world in the topsy-turvy state that it is in. Both simultaneously depend on and question the authority of vision in knowing reality and therefore call for a different way of viewing the world that will expose the true essence that is concealed behind deceitful appearances.

Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (Chapter 4) is composed of over 300 news bulletins over three volumes that report on current affairs from the land of Apollo. The author interrogates the reliability of vision in the acquisition of knowledge as he opposes the authority of the *menante* or reporter, whose eyewitness accounts constitute the content of the *ragguagli*, against the very content of the newsletters, which warn against the prevalence of artifice and dissimulation in contemporary society. Boccalini proposes the *occhiali politici* as a solution to preserving vision's epistemological validity and value, for these glasses allow the viewing subject to see reality as it is – inverted and corrupt – rather than as it appears. These glasses, however, appear alongside a variety of others, whose effects are less benevolent and enlightening. Playing on the distorting property of lenses and their dual reception as manipulative or corrective, Boccalini's equation of lens and text highlights the potential that literature has in shaping the individual, and as a result, it identifies text and lens as instruments of power.

In d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques* (Chapter 5) the poet-narrator is an eyewitness to a version of France's religious wars that officials have attempted to obfuscate. In an effort to counter the Catholic narrative, d'Aubigné reveals the weakness of the eye by demonstrating its limitations in uncovering the true essence and motives of rulers, though he reclaims the eye's authority by advocating for mediation through an agent elected by God. In addition, the Huguenot poet adopts two distinct visual modes of representation, one of

reflection and the other of refraction, to paint vividly realistic images of what he has witnessed during France's religious wars and to strip objects of their appearances and reveal them in their true, denatured state.

Part Three, "Optics and Literary Polemics," examines two literary quarrels, one around Giambattista Marino's *L'Adone* (1623) and the other around the dramatist Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637). If the previous part did not differentiate between telescopes and eyeglasses and was instead concerned with the operation of lenticular instruments more generally, here, the distinction between eyeglasses and telescopes becomes significant. The two instruments, which correspond to the functions of correction and extension respectively, provide two separate theoretical models of instrumentalized vision, which are in turn indicative of different relationships to a given norm. Furthermore, the natural eye and the instrument appear as two opposing means of knowing and judging a piece of literature.

Chapter 7 analyzes a group of texts that comprise a literary polemic around the *L'Adone* written by the Neapolitan poet Giambattista Marino, and it focuses on his rival, Tommaso Stigliani, the curious choice of title for his criticism of Marino's work (*Dell'occhiale*, 1629), and the exploitation of the optical reference in the works of Stigliani's respondents. The chapter challenges the currently accepted interpretation of the word "occhiale" as "telescope," for it could also designate a pair of spectacles. The attitude of the individual writers in the polemic toward optical devices is therefore revelatory of the dynamic they envision between writer, reader, and critic and what they believe determines the value and success of a work of literature. Where the critic, privileging Aristotelian precepts, relies on instruments to instruct readers about literary norms and to enforce their implementation, his respondents point to the errors of the instrument to praise instead the natural eye or the affective response of the readers.

The final chapter focuses on the *Querelle du Cid*, in which similar oppositions between an analytical reading and an affective response erupt in the span of one year and thirty-something documents. The novelist and dramatist George de Scudéry emerges as the primary rival and detractor, and his *Observations* denounce Corneille's lack of regard for Aristotle's precepts. Corneille's supporters, like Marino's, cite instead the authority of the audience, and the public's indifference toward the rules of dramatic poetry, to defend the play's merits. Unlike the Italian polemic, however, the *Querelle* introduces a third party, the *Académie Française*,

whose judgement, in favoring regulation and normative practices in both the creation and evaluation of literary works announces the end of the tensions between the natural and the instrumentalized eye as mechanisms of knowledge. The official triumph of the instrument over the eye, and the move toward the rationalization of the senses that characterizes the pages of Descartes's *Discours de la Méthode* and *Dioptrique* (1637) marks the arrival of a new order and anticipates the rise of another ocular regime.

Chapter 2.
The World through the Lens of Béroalde's Cheeky Glasses

-- *Tu rêves: il n'y a que cinq sens, et tu dis six.*
-- *Oui, j'ai dit six.*
-- *Et qui est le sixième?*
-- *C'est le sens du cul.*[1]

Considered to be the final work of the polymath Béroalde de Verville (1556-1626), *Le Moyen de parvenir* (1614 c.) gathers philosophers, thinkers, and writers from Antiquity to the author's own contemporaries at a banquet, though unlike the Platonic or even Renaissance feasts upon which it is based, the discussions, rather than being profound or erudite, revolve around food, drink, and anecdotes colored by obscenity. There is, however, a strong critique underlying the jolly and inebriated banter, which has earned *Le Moyen* the labels of parody and satire. The text has also piqued the attention of scholars because of its arcane qualities and its significance with respect to questions of knowledge. While Béroalde is in many ways closer to his sixteenth-century predecessors than to the authors of the Classical Age, his writing challenges and ridicules the epistemological systems of the Renaissance and pushes the apprehensions that arise from them to their very limit. The place of vision in Béroalde's considerations on knowledge is a central one, and the question of perspective or point of view is a familiar one for both Béroalde and his scholars.[2] His readers will encounter references to anamorphosis in his other works, including *Le Voyage des princes Fortunés*, *Le Cabinet de Minerve*, in addition to the *Le Moyen de parvenir*, whose final chapter invites the reader to approach the book "de son vrai biais" (CXI 450), that is to say, from an oblique rather than a direct angle. Presented by the narrator as the equivalent of an anamorphotic painting in its concluding pages, the book thus hints at its own

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[1] Béroalde de Verville, *Le Moyen de parvenir*, ed. Michel Renaud (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), XXXI 132. All references to *Le Moyen de parvenir* are taken from this edition unless noted otherwise, and text references are to chapter and page number.

[2] The scholarship on the topic of steganography, coded writing, trompe l'œil, or anamorphosis in Béroalde's *oeuvre* is extensive. For works that refer to or more fully address these topics in *Le Moyen*, see Barbara Bowen, "Béroalde de Verville and the Self-Destructing Book," in *Essays in Early French Literature*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Jerry C. Nash (York, SC: French Literature Publications, 1982), 170; Tom Conley, "Mapping Beroalde: Between *Le Palais des curieux* and *Le Moyen de parvenir*," in *Studies on Béroalde de Verville*, ed. Michael J. Giordano (Paris; Seattle: Papers on Seventeenth Century Literature, 1992), esp. 85,86,96,97,107; Neil Kenny, *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Conceptions of Knowledge* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1991); Janis L. Pallister, *The World View of Béroalde de Verville Expressed through Baroque Style in* Le Moyen de Parvenir (Paris: J. Vrin, 1979), esp. ch. 6; Michel Renaud, *Pour une lecture du* Moyen de parvenir *de Béroalde de Verville*, rev.ed. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 68-86.

structure as one bearing hidden meaning. This visual aspect of *Le Moyen* is perhaps the one that has received the most attention from scholars, and it is also one that has a direct scientific counterpart. If anamorphosis plays with the notions of the visible and the invisible in its attempt to reveal an image that is concealed behind or embedded in another, an optical device like the telescope fulfills a similar function by guiding the eye to that which it cannot ordinarily see. Secondly, the concept of anamorphosis is one that is inseparable from that of perspective, both as artistic technique (the deformation of linear perspective) and point of view (the position from which a viewer beholds an object). This operation has an optical equivalent as well, for lenses alter the way in which we perceive the world as they correct our visual ailments like near- or far-sightedness, filter our vision through a specific color, blur our sight when their diopters do not align with that of our eyes, and even invert images because of their shape. The reading of *Le Moyen* in the pages that follow adopts this second visual axis – the one based not on pictorial interpretations, but on the science of vision and its instruments. The dialogue between the textual references and optical instruments and their cultural, social, and scientific history elucidates the impact of lenses on the viewing subject. Through this brief survey, we shall see that the eye in *Le Moyen de parvenir*, often aligned with the lower body, brings into question the nature of knowledge – recognized as contingent and in a state of perpetual flux – and challenges both its traditional producers and consumers. In addition, the text also participates in the transformation of the subject from an agent of perception to one of interpretation. The consequences of this dynamic between the lenticular object and the viewing subject will inform the analyses of the subsequent chapters.

Glasses: A Historical and Cultural Overview

Unlike the telescope, the invention of eyeglasses dates not to the seventeenth century, but to the thirteenth, in the 1280s, around Pisa.[3] The early glasses, oftentimes used in conjunction with concave mirrors to enlarge text and facilitate reading, and primarily used by the elderly at their inception,[4] are thought to have

[3] See Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision.*

[4] Ibid., 21.

been for presbyopia (farsightedness brought on by age).[5] It was not until the middle of the fifteenth century that discussions of myopia began to emerge, and the first documentation of concave glasses for shortsightedness appeared only later in that century.[6] The lenses were made of either glass or crystal, the latter being of superior quality and therefore destined for more privileged users. Early on in the fourteenth century, however, glass lenses were refined to achieve a quality closer to that of crystal.[7] An improvement in lens quality along with a more substantial understanding of combining lenses and mirrors saw the advent of two-lens tubes or spyglasses and other predecessors to the Dutch telescope.[8]

Figure 4. A pair of iron eyeglasses, Italian-made. 16th-17th c. Museo dell'Occhiale, Pieve, Italy

It was during the sixteenth century that works on spectacles and the trade of spectacle making became an object of fascination for people outside of the field,[9] but this period also saw the emergence of theoretical works about lenses, whose science was only starting to be understood. Like the telescope, many of the

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[5] Ibid., 6.

[6] Ibid., 82.

[7] Ibid., 10-11.

[8] Ibid., 216. On the advent of the Dutch telescope, see Van Helden, *The Invention of the Telescope*. Also see Reeves, *Galileo's Glassworks*. Reeves remarks that the language used to describe existing visual aids and instruments was adapted to speak about the telescope, which was, for instance, depicted as a "superior version of common reading glasses, as if it had been designed above all for the remote and potentially covert processing of textual information, or more generally, espionage," (ibid., 10-11).

[9] Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*, 225. Ilardi cites Tomaso Garzoni's *Piazza universale* (1585) and Benito Daza de Valdés' *Uso de los antojos* (1623) as examples.

developments and modifications that eyeglasses underwent were purely empirical, grounded in the practical and in trial-and-error. The full theoretical and scientific implications of lenses were unknown and untreated by those who made them, and up until the sixteenth century, the benefits of lenses were thought to be in their ability to manipulate distances and magnify objects rather than in their capacity to readjust the convergence of light before it entered the eye. Francesco Maurolico (1495-1575) appears to be the first to acknowledge this corrective property in his *Photismi*, published posthumously in 1611,[10] and though his work signaled significant steps in the revision of the Perspectivist theory,[11] it was not without its limitations. Still adhering to the conventional theories inherited from his predecessors, Maurolico continued to consider the crystalline lens to be sentient and the image inside the eye to be right-side-up, despite the refraction of the rays inside the eye.[12]

If eyeglasses were in circulation long before the seventeenth century, and the conditions of myopia and presbyopia as well as the functions of concave and convex lenses already known prior to this period, what, then, is unique to this moment in their history? In the centuries preceding Kepler's writings on optics, optical images inside the eye were thought to be subjective rather than objective, regardless of disparities among proponents of extramission (rays emitted from the eyes of the viewing subject to apprehend objects) and intromission (rays emerging from objects and entering the subject's eye).[13] As A. Mark Smith perspicuously explains, both models, respectively embodied by Ptolemy and Alhazen, involve an element of "perceptual agency," or "sensitive selection," wherein the eye actively chooses the rays that eventually penetrate the crystalline lens.[14] Arising from his studies on the *camera obscura* that eventually led him to

[10] For a more detailed account of Maurolico's contribution, see Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, 178-182.

[11] The term "Perspectivist" refers to "a member of the mathematical tradition in optics which included Euclid, Ptolemy, al Kindi, Alhazen, Roger Bacon, Witelo, John Pecham, and others." Lindberg, *Theories of Vision,* 251n1. See ch. 6 for a more extensive explanation of this tradition.

[12] For a discussion of the conservative nature of Maurolico's theories, see A. Mark Smith, "Ptolemy, Alhazen and Kepler and the Problem of Optical Images." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 8 (1998): 36-37; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, 181.

[13] For a more thorough examination of these two theories and their transformation until the seventeenth century, see Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*.

[14] "Ptolemy's visual-ray model emphasizes the intentionality of the viewer in the visual act. Because they are picked out point-by-point by visual rays impinging on visible surfaces, the resulting images are absolutely subjective." Smith, "Ptolemy, Alhazen, Kepler," 19; "According to Alhazen's account, then, optical images entail perceptual agency in their actual formation. The visual impressions produced in the crystalline lens are the product of sensitive selection, of a sort

understand the mechanism of vision, Kepler introduced significant revisions to previous theories,[15] which Smith efficiently summarizes: "As Kepler describes it, the lens is no longer a sensitive selector of visual impressions. Nor, for that matter, is it a selector of any kind. It is a mere optical focusing-device, with the eye as a whole serving as a camera and the retina as a screen."[16] The eye, then, as mere lens and screen, is reduced to an object or instrument, and the viewing subject becomes a vestigial element in the process of image formation.[17]

The scarcity of scientific literature on lenses up until the late sixteenth century does not offer an accurate account of the popularity and circulation of eyeglasses during the period. Although doctors were often reluctant to prescribe them, preferring to cure ocular ailments by way of herbal remedies,[18] as of the fourteenth century there was nonetheless a growing demand for these visual aids, and this only continued to increase in the following centuries with the invention of the printing press and an expanding readership. Moreover, the improvement in the quality of glass lenses, approaching that of crystal ones, made the object a more financially accessible commodity and therefore opened it to a larger market.[19] The discrepancy between the high demand for the instrument and the paucity of scientific treatment of the object is in part attributed to the views that Scholastics and other intellectuals held of lenses, which they judged to be a source of illusion and error.[20] This association of spectacles with deceit continued to prevail through most of the sixteenth

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of visual feeling – which is to say that the construction of optical images is intentional, carried out by and through the visual spirits extramitted from the brain to the anterior surface of the crystalline lens" (ibid., 29).

[15] Kepler, *Optics: Paralipomena to Witelo & Optical Part of Astronomy*, trans. William H. Donahue (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Green Lion Press, 2000) esp. ch. 5.

[16] Smith, "Ptolomy, Alhazen, Kepler," 39.

[17] For an examination of the transformation of the role of the viewing subject in optics, and the ensuing epistemological implications, see Smith, "Ptolemy, Alhazen, Kepler," especially 39-43; Chen-Morris and Gal, "Baroque Optics"; Chen-Morris and Gal, *Baroque Science,* esp. ch. 1.

[18] Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*, 73. Also see Katrien Vanagt's essay, "Suspicious Spectacles. Medical Perspectives on Eyeglasses, the Case of Heironymus Mercurialis," in *The Origins of the Telescope*, eds. Albert Van Helden et al. (Amsterdam: KNAW Press, 2010), 115-128.

[19] Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*, 136, 205.

[20] See Vasco Ronchi, ed. *Scritti di ottica...* (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1968). For a more nuanced discussion of this negative reception of lenses, cf. Smith, "Ptolomy, Alhazen, Kepler," 12; David C. Lindberg, "Lenses and Eyeglasses," in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. Joseph Strayer, vol. 7 (New York: Scribner, 1986), 540.

century, though when we think that lenses for presbyopia were modified according to age brackets, we cannot be entirely surprised that eyeglasses were less than helpful in correcting impaired vision.

The Italian physicist Vasco Ronchi, known for his work on optics, affirms that the first written account acknowledging the usefulness and necessity of eyeglasses appears in the second and augmented edition of Giovanni Battista Della Porta's *De magiae naturalis* (1591).[21] Later, in his 1623 *Uso de los antojos*, Benito Daza de Valdés, a Spanish notary, a member of the Inquisition, and the author of the first book on optometry in Spanish, recognizes the absence of literature about "problems of sight" and writes that he is "compelled" to write of the need for the visual aids "because many people are ignorant about the use of eyeglasses."[22] He continues to praise the benefits of the visual aids, claiming that "present and future centuries will have even more reason to value the admirable invention of eyeglasses."[23] Valdés even goes as far as to divulge their "divine" nature: "The invention of eyeglasses appears to have come from heaven, from where the eyes also came. So we can say that the "new eyes" – which we receive when we wear eyeglasses – also came from above."[24] The "new eyes," as he proceeds to declare, are not only essential to our acquisition of knowledge of the arts and sciences, but also to the knowledge of God and scripture.[25] This shift toward a more positive reception of lenses and the recognition of their utility and necessity is therefore relatively new in the early years of the seventeenth century.

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[21] Ronchi, *Scritti di ottica*, 138-9.

[22] Benito Daza de Valdés, *Uso de los antojos* [The Use of Eyeglasses], 1623, Facsimile of the first edition, trans. and ed. Paul E. Runge (Oostende, Belgium: J.P. Wayenborgh, 2004), 67.

[23] Ibid. 2:97.

[24] Ibid.

[25] "Without eyeglasses, many people will miss the beauties of the sciences and the liberal arts because we acquire this knowledge primarily with our eyes. Not only can many enjoy these treasures of the mind because of glasses, but we can also avoid the evils, the enemies, and the dangers that blind people experience. Those who cannot see without eyeglasses face the same risks – that is, they will miss the whale's dorsal fin, the beacon light in the night, the lighthouse of the captains, and the North Star of the navigators.

The gifts of virtue and honesty are also found in eyeglasses. For without glasses, many people would be deprived of all the sacred things: the holy books, the divine letters, the sacred ceremonies, and all the greatest aspects of the Church. We see that the most faithful *achates* of the Church, the Doctors, are often painted with eye-glasses. The famous preachers, the wise masters who are elders – true fathers of wisdom, as stated in the Ecclesiasticus (*In sensibus est Sapientia*) – would be useless to the Church if their failing vision could not be aided by the use of the 'new eyes'" (ibid., 2:98).

The documentation of the increased and wider diffusion of eyeglasses, and their mixed reception resulting from either a misunderstanding of the science or the divide between theory and practice, extends beyond written accounts. If, on the one hand, we find a set of implications arising from the scientific developments and the economic evidence, iconographical and literary representations of the instrument equally elucidate their use and reception. A number of catalogues and surveys compiled by scholars, amateurs, collectors, and curious ophthalmologists provide extensive lists of spectacles in iconography, and these depictions have been a precious resource for determining the forms of the visual aids (many of which no longer exist), the periods in which they were used and in vogue, the contexts in which they were worn, and the identity of their various users.[26] A number of permutations are possible when trying to categorize these works, though what remains constant is the dual reception, and therefore representation, of the visual aid. Despite the clarity that they are meant to bring to those who wear them, eyeglasses blur the lines when it comes to their iconographic users. The symbolic meaning of the visual aids is hardly unified as the circumstances and the characteristics of the bespectacled figure alter our interpretation of the object. In "real life," of course, visual imperfections and defects do not discriminate between those who are afflicted based on their status or profession, but in painting, where the object is charged with symbolic meaning, the diversity of contexts and users becomes rather telling. The eyeglasses are worn by both saints and sinners, by the enlightened and the ignorant, by the courtier and the court jester, by those who teach and those who deceive.

The first known depiction of spectacles is by the Emilian artist Tomaso da Modena, whose frescos from 1352 in Treviso at the Dominican monastery of San Niccolò show bespectacled friars at their desk (Figure 5). Here begins the tradition not only of associating visual aids with age,[27] but with study and

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[26] See Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*; Raimonda Riccini, ed., *Gli occhiali presi sul serio: arte, storia, scienza e tecnologia della visione* (Milan: Silvana, 2002); William J. Rosenthal, *Spectacles and Other Vision Aids: A History and Guide to Collecting* (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1996); Rosalino La Mattina, *Gli occhiali nella pittura dal XIV al XX secolo* (Caltanissetta, Italy: Lussografica, 2006); Richard Greeff, ed. *Katalog einer Bilderausstellung zur Geschichte der Brille* (Amsterdam: A.E. d'Oliviera, 1929).

[27] See Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*, 263. When he presents the frescos, Ilardi reminds his readers that the figures are all in their forties.

scholarship. The numerous images of saints (St. Jerome, and St. Bernardinus are the ones most commonly depicted), who are found with glasses in hand, or on the nose, or dangling from their robes, and in some

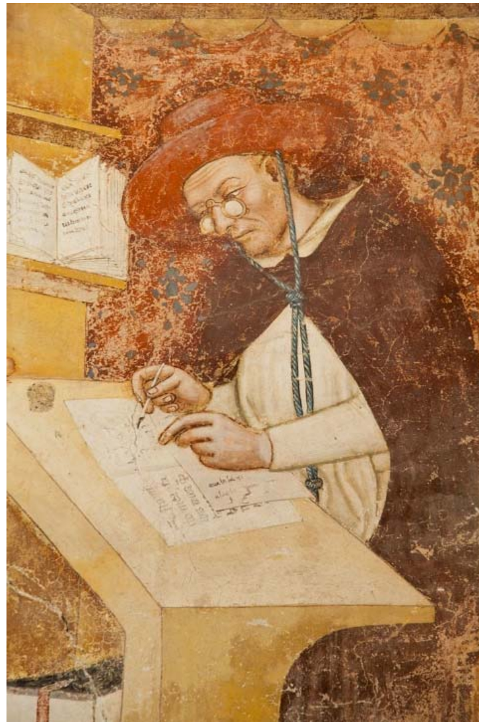

Figure 5. Tomaso da Modena. Portraits of Dominican Friars (detail, Hugo of Provence). Fresco. 1352. Monastery of San Niccolò, Treviso.

instances, metonymically represented through glass cases, are part of this lineage. Other anachronistic representations include spectacles in religious paintings, where figures from Joseph to baby Jesus himself can be found with a pair of visual aids, which occurs in stark contrast to other artistic works that place spectacles on the nose or in the hands of the Devil as a symbol of trickery. If the saintly and the scholarly, and conversely, the devilish figures, dominate the bespectacled scene during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they exist alongside more secular illustrations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where similar oppositions and tensions are visible among an even more diverse range of subjects. The everyday scenes of genre painting, especially among Northern artists, depict people of different trades, from artisans to alchemists, to account keepers, using visual aids at work; there are also peddling spectacle dealers, and men and women in marketplaces trying on and buying the visual aids, which speaks to the object's wide circulation and popularity. Fools and jesters use them to provoke laughter or to emphasize their deceitful nature, a

meaning substantiated by their presence in masquerade scenes, where spectacles become a means of disguise and dissimulation.

If fools and quacks denigrate the value of glasses, the addition of the object to the portraits of distinguished men and women has the opposite effect. Ilardi, writing of self-portraits in which the artist is accompanied by glasses, notes that "the prominent depiction of spectacles in the self-portraits may be interpreted as another sign of the higher social status of the artist by the late sixteenth century. He is no longer just another artisan working with his hands, but an intellectual worker, a "fine artist" as we say today, the intellectual equal of the humanists, even aspiring to noble rank."[28] Spectacles, then, are the instruments of both the artisan and the intellectual, the fool and the humanist (Figure 6),[29] people of common ranks but also those of noble birth. They are objects used by all, especially by the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth, and they are at once objects of deceit, necessity, fashion, and status. Furthermore, while the value of the instrument as positive or negative mostly depends on its association with the subject who wears it, in other representations, it is the object that shapes the subject. The iconography

Figure 6. Master of the Haintz-Narr. "Of Useless Books." Woodcut. Sebastian Brant, Stultifera navis (Basel: Johann Bergmann, 1498)

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[28] Ibid., 298.

[29] See Jean-Claude Margolin, "Des Lunettes et des hommes ou la satire des mal-voyants au XVIe sièlce," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 30, no.2/3 (1975): 375-393. Margolin's analysis also exposes the relationship that emerges between glasses and humanism. While acknowledging and remarking the negative connotation of glasses as symbols of illusion and error, he also argues that in many instances, when glasses are coupled with the figure of the fool, it is in the humanistic spirit of a critical observation of the world's folly, the Erasmian reversal of the roles of the fool and the learned man (387).

very clearly supports the historical documentation about the circulation and accessibility of eyeglasses. Linked to the advent of the printing press and growing literacy, a mutually beneficial system arises in which greater access to science and books solicits greater demand for visual aids, and conversely, a greater demand for visual aids facilitates the act of reading and the acquisition of knowledge.

This ability to transform a given order and open possibilities where they did not exist before is among the remarkable consequences of glasses as an invention, and it not only related to reading and an expanding readership. In his brief essay in the catalogue accompanying an exhibition on eyeglasses at the 2002 Milan Triennale, Tomás Maldonado proposes an intriguing connection between visual ailments and division of labor in the Late Middle Ages.[30] Prior to the invention of glasses, Maldonado claims that one's profession, trade, or responsibilities were in part dictated and defined by one's visual acuity and limitations. The farsighted were better adapted for activities such as hunting, farming, and mining, whereas the nearsighted were more likely to become scribes, notaries, calligraphers, or more generally, to hold jobs that involved working with texts or were affiliated with positions of power.[31] In addition to exposing the constraints imposed by one's eyesight, Maldonado also addresses the problem of presbyopia, the gradual degradation of vision that comes with age, and the consequences that arise for those who practice "nearsighted" professions: without the aid of corrective instruments, they would have had to change jobs or simply retire.[32] According to Maldonado, the introduction of visual aids in the Late Middles Ages not only enabled and ensured the continuity of professions that would have otherwise been compromised by degenerating visual acuity, but it also effected a transformation insofar as it created opportunities within the workforce. Though socio-economic factors may have still restricted the trades that one could practice, visual ailments no longer presented a barrier: farsighted individuals could engage in work of an artisanal or

[30] This notion is the object of a cursory mention in Ilardi's *Renaissance Vision* (79) and is developed at much greater length in Tomás Maldonado's essay, "Gli occhiali presi sul serio," in *Gli Occhiali presi sul serio*, ed. Raimonda Riccini (Milan: Silvana, 2002) 33-46.

[31] Maldonado, "Gli occhiali," 39.

[32] Ibid., 41.

intellectual nature, and later in the fifteenth century, the nearsighted could elect to practice "outdoor" trades.[33]

Three major considerations arise from these scientific, artistic, cultural, and social contexts. Firstly, the scientific conclusions about how vision occurs transpose the subject from an agent of vision to an interpreter of the image that the eye receives. The subject exercises no control in the production of the retinal image, and therefore, in how reality is communicated to the eye. Instead, its role is uniquely one of determining meanings in that which has been observed. Secondly, the variety of users of eyeglasses, a point that the iconography certainly corroborates, attests to the wide circulation of the object, and this greater access to eyeglasses by a larger public signals a growing readership. The spread of eyeglasses, then, can be linked to the democratization of knowledge. Finally, where most of the iconography points to the influence of the subject on the object – the identity of the bespectacled figure determines the negative or positive connotation of the eyeglasses –, one group in particular inverts the relationship. In portraiture, the genre of painting most closely associated with the subject and its representation, it is not entirely the individual who gives meaning to the instrument, but rather, the instrument that is used to shape or fashion the individual. The socio-economic study by Maldonado bolsters this argument by demonstrating how the use of eyeglasses to correct a visual ailment, or the lack of such treatment, has the potential to alter the subject and the kinds of tasks that he or she is able to perform. In the event of a developing ocular disorder, the instrument not only permits the subject to continue exercising the same profession or activities, but it also enables the individual to pursue something new or different, thus acting as an equalizer and allowing for greater social mobility, at least in theory.

While recognized more for its "prismatic" structure or for its parallels to an anamorphotic painting rather than for its reference to eyeglasses,[34] the presence of the visual aid in *Le Moyen de parvenir* is especially

[33] Ibid., 39. To speak of the two different categories of trades based on the visual ailment of the individual, Maldonado adapts Lucien Fèbvre's distinction between "hommes de serre" ("uomini di serra") and "hommes de plein-vent" ("uomini all'aria aperta").

[34] For references to the "prismatic effect" of *Le Moyen,* see Pallister, *The World View of Béroalde*, esp. 114-115, 179-182, and 207.

valuable when situated in its socio-cultural and scientific context. The instrument in Béroalde's book participates in effacing barriers between creators and consumers of knowledge and in exploring the influence that the eyeglasses exercise on the subject in the perception and interpretation of the world, and by extension, in the subject's understanding of itself and its place in reality.

"Tous ceux qui ont nez à porter lunettes" :
Béroalde's Lenses & the Democratization of Knowledge

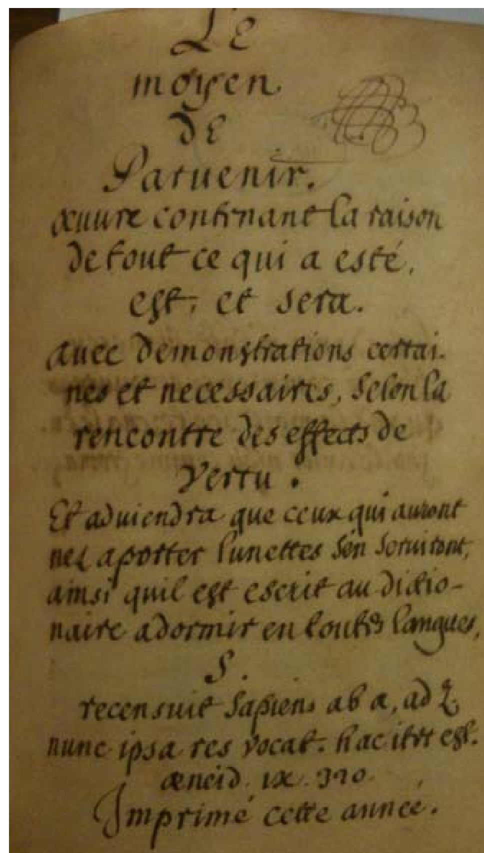
Le
moyen
de
Paruenir.
œuure contenant la raison
de tout ce qui a esté,
est, et sera.
auec demonstrations certai-
nes et necessaires, selon la
rencontre des effects de
Vertu.
Et aduiendra que ceux qui auront
nez a porter lunettes s'en seruiront,
ainsi qu'il est escrit au dictio-
naire a dormir en toutes langues.
S.
recensuit sapiens ab a, ad z,
nunc ipsa res vocat: hac iter est.
æneid. ix. 320.
Imprimé cette année.

Figure 7. Béroalde de Verville. Le Moyen de parvenir, frontispiece. n.d. Ms Fr 163. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The first optical reference in *Le Moyen* appears on the frontispiece (Figure 7), where the author claims that "ceux qui ont nez à porter lunettes s'en serviront" (41). Janis Pallister, who offers a meticulous study of the frontispiece in *The Worldview of Béroalde de Verville,* discusses the optical reference and its significance, which can be reduced to two main points. The first relates the eyeglasses to the act of reading and proposes that

> The author of *Le Moyen de parvenir* is half-jokingly, half-seriously implying that one must be able to "see clearly" his intention. (…)On the other hand, the relation of spectacles to the novel in general, and to its prismatic

> themes, is not to be minimized. In several ways then, Béroalde is already – on the title page – riding the idea that one must "read between the lines" if one is going to understand the true purpose of the book.[35]

In addition to presenting the *lunettes* as a mechanism to decipher the anamorphotic structure of the text, she claims that only a select few, "the initiates," are able to do so with success.[36] Quoting from Saulnier's 1944 study on *Le Moyen*, she suggests that the glasses are a symbol of pedantry, thus associating their appearance on the title page with the mockery of such figures.[37] In opposition to this affiliation between the eyeglasses on the frontispiece and the figure of the pedant, I propose that Béroalde's reference opens and expands his readership, making knowledge more accessible by mocking and breaking down the very ideas of the "initiate" and the learned scholar. After all, could "tous ceux qui ont nez" not encompass *all* those who have a nose, that is, all men and women? One of Béroalde's claims about knowledge, then, has to do with its democratization, and his text constantly undermines the monopoly that the "elite" or the "initiate" have on knowledge, be it in its production or dissemination.

The book's reflection on its own choice of language echoes the decision to privilege a more inclusive readership: not only is the vernacular more conducive to varied expression and to the exposition of a diverse range of subject mattrers,[38] it is also a language comprehended by the common people. At the approximate mid-point of the book (chapter 55 of 111), the narrator provides a lengthy reflection on different tongues as they relate to communicating knowledge. He praises French as the language of princes, and explains that it has only been reserved for serious literature ("de fait il n'y a que ce livre, et les belles tragedies, ou graves histoires, qui aient grâce en ce langage: toute badinerie et conte de jongleur n'y paraissent point" [234]), in

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[35] Ibid., 45.

[36] Ibid., 60.

[37] Ibid., 47.

[38] "C'est une belle chose de savoir tout. C'est que notre langue française est la plus ample de toutes. Sic probo: elle a le plus de termes pour remarquer la copulation, qui est cause que tout est produit: ergo, elle est la plus produisante. Voilà dit, cela! et si vous êtes si pauvre de ne l'entendre pas, je vous le ferai entendre." Béroalde, *Le Moyen*, XLVI 201-2. The emphasis on the generative property of the French language is reminiscent of the fertility of the lower body, which operates as a site of production and variation. See Conley, "Mapping Béroalde," 93-94 for an analysis of the concept of "flow" as it relates the notions of language and subject to the female reproductive organs, and therefore preserves the regenerative value of the lower body. Also see Bowen, "The Self-Destructing Book," 171-174, for the role that references to sex and to the obscene play in showcasing the richness of language.

which he includes *Le Moyen*, clearly differentiating it from "toute badinerie et conte de jongleur." Playing with received ideas about what constitutes high and low literature, Béroalde pairs his book with the former, and clearly differentiates it from the latter. In doing so, he contaminates one by the other, erases elitist boundaries, and strengthens the cultural currency of the "low" or popular. He then continues to explain the reasons why Greek, Hebrew, and Latin are no longer vernacular languages ("des langues vulgaires"). Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, so venerated by humanists in their philological approach, appear as the learned languages that they are, but the narrator highlights that they are also languages of exclusion ("on a caché les langues pour, avec leur secret, ne les communiquer qu'aux gens de bien et d'honneur," LV 235), accessible only to an elite, expressed by the negation "ne que" which further emphasizes its closed nature. He also clarifies that as each of those languages corresponds to a specific field of knowledge, it would have been inappropriate in the context of his project, his all-encompassing œuvre, which claims to contain the knowledge of all books past, present, and future. By writing in French, much to the chagrin of those who wish to veil the secrets of science from the common people and reserve them for a specific group of initiates ("ce livre venant à être goûté, savouré et digéré, on tâchera d'abolir le français et ôter de la bouche du peuple ce beau langage, de crainte que ces bonnes et meilleures doctrines ne viennent à tomber entre les mains du populaire qui, advenant tel cas, ferait aussi aisément la pierre philosophale que les doctes," ibid.), not only can he diversify the content of his book, but "ces bonnes et meilleures doctrines") can be accessed by the common people, "le menu peuple," understood in direct opposition to the "gens de bien et d'honneur."[39]

The appeal to a broader, non-scholarly or non-erudite public occurs in one other considerable way: the prominence of the lower body in *Le Moyen*, which in a strange way, comes to coincide with the eyes. The question of knowledge – what is known, how it is known, by whom, how it is communicated and to whom, how it is received, and its value over time – is at the core of the debate in *Le Moyen de parvenir*, and the narrator presents the book and the banquet as an alternative,[40] or rather, as an antidote to traditional forms, producers, and audiences of *science*. With their propensity for laughter and drink, combined with the popular and often

[39] See Kenny, *Palace of Secrets*, 85-86.

[40] See Bowen,"The Self-Destructing Book," 170, on the conflation of the book and banquet.

crass content driving the conversation, the guests at Béroalde's banquet are in reality more akin to the merry *beuveurs* of Rabelais than to, say, the noble interlocutors in Castiglione's dialogues about the courtesan. The common thread of the discussion among the banquet's guests is the lower body, erotic, racy, or scatological anecdotes, which are embroidered by commentaries on the hypocrisies of various institutions, especially Religion. If there is a predilection among the guests for sex and scatology, it is because "[c]e serait belle chose de parler du cul. Ce serait un langage excellent: il serait plein de toutes sentences et, si cela était, on parlerait comme on s'assied" (XLI 176-177), and that "si on ôtait ces paroles d'ici, ce banquet serait imparfait. Seriez-vous bien aise que l'on vous ôtât le cul pour ce qu'il est puant et le sera jusqu'à la mort? Vous seriez un bel homme, sans cul! Il faut suivre nature…" (LXXVI 320). There is a special emphasis placed on the lower body as the very seat of knowledge and wisdom: without transmutation and constant creation of *matière*, there would be no matters to discuss and the conversation would be static. The displacement of the eyes from the intellectual domain toward the lower body, the *locus* of the material, exemplifies this shift from philosophical considerations to popular musings.

An Anatomical Odd Couple:
The Buttocks & the Eyes

The banquet's guests constantly evoke the fundamental relationship that exists between the buttocks and science. Very early in the book, as the narrator sets the scene of the gathering and identifies some of its distinguished guests, he remarks: "Nous étions là, devant elle [la Bonne Intention] pour faire preuve de nos esprits. Cela fut cause que je m'y trouvais et m'assis aussi bien qu'un autre, d'autant que j'ai un cul -- joint que, sans cul, nul ne pourrait avoir séance entre gens d'honneur" (VI 55). In an effort to counter the language and discourse of the elite, Béroalde fuses the high and the low, a typical trait in his banquet, as he joins intellect, wit, and people of an elevated status ("gens d'honneur") with the lower body. The buttocks are not only seen as an essential part of the gathering, but serve two other functions as well. On the one hand, they literally *ground* the intellectual discussion by drawing attention to the lower body instead of the head. We could even suggest that Béroalde is here taking a jab at the peripatetic tradition of ambulatory philosophical discourse, his "seated" gathering offering an alternative to this model. On the other hand, this "grounding" of

science also makes it more accessible to a larger audience, for anyone with a rump can take a seat and become a participant. One of the functions of the eyeglasses, then, is related to this notion of accessibility.

The association between the buttocks and knowledge is further stressed when the "cul" is believed to be the sixth sense. Sensory perception has always occupied a position, whether primary or secondary, in the acquisition of knowledge, and with the "sens du cul" (XXXI 132) added to the five traditional senses, the lower body in general and the buttocks in particular are identified as epistemological agents. In fact, the buttocks are considered to be "la base et le vrai *milieu* du corps, le mignon de l'âme," and " le gouvernail de tout le corps" (XLI 177 emphasis mine). Once coupled with another statement perpetuated throughout *Le Moyen*, the assertion that "CE LIVRE EST LE *CENTRE* DE TOUS LES LIVRES" (XII 76 emphasis mine), the affiliation between the book and the lower body as a source of knowledge is firmly established. The center of all books is mirrored in the center of the body, as the secret to deciphering the apparent nonsense and *coq-à-l'âne* structure that underlies the "centre de tous les livres" lies in the "vrai milieu du corps." This observation implores us to look more closely at the lower body and assures us that we having something great to learn from it.

Aligned with the popular and regenerative spirit of the Bakhtinian grotesque,[41] and anchored in the material realm, Béroalde's text thus sets out to interrogate the objects of knowledge and their dynamic nature, as well as the figures who are involved in the production, dissemination, and acquisition of *science*. It is here that the use of optics, and especially of eyeglasses, is particularly pertinent. The gravitational pull toward the lower body and its secretions, the importance of the lower body as the seat of the very stuff of knowledge, is done in conjunction with an unlikely anatomical ally.

The placement of the eyes in the upper body, where they not only have a better vantage point over what goes on below but are closer to the intellectual faculties and to the heavens, certainly reaffirms their

[41] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). For references to generation and reproduction in Béroalde's text, see *Le Moyen de parvenir*, X (the role of both the anus and the genitals as part of the generative process, 67); XXXV (expulsion following plenitude as generation, 152); XLI (feces and offsprings as both products secreted from the female lower body, 180).

reputation as the most noble of the senses.[42] Compared to celestial bodies (the stars and the sun) and thought of as the "window to the soul," we should not be surprised to discover that they are, as Bakhtin explains, absent from grotesque literature:

> Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate object. *The eyes have no part in these comic images*; they express an individual, so to speak, self-sufficient human life, which is not essential to the grotesque. The grotesque is interested only in *protruding eyes* (…). It is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines.[43]

In addition to their visual effect in iconographical or literary representations, the optical characteristics unique to protruding eyes as described in scientific writings are equally striking. Benito Daza de Valdés (1591-1634), in his *Use of Eyeglasses*, writes that protruding eyes "receive a greater number of lateral and oblique images that cause refractions and confuse vision."[44] Although there are no explicit remarks about protruding eyes in Béroalde, Valdés's description perfectly befits *Le Moyen de parvenir* on a conceptual and structural level: the text is replete with digressions and obscure references, and it is a self-proclaimed anamorphosis.[45] Throughout *Le Moyen*, the notion of reading or approaching the text from the correct perspective or "biais" is mentioned on several occasions, the most notable of which occurs in the final chapter, and which has detracted attention from other ocular and optical references in the book, namely that Béroalde's text perpetually displaces the eyes from the upper body to the lower stratum, binding them together and conjuring up images of this anatomical odd couple.

If we are to give credence to the idea that the nose is oftentimes used as a euphemism for the phallus,[46] there is a merging of the ocular and the lower body in the initial pairing of the eye and the nose on

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[42] See Kepler, *Optics*, ch. 5. Kepler compares the placement of eyes in animals and humans. With regard to human eyes, he writes: "Their location is in the highest place so that the vision may reach to places that are that much more distant," and that "the human, master of creatures, has his face so directed that he should be invited continually to contemplate how far flung are the limits of his possession: they are the heaven itself, contiguous to the mountains, as it appears," (ibid., 172-173).

[43] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His Word*, 316 (emphasis mine).

[44] Valdés, *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 1:75.

[45]"Bien donc, dites-moi, avez-vous envie de parvenir ? Lisez ce volume de son vrai biais. Il est fait comme ces peintures, qui montrent d'un et puis d'autre." Béroalde, *Le Moyen*, CXI 450.

[46] See Bakhtin, *Rablais and His World*, 87, 316. Also see Pallister, *The World View of Béroalde*, 43.

the frontispiece ("tous ceux qui ont nez à porter lunettes,") and therefore a contamination of the high by the low from the very outset. Beyond this initial image, one of the most peculiar episodes is perhaps the (aftermath of an) anecdote in chapter 15 ('Dessein'), in which a horse witnesses a violent beating in the woods: "elle chiait de male rage de peur, et fientait si sec que ses étrons devinrent *étuis de lunettes* pour ceux qui ont courte haleine" (87, emphasis mine). What could be more random than a reference to glass cases in such a scene? What a strange image, indeed, to have glass cases made out of horse fecal matter! And yet, once this surrealist picture is aligned with other incidents in the text, the juxtaposition between the optical, here represented by the glass cases, and the material lower body is not as isolated and random as it may initially appear. Béroalde constantly and consciously brings together the two anatomically and theoretically distant body parts. This is achieved textually, through the juxtaposition of the words "yeux" and "cul," like when the character of Simplicius, in defining what an organization's "chapter" implies, adds that "ce qui le fait être cela, dont il est composé, sont plusieurs têtes, oreilles, yeux et culs" (XXIII 103). This connection also often occurs physically. On a number of occasions, the idea of sticking one's nose in someone's bottom is evoked by a speaker,[47] which also brings the eyes in direct contact with the lower body. It is, however, in a conversation that appears to take place between Cesar, Boethius and Madame (though we cannot be certain that they are the interlocutors who continue the discussion due to the effacement of all attribution and the polyphonic nature of the text), the eyes are explicitly molded into an erotic and obscene cast:

> – Sec! gardez-vous de choir, madame. Çà, fi! il y a un grand trou devant vous: si vous mettez le pied dedans, vous vous gâterez!
> – En da! *si vous aviez le nez dedans et deux autres de même autour les deux yeux, vous auriez une belle paire de lunettes*!
> – Taisez-vous, vous êtes belle.
> – Que sert cela? Les belles se font prier et les laides prient: chacun fait ce qu'il peut pour vivre.
> – Pour que faire des lunettes?
> – Pour mieux voir.
> – De quoi voit-on le plus?
> – Des yeux.
> – *Si votre nez était en mon cul, vous ne verriez que des fesses.*
> – Que voici des sentences accomplies! Que vous êtes heureux, vous qui les savourez … (XLVI 199, emphasis mine)

This episode, in conjunction with the reference in the frontispiece, invites us to rethink the simply accidental or ornamental role of eyeglasses. In addition to the wordplay on the meaning of the "grand trou devant,"

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[47] See Béroalde, *Le Moyen*, esp. 186 (XLV), 210 (XLVIII), 246 (LVIII), 264(LXII), 300 (LXIX).

might we not find embedded in "verriez que des fesses" the form of "verres de fesses," of buttocks lenses?[48] Indeed, Béroalde's spectacular spectacles provide us with an interpretative key: far from being accessories, they are necessary visual aids. As Pallister has suggested, Béroalde is teaching us how to see, and by extension, how to read, though it is the construction of his glasses that are particularly telling and go beyond Pallister's analysis. There may be no explicit mention of protruding eyes in Béroalde's banquet, but there are certainly intruding ones: they do not seek to go beyond the confines of the body, but to remain in close proximity to it so as to better examine its operation. If we are to read properly, if we are to learn anything, we must look to the lower stratum.

It is precisely the image of the cheeky glasses, where high and low, intellectual and material, literally come together. By countering traditional associations with the object and its traditional users, Béroalde reshapes the objects and the figures related to science, and he eradicates the boundaries between the scholarly and the popular reader. The alliance of the eyes and the lower body, in addition to focusing our attention on the material and temporal, also challenges and changes traditional imagery by partnering the key protagonist, the buttocks, with a relatively unknown actor on the grotesque scene. This carnavalesque reversal of the eye's position away from the mind and the intellectual seat of the body towards the "vrai milieu" mirrors *Le Moyen*'s content: we do not encounter "high" culture or science, but popular musings and anecdotes. Furthermore, the book's title page, as previously mentioned, already announces a more democratic than elitist readership, for "*tous* ceux qui ont nez à porter lunettes s'en serviront" (4, emphasis mine). The book is not exclusively reserved for learned men, nor for a group of "initiates" as Pallister has suggested,[49] but rather, for everyone.

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[48] To my knowledge, there is at least one other such literary episode of "cheeky glasses." In Rabelais's *Tiers livre* (1546), as Panurge, Pantagruel's trickster friend, seeks advice – from friends to theologians to dreams – about marriage and the chances of becoming a "cocu," he is encouraged to consult a figure by the name of Her Trippa. In his state of anger and dismay over the magician's "proof" of his prospective cuckoldry, Panurge can no longer withhold his reaction: "Quand (dist Panurge) tu mettras ton nez en mon cul, soys records de deschausser tes lunettes. Par Catoptromantie (dist et Her Trippa continuant) il ne te fauldra poinct de lunettes. Tu la voyras brisgouttant aussi apertement, que si je te la monstrois en la fontaine du temple de Minerve pres Patras," François Rabelais, *Tiers livre* (Paris: Chrétien Wechel, 1546), XXV 184.
[49] Pallister, *The World View of Béroalde*, 60.

Following the line of thought proposed in Maldonado's socio-economic study, Béroalde's book, rather than restricting the text to a designated and erudite readership – the traditional consumers of texts and the knowledge they envelop – recalibrates its subject matter and its language to accommodate another kind of audience as well, inviting a broader public to participate in this act. *Le Moyen de parvenir*, from its very title, proposes itself as a means or a medium through which knowledge is acquired: the book parallels the pair of beneficial *lunettes* that should be placed upon the nose of every reader. Unlike the majority of the iconographical depictions, in which the bespectacled figure informs our understanding and interpretation of the lenses,[50] and unlike literary representations that create a similar relationship between the object and the subject,[51] the identity of Béroalde's bespectacled figures is, for the most part, fluid, ambiguous, or not established. In Béroalde's book, our interpretation of the glasses and the meaning with which we infuse them is not determined by a preconceived idea of their users. It is therefore not the figure who contaminates and complicates the significance of the instrument, but rather, the instrument, beyond its function as prosthesis, that shapes the identity of the person who wears it. In the initial "cheeky glasses" episode of Chapter 46 the multiplication of voices and interlocutors veils the identity of the intended user. The frontispiece of the book, "tous ceux qui on nez à porter lunettes" opens the possibilities of bespectacled subjects, thus turning each and every reader into a subject and the book into a lens: the *moyen*, the means or medium through which the perception of reality occurs. In other words, it is not the subject who characterizes the glasses (as helpful,

[50] See Margolin, "Des Lunettes et des hommes," 383. Margolin refers to Merleau-Ponty to point out that our reading of glasses in a painting is not neutral, for it has already been colored by our characterization of its user. Basing his observations and analysis on a sample of 175-200 painted works from the sixteenth century, he proposes three categories of meaning: "fonctionnelle," visual aids worn by the elderly and by myopes out of necessity; "intention valorisante" or "signification laudative," affiliated with knowledge and scholarship; and finally, "signification satirique" (336). Among the elements that he problematizes is the relationship between glasses and the polyvalence of folly, which essentially brings us back to the function and value of glasses as a corrective or corruptive instrument.

[51] One literary model is that of the trickster. See Rabelais, *Tiers livre*, VII 62. We may think of Panurge's eclectic guise, which includes a "lunettes à bonnet" inspired by the character's observation of a saintly figure and his desire to emulate him in appearing erudite. Panurge, however, is a trickster, and it is difficult for the reader to associate the glasses with serious scholarship. A second type of character associated with eyeglasses, and most often in a negative way, is the pedant, like Manfurio in Giordano Bruno's *Il Candelaio*, ed. Augusto Guzzo (Milan: Mondadori, 1994) 143. A third category is that of the saintly figure who uses lenses for divine contemplation and for reading the book of the world. We find the verses "Mais celui, *de qui l'œil prend la Foi pour Lunetes*/Passe de part en part les cercles des Planetes:/ Comprend le grand Moteur de tous ces mouvemens:/ Et *lit bien plus courant* dans ces vieus Documens," in Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *La Sepmaine, ou Création du monde* (Paris: Jean Février, 1578), 6 (emphasis mine).

deceitful, ridiculous, etc.), but rather, the glasses that contribute to shaping the subject and his/her reception of the world.

Lenses & Time, Lenses of Time

What exactly is the world that we see through Béroalde's text-as-lens, and what is its effect on the reader or viewing subject? As evidenced by the salacious tales and the popular protagonists of *Le Moyen*'s anecdotes, Béroalde is not seeking to resolve metaphysical or spiritual matters. This is an author with an acute awareness of the work of time and the ephemeral nature of all things earthly, including language and knowledge, and he adopts the cheeky glasses as an emblem of the metamorphic nature of knowledge. Béroalde ascribes this perpetual transformation not only to the emergence of new science (new theories, discoveries, or inventions), but also to the act of commenting texts, which generates and multiplies the interpretation of a single work without ever arriving at a unified conclusion.

Brilliantly and mischievously, if not somewhat sadistically, Béroalde plays with our insecurity and our desire to arrive at some sort of concrete knowledge or conclusion. In fact, about a third of the way in the book/banquet, one speaker remarks that the guests are no closer to understanding what the "moyen de parvenir" is and what exactly it is trying to achieve, and that he is concerned about readers who are awaiting this wisdom which continues to be withheld from them (XXXV 151). The only certainty, Béroalde seems to imply, is that everything is subject to change. *Le Moyen* is at its heart a long exposé on the work of time, which is, among other elements, characterized by invention, innovation, and transformation, and these changes not only impact our relationship to knowledge, but to ourselves as knowing subjects in an altered reality. The cheeky glasses, coupling the organ of sight and therefore perception, with the lower stratum as the symbol of materiality and its degradation, are in effect lenses of Time, and they shape the subject through the heightened awareness of its existence in a mutable world. Indeed, here we may even extract new meaning from the opening page of *Le Moyen*, which, after the first paragraph with its long chain of units of time and its reference to games, continues as follows: "Confus soient ces inventeurs de nouveautés qui gâtent la jeunesse et, contre les bonnes coutumes, trouvent nos jeux! N'est-ce point au jeu où l'âme se dilate pour faire voir ses conceptions?" (I 43). Though these inventors may more immediately refer to those of the games in question,

they could also be thought of as inventors of new things in general, creators of new objects and technologies. And if the games spoil youth, the "jeunesse," and go against what is customary or traditional, these new technologies are also a threat to selfhood, to identity, to the very "je-ness," to those elements defining the subject. For new technologies change the way in which we experience and act in the world, they transform the way in which we negotiate reality and our place in it, and therefore, lead to a re-evaluation of what it means to be a subject. In this vein, we may even hear in the word "jeunesse" a cry of "je ne sais," the doubt that will charactereize the ground upon which Descartes, only a few decades later, will build his method.

The full impact of these inventions and discoveries is added by the narrator: "beaucoup de maux sont avenus à cause de ce changement qui troublera des histoires et gauchira toute la mappemonde" (I 43). These consequences are described as "many evils" ("beaucoup de maux"), but by a play of homonyms, what emerge from these changes are also "beaucoup de mots," many words. Our vision of the world and of history will forever be reformed by these novelties, it will be "troubled," twisted, distorted. Part of this distortion is also the creation of new words, of a new language, a new lexicon that would enable us to speak of this new reality and the position of the subject within it. Béroalde's cheeky glasses focus our attention on contingency or make us aware of our point of view, but the image of intruding eyes, searching for knowledge inside the body rather than outside of it, also suggests a return to the self.

Among the scholars who have explored visual themes in Béroalde's works, especially as they relate to the subject, Neil Kenny and Tom Conley are perhaps the two who have substantially ventured beyond the author's penchant for anamorphosis.[52] Instead, they have extensively analyzed and commented Béroalde's visual theories throughout his œuvre and have shown the moments in which the author oscillates between and even conflates intromission and extramission. It is not without importance that Béroalde's later texts primarily espouse an extramissionist theory of vision, especially in a period when intromission is dominant,

[52] See Kenny, *Palace of Secrets*, 70, ch. 3, esp. 236-37; Tom Conley, "L'Œil épluche. Voir chez Béroalde de Verville (ca 1600)," in "L'œil classique," eds. Tom Conley and Sylvaine Guyot, *Littératures Classiques* 82, no. 3(2013): 39-50. Kenny's text addresses the question of perception, as well as Béroalde's œuvre in relation to theories of intromission and extramission. "L'Œil épluche" is a novelty insofar as it is the first study dedicated to Object 59, (" Que les obiects sont cognus par l'émission de la veuë à iceux, & non par la reception de leurs images és yeux") of *Le Palais des curieux*, where Béroalde expounds his theory of vision. Conley carefully delineates Béroalde's adoption of an extramissive or an intromissive mode of vision to examine the notion of "apprehension" and the construction of subjects and objects.

and, if we take into consideration the date of *Le Moyen's* (or *Le Palais'*, even) publication, at a time when Kepler's theories have already been published.[53] The accentuated role of the subject, namely the agency of the intentionality associated with extramission vision, is perhaps one of its more attractive factors, and it is not far-fetched to imagine that Béroalde's adherence to this theory is not motivated by a firm scientific conviction, but rather by ideological and ontological reasons.[54] The theory that posits that visual rays emerge from the eyes of the spectator becomes an appropriate and strategic means of affirming the subject and subjectivity in the acquisition of knowledge during a time when the relationship between subject and reality is fragile and in a state of flux. If the subject's very essence, the "je-ness," is threatened by time and by history, by transformations and by novelties, then Béroalde's visual theory works to create a place for the subject in an ever-changing reality, securing a role for it in the epistemological process.

Although there is continued emphasis on the subject's agency in *Le Moyen*, it occurs through the emphasis on the subject's role in interpreting reality rather than through the articulation of any particular theory of vision in the manner of the *Palais*. In an ironic attribution**,** Béroalde addresses the chaos of annotation – an act of interpretation – through the voice of Erasmus: "il n'y a que les commentateurs qui donnent l'intelligence selon leur dessein. Plusieurs interprètent les écrits et paroles des autres selon leurs sens. Ainsi, les moines ivrognes interprètent les épigrammes d'Énéas Sylvius et de Bèze en ivrognerie, les sodomites en sodomie, les amoureux en amour, …" (XXXIII 143). The meaning of the text is in the eye of the beholder, who, if we take "dessein" to mean "goal" or "project," interprets according to his or her intentions, perhaps bending and twisting words to align them with what one consciously or subconsciously wants them to say. The reader is also an interpreter insofar as he or she takes part in the actual creation of the text by visualizing its graphic representation ("dessin").[55]

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[53] Kepler's *Ad Vitellionem paralipomena* was published in 1604, while his *Dioptricae* appeared in 1611.

[54] See Kenny, *Palace of Secrets,* 235. Kenny insists upon the agency granted to the subject in the frame of the extramissionist theory.

[55] The distinction between "dessein" and "dessin" does not occur until the eighteenth century. "Dessin" appears in the fifteenth century, derived from the Italian, "disegno," as an alternative to "dessein," which is in use since the thirteenth century. *Le Petit Robert 1*, rev. ed. 1991, s.v. "dessein," "dessin." The dual meaning embedded in the same word with two different graphic representations is also reflected in Randle Cotgrave's 1611 bilingual French-English dictionary. He

Both meanings reinforce the agency of the subject, defining his or her understanding of reality as an interpretation based on intention or perception, and it is not surprising that the author explicitly draws our attention to these aspects with regard to language. Béroalde's masterful manipulation of language through the *Moyen* is evident from the opening pages and his lengthy chains of words formed purely by association ("Il fut donc en cette saison sonné, trompé, trompeté, corné, (…), et crié, huché, dit et proclamé avec la trompe philosophique," [I 44]), a technique he uses frequently throughout *Le Moyen*. Among the many language games he plays, he shows a particular penchant for puns, both spoken and written. He navigates and fully exploits the sounds, the spellings, and the typographical representation – the arrangement of letters and spaces, the "dessin" – to multiply meaning, and oftentimes, to turn words upside down and reveal obscene configurations. The banquet's guests constantly acknowledge these slips ("deux sortes de sot… Foin! il m'est échappé: je cuidais prononcer 'honteux'" [V 49]; "… barbe de pipeux – je cuidais dire 'depuis peu'" [VI 54]; "Le tout accordé, fut passé prévarication – je cuidais dire procuration" [XXIV 109]). Here, we see the duality of "dessein/dessin," as there is a significant gap between the speaker's intention ("dessein") and the graphic or phonic representation ("dessin") of the words that are actually pronounced. The countless pairs of equivocal words or puns flow flawlessly from one sense to another.[56] This idea of fluidity, which we may attribute to the open nature of language itself, is one that Béroalde proposes in opposition to traditional views, and which he presents in the second chapter of *Le Moyen*: "J'ai ouï dire, à ce propos, que les docteurs de ce temps ont défoncé les pipes de leurs sciences pour trouver une glu qui pût congeler les paroles et les faire tenir" (II 46). Contrary to the efforts of those who have tried to mummify words, to make of language something stale and static, Béroalde unfolds and multiplies its possibilities by showing its dynamic and protean nature. On the one hand, there is the graphic and phonetic versatility of words (as one guest remarks,

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defines "desseing" as "A designe, plot, proiect, purpose, determination; resolution." The entry "dessing" refers the reader back to "desseing."

[56] See Bowen, "The Self-Destructing Book," 171-174 for the generative function of Béroalde's puns. See Conley, "Mapping Béroalde," esp. 90-93, for an analysis of a fluid typographical representation and the movement between written and spoken words. Some of Béroalde's puns include: "entre-gents/entre-jambes"; "merde-en-vos-lippes/mélancolique," "Bachon/bacon," "vilipender/vit-lui-pend-ait," "Suisse/sotisse," "ma quoifoutre/ ma coiffe outre," "apothéoise/le pot aux roses," "faucon/faux con," "lettrerie/ladrerie," "chose/ chouses," "amour et vesse/amorevolesse," "sent le vit/ s'enlevit,"/ "cent mille écus/ sens-mi le cul."

"il n'y a que transposition de lettres" [XVII 91]). On the other, there is the question of expression and interpretation. The act of expression is comprised of one's intentions and the actual words that are used communicate it, though the two do not always coincide. In fact, words can be used to mask the true projects and desires of those who speak and write them ("Vraiment, vous êtes bien cruel de regarder à des paroles et non à l'intention," [LXXVIII 327]). As for interpretation, we have already seen that it is based upon the goals and point of view of the interlocutor, how he/she elects to comprehend the matter (an unidentifiable guest reminds us that "Les paroles ne sont point sales: il n'y a que l'intelligence. Quand vous orrez une parole, recevez-la et la portez à une belle intelligence, et lors elle sera belle, nette et pure," [LXXVI 319]).

Language, operating on these different levels, is much like an anamorphotic painting: a different meaning emerges depending on the angle from which it is viewed.[57] Alternatively, the fluidity, or the impression of graphics on a page recalls the effect of light and color on the retina. As previously stated, the role of the viewing subject, following the revisions to existing theories of vision that attributed a sentient and selective quality to the organ of sight, changes from one of participating in the image production to one of interpretation. Béroalde's glasses – the book-as-lens and the lenses of Time – though seemingly distinct entities, are one and the same, for the book itself, as an object of its time, and as an object in time, is subject to interpretation that is conditioned by the temporal lenses that inform the reader's perception of the world. Although the commentary may emerge from a critical examination, the emphasis is nonetheless on a subjective, rather than objective knowledge or a "'fondement stable' of essential philosophized doctrine."[58]

The narrator of *Le Moyen* does not have any illusions about the consequences of this contingency and multiplication of meaning as it applies to the book iself: "Et comptez diligemment les jours, parce que d'ici à

[57] See Jean-Claude Margolin, "Aspects du surréalisme au XVIe siècle: Fonction allégorique et vison anamorphotique," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 39, no.3 (1977): 503-530. The idea of an "anamorphotic language" or anamorphosis as a type of language is addressed by Jean-Claude Margolin, who qualifies it as a type of allegory. He draws parallels between the frontal and oblique views necessary for deciphering anamrophotic paintings to the direct and derived meanings of language ("signification directe"/ "signification dérivée") (ibid., 507). For the centrality of the verb "éplucher" in Béroalde with respect to hermeneutic activity, see Conley, "Mapping Béroalde." Also see Conley, "L'Œil épluche."

[58] Neil Kenny, "From Poetry to Prose: Béroalde de Verville and Philosophical Writing," *Renaissance Studies* 3, no.2 (1989): 184. Kenny links expression in prose to the act of glossing.

deux cent trois ans, dix mois, sept jours, dix-neuf heures, quarante minutes et trois secondes justement, le Grand Stéganographique fera une nouvelle translation de ce livre, à cause du changement de religion" (VI 55). If *Le Moyen* is the center of all books and contains all the knowledge from texts of the past, the present, and the future, it is due to its status as an object of interpretation before the eyes of a multitude of interpreting subjects, each of whom enriches the signifying book by adding a new layer of meaning to it. The "Grand Stéganographique," who dissimulates one idea behind the veil of another, may be referring to God, but the label could also extend to the reader as interpreter, and consequently, creator. In this sense, the couple "lire/construire" could substitute Michel Renaud's "lire/détruire,"[59] for the act of reading is not destructive, but constructive insofar as it solicits the reader's participation in the generation of meaning, and consequently, of the construction of his or her reality.

The three principle ideas developed here with regard to vision and its instruments – namely, the expansion of a public, the influence of the instrument on shaping and even defining the subject, and the relationship between perception and interpretation – also guide the analysis of the texts in the chapters that follow. With regard to the public, the texts of Part Two, considering what may be revealed and therefore known through the lens of literature, examine the benefits or presumed dangers of distributing texts to a wider audience. In the chapters of Part Three, the two kinds of readers or audiences that Béroalde seeks to unite reappear in an antagonistic relationship in the context of literary polemics through the opposition of the scholarly and affective approaches to the understanding and evaluation of literature. The influence of lenticular instruments on the subject and his or her perception of reality, which is inseparable from the question of its interpretation, is also a common thread. The authors apply lenses to manipulate, correct, or extend the vision of the viewer. The texts in Part Two contrast the natural eye and the instrument to interrogate the validity of the eye in the acquisition of knowledge. By suggesting that the two modes of vision correspond to two different realities – appearances, and therefore, the immediately visible, tend to conceal true forms – they also highlight the importance of the medium or the *moyen* through which the world is

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[59] "Le livre, en fait, est conçu comme un symbole de l'échec absurde de la parole et du savoir (…) Lire, c'est dissocier, distinguer forme et contenu (…) lire c'est détruire," Renaud, *Pour une lecture*, 151.

viewed. In Part Three, the application of the natural eye and the instrument to the act of literary criticism also demonstrates the degree to which the lens informs or deforms interpretation. With its emphasis on the means or the medium, *Le moyen de parvenir* articulates the mediated nature of knowledge. The focus on vision and its instruments in the chapters that follow explores the significance of this mediation.

PART II.

OPTICS & THE LITERATURE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL DISCONTENT

Chapter 3.
Introduction

In his study on vision and the visual in historiography, François Hartog writes of the primacy of the eye in Greek writings, and suggests that "à partir de là, l'histoire de l'historiographie pourrait s'écrire en contrepoint d'une histoire de l'œil et de la vision."[1] The two chapters that follow examine the relationship between the mechanisms of vision as informed by the optical theories and technologies of the early seventeenth century and the authority of the eye in narration. Neither Traiano Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1612-1615) nor Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques* (1616) is a work of history, but both engage with the connection between literature and historical writing. They both integrate elements of an *ars historica*, be it in the subjects that they address or the form that they choose, and more importantly, both accord a central role to the eye, to visual evidence, and to observation.

Boccalini's *Ragguagli* offers a portrait of early seventeenth-century society in Italy, with commentaries on court culture, the role of the Church, different systems of government, international relations, and language and literature. The narrator of the *Ragguagli* is a *menante* or journalist, whose task consists of writing regular reports on the events taking place on Mount Parnassus, where Apollo reigns supreme over poets, political thinkers, philosophers, historians, and artists from times past and present. What he offers are first-hand accounts of what he himself has seen and experienced. The form of the news bulletin resembles to a certain extent that of the chronicle. Across the Alps, d'Aubigné's *Tragiques* presents itself as an alternative account of France's religious wars, one whose focus is on Protestant victimhood and martyrdom and Catholic cruelty, thus countering the official version of those events. As a poem, the text is rooted in the art of Letters, and yet, the narrator goes to great lengths to remind his readers that he has abandoned the light and lofty pursuits of the poet to adopt the more serious task of bearing witness to the crimes of his time. Like Boccalini's *menante*, the poet-narrator of *Les Tragiques* is as an eyewitness of the events he describes. The sense of sight thus appears as the primary means by which knowledge is acquired, and the authenticity of the

[1] François Hartog, *Évidence de l'histoire: Ce que voient les historiens* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005), 33.

material that the *menante* or the poet-narrator communicate to the readers strictly derives from the authority of vision.

There is a long-standing tradition in the writing of history, beginning with Thucydides, and inherited by a number of classical historians, that privileges the role of experience, especially in ocular form, as the source of information, and by extension, as a guarantor of the historian's authority.[2] The eye becomes the organ of history, and the emphasis on eyewitness accounts prevails well into the sixteenth century. If, however, we take a close look at a statement by Thucydides himself, we see that the authority of the eye and of the eyewitness is not impeachable:

> And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories.[3]

The Greek historian does not distinguish between first- or second-hand accounts, between what he has seen or what a surrogate has seen for him, provided that they be based on visual evidence.[4] Indeed, the author of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* attributes the accuracy of his accounts and the plenitude of evidence to the fact that he narrates events that have occurred during his lifetime, just like Boccalini's *menante* and d'Aubigné's poet-narrator. And yet, different eyes produce different reports, and versions of the story do not always coincide. If Boccalini and d'Aubigné bestow authority upon the sense of sight, they do so with an awareness of its limitations, especially at a moment in history when outside appearances oftentimes conceal the true essence. Be it the notion of *sprezzatura* coined by Baldassare Castiglione in his discussion of the perfect

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[2] Addressing Polybius's methodology, François Hartog writes: "La tradition est alors appelée à la rescousse et invoquée l'autorité d'Héraclite pour défendre la supériorité de l'œil sur l'oreille: les yeux sont des témoins plus fidèles que les oreilles. *L'autopsie thucydidéenne demeure la référence*. Ephore lui-même a soutenu que si l'on pouvait assister en personne à tous les événements, ce serait de beaucoup la meilleure façon d'être informé." *Evidence de l'histoire,* 98 (emphasis mine). For the role of the eyewitness in the writing of history, also see Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern.* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), esp. ch. 3 and 4; Anthony Grafton, *What Was History?: The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 181-182; Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*: *The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), esp. Introduction and Ch.1.

[3] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 1:48.

[4] See Hartog, *Évidence de l'histoire*, 47, for the emphasis on evidence, especially as it relates to Thucydides.

courtier – the art of effortless appearance – or Machiavelli's description of the Prince who must be a wolf or a fox as the situation demands it, ideas of shaping and shape-shifting one's identity, of controlling the image that one presents of oneself, especially in accordance to one's circumstances, abound in the culture of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. *Il Corteggiano* and *Il Principe* – handbooks for the courtier and the prince – represent two different spheres to demonstrate that one's representation of oneself permeates different levels of society. Dissimulation becomes a means of enhancing or safeguarding one's status or power, and it is associated with virtue (prudence) as it is with vice (deceit and hypocrisy).[5] Both Boccalini and d'Aubigné lament the culture of dissimulation and the cult of appearances, and both attribute the corruption of their times to such practices that have led to a lack of sincerity and transparency.[6]

What does this mean, then, for the *menante* and the poet-narrator who rely on the sense of sight for the information that they are to convey? If the eye is susceptible to error because of the artifice that conceals the true form of what is to be known, how do these narrators convince their readers of the validity of the information? The narrators do not abandon vision, but rather, they find a way to enhance it. In order for vision to be reliable, it requires the aid of an instrument, and it is here that the visual modes that the two authors espouse enters into dialogue with the developments in the theories and technologies of vision in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Rather than seeing the world through the natural eyes, both narrators adopt what the historian and philosopher of science Philippe Hamou calls "la perception instrumentalisée du visible."[7] In the first of a two-volume study on changes not only to vision but to the notion of the visible, Hamou places great emphasis on the invention and application of optical instruments such as the telescope and the microscope. Classifying the seventeenth century as the time of "un au-delà

[5] For a discussion of dissimulation in various spheres of society, its theorization, as well as its reception in the early modern period, see Jon R. Snyder's excellent and indispensable study, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009). Also see Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), esp. the Introduction.

[6] See Snyder, *Dissimulation*, esp. ch. 5. Snyder argues that there is a return to sincerity, or at least a more pronounced desire for sincerity toward the end of the century.

[7] Hamou. *La mutation du visible*, 20.

visuel,"[8] he argues that the advent of the optical instruments during this period extended vision and introduced it to new areas, thus transforming the very objects of vision, the visual experience, and the definition of what is visible.[9]

This re-evaluation of the nature of the visible continues to operate within the frame of an ocular epistemology, and yet, in a seemingly contradictory turn, it demonstrates more than ever the limitations of the organ of sight, the naked eye. What was once considered invisible because inaccessible becomes, in the seventeenth century, the latest addition to the list of "seeable" entities, and yet, this visibility comes with a condition, for the eye must be supplemented by an instrument. The idea of an "assisted" or "instrumentalized" vision is therefore the solution that continues to allow vision to play a fundamental role in the gathering of information and the acquisition of knowledge, but it also further contributes to the mechanization of the eye, an idea already articulated in Kepler's *Optics* through the comparison between the eye and the *camera obscura*.[10] This reconciliation prominently figures in Francis Bacon's *Novum organum* (1620), which promotes experimentation and grounds itself in empiricism, arguing that reason alone cannot produce knowledge.[11] The text praises the senses and declares in its *Preface* that the author's method consists of "open[ing] up and lay[ing] down a new and certain road for the mind to take, starting from those perceptions of the senses."[12] Elsewhere in the same text, however, the author acknowledges the boundaries beyond which the senses cannot venture alone, and asserts that their "dulness and inadequacy and deception" are "by far the greatest impediment and aberration of the human understanding."[13] With regard to the sense of sight, he

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[8] Ibid., 15.

[9] Ibid., 19-20.

[10] Kepler, *Optics*, 183-184.

[11] "The understanding left to itself, in a sober, patient, and serious mind (especially if unhindered by received doctrines), tries sometimes to follow the second way, the right one, but does not get far. For the intellect alone, unregulated and unaided, is unequal to the task and quite unfitted to overcome the obscurity of things." Francis Bacon, *Novum organum*, trans. Peter Urbach and John Gibson (Chicago; La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1993), 1:21. The reference referes to book number followed by the aphorism.

[12] Ibid., 1: "Preface."

[13] Ibid., 1: 50. Also see 1:41, 2:7, and 2:40.

comments that "contemplation mostly ceases with seeing, so much so that little or no attention is paid to things invisible. Therefore every action of the spirits enclosed in material bodies lies hidden and escapes us."[14] In order to renconcile the centrality of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge with their various limitations and liabilities, Bacon thus praises the invention of instruments, for unlike the skeptics who assert that nothing can be known and who "destroy the authority of the sense and understanding," Bacon seeks to "devise and furnish ways of helping them."[15] Given that the senses are the first gateway to knowledge of the world, it logically follows that any object that would ensure or even improve their accuracy would be most beneficial to the process of acquisition.[16] As for the sense of sight, "among the senses, vision clearly holds the first place for providing information, so it is chiefly for this sense that we should seek out aids. And these aids appear to be three in number: they enable the sense to perceive things that are not seen, or are a long way off, or to perceive them more precisely and distinctly."[17]

In a world where appearance deviates from essence and in which artifice masks the true form of things, it is precisely those "spirits enclosed in materials bodies," that which is invisible and lies behind the self-fashioned or projected self, that Boccalini and d'Aubigné aim to uncover, and if they use the sense of sight to do so, they, like Bacon, use ocular supplements to help enhance visual perception and guarantee the authenticity and veracity of what they observe. The "au-delà visuel" is the prime preoccupation of both writers. Boccalini's journalist reports from Parnassus, which remains an otherworldly space despite its urban description: he communicates to readers that which is out of their reach.[18] Furthermore, Boccalini introduces his readers to a special kind of eyeglasses, the *occhiali politici*, whose value, and perhaps danger, lies in their ability to show things and the hearts of men in their true form rather than in their disguised and dissimulated state. D'Aubigné's "au-delà" visuel consists of both physical and metaphysical components. On earth, his

[14] Ibid., 1:50.

[15] Ibid., 1:37. A similar claim is repeated at the end of 1:67.

[16] See Ibid., 2: 38.

[17] Ibid., 2:39.

[18] On the affinity between the *gazzetta* and the telescope, see Reeves, *Evening News*, esp. Introduction and ch.3.

vision, like Boccalini's *occhiali politici*, strips rulers of the cloak of false promises, pretense, and hypocrisy to uncover instead their putrid essence. The poet also aims to show and make known a version of history – the Protestant's version – of France's *guerres de religion*, the civil wars that led to the eradication and exile of many Huguenots and which marked a dark period in France's history that was better left buried. D'Aubigné's eyes unearth these effaced events, bring them to the surface, and curate them in such a vivid manner as to engrave them onto the eyes and minds of those who behold them. If he considers himself a witness to the civil strife, his writing aspires to make the reader into an accomplice in observing this re-presentation of the past. On another level, d'Aubigné directs his eyes to the heavens and into divine secrets as they are written in the stars, predicting the fate of his fellow Huguenots and God's words on Judgement Day.

Unlike Boccalini, the French poet, though he may yearn for a new way of seeing, never refers to an optical device, and it is here that the comparison with Boccalini is insightful. The *occhiali politici* of the Italian text, as Eileen Reeves has demonstrated, are not solely based on a literary predecessor, but are informed by Boccalini's connections to important figures related to glass-making and optical instruments, including Galileo himself.[19] We know that d'Aubigné's collection of books in his Genevan library contains a copy of Boccalini's posthumous *La Pietra del paragone Politico* (1615),[20] a series of anti-Spanish bulletins written in the same journalistic form to bring news from Parnassus and intended to form the third volume or *centuria* of the *Ragguagli*. These newsletters contain several explicit references to the *occhiali politici*, which also appear in a number of bulletins in the first two volumes. It is, however, difficult to say with certainty if d'Aubigné had purchased this book immediately after its publication. Furthermore, given that the date of *La Pietra*'s publication precedes that of *Les Tragiques* by only one year, and that the composition of *Les Tragiques* began before the turn of the century, there is no guarantee that Boccalini's writings would have informed those of d'Aubigné despite the connection between the two authors. What is far more relevant here is that those ideas

[19] The literary precedence here is Cesare Caporali's *Avviso di Parnaso*, where eyeglasses are associated with ethical blindness. Reeves, *Evening News*, 106. For Boccalini's "optical connections," including his possible experiences with a telescope and his attitude toward the instrument over time, see ibid., 107-108.

[20] Jean-Raymond Fanlo, "La Bibliothèque genevoise d'Agrippa d'Aubigné d'après l'inventaire après décès," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 66, no. 3 (2004): 565-601.

that Boccalini explicitly spells out, those abilities that he attributes to the subjects who wear the *occhiali politici*, reappear in d'Aubigné's vision of vision, even if the name of the instrument is absent from the latter's treatment of the subject.

Vision is not only a form of knowledge, but also a foundation for the way in which the authors of the *Ragguagli* and *Les Tragiques* represent their observations. While we will encounter moments of mirror-like representation, descriptions that are a direct reflection of what they depict – this is especially true in d'Aubigné's poem and its use of *enargeia* –, the dominant mode of representation is that of refraction, which distorts the outside object, oftentimes altering its value 180 degrees, displaying it in inverted form. The lens is therefore a mechanism of knowledge as well as one of representation insofar as it effectuates a reversal of terms, turning the pages of the news bulletins or the poem into a retinal screen or a *camera obscura*, where the projected image is upside down. Here, we may look to the German mathematician and astronomer, Johannes Kepler and his *Ad Vitellionem Paralipomena*. The larger part of the study is dedicated to light and, in the second half, on the effects of light and darkness on stars, the moon, the sun and on the phenomenon of eclipses, as well as on the size and motion of heavenly bodies. Kepler's experiments with light, however, also led to some important findings about the eye. What originated as a question of why a ray of light from the sun would appear round as it passed through a whole and reached a surface subsequently led to an experiment in a dark, human-sized, *camera obscura*. In the second chapter, Kepler shares the details of his experiment with a rectangular book and thread, and as he draws the outline of the book on a pavement according to the placement of the threads that have passed through a hole, he concludes that the shape of the surface matches the shape of the object, but also, that this shape is inverted. He then presents this as a proposition in the same chapter.[21] In the fifth chapter, when Kepler finally addresses the eye and the mechanism of vision, he identifies the retina as the final location of the projected image or *pictura*, which also appears in inverted form: "Vision thus occurs through a picture of the visible object at the white of the retina and the concave wall; and

[21] "*If a window could be a mathematical point, the illumination of the squarely interposed wall would precisely assume the shape of the illuminating surface, but inverted; and the ratio and the diameters of the luminous surface and the illuminated wall would come out the same as that of the distances of each from the point of the window*." Kepler, *Optics*, 60. The corollary to this proposition, which extends the number of points to an infinite quantity, also repeats that "*inverted images of the luminous surface are transmitted to the illuminated surface*" (ibid., 61).

those things that are *on the right outside*, are depicted on the *left side of the wall*, the *left at the right, the top at the bottom, the bottom at the top*."[22]

There exists a blatant discrepancy between the outside object and the projection of it inside the eye. Not only is the world inside our eyes, the world as we perceive it through our senses, literally upside down or inverted, but what is projected on the retina has no intrinsic relationship to the outside object. It is but "coloring and illumination," and it "has an existence separable from the presence of the object seen."[23] In other words, none of the essential properties of the outside object transfers to the the *pictura* inside the eye: the internal image is not a miniature version of the outside object as previously believed, but an effect of light and color. Moreover, considering that this image undergoes a number of refractions before it arrives at the retina, and that it is inverted upon arrival, the *pictura* and the object are completely disconnected. Boccalini and d'Aubigné may not be drawing directly from Kepler and his writings, but their representation of a world where the essence of things is an inversion of their appearance is made literal by the mathematician's conclusions about the inverted retinal image. It is all the more interesting to note that Kepler carefully distinguishes between "reflection" and "refraction" in his text,[24] using the word "infractus," from "infringo" (to break, refract or disjoint).[25] What could be more befitting a broken society than a broken form? Both

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[22] Ibid., 181, emphasis mine. After an overview of the eye's anatomy and the density of the various humors (183), which would be responsible for refracting the rays of light that enter the eye, Kepler uses the model of two points, and follows the trajectory of the second, originally to the right of the first. What he demonstrates is that the eye and the *camera obscura* function in an identical manner, that "nearly the same thing happens that we proved in ch.2 above happens in a closed chamber. For the pupil takes the place of the window, the crystalline takes the place of the plane opposite, except that, because of the proximity of the pupil and the crystalline, the complete intersection has not yet been brought about here, with the result that everything is still confused. Next, when this cone constructed *on the left* strikes upon the anterior surface of the crystalline, it will be *refracted towards the right cone*, and nonetheless takes an oblique path through the crystalline, where it will *again be refracted towards the previous right cone*, but slightly so, with the result that it departs less from the previous right cone in the vitreous humor than in the crystalline, but it does nevertheless depart, and thus will fall upon *the left wall of the retina*" (ibid., 184, emphasis mine).

[23] Ibid., 181.

[24] "But because rays are affected in one way by mirrors and in another by water (for the one rebounds from the mirror towards those parts whence it came, while the other bends down from the surface of the water into the depths, and towards those parts opposite those whence it came), let us therefore follow here the convention of the optical writers, and use diverse names: let the one be denoted by the Virgilian and special word "Repercussion," and the other by the class name "Infraction," so that the propositions themselves may allude to the nature of the thing." Kepler, *Optics*, 18.

[25] See ibid., 18n13 and 18n14. The translator of Kepler's *Optics* adds that the Latin words used by Kepler for "repercussion" and "infraction" are "repercussus" and "infractus" respectively.

authors adopt an aesthetic of refraction, constantly bending and breaking, transforming the value of things as they strip their positive and beautiful exterior to reveal a negative and ugly form underneath. Privileging the lens to the mirror, Boccalini and d'Aubigné offer their own texts as a lens – an *occhiale politico* – to present reality not as it *appears* but as it *is*, extending what they have seen and known to the readers, and sharing this knowledge with them exactly as they have seen it.

Chapter 4.
A World Refracted: Boccalini's Political Lenses

A native of Loreto and a Venetian at heart, Traiano Boccalini (1556? -1613) came from modest origins and trained as a lawyer despite a predilection for the world of Letters. The number of offices he held in Rome and within the Pontifical State between 1592 and 1612 expanded his network and exposed him first hand to both domestic and international political affairs, from internal divisions and dysfunction to external threats of domination. Disillusioned by the corruption of governing bodies, Boccalini abandoned his legal career and the political sphere and moved to Venice, where, during the final years of his life, he would fully immerse himself in literary endeavors. These included his commentary on Tacitus and the construction of his political Parnassus,[1] where his previous experiences, his reading of the *Annals* and the *Histories*, and his love of letters converged in a colorful chronicle of contemporary life.

Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnaso*, which enjoyed many reprints and imitations in Italy and many translations abroad over the course of the Seicento,[2] is a compilation of 301 news bulletins divided over three volumes, two of which were published during Boccalini's lifetime and under his supervision (Venice, 1612-1613).[3] The fragmented or non-linear organization, its presentation of multiple perspectives, its emphasis on the passage of time and on the physical rather than on the metaphysical, combined with its satirical tone and humor recalls Béroalde de Verville's *Le Moyen de parvenir*. Both texts unite the great thinkers of times past and

[1] Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso e scritti minori*, ed. Luigi Firpo, 3 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1948). All references to the text are from this edition unless noted otherwise. The numbers in parentheses designate the volume number, followed by the *ragguaglio*, and finally, the page number.

[2] For the Italian editions of the *Ragguagli*, see Luigi Firpo, *I 'Ragguagli di Parnaso' di Traiano Boccalini. Bibliografia delle edizione italiane* (Florence: Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato, 1955). For all of the translations of the *Ragguagli*, see Luigi Firpo, *Traduzioni dei 'Ragguagli' di Traiano Boccalini* (Florence: Edizioni Sansoni Antiquariato, 1965). Also see Harald Hendrix, *Traiano Boccalini fra erudizione e polemica: Ricerca sulla fortuna e bibliografia critica* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1995), as well as his more recent contribution, "Venti anni di fortuna boccaliniana (1994-2014)," in *Traiano Boccalini tra satira e politica*, eds. Laura Melosi and Paolo Procaccioli (Florence: Olschki, 2015), 339-356.

[3] Even though the last bulletin number in the first volume appears as "100," it is in reality the 101st *ragguaglio*, as two bulletins bear the number 47. What is now considered the third "centuria" contains 29 unpublished pieces with a heavy anti-Spanish sentiment, initially published in 1615 under the title of *La Pietra del paragone*, and is a posthumous reconstruction. The present study focuses primarily on the first two volumes.

present to address some of the pressing issues of their own times, though Béroalde's rambunctious banquet and its salacious tales are replaced by a crowd of *virtuosi* encircling Apollo atop Boccalini's Mount Parnassus.

Both the form and the content of the book contributed to the work's tremendous success over the course of the Seicento. The "ragguaglio," a hand-written historical document that reported only the most important facts from the daily chronicles, was in wide circulation in the courts during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As one scholar remarks, the fact that these proto-journalistic works were in vogue at the time when Boccalini was writing made the chosen form both intriguing and appealing.[4] Boccalini's newsletters seldom specify the date, and while a month may be mentioned, events are oftentimes suspended in some vague moment of an ephemeral present, which, with each new *ragguaglio*, has already become a thing of the past. In contrast to this mutable form, however, we find a reiteration of the same concerns – from disenchantment and discontent about a culture of dissimulation to a disavowal of the Spanish monarchy and its actions – which emphasizes the permanence of the problems that plague society in Boccalini's epoch, problems which may adopt a new guise with the passing of time, but whose essence remains unchanged.

Indeed, Boccalini mourns not only the lack, but the impossibility, of sincerity and transparency in a society where appearances regulate all aspects of life, and the issues he evokes strongly resonated with the public and further justified his immediate success.[5] The subjects of the bulletins drafted by the narrator, the special reporter or *menante*, are none other than modern woes: the corruption of court culture and the relationship between rulers and subjects; questions of language and the use of Latin versus the vernacular; comparisons between Italian writers of the Cinque- or Seicento and those of centuries past, including Latin predecessors; concerns about the rise of the Ottoman Empire; the relationship between Italy and its

[4] "Sicuramente l'adozione della forma dell'avviso può essere stabilita come primo elemento determinante per la fortuna dell'opera del lauretano: i ragguagli di cronaca avevano una grande circolazione e costituivano la moda del periodo, quindi erano molto familiari al pubblico dei lettori," Michele Magnatti, "I 'Ragguagli di Parnaso': L'Invenzione di un genere letterario," in *Ragguagli di Parnaso: Testi scelti e studi*, ed. Laura Melosi (Macerata, Italy: Eum, 2013), 113. Also see Hendrix, *Fra erudizione e polemica*, 83.

[5] See Magnatti, "I 'Ragguagli di Parnaso'," 110-112. Magnatti also suggests that if the book was no longer popular in later periods, it is because the reality of the reading public had changed since the Seicento, and that matters such as anti-Spanish sentiments, were no longer on the minds of readers (127). Also see Hendrix, *Fra erudizione e polemica*, 6.

neighboring countries; and an acerbic critique of Spanish domination and conquest, in the Italian peninsula, in Europe, and in the New World.

Figure 8. Nicolas Poussin. Parnassus. Oil on canvas. 1630-1631. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

The modernity of the *Ragguagli*'s form and its content is matched by that of the setting, for Boccalini's Parnassus is anything but traditional. Like a number of his compatriots – beginning with Pietro Aretino and extending to Cesare Caporali,[6] Boccalini transforms the recognizable landscape of Mount Parnassus, the dwelling of Apollo and the Muses, from a bucolic setting into an urban environment.[7] This urban Parnassus is divided into a variety of neighborhoods populated by poets, musicians, artists, philosophers, scientists, and political thinkers, figures of all nationalities, even though those of the Greco-Roman and Italian traditions dominate. The gates of Parnassus guard its residents from unwanted visitors,

[6] For Boccalini's influences and predecessors, see Chiara Pietrucci, "Traiano Boccalini e il lessico della satira," in Melosi, *Testi scelti*, 94-95.

[7] For the transformation of the Parnassian landscape in the Italian tradition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Maneesha Vinod Patel, "Propertied on Parnassus: Dissent and Theoretical Culture in Early Modern Italian Literature," Diss. Columbia University, 2004. Also see Magnatti, "I 'Ragguagli di Parnaso'," esp. 113-120, for a summary of the meaning of Parnassus and the transformation it underwent from the classical myth (as a space representing all of the arts) to one that privileged literary figures among its dwellers (a shift attributed to Dante, and one developed by writers of the Cinquecento, and later, by Boccalini, to become a full-fledged society that goes beyond the literary field; which also bears implications for the figure of Apollo himself).

some never admitted on its grounds, others expelled from it; but they also open to welcome guests, from unknown individuals to personifications of ruling bodies (like the Spanish Monarchy, or the Ottoman Empire) who are either summoned by Apollo or who seek an audience with him. Within the gates, one counts an endless number of spaces dedicated to governance, and like any urban environment, the streets of Parnassus also see their fair share of criminal activity. Moreover, from its fertile grounds spring not flowers, but marketplaces and merchandise.

Vision and its instruments play an integral role in the *Ragguagli*, and they are inseparable from both its form and content. The opening news bulletin guides the reader through a marketplace where a variety of *occhiali* appear among the commodities,[8] and in later newsletters, we find references to *occhiali politici*. The journalistic form relies on the observations of the *menante*, and the validity of what we read is grounded in these first-hand eyewitness accounts, while the constant reminder of the division between appearance and essence brings into question vision's authority. Two recent studies have elaborated on the significance of Boccalini's *occhiali* and the visual tenor of the books specifically within the context of development in the history of science and that of optical technologies. Though her analysis of the *Ragguagli* is part of a larger argument to demonstrate how Galileo was portrayed as a *gazzettante* or reporter, Boccalini appears as a prominent object of study in one chapter of Eileen Reeves' *Evening News*, which investigates the parallel between the journalistic form and the newly invented telescope. In Enrico García Santo-Tomás's *La Musa Refractada*, which offers similar remarks on the affinity between the *gazzetta* and optical instruments,[9] the *Ragguagli di Parnaso* and its lenses are a point of departure to analyze the use of lenses in Spanish Golden Age literature. Examining the tensions between astronomy and religion in addition to the mixed reception of lenses, he identifies the *occhiali politici* – attributed to Boccalini's Tacitus – as a "satirical stylus" ("estilete satírico"),[10] and deems them a perfect way to combine science and ethics, which the Spanish satirical writers

[8] See Reeves, *Evening News*, 105. Reeves notes that the first draft of the *Ragguagli* (1609) did not contain the optical motif.

[9] Santo-Tomás, *La Musa refractada*, 136.

[10] Ibid., 138.

adapted as they explored the relationship between astronomy and religion and offered commentaries on contemporary society.[11]

The present chapter will echo many of these arguments with a focus on lenses – be they eyeglasses, telescopes, or the *camera obscura*[12] – as mechanisms of distortion. This distortion, however, is not synonymous with deceit, at least not entirely. Boccalini's text will demonstrate that the manipulation of vision, while used by some to deform reality to further perpetuate a lie, could in other instances be used as a means of correction, representing reality not as it is seen but as it is. Distortion, therefore, is dual: it may work to create an illusion and perpetuate a false impression, but it is also a crucial operation in the correction or enhancement of vision. The society that Boccalini depicts, like the one that d'Aubigné will paint in his *Tragiques*, is a topsy-turvy one, where all terms and values appear in inverted form. The text's various references to lenses are meant to bring these inversions to the foreground, and with direct comparisons drawn between written works and optical devices, the text itself comes to identify with a lens,[13] constantly distorting, or more precisely, refracting the image at hand. Through his aesthetic of refraction, one that we will encounter in d'Aubigné's poem as well, Boccalini reconstructs and deconstructs a culture of dissimulation and appearance, appearances beyond which things exist in corrupt or hollowed form and as an antithesis of what and how they ought to be. Thus, though the *Ragguagli* may rely on a form that is anchored in history and the true – journalism considered as a form of chronicle or, however oxymoronically, contemporary history – it is pure literature insofar as what it aspires to is the verisimilar, things as they ought to be.

Trust/Distrust:
The Authority of the *Menante*'s Eye

If the reader suspends his or her disbelief and momentarily forgets the supernatural setting of the *Ragguagli* and the way that both time and space have warped to allow for a reunion of figures from past and

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[11] "Al igual que Boccalini, los escritores satíricos españoles no solo utilizaron los *occhiali* con un propósito moral, sino que también los adaptaron a las realidades sociales, económicos y religiosas que los rodeaban," ibid., 146.

[12] The distinction between eyeglasses and telescopes is less relevant here, but it will be crucial to discussions in Part 3 of this study.

[13] For the identification of texts with optical instruments – however positive or negative this association may be – see Reeves, *Evening News*.

present, everything else is depicted with great realism. With Parnassus refurbished as a modern urban center, and debates focused on contemporary matters, we could very well allow ourselves to be swept into the fictitious world and perceive the news bulletins as reporting on real events. With the affinities between historical writing and journalism,[14] as discussed in the previous chapter, Boccalini's chosen form anchors the text in the real and in the historical. As for the veracity of the content of these newsletters, while the form of the manuscript newsletter was considered to contain more accurate reporting,[15] very little insight is available to us about the person who is providing us with the information, but what we are able to glean from the limited references is mostly favorable and invites us to put our faith in him and his remarks.

From the previous chapter, we are aware of the primacy of the eye and the centrality of the eyewitness to the writing of history. In the *Ragguagli*, though largely absent from the bulletins, the reporter does include himself on occasion. *Ragguaglio* I.10 places him in the marketplace, where he follows a number of individuals to various stands or stores and inquires about their purchases: the source is a reliable one because the reporter is on-site. Another bulletin, which announces Apollo's reservations about historical writing and includes the reading of an edict that outlines what is and isn't permissible in such documents, is followed by a statement that mentions the *menante*: "Doppo la pubblicazione di cosí rigoroso editto, si mormora in questa corte – ma perché la faccenda molto va secreta, il menante, *che non avvisa se non cose certe*, non la dà per nuova molto sicura, – che nella congregazione abbino ricevuta la mortificazione di severe riprensioni molti istorici, tra i quali si nominano alcuni della prima classe" (I.54, 197-198, emphasis mine). Where the reporter is not able to get direct access to the content of his bulletins, he includes a disclaimer to let readers know that the information comes from other, and perhaps unreliable, sources.[16] Our *gazzettante* adheres to the highest standards of journalistic activity and practices great integrity, only reporting things of which he is certain, and in the event that this certainty is lacking, he is sure to caution the reader.

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[14] Ibid., 13, 114.

[15] Ibid., 7.

[16] Ibid., 20. Reeves exposes the difference between seeing and hearing as forms of knowledge, and the superiority of the former.

We cannot, however, fully negate that some degree of deformation may be at work, especially since the authority of our reporter depends on the very *ars historica* that has been questioned by the leader of Parnassus. As Pasquale Gauragnella has remarked, while the *Ragguagli* is not strictly speaking classifiable as historiography, it does profoundly engage with an *ars historica* and even proposes its own guidelines to revise existing models.[17] This comment, though applied by Gauragnella to the project of the *Ragguagli* more generally, turns to I.54, mentioned above, as evidence. In this bulletin, we find a long list of methods and approaches to the writing of history, in addition to the objects of such writings, from the biography of important figures to the history of a particular city. More importantly, however, is Boccalini's comment on the lack of objectivity, the strong bias that exists in these endeavors: self-interest, or submission to an authority figure, compromise the truth. Why, then, should we trust the *menante*? What are his connections to the governing body? What are the biases underlying his reportages? The simple answer is that we do not know.

Another reference to the *menante* further complicates our relationship to him, for we read in an earlier bulletin about the "*Ragguagli* di un moderno menante, ne' quali con nuova invenzione e sotto metafore e sotto scherzi di favola si trattavano materie politiche importanti e scelti precetti morali" (I.28, 87). The statement appears in a newsletter about innovation in literature, with praise for Tasso and arguments against strictly following Aristotelian precepts. The *moderno menante*, at once the special correspondent in Parnassus and the author of the collection, also receives applause for his contribution to modernizing Italian letters. What is striking here is the departure from the supposed transparency of historical writing toward the masked and allegorical form proper to literature.[18]

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[17] Pasquale Guaragnella, "Politica e arte istorica nei *Ragguagli di Parnaso*. Osservazioni su uno stile di pensiero," in Melosi and Procaccioli, *Tra satira e politica*, 62.

[18] A number of scholars have juxtaposed passages from Boccalini in which he talks about his two projects, the *Osservazioni su Tacito* and the *Ragguagli*, and they often rely on a rhetoric of masks and transparency. Alberto Asor Rosa claims that Boccalini's writing allows for two types of readings, one superficial and corresponding to the dominant opinions of the day, and the other, more intimate that puts into question those common places, "Ambiguità e opposizione nell'opera di Traiano Boccalini," in *Il Seicento: La nuova scienza e la crisi del barocco*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa, vol. 2 (Bari, Italy: Laterza, 1974) 85. Also see Hendrix, *Fra erudizione e polemica* for a discussion of how Boccalini attempts to reveal the truth through a veiled form; Diego Poli evokes the notions of "dissimulation" and "paradox" as a way of highlighting oppositions, and elaborates on the expression "dialettica bipolare" to address the way in which fiction engages with political concerns in "La Lingua in Traiano Boccalini," in Melosi and Procaccioli, T*ra satira e polticia,* 368.

The warnings about historical writing, in addition to awareness of the "travestimento allegorico" at work in the *Ragguagli*,[19] avert us to the distortion and manipulation that permeate the text. Like the readers of *Le Moyen de parvenir* whom the narrator invites to approach the anamorphotic text from its true angle, those of the *Ragguagli* are constantly seeing *through* something, or being made to see from a given perspective.[20] Our perception is never neutral, as there is always some element that conditions or shapes it. It should not come as a surprise, then, if lenses play such a prominent role in Boccalini's Parnassus, though what is attractive about the object is not simply its distortive property, but the duality of its reception. Eileen Reeves' study on the relationship between optical instruments and news is especially enlightening in this regard. Her analysis of the *camera obscura* in narratives about the Thirty Years' War reveals how the object was represented to either advocate the objectivity of journalist activity or to emphasis its biases.[21] Her argument can be transposed to the *Ragguagli*, for the same kind of division exists in the lenses we encounter in Boccalini's text, which at times operate as instruments of deformation in order to perpetuate lies and appearances, and which, on other occasions, transform the vision of the subject who wears them in order to reveal the true form, thus offering a beneficial correction.[22]

The 'Mirabil Fondaco' and its Instruments of Distortion

The first bulletin of the *Ragguagli di Parnaso* announces the opening of a new marketplace in Apollo's

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[19] Guaragnella, "Politica e arte istorica," 60.

[20] See Reeves, *Evening News*, 108 and ch. 3 more generally on the equivalence of the *occhiali politici* and the imposition of a particular perspective.

[21] Ibid., ch. 5 and 6.

[22] The dual reception of lenses as helpful or harmful is part of the object's history, and it is discussed at length by Vasco Ronchi in his compilation of texts from the early modern period on vision and its instruments in *Scritti di ottica*. In the context of literature, Enrico Garía Santo-Tomás evokes the rarity of the positive reception of glasses (with Benito Daza de Valdés cited as example) compared to their more common negative depiction as instrument of treason, spying, and aggression. *La Musa refractada*, 94. Santo-Tomás also demonstrates how the word-play in the Spanish language, where the word *antojo* means eyeglasses and caprice, is also conducive to a more negative interpretation of the instrument (106-125). Elsewhere, he describes the use of eyeglasses and telescopes in literature as "un arma de doble filo" which illustrates both their utility and their dangers (225). A recent study by Salvatore Silvano Nigro examines the inclusion of eyeglasses in a variety of literary traditions and over a vast window of time, but the corpus he studies primarily associates the instrument with trickery and deceit, thus eliding completely the positive and beneficial aspect of the instrument. Cf. *Il portinaio del diavolo: occhiali e altre inquietudini* (Milan: Bompiani, 2014).

domain, an initiative that had been proposed by the "università de' politici." The heading of the bulletin reads: "Università dei' politici apre un Fondaco in Parnaso, nel quale si vendono diverse Merci utili alla virtuoso vivere de' Letterati"(I.1, 9). In this "mirabil fondaco," one finds "una pomposa e molta ricca mostra di tutte le merci delle quali gli uomini hanno necessità maggiore" (9), with some rather curious choice of objects on display: special fabric for saddles; paint brushes; compasses (*compasso* and *bussola*), a contraption made of iron that resembles pliers; brooms; ink; oils; glass vials; vases filled with fragrant candies; shackles for horses; fans made of herbs and flowers; and, of special interest to us, various kinds of *occhiali*. However different they may be in shape or essence, this seemingly random collection of items is carefully chosen by the grand curator Boccalini, and there is a very clear element unifying them in the Parnassian marketplace. They are all objects of manipulation, distortion, or dissimulation, intended for use by governing bodies (usually, a prince) and their subjects (courtiers) to either reinforce certain power dynamics or to render them more tolerable. In sum, these are objects that attest to the corruptions of a society lacking in transparency and sincerity. Among these commodities, the *occhiali* stands occupy a special place. Boccalini situates the references in the middle of the list, dedicates more space to the *occhiali* than to any other object (five paragraphs rather than one), and unlike the other merchandise, he emphasizes their great variety, with different kinds serving different functions.

Figure 9. Hans Collaert II. Conspicilla: Invention of Eyeglasses. Engraving. Ca.1600.

One group is meant to correct the vision of the libidinous by helping them see the error of their appetite, "servono per far vedere a quegli uomini salaci, a' quali nel furor delle libidini di modo si scorta la vista, che non discernano l'onor dal vitupero (…) né altra cosa che meriti che gli sia portato rispetto" (10). The glasses are meant to "give light" or illuminate the vision and mind of those whose perception of reality has been distorted by carnal desire (based on the sales numbers, we are told, "rari sono gli uomini che nelle cose carnali abbiano buona vista," ibid.). Another pair of glasses, however, has the opposite effect, namely "servono per altrui *non far vedere* lume," (ibid., emphasis mine), and it is primarily destined toward courtiers:

> (…) gli stessi politici affirmano che, se bene agli uomini tutti, particolarmente nondimeno ai cortigiani più sono necessari di quei della vista lontana: mercé che avanti gli occhi dei galantuomini spesse volte si parano cose oltra modo spiacevoli; e perché il voltar loro le spalle spesse volte è un tirarsi addosso l'ira degli uomini potenti, il rimirarle è un crudelmente martorizzar se stesso. Il porsi in quella occasione così mirabili occhiali al naso, opera che altri libera se stesso dal travaglio di veder le cose stomacose di questo mondaccio tanto corrotto, e alla sciocca brigata si fa credere che altri voglia rimararle con maggior accuratezza. (ibid.)

Rather than a strictly corrective measure, these glasses are meant to distort in order to protect. The position of the courtier within a culture of appearances and within a social hierarchy places him in a bind, where both sincerity and dissimulation lead to significant consequences. If the courtier expresses his true sentiments, he risks offending fellow courtiers, and more importantly, the authority figures on whom his livelihood and reputation depend. On the other hand, if he continues to play the game, he condemns himself to disenchantment and despair as he faces realities of a corrupt world. With these spectacles placed before his eyes, he would offend neither himself nor others: he would be allowed to continue participating in the charade and appear to be engaged in the life of the court as an astute observer, but his vision would be protected from its monstrosities.

The third kind of glasses serves both a corrective and protective function, and it targets those who, upon receiving promotions, are prone to forgetting the services they received prior to being elevated to a position of greater power. The fourth type of glasses, qualified in the superlative as "mirabilissimi," are destined for the eyes of courtiers as well, though it is the princes who reap the benefits. These glasses

> altrui fanno parer le pulci elefanti, i pigmei giganti; questi avidamente sono comperati dagli stessi grandi personaggi e poi donati ai loro cortigiani da alcuni soggetti grandi, i quali, ponendoli poi al naso dei loro sfortunati cortigiani, tanto alterano la vista di quei miseri, che rimunerazione di cinquecento scudi di rendita stimano il vil favoruccio che dal padrone venga loro posta la mano nella spalla, o l'esser da lui rimirati con un ghingo, ancor che artificioso e fatto per forza. (ibid., 11)

While we may hear echoes of the historical accounts that spoke of Francesco Sforza giving eyeglasses to his courtiers as gifts,[23] the gesture here seems to be less benevolent. The distortive quality of lenses is not intented to correct, but rather, to manipulate as a means to secure power. The lenses are meant to distort the size of objects in a seamless manner, which the immediate juxtaposition between the original (*pulci*, *pigmei*) and the target (*elefanti*, *giganti*) demonstrates, to make them appear (*parer*) other than they are without raising suspicion. The effect is achieved with success as those in power are immediately described as *grandi personaggi* or *soggetti grandi*, paralleling the product of the optical illusion (elephants and giants), even if in reality, they are more akin to fleas and pigmies. In turn, it is the courtiers who are belittled, described as *sfortunati* and *miseri*, for they must succumb to the dangerous effects of the lenses that someone else has placed on their nose and before their eyes.

The final *occhiali* designates an entirely different instrument. With the specification that these have been *ultimamente inventati in Fiandra*, the market also sells the newly invented telescope.[24] These, too, are popular with the same *gran personaggi* and gifted to courtiers, and upon use, "fanno parer loro vicinissimi quei premi e quelli dignitadi alle quali non giunge la vista loro, e forse non arriverà l'età" (11). Boccalini immediately captures the effects of the telescope, giving the impression that distant – even normally invisible – objects are within reach, and he uses it to represent the way in which those in positions of power dangle the proverbial carrot before their subjects.

The function of the *occhiali* in the marketplace converges to one main act: deforming reality.[25] The distortion, however, is not uniform, be it because of the subject before whose eyes the instrument is placed, or because of its effect. It is true that the different types of lenses have an intended user, which in turn determines their operation, but the influence also works in the other direction, for the lenses alter the subject

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[23] See Ilardi, *Renaissance Vision*, 82-85. Also see Reeves, *Evening News*, 105.

[24] The use of the same word "occhiale" or "occhiali" for both the eyeglasses and the telescope is not uncommon, especially in the early decades of the seventeenth century. As the specific identity of the device is not crucial to the argument of this chapter, it will not be discussed here. We will, however, return to the dual meaning of the word in chapter 6.

[25] On the depiction of eyeglasses in the opening *ragguaglio*, Eileen Reeves remarks that "Boccalini's descriptions would have been recognizable adaptations of the kinds of claims routinely made for pretelescopic devices and eventually for the Dutch instrument itself," *Evening News*, 105-106.

who uses them, whatever his or her identity may be. As with Béroalde's glasses, the object shapes the subject: by altering what the individual sees, the lenses consequently alter what the individual knows, and by shaping the individual's perception of reality, the lenses also shape the individual's self or being, be it temporarily or permanently. Through these lenses, seeing and knowing become inseparable, and if those glasses on the market are any indication, they can be valuable mechanisms of control. Indeed, in addition to being harmful or helpful, manipulative or corrective, lenses can also be used as instruments of power or empowerment. What remains to be determined, what we must identify, is the lens through which the narrator is observing the world and the lens through which we are, in turn, made to see it.

***Essere* or *Parere*:**
Refracted Reportage & the Inversion of Values

What does the special Parnassian correspondant communicate to his readers, and how does he represent the reality of Parnassus? In contrast to the instruments of concealment or disguise that clutter the bustling marketplace of the first news bulletin, the twenty-sixth notice presents transparency as a prized alternative or aspiration. The *ragguaglio* reports an encounter between the French king Francis I and Philosophy. The king is distraught to see noble Philosophy walking the streets of Parnassus in the nude, and he offers her his royal coat. Philosophy refuses the king's gesture and clarifies that "senza punto pregiudicar alla sua riputazione ignuda poteva andar per Parnaso chi non avea vergone da nascondere, bruttezze da ricoprire" (I.26, 82). Associating clothing with *vergogne* and *brutezze*, shame and ugliness, and with flawed characteristics that need to be hidden or covered, nudity, instead, is a privilege bestowed upon those whose immaculate reputation allows them to bare all. The word "schietto" – pure or sincere – and its variations abound in the other reportages, though this state, embodied by Philosophy's nudity in the ideal reign of the ideal prince Apollo, is itself an ideal. The reality could not be more distant in a contemporary society that is deeply entrenched in disguise and artifice, one that the *menante* reiterates and one that Boccalini condemns in unquestionable terms.[26]

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[26] Reeves, *Evening News*, 118-119. Reeves convincingly argues that this veil is in reality rather transparent, especially as it applies to the identity of specific individuals.

In one bulletin, Michelangelo is asked why he is copying the ugly façade of Anneo Seneca's home, to which he responds:

> In questa facciata, che a voi tanto par sporca, gl'intendenti dell'arte così compiutamente scorgono gli ordini tutti dell'architettura dorica, ionica, corinzia e composta dell'essere e non parere, che, per opinione anco dello stesso Vitruvio, per l'ottavo merita di esser aggiunta ai sette miracoli del mondo. (I.4, 20)

The discerning eye of the artist distinguishes itself from that of the interlocutor (*a voi* vs. *gl'intendenti dell'arte*) for it is able to see the true and raw form, the essential components, devoid of artifice. The drawing, Michelangelo informs us, is to go to Naples, where people "impazziti nella vanitá di parer quei che non sono, hanno somma necessitá di ocultamente veder nel disegno di questa facciata come siano fatte le cose degli uomini saggi, che sono e non paiono" (ibid.). Just like Philosophy, Boccalini's intentions are *mises à nu*, for not only does he present his readers with a rather obvious metaphor – the façade – but he spells out its significance by repeatedly invoking the terms "appearing" and "being," *parere* and *essere*. Within this seemingly simple contrast, however, a more subtle and sophisticated mechanism is at work, for Boccalini does not simply apprise his readers of this division. Instead, he shows the degradation that has separated form from appearance, and the ideal from reality. The terms *parere* and *essere* are juxtaposed with both groups, the *impazziti* of Naples and the *uomini saggi*. For the former, the terms are "parer/non sono," where appearance prevails over essence. Not surprisingly, the latter privileges essence over appearance, as the "uomini saggi" "sono e non paiono." The reversal of terms that we witness here is one that permeates the *Ragguagli*, where the text's lenses and the text-as-lens act as a refractive node that constantly breaks the line of thought, and in most instances, to an extent that results in a complete inversion.

If nudity and transparency are the desired effect, what transpires in reality changes the goal into a distant dream. Parnassus itself is exposed as being vulnerable to the corruptions that plague the courts of Italy and Europe. One news bulletin reports that Fedeltà, or Loyalty, has abandoned her house on Parnassus, causing chaos in Apollo's kingdom. A search party is sent out, and upon finding her, its members learn the following:

> che quella Fedeltá *ostinata* di onoratamente servir il suo principe fino all'effusione dell'ultima goccia di sangue e all'emissione degli ultimi spiriti della vita, che *prima* tanto era ammirata e ambita, *ora* vien riputata sciocca e viziosa *ostinazione*: e ditele che l'aver, per ben potersi accommodare al tempo, al luogo e alle persone, un animo fraudolente, colmo di perfidia e disposto ad usar ogni piú esecranda *infedeltá*, oggigiorno vien predicata sapienza, sagacitá e accortezza d'ingegno copioso di partiti (…). (I.11, 44, emphasis mine)

As Fraude has come to replace Fedeltà, the displaced virtue outlines the process of this unfortunate reversal of terms. The temporal adverbs *prima* and *ora* designate two distinct periods and states of being. The "serenissima virtù" (43), whose tenacious (*ostinata*) will to serve Apollo was once admired and desired (*ammirata e ambita*), is now considered a stupid and depraved (*sciocca e viziosa*) obstinacy (*oztinazione*). The permanence of the new reputation, crystalized as a state of being rather than an attribute, is reflected in the shift from the adjective "ostinata" (here, positive) to the substantive "ostinazione," charged with a negative connotation. In the present, Fraude has embedded itself in the hearts of men ("un animo *fraud*olente"), completing negating Fedeltà as "infedeltà" usurps all of the qualities that were once associated with the virtue ("sapienza, sagacitá, e accortezza d'ingegno").

The desire for sincerity and transparency is met with constant resistance, and modern times render their realization not only difficult, but practically impossible. When a group of virtuosi proposes that Apollo draft a document banning hypocrisy, Plato objects:

> perché le persone schiette, gl'ingegni aperti, gli animi liberi, inimicissimi degli artifici e delle doppiezze, i quali ne' tempi passati come semidei dalle genti furono ammirati e onorati, dagli uomini del presente secolo intanto non piú erano stimati, che la nobilissima virtù del ragionar con la verità in bocca, la singolar dote del proceder libero, non cose sante, non virtù amabilissima, ma eran stimate scurrilità, vita rilassata, proceder licenzioso, costume scorretti. (II.41, 166)

As past collides with the present, the point of contact refracts the trajectory of those attractive characteristics in individuals. All of the positive qualities – sincerity and open-mindedness – that stood in the strongest opposition to artifice and duplicity, once honored and admired much like Fedeltà, are discarded in the new century. The *presente secolo* bends the line of virtue, and immediately introduces a negative, *non più*, setting the course of the line along another angle. The syntax perfectly mirrors the effect of this refraction as the *nobilissima virtù del ragionar con la verità in bocca* is followed by the adjectives that one would ordinarily associate with it (*sante*, *amabilissima*). The positive value, however, is negated as these adjectives appear after *non*, which only announces the progressive degeneration that culminates in a complete reversal after the conjunction *ma*. What follows no longer needs to be qualified by "non" to acquire negative meaning, for the words themselves already denote this deterioraton. To allow individuals to freely exercise the virtues of yesteryears, Plato argues, would yield dangerous and undesirable effects, for the perception and values of contemporary society have

become so denatured that what is in reality respectable would be viewed as repugnant. In recognizing that the customs of the times force the virtuosi to adopt appearances, Apollo decides to allow people to consume a limited dose, one eightieth of a grain, of hypocrisy. Distortion, like the pair of obscuring glasses from the marketplace, becomes a necessity, a means of self-preservation.

The situation described in the above newsletter only grows more dire when about a dozen bulletins later, the Parnassian reporter announces the monumental failure of Apollo's plan. By consuming the permissible dose of hypocrisy, the reversal of values goes one step further, as the virtuosi no longer *pretend* to adopt a new mentality, but embrace and internalize it in its totality. The *menante* describes the situation as a sort of epidemic, where the consumption of the hypocrisy pill has infected (*ammorbare*) "in pochi giorni tutti i sinceri e schietti costume loro," and that "in pochi giorni Parnaso tutti si era impocritato" (II.53,191). What was previously intended as a protective cloak to conserve true virtues and safeguard the individual from a rabid society that capitalizes on the vulnerabilities of the *the schietti* or the sincere, becomes inseparable from the body that wore it:

> che quegl' ipocritoni, che col manto di una santa umiltà, con artificio grande ricoprivano una diabolica superbia, col velo della povertá una inestinguibil sete dell'oro, con la coperta del disprezzo del mondo un'esecranda ambizione di dominar l'universo, lasciassero vivere nello Stato loro dell'apparente umiltà, della finta povertá, della simulata solitudine della vita ritirata. (II.53 193)

"Manto," "artificio," "ricoprire," "velo," "coperta": how far we have come from Philosophy and her shameless nudity! The various terms that refer to outerwear are coupled with what used to be those honorable characteristics that formed the essence of the virtuosi. Instead, they have become methods of distortion and deception, concealing vile ambitions. The inversion is complete as the virtuosi, too, succumb to the seductions of appearances and abandon their core values for the ones of a denatured society.[27] Parnassus is in disorder, and with the refraction of values, the whole world is now upside down.

Boccalini turns his Parnassus into a funhouse of lenses that constantly refract and distort.[28] Just as the *pictura* on the eye's retina bears no intrinsic relationship to the outside object – not only is the *pictura*

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[27] Jon R. Snyder elucidates the dangers associated with dissimulation as the perpetual wearing of masks and assuming a different self could lead to a loss of a sense of identity. See *Dissimulation*.

[28] Ilaria Pini examines the structure and organization of the three volumes of the *Ragguagli* to argue that the arrangement of the news bulletins is not random, but rather, revelatory of internal reflections and refractions: "Queste costruzioni in

upside down, but it is an effect of light and color, and as such, it contains no essential property of the object itself – the images that Boccalini presents through the supposedly objective eye of the *menante*-narrator are in a perpetual state of flux, such that over time, they transform into their own polar opposite. We have already seen this effect in the reversal of terms from virtue to vice, but Boccalini also applies his aesthetic of refraction on a structural level, introducing twists and turns within a news bulletin so that those antithetical terms in a single sentence extend to the development of an entire report. One bulletin begins with Apollo asking his men to search for "gl'inventori di tutte le cose per beneficio del genere umano escogitate dagli'ingegni straordinariamente grandi" so that they could be honored (I.46, 166), and it ends with Apollo "forzato ad amare che ogni giorno piú crecessero le crudeli invenzioni di presto estirpar dal mondo cosí fetente carogna, cosí diabolica semente dalla terra, che indegnamente pasce uomini tanto perniziosi (ibid., 168). How did the ruler of Parnassus go from celebrating the inventors of all that is beneficial to humankind to wishing for the proliferation of those diabolical creations that would lead to its demise? The transformation from the original intention to the end result occurs through a series of refractions. The positive tenor of the opening lines appears to continue as the next sentence begins with "E perché," leading the reader to expect more on how Apollo wishes to honor these great minds. Instead, celebration cedes to distress as the words "E perché" are followed by "Sua Maestá *sente travaglio* infinito" before announcing Apollo's preoccupation with the art of war, judged to be "sempre crudele," and with the invention of the cannon that has altered the nature of warfare. The picture shifts from positive inventions "per beneficio del genere umano" to this "diabolica invenzione," the product of a "crudele ingegno" (ibid., 166). Upon finding the inventor, a German, Apollo decides to punish him in a manner reminiscent of Dante's *contrapasso*, commanding that he be placed in a canon and shot from it, and therefore killed by his own "infernale

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parallelo, a volte rovesciate, fanno parte del complesso gioco di specchi che è alla base dei *Ragguagli* e che costituisce una caratteristica fondmanetale della letteratura paradossale. Essi, caso per caso, hanno la funzione di porre in evidenza alcune tematiche diffrate, di moltiplicare le angolazioni di interesse richiami puntuali all'interne delle linearità spezzata del discorso," "Simmetria e opposizione nelle due *Centurie* dei *Ragguagli di Parnaso*," in Melosi and Procaccioli, *Tra Satira e Politica*, 141. In his analysis of satirical literature of the Spanish Golden Age, and in the specific context of examining optical instruments as means of voyeurism and extension into hidden places, Enrique García Santo-Tomás also addresses the role of refraction in the transformation and reorganization of a given space, *La musa refractada*, 199. Cf. Poli, "La lingua in Traiano Boccalini," esp. 366, in which he describes Boccalini's mode of representation as more of a reflection, based on ekpharsis and imitation.

invenzione" (ibid.). Before being put to death, however, the German pleads with Apollo to hear his side of the story, in which he justifies the "diabolica invenzione" by evoking his "buona volontà" and "santa intenzione" (ibid., 167) and claims that the sinister effect or the consequence of the invention, "affligere il genere umano," has eclipsed his original intention, to invent "per carità, per zelo di grandissima pietà." The German explains that he had invented the device recognizing all of its horrors, though he had hoped that this exaggerated cruelty would deter men from killing one another. He claims that it is not his fault if, regrettably, the effect proved to be contrary to his wishes:

> Se poi *è succesduto il contrario di quello che io ho creduto*, e se il genere umano, in superlativo grado pazzo, fiero contro il suo sangue, immane contro le sue carno, è arrivato al termine di così crudele sciochezza, che, per ambizione di parer bravo, fine per delizia va contro le cannonate, devo io portar le pene della temerità e bestialità altrui? – La difesa del tedesca talmente commosse l'animo di Apollo, che**,** *convertendo* la pena in grazia, comandò ch'egli piú tosto fosse premiato che castigato (ibid., 168, emphasis mine)

"Il contrario," "convertendo": both layers of the narrative undergo refraction as the initial intention and the final effect stand as diametric opposites, their terms completely reversed. For Apollo, his celebration of the inventors of beneficial things transforms into a promotion of artillery; for the German inventor, the aspiration to rid humanity of war only leads to further cruelty and more aggressive warfare. Boccalini, by setting up an expectation, quickly changes the vector, and this refraction displaces the image until it has been turned completely upside down.

While a number of news bulletins replicate this model within the frame of the *ragguaglio*, none is nearly as destabilizing as the eighty-sixth notice of the first volume, for this particular refraction and inversion of positions undermines and overturns everything that the reader has come to accept over the course of the previous bulletins. The *menante* reports of a conflict between Justus Lipsius and Tacitus. Lipsius had said something that had offended Tacitus, who later forgave him. Overwhelmed by this magnanimous gesture on the part of Tacitus, the news bulletin claims that Lipsius's admiration for Tacitus grew very strong and that he spent most of his waking hours in the historian's company much to the chagrin of Tacitus' other followers and admirers. Prompted by jealousy, these individuals complained before Apollo under the guise of concern for Tacitus, invoking the way that Lipsius had insulted their hero, and accusing their rival of idolatry, claiming that his adulation of Tacitus surpassed what he was to feel towards the prince of Parnassus. Herein lies the

twist: Apollo, rather than question Lipsius's loyalty to him, interrogates him on his choice of idol, and what follows is a venomous critique of Tacitus, the very same figure whom Apollo himself had hailed and venerated in every other bulletin in which his name had appeared.

Apollo blames Tacitus for *empietà*, he colors the historian's words and actions and their consequences with the word *scelerato*, and decries "quella crudele e disperata politica" that is harmful to both the princes who apply it and the people who are subjected to it, one that has instructed both public and private men to deceive, and one that has driven the virtuous to do things that even the darkest demons of hell would consider an abomination (I.86, 313-314). In addition to displaying the reversal of values that Tacitus and his work are said to incite, Boccalini completely dismantles the reader's expectations in Apollo's acerbic portrait of the Roman historian, thus inverting all previous images. The description accumulates the references to duplicity and artifice ("le doppiezze e l'arte tanto fraudolente," "ingannar ognuno"), to that which is false and misleading, all those factors that contribute to the discrepancy between appearance and form, between true intentions and insincere actions, or pleasing words and ugly deeds (*le fallacie delle belle parole e de' cattivi fatti*, 113), reminiscent of previous complaints and condemnations against dissimulation and hypocrisy.

The malicious and malefic nature of Tacitus' work is expressed more forcefully when Apollo speaks of the writings on the life of Tiberius. Calling the text "insopportabile," he displays deep regret that the work, which had been considered buried and lost somewhere in Germany, "con pestifera curiosità da un alemanno, al mondo tutto più fatale *del suo compatriota inventor della mortal bombarda*, nel tempo medesimo fu cavata fuori, che quella nobilissima provincia cominciò ad esser appestata dalla scelerata moderna eresia" (ibid., 314, emphasis mine). The comparison between the text and the devastating effects of the cannon could not make the harmful implications of Tacitus' works more explicit. And yet, this reference prompts us to take a step back and reconsider everything we have just read, for if we recall a previous newsletter, the very same maker of the cannon, who had initially received severe castigation, was then rewarded. Moreover, the change in his fate occurred once the German inventor exonerated himself by explaining how the use of the object *at the hands of others* had deviated from his original intention. Once we make this connection, once we see beyond the distortion, we are perhaps able to foresee the conclusion and anticipate another reversal, one that restores

Tacitus's reputation and allows him to regain his rightful place. Indeed, when Lipsius refuses to abandon his convictions even when threated to be burned at the stake, Apollo divulges that he was just testing Lipsius's loyalty, and that all that he had uttered against Tacitus echoed the sentiments of readers who had misunderstood and misused him.[29]

In Apollo's distorted depiction, the misinterpreted Tacitian corpus is compared to two objects whose evocation is far from gratuitous: a paintbrush that paints black as white ("pennello di falsi pretesti dipinger lo nero per lo bianco," 313), and a compass of self-interest, "lo scelerato compass dell'interesse," with which to measure "l'amore, l'odio, la fede, e ogni uman virtù" (ibid.). If we return to the marketplace scene that opens the first volume of the *Ragguagli*, we find these same two items available for sale on the stands.[30] It would appear that these tools of dissimulation, just like Tacitus' texts, are accessible to anyone, which should be alarming insofar as they are deemed dangerous instruments that corrupt individual men and societies at large. We may also remember that these mechanisms of manipulation appear alongside a variety of *occhiali*, which solicits the question of which kind might be affiliated wtih Tacitus. While glasses are absent from this passage, they do appear in strict connection to Tacitus elsewhere in the *Ragguagli*, but we they are strikingly different from the ones available on the market.

Distorting to Correct: The *Occhiali Politici*

According to the *menante*'s seventy-first bulletin of the second volume, Tacitus is credited with inventing a particular type of glasses, the *occhiali politici*. If the paintbrush and the compass, like the *occhiali* of the marketplace, worked to conceal and deceive the hearts of men, and if these properties made them attractive objects to corrupt people in both private and public spheres, the *occhiali politici* present a threat

[29] "Le ingiurie che ho dette a Tacito, che sono le medesime con le quali lo accusano quelli che non lo studiano o non l'intendono, ho fatto prova della divozion tua verso quell'eccellentissimo istorico anco degno della maraviglia mia: e da quello che per ora da te ho udito, ben m'accorgo che l'hai letto con gusto, studiato con frutto, lucubrato con utilitá," Boccalini, *Ragguagli*, I.86, 317.

[30] "Nel medesimo fondaco si vende ancora copia molto grande di pennelli eccellentissimi per quei prencipi che nelle urgenti occasioni loro sono forzati dipinger ai popoli il bianco per il nero," Boccalini, *Ragguagli*, I.1.10; "Si vendono anche in quel fondaco alcuni compassi: non già fabbricati di argento, di ottone o di acciaio, ma del puro interesse della più soprafina riputazione che si trovi in tutta la maniera dell'onore," ibid., 11.

precisely because they perform the opposite function. These glasses enhance the visual acuity of the person who wears them, making transparent that which is obscured. Rather than clouding truth in artifice, they reveal things – and people – in their veritable form. The powerful princes who raise the complaints against Tacitus object to the "diabolici occhiali" and to their application by "le persone semplici" for two reasons. The subversive instrument (*sediziosa invenzione*) has excessively harmful effects (*perniciosissimi effetti*). On the one hand, it strips away those encrusted layers of artifice that are so integral to the rulers' way of governing and exercising power. On the other hand, clipped onto the nose of the subjects, they protect the eyes of those who wear them from the dust that rulers ordinarily throw in their eyes to obfuscate their vision against future misdeeds and trickery.[31]

The *occhiali politici* only appear in a handful of bulletins (I.89, II.71, II, 89, III.4, and III.12), though their function – when explicitly described – is consistent: they allow the bespectacled subject to see beyond appearances and straight into the hearts of men. Most scholars who refer to II.71 often do so in conjunction with I.89, the first time that the expression appears in the *Ragguagli*. Unlike the bulletin about Tacitus where it was the princes who had identified the existence of such an instrument and attributed its invention to the Roman historian, in I.89,[32] they appear in a direct discourse enounced by Machiavelli. The bulletin reports on the trial of the Florentine secretary, who, after having been found in a friend's library despite being banished from Parnassus, is sent to the stake. Before his punishment is carried out, he requests that he be given the opportunity to explain his position. The saying "don't shoot the messenger" aptly summarizes Machiavelli's speech as he defends himself by saying he did not create the behavior and mentality for which his books are condemned, but rather, that he was responsible solely for putting into words that which he observed. He is

[31] "Tutte cose che i prencipi, per cagione della sediziosa invenzione di Tacito, più non averebbono potuto fare: chiaramente vedendosi che i diabolici occhiali fabbricati da quell'uomo sempre sedizioso, oltre il primo, che si era detto, di assottigliar la vista de' popoli, facevano anco il secondo perniziosissimo effetto di così bene sigillare al naso degli uomini, che a' prencipi non piú, come per lo passato con non minore loro facilità che utilitá grande avevano fatto, era possibile poter gettar la polvere negli occhi a' loro sudditi, ancor che ella fosse stata della piú artificiosa e della piú soprafina, senza che essi si accorgessero di essere ingannati," ibid., II.71, 249.

[32] The relationship between Boccalini and Machiavelli has drawn great attention from scholars, especially as they attempt to glean Boccalini's attitude toward the Florentine secretary and to situate Boccalini's own political thought. These views, and the history of scholarship on this relationship is provided by Hendrix, *Fra erudizione et polemica*. Hendrix also observes Boccalini's attitude toward Machiavelli is often read in light of a given period's reception of Machiavelli as revolting or revolutionary (ch.8).

puzzled, he adds, that those who participate in the cult of appearance and hypocrisy, whose actions he has simply represented, are adored while he, the messenger, is abhorred and castigated. With these words, Machiavelli succeeds in moving his judges, though they are not enough to exempt him. While the judges concede that his works were observations rather than invented precepts, Parnassian official had caught the Florentine the night before the trial as he attempted to put dogs' teeth in the mouth of sheep.

The subversion, therefore, is not in the content of Machiavelli's writings, but rather, in his intentions of using texts to enlighten people with regard to their rulers by divulging their strategies in plain sight. This act, his judges claim, "era un voler porre il mondo tutto in combustion il tentare di far maliziosi i semplici e far veder lume a quelle talpe le quali con grandissima circospezione la madre natura avea create cieche" (I.89, 328). We recall that Tacitus, too, had raised suspicion and alarm among princes because of his distribution of *occhiali politici*, and he, too, faced some restrictions. Apollo's sentence is not so severe as to exile or imprison Tacitus, but he does recommend that the historian make fewer glasses of this kind, and that their circulation be limited to a very specific group (secretaries, councellors, princes, "tutto affine che servissero per facilitar loro il buon governo de' popoli," 249). Sheep are not to be given dogs' teeth, the blind – by the will and design of Nature – are not meant to see, and not everyone is meant to have access to the *occhiali politici*.

Unlike Béroalde's glasses, which championed a democratization of knowledge, an opening of the readership to the general public, and unlike those metaphorical lenses of faith that d'Aubigné hopes to circulate as broadly as possible to apprise his readers ofthe dissimulation of rulers and to correct their perception of France's religious wars, the conclusions of Machiavelli's trial and Tacitus's hearing challenge the wide distribution of the *occhiali politici*. They act as a cautionary tale, warning of the dangers and disruptions to power structures if everyone has knowledge of the mechanisms used by governing bodies. The possession of such information granted to the general public by the *occhiali politici* in the name of empowerment would mark the unraveling of the threads of all those layers of artifice that conceal true feelings and intentions. If the *occhiali politici* are sanctioned, so too, are certain types of books. Béroalde, in the frontispiece of *Le Moyen de parvenir*, did not go as far to equate his book with the *lunettes*, but claimed that all those who would have a nose to wear glasses – namely, everyone – could draw benefits from it. In the *Ragguagli*, and in II.71 in

particular where we are introduced to the inventor of the *occhiali politici*, there is an infrangible link between text and lens, between the "sediziosa materia de' suoi *Annali* e delle sue *Istorie*" and "la sedizioza invenzione di Tacito" (247). This bulletin crystallizes the notion of "book-as-lens" as both objects serve the same function of enlightening those who use them, enhancing the vision, and by extension, knowledge of the bespectacled subject.[33] In I.89, Machiavalli suggests that the *occhiale politico* is a privileged way of looking at texts that reveals their true value and enables the reader to derive the maximum benefit from them,"la lezione delle istorie, non solo permessa ma tanto commendata da ognuno, notoriamente ha virtù di convertire in tanti Machiavelli quelli che vi attendono con l'occhiale politico" (327). If we are to believe the secretary's earlier assertions that he has not devised the notions of dissimulation or hypocrisy, but has only observed, deciphered, and transcribed the behavior of rulers, then to become Machiavelli, with the aid of the *occhiali politici*, implies having the same degree of insight, the same visual acuity, that makes it possible to see beyond appearances and comprehend those hidden strategies that propel the action of rulers. The relationship between knowledge and vision is repeated shortly after this declaration, when Machiavelli states that "le buone lettere, (…) sono quelle che fanno divenir Arghi gl'intelletti ciechi" (ibid.). Exposure to Letters is a cure for blindness, but if these benefits are not universally praised, or if they are met with tepid reactions, it is because the same vision that leads to knowledge also threatens to transform existing power dynamics and incite a political upheaval. This is exactly the effect that d'Aubigné will want to achieve in *Les Tragiques*, and yet, in the *Ragguagli*, there seems to be some more resistance.

The news bulletin immediately following Machiavelli's trial welds the notions of vision, knowledge, and power together even more emphatically when a group of prisoners requests an audience before Apollo so that the condemned may plead their case before the Prince. One prisoner, a former lawyer and man of letters who had abandoned those practices to become a soldier, evokes Apollo's ire, who strongly condemns warfare and reproaches the man's poor choice. What follows is an equally powerful praise of the liberal arts and letters, which, according to Apollo,

[33] In the context of her study, in which lenticular devices are instruments of contemplation and knowledge production, Joanna Picciotto coins the term "textacle" to capture the equation of text and sectacles, *Labors of Innoncence*, 326.

da alcuni prencipi non per altra cagione severamente sono state proibite negli Stati lor, eccetto perché aprono gli occhi ai ciechi e illuminano gli' intelletti agli uomini sciocchi, a' quali esattamente fanno conoscere gli artifici e le imposture che i re del mondo hanno usate per altrui far parer utile e onorato, esercizio tanto degno di esser abborrito" (I.90, 333).

The proximity of the news bulletins makes it impossible not to recall Machiavelli's statement about the "buone lettere," which transform the blind into Arguses, for here, too, the effect of these texts is described in terms of the sense of sight, its absence, and its restoration ("aprono gli occhi ai ciechi"). Here, too, we find details of what it is that these texts do, namely, exposing the façade behind which rulers conceal themselves. We have also come to understand that uncovering the essence of such rulers is a legitimate threat, not only because the transparency renders them vulnerable, but because this new-found knowledge leads to discontent among their subjects who, upon learning of these hypocrisies and lies, would be likely to revolt against them. Without naming the object, what Apollo describes is the *occhiali politici*, and literature appears once more as a vision aid, one that has the capability of putting the existing bodies and structures of power in peril.[34] The debate therefore shifts from how to acquire (reliable) knowledge to how knowledge must be restricted.[35]

A number of elements in Boccalini's text suggest a degree of compliance with Apollo's advice about limiting access to such instruments. For one, the marketplace of the opening *raggaglio*, while exhibiting a variety of *occhiali* with diverse effects, does not have any *occhiali politici* among its stock. These special glasses do not circulate openly in Parnassus. This is true as well for the news bulletins themselves, for only a handful contain the expression over the three volumes. Finally, the *ragguaglio*, as previously stated, is a document intended for distribution before a smaller group at court, and its manuscript form also means that there are

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[34] See *Evening News*, 26-27, and ch.3. Reeves discusses the circumstances around Boccalini's death in 1613 – at the time attributed to assassination by poison at the hands of the Spanish in retaliation for his anti-Spanish commentary– as a cautionary tale for using the *occhiali politici* and disclosing too much information. This episode belongs in a larger frame in her argument that examines the reporting of natural observations and their consequences, especially as they challenge existing world systems.

[35] Peter Burke's contribution to *The Renaissance World* offers a succinct yet rich overview of the diffusion of knowledge and the measures taken to control or amplify its circulation. He addresses the relationship between classical languages and the vernacular, various forms of censorship, including the Index of Prohibited Books, translations of various works from both classical and vernacular languages, as well as the circulation of people (be it expatriation, exile, diplomacy, or travel). "The Circulation of Knowledge," in *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (New York: Routledge, 2007) 191-208. These ideas are developed in further detail in Burke's *A Social History of Knowledge from Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, UK: Polity/ Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). For the relationship between knowledge and power or control, see esp. ch. 6, which includes examples of collecting information on others as a means of controlling them (i.e. the Inquisition), as well as examples of restricting knowledge to information in order to stunt knowledge and safeguard power (i.e. classification of documents and restricted access to archives; the Index of Prohibited Books).

fewer available copies. Boccalini abides by Apollo's rules, but only in appearance, for this occurs on the diegetic level only. His *Ragguagli di Parnaso* made it from manuscript into print form, which expanded their diffusion. He wrote the text in the vernacular rather than in Latin,[36] which opened the work to a much greater – and more diverse – audience than the "elite" to whom Apollo restricts the use of the *occhiali*. Furthermore, the popularity of his book led to the publication of a number of editions over the course of the seventeenth century, and they were translated into practically all of the major European languages, which further amplified the text's outreach. And finally, despite its supposed "travestimento allegorico" and its veils and masks, the work is perhaps more transparent than it claims to be, for there is nothing cryptic about Boccalini's desire to expose the world in the distorted state that it is in.[37]

If previous references coupling written works and the instrument invoked the *buone lettere* rather than the *belle lettere*, with the object used primarily in relation to historical texts or political treatises, II.89 brings the vision aid to poetry. A poet who has portrayed the present times as the best of all periods is brought before Apollo who explicitly asks him what kind of glasses he is wearing that he is able to see the world in such a manner, "s'egli, come faceva bisogno, ben veduto aveva il secolo che tanto dicea di aver lodato, e con quali *occhiali* l'aveva considerato e ben contemplato" (II.89, 296, emphasis mine). The poet responds that his observations are based on first-hand experience, and that he has narrated the findings of his travels and encounters in all of Europe's courts. He adds that his vision was not altered by any sort of lens, that "senza adoperar altri occhiali, solo si era servito dell'ordinaria vista del suo giudicio, il quale affatto non istimava losco," (ibid.). In other words, the poet considers his natural vision and judgement to be good enough to know and represent reality. Apollo, however, begs to differ:

> A costui replicè Apollo che ben si conosceva ch'egli al buio aveva scritta quella sua orazione, poiché 'l vero stato del secolo presente, l'intimo senso che ne' negoci loro vi avevano quei che lo governavano e qual fosse la vera qualità de' costumi di que' che vivevano in esso, nemmeno con l'occhio stesso Linceo poteva esser veduta, se al naso altri non si poneva prima quel finissimo occhial politico, che altrui perfettamente faceva veder la verità delle

[36] For a discussion of language, and how the languages of "erudition" do nothing but veil empty concepts under seemingly important and sophisticated words, see Boccalini, *Ragguagli*, I.73.

[37] Eileen Reeves cites Angelo Grillo's portrayal of Boccalini and his work as an example of a contemporary who judges the text to be rather transparent. The implication of this account, she suggests, is that the understanding of Boccalini's work is not limited to the elite, but that the text's message is accessible to all, *Evening News*, 119. Harald Hendrix also discusses how Boccalini provides enough clues to allow his readers to perceive the author's intentions, *Fra erudizione e polemica*, 238.

> passioni che negli stomachi cupi delle moderne persone si trovavano, tutte nel proceder loro tanto misteriose, che quel senso avevano di dentro, che meno appariva di fuori. (II.89, 296-297).

Apollo immediately dismisses the authority of the poet's natural vision, equating his unaided eye with blindness, for he may as well have written his praise of the current century in the dark. The insistence on the true form of the times (*vero stato del secolo presente*; *l'intimo senso*; *la vera qualità de' costume*) is not, Apollo argues, so easily and immediately accessible, for even one with the eyes of the lynx – an animal prided for its visual acuity – is unable to see these elements without the aid of an instrument, the *finissimo occhial politico*.[38] The notion of truth (*verità*) is evoked once more after the *occhiali* are mentioned, and the contrast between the poet's erroneous perception and the one granted by the visual aid is made more apparent as the optical device "altrui perfettamente faceva vedere la verità." Unlike the natural eyes that are unable to apprehend the "vero stato del secolo presente" or grasp the "intimo senso" of what transpires in the hearts and minds of rulers, the lenticular device is able to extend to those invisible and hidden areas (*misteriose, dentro, che meno appriva di fuori*).

Rather than rest his case on words alone, Apollo invites the poet to make use of "un paio di eccellenti occhiali modernamenti lavorati nella fucina del politico Tacito" (297) and to perceive reality through their lens. What the poet now sees bears no resemblance to what he had depicted in his poem:

> -- Sire – disse, -- quello che io ora con questi occhiali rimiro, non è il secolo nel quale ora viviamo, ma un mondo pieno di ostentazioni e d'apparenza, con pochissima sostanza di bene e di vera virtù: dove numero grande d'uomini sono foderati d'una finta semplicità: vestiti della falsa alchimia di una apparente bontà, ma pieni d'inganni, di artifici e di macchinazioni: dove ad altro più non si studia che a cercar d'ingannare il compagno, e co' falsi pretesti di santissimi fini ne' baratri di sceleratissime imprese aggirar il suo prossimo. (ibid.)

With the aid of the glasses, the poet is able to identify the corruption and trickery that dominates the words and behavior of individuals, one where there is little good (*pochissima sostanza di bene e di vera virtù*) and instead, a lot of deceit (*pini d'inganni, di artifice e di macchinazioni*). All of those elements that are considered positive and desirable (*semplicità, bontà, santissimi fini*) are accompanied by words of artifice and disguise (*fintà semplictà; apparente bontà; falsi pretesti di santissimi fini*), thus denatured and inverted. What the poet views through the

[38] We may think of Galileo, a member of the Accademia de' Lincei, who, without the aid of his instrument, would not have been able to make his observations of the heavens.

occhiali politici are the same topsy-turvy images we have encountered elsewhere: what the poet describes upon wearing the eyeglasses is precisely what we have seen in the *menante*'s reports.[39]

At first glance, the poet and the *menante* share much in common. What guarantees the authority and authenticity of their respective works is the fact that they are both based on eyewitness accounts, on first-hand experiences of the narrated events. Just as the reporter wanders around the marketplace and the courts to observe for himself the on-goings of Parnassus, so, too, has the poet, who claims to have visited all of the places and people about whom he writes. What they represent of the world, however, could not be more distant, for the poet, relying on his natural eye, is limited to perceiving appearances, hence the positive portrayal of the century. The *menante*, on the other hand, captures a version of reality that is exactly the negative or inverse of what it appears to be: the aesthetic of refraction that is so common to the news bulletins is made possible by the visual aid, which distorts in order to correct our perception of reality.[40] To return to the question posed earlier in this chapter, the *menante* is very much an eyewitness, but the lens through which he observes the activities of Parnassus are neither his own eyes nor the types of *occhiali* encountered in the marketplace. Given that his account of the world is upside-down, with the culture of early seventeenth-century Europe exposed as corrupt and plagued by dissimulation and deceit, the reality he puts before our eyes is exactly the one that the *occhiali politici* have been known to reveal.

If Béroalde encourages his reader to discover his text from the "vrai biais" or correct angle in order to properly decipher it,[41] Boccalini offers a lenticular instrument that operates in a similar fashion. Literature – broadly defined as written work – is a lens through which objects are perceived, and this lens is not neutral for it acts on the eyes of the subject who wears them, manipulating – for better or for worst – his or her

[39] The interest in the potential of lenses as a transformative object and its direct relationship to Galileo and his telescopic observations is not a uniquely Italian phenomenon, as demonstrated by Enrique García Santo-Tomás's study on Spanish literature of the Golden Age in *La Musa refractada*, 199-201. Also see the 1623 text of the Czech humanist John Comenius, *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*, trans. Howard Louthan and Andrea Sterk (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998) The protagonist, on a quest to understand his faith, is guided though various spaces representative of different social groups while wearing a pair of spectacles.
[40] Eileen Reeves, who demonstrates the affinity between the *occhiali* and the Galilean telescope and its function, suggests that "in Boccalini's account sustained natural observation seemed a precondition for proper political judgement," *Evening News*, 108.

[41] Béroalde, *Le Moyen de parvenir*, CXI 450.

vision, and ultimately, understanding of the world. Just as a lens becomes an extension of the organ of sight that alters its abilities, both what and how it perceives, so, too, does literature become an extension of the reading subject, providing a degree of insight that transforms how and what he or she can know about the world and about others. As with Béroalde in the previous chapter, it is not the identity of the bespectacled subject that determines the function or value of those lenses, but rather, it is the lenses – here one and the same as literature – that have the power to shape the subject.

This poet in II.89 may refuse to wear the *occhiale* after bearing witness to the reality of his times, but Boccalini keeps his glasses firmly clipped on, and thus emerge two modes of representation. On the one hand, there is the poet's aesthetic of reflection: by seeing the world through nothing by his own eyes, he then represented its mirror image, and consequently, depicts only appearances. Boccalini, on the other hand, uses lenses to refract what he observes, and as such, captures the essence of things, even if it means that the representation does not coincide with that which is immediately visible to the naked eye.[42] Be it through the natural organ of sight or through an instrument, vision occurs through a lens, and we may conclude that the lens through which we see and know the world is also the lens through which we represent it. As such, if everything is distorted, if everything is reversed, if all values are overturned, if everything undergoes a series of refractions, it is because Boccalini's *menante* reports with a pair of *occhiali politici* clipped to his nose as well. The individual *ragguagli* which make up the *Ragguagli* are not mirrors that show society as it appears, but a lens through which the astute narrator-observer has been able to study reality more profoundly in order to depict it as it is.

Appalled by what he had seen, the poet in II.89 who took a second look at reality through the *occhiali politici* discarded them immediately, claiming that he was unable to bear what he beheld. The *menante*, instead, does nothing but inundate readers with these inconvenient truths, without any regard for how the unpleasant sights might offend them. Truth is no longer wrapped in a beautiful or pleasant form, and in a culture of dissimulation and deceit, Beauty is often nothing more than an artifice that conceals an ugly reality. In the

[42] Joanna Picciotto also insists on the distinction between mirrors and lenses as modes of representation, especially with regard to the agency of the writer and the pointedness of his observations of the world, *Labors of Innocence*, 324.

chapter that follows, Agrippa d'Aubigné will adopt the same *esthétique du laid*, and the same mechanism of refraction to expose a denatured France at the hands of incompetent leaders ridden with vice. He, too, will ground the authority of his narrative in ocular experience, and though he does not mention any lenses in his writing, the visual experience that he demands and relies on strongly echoes the mechanisms of the *occhiali politici*.

Chapter 5.
Redefining Vision and Visible Spaces:
The New Visual Experience in *Les Tragiques*

> *Qu'est-ce que 'voir'? comment une 'vision' peut-elle donner jour à un nouveau monde?*[1]
>
> *Voyant, vous n'avez vu.*[2]

The year is 1616, and Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné publishes *Les Tragiques* under the signature of L.B.D.D, or "Le Bouc Du Dezert." With each of the poem's seven cantos addressing a different facet of France's religious wars within the greater scheme of a divine plan, the poet claims to adapt the style of the individual parts to match its content. This calibration notwithstanding, the verses of *Les Tragiques* are all masterfully crafted and propelled by violence and ire as the poet criticizes Catholic rulers for ostracizing and massacring Protestants, and as he defends the religious minority and its place within the fabric of the French nation. The poem, though perhaps the better known of the Protestant responses to France's civil wars, has a number of precedents from whom d'Aubigné draws, including works from the "enemy camp."[3] While his historico-epico-tragic poem reproduces many of the images already rehearsed by the pro-Catholic Ronsard in the *Discours des misères de ce temps*,[4] d'Aubigné amplifies the acerbic tone of the *maître passé* and transcends ethereal images in favor of visceral figures engraved onto the page and in his reader's mind.[5] Unlike his Catholic predecessor, the Protestant poet doesn't simply observe from a privileged vantage point to describe what he sees. He sees, but he also penetrates the wounds of a moribund France with his fingers, not out of

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[1] Michel de Certeau, *La Fable mystique. II: XVIe-XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 53.

[2] Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, ed. Frank Lestringant (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), VII 7-8. All references to *Les Tragiques* are taken from this edition unless noted otherwise, and parenthetical references are to the canto and verse number. "A.L," followed by a page number, will be used to indicate d'Aubigné's address "Aux lecteurs," and "P," followed by the verse number, will designate the "Préface".

[3] See Frank Lestringant, *Lire* Les Tragiques *d'Agrippa d'Aubigné* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013) 23-38, for a discussion of sources and influences.

[4] Pierre de Ronsard, *Discours des misères de ce temps* (Paris: Buon,1562).

[5] For a comparison between Ronsard and d'Aubigné with regard to their depiction of the *guerres de Religion*, see François Rigolot, "Tolérence et condescendance dans la littérature française du XVIe siècle," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 62 no.1 (2000): 25-47; Virginia Crosby, "Prophetic Discourse in Ronsard and d'Aubigné," *The French Review* 45, no. 3 (1971): 91-100.

disbelief, but rather, so that he can extend his vision to hidden layers in order to better identify the cause of his nation's demise as well as its current state. D'Aubigné is cutting, trenchant, corrosive, and he infiltrates the crevices and the shadows to uncover new visual spaces that help him understand his world.

Omnipresent in *Les Tragiques*, "vision" and "the visual" are two of the indispensable pillars of d'Aubigné's Protestant poem. The poet is witness to the atrocities that plague France during the wars of religion and which consequently form the content of his writing; the reader is a spectator whom the poet seeks to turn into a critical observer and actor; the poem is a stage, a painting, an incarnation of the Horatian expression "*ut pictura poesis*." Intricately linked to the notion of the poet-witness is that of perspective. While the poem is predominantly narrated in the first person, the point of view shifts on a number of occasions to espouse that of Protestant martyrs, and in an oscillation between the sub-lunar world and the celestial realm, that of the heavens, and of God himself. Moreover, *Les Tragiques* fully exploits the relationship between text and image, as on the one hand the veritable historical scenes to which d'Aubigné is privy are the source from which his words, and his created world, emerge. On the other, the very poetic language, the very manipulation of rhetorical and narrative devices, strives to create or re-present ephemeral images so that they are as vivid and horrific as what the poet and his contemporaries witnessed. Celestial "tableaux" depicting the conflicts are ekphrastically transcribed into words, and events are described in expressive and realistic detail, turning history and memory into a gallery of paintings: in the text of *Les Tragiques*, *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* reign supreme. The gruesome nature of d'Aubigne's images also reveal another facet of his poem: he has consciously abandoned Beauty in favor of Truth, espousing an *esthétique du laid* which does not seduce or delight by illusory appearances, but in the name of mimesis, strips every object of every artifice to expose the reality, however harsh, that lies beneath it.[6] On an even more abstract level, "vision" detaches itself from sensory perception to evoke instead a spiritual experience in the form of prophecies and dreams.[7] In a similar

[6] The idea that a low and ugly mode of representation depicts reality all the more accurately is suggested by Michel Jeanneret: "Puisque la réalité vécue est foncièrement laide, le poème véridique adoptera, lui aussi, un style laid, esthétique de l'horrible qui fonctionne comme indice d'authenticité." See "*Les Tragiques*: Mimesis et intertexte," in *Le Signe et le texte: études sur l'écriture au XVI siècle en France,* ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, (Lexington, KY : French Forum, 1990)103.

[7] For a discussion of abstract visions and dreams, see Marguerite Soulié, "Songe et vision dans *Les Tragiques* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné," in *Le Songe à la Renaissance: Colloque international de Cannes, 29-31 main 1987*, ed. Françoise Charpentier (Saint-Etienne: Institut d'études de la Renaissance et de l'Age Classique, 1990), 199-207.

vein, the poet establishes a clear distinction between the eyes of the flesh and the eyes of the soul, the clarity and purity of God's vision (and that of the poet-prophet), and the blindness of the earthly rulers and tyrants.

A number of these visual or vision-related motifs – from the role of the witness to the textual "tableaux," from the changing perspectives between earth and heaven to the figurative visions-as-dreams – have received much attention from scholars. What is absent from scholarship on *Les Tragiques*, with the exception of a quick remark or two within the frame of other arguments, is a comprehensive discussion of vision within the context of contemporary optical theories and instruments. This void is perhaps not all that surprising when we consider the lack of explicit references in the poem to theories or technologies of vision. And yet, if d'Aubigné does not expound a theory of vision in this text, the role he grants the sense of sight in the activities of the poet, the tyrants, and the reader carve out a distinct role for visual perception in the acquisition of knowledge, and as such, offer valuable insight on its epistemological value. A closer examination of the different agents of vision (the viewing subject), of what they see, and of how they know unveils very different and often incompatible attitudes toward the sense of sight as a means to knowing the world. This, in turn, elucidates a number of tensions that arise or are amplified during the early seventeenth century with regard to the unstable role of vision in the hierarchy of the senses and the acquisition of knowledge. Far from denouncing the ocular regime, however, the poem introduces a nuance that echoes the debates within the scientific community, contrasting the natural and the instrumentalized eye, and thus redefining the visual experience as a whole and revisiting the very meaning of the "visible." Although d'Aubigné never refers to optical instruments by name, the visual modes of observing and representing reality parallel those embodied by Boccalini's *occhiali politici*.

The Merits of Vision

Whether we read *Les Tragiques* as the words of d'Aubigné the prophet, the historian, or the poet, the voice we hear is one of a true *auctor*, of one who embodies perfectly the plurality of meanings embedded in the word's etymology. He is, of course, the one who creates through writing, though this particular meaning of the word is preceded by a number of others, which emphasize instead the role of the person in question as

one who augments, as an authority, as a guarantor, as a source, as a witness, and even as an instigator.[8] The "auctor" as composer is here a synthesis of these other functions. D'Aubigné's work in *Les Tragiques* is an "augmentation" or "addition" to the historical narratives that exist on the subject of France's religious wars, working to fill in the lacuna of Protestant perspectives. This "augmented version" of history gains its credibility from the status of its creator, who, as a contemporary and, more importantly, as a participant in the conflicts, is a source of information, a witness to the images that constitute the book's contents, and as such, a guarantor and an authority. D'Aubigné is also an instigator insofar as his poetic composition seeks to move its readers.[9] In order to affirm his status as an authorial figure, and in order to be an agent, d'Aubigné relies on vision: the sense of sight is indispensable to both the acquisition of knowledge and to its representation.

On a spiritual level, the ultimate model and *exemplum* of good vision is that of God's eyes. D'Aubigné, who claims on a number of occasions that his poem is motivated by the divine figure, and thus aligns his writings with the will and word of God himself, can therefore shift the narration and the perspective from earth to access the heavens and God's domain. In *La Chambre dorée*, after Peace and Justice flee an unruly Earth and stand before God and a body of angels in a state of disarray, the reader follows God's piercing vision from above. The angels appeal to God's omniscience (" Grand Dieu, devant les yeux duquel ne sont cachées/ des cœurs plus endurcis les premières pensées (…)," III 85-86) to request that he restore peace and exercise his gavel. God's observations are itemized as the repetition of the expression "tu vois" (v. 89, 93; "ne voit ton oeil" v 99) introduces new instances of crime, corruption, and massacres motivated by religious belief. This prompts the Divine figure to protrude his head through the clouds for a closer look. One building in particular arrests his gaze:

> (…) le Tout-Voyant ne voit,
> En tout ce que la terre en son orgueil avoit,
> Rien si près de son œil que la brave rencontre
> D'un gros amas de tours qui élevé se montre
> Dedans l'air plus hautain. (…) (III 161-167)

[8] *Dictionnaire Gaffiot Online*, s.v. "auctor." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "author."

[9] "'Nous sommes ennuyés de livres qui enseignent, donnez-nous-en pour émouvoir, en un siècle où tout zèle chrétien est péri, où la différence du vrai et du mensonge est comme abolie, où les mains des ennemies de l'Eglise cachent le sang duquel elles sont tachées sous les présents, et leurs inhumanités sous la libéralité. (…)'," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, A.L.53.

The arrangement of the verses separates the two parts of the negative "ne…rien" (v. 161 and v. 163) not simply by a punctuation mark or a new line, but by an entire verse (v. 162). Initially, we are faced with confusion before the unsettling juxtaposition of "Tout-Voyant" and "ne voit": it is, after all, impossible that something escape the view of the omniscient divinity. We have to wait two verses to find the second part of the negative ("rien") which singles out the one object that God carefully beholds. The separation of the negative's two parts attest to the building's extravagance and audacity: the Palais literally invades even the highest regions of the sky and obstructs the vision of God. With his eyes fixated upon this building, God begins his examination:

> Sur ce premier objet Dieu tint longuement l'œil,
> Pour de l'homme orgueilleux voir l'ouvrage et l'orgueil
> Il voit les vents émus, postes du Grand Eole,
> Faire en virant gronder la girouette folle.
> Il descend, il s'approche, et pour voir de plus près
> Il met le doigt qui juge et qui punit après,
> L'ongle dans la paroi, qui de loin reluisante
> Eut la face et le front de brique rougissante. (III 161-178)

More than a simple scan, God performs an autopsy, at once seeing with his own eyes and examining the interior of a body. The process begins with an over-arching view of the object of study that equates the building's pomp with its maker's pride. Next, an observation of external elements (the weather-vane, whose capricious and changeable nature is as vain as the men who constructed the building), before inching even closer to access the internal layers. With the eyes aided by the finger's intervention, or perhaps with the sense of sight becoming akin to the sense of touch – the *enjambement* "pour voir de plus près/ Il met le doigt" allows us to read the image in both ways: God peels away the layers of gleaming appearances to uncover a fresh wound, tainted with blood. The building turns into a body as a more probing look at the architecture reveals walls made of bones, skulls, blood, and ashes,[10] and God's autopsy of the Palais de Justice takes on new meaning. Far from being a simple observation, or "that which the eye sees," God's visual act becomes a thorough inspection of a building-turned-body.

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[10] Ibid., III 179-186.

Transposing his own experiences onto the eyes of God, d'Aubigné establishes an epistemological model that is based on an irrefutable and penetrating vision,[11] one in which the eye can decipher all that it beholds, and as such, can perceive reality as is. By fashioning himself as a mere and humble instrument of God's will, the poet aligns his own vision with that of the Divine.

> Nul bon œil ne la [= la Vérité] voit qui transi ne se pâme,
> Dans cette pâmoison s'élève au ciel tout âme;
> L'enthousiasme apprend à mieux connaître et voir,
> De bien voir le désir, du désir vient l'espoir,
> De l'espoir le dessein, et du dessein les peines,
> Et la fin met à bien les peines incertaines. (II 177-182)

The discovery of truth itself is here depicted on two levels. The first is spiritual, where the individual is inspired and even possessed by the Divine and moved into a mystical and trance-like state.[12] The second, a derivative of the first, is physical, with the sense of sight at its origins. Even if visual perception is then sublimated with a mystico-spiritual experience as its end, and which the text illustrates by the chain of cause and effects that begins with "enthousiasme," knowledge is inseparable from the act of seeing ("nul bon oeil," "à mieux connaître et voir," "bien voir"). Vision's value is here intricately tied to its spiritual root, mirroring the eyes of God and the clarity with which he can see and consequently know everything. So if the poet can present himself as an authority, it is, in part due to his reliable perception, guaranteed by God himself. The divine power has elected the poet, whom he has inspired and therefore made interpreter.[13]

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[11] Cf. Claude Gilbert Dubois, "'Dieu descend': Figuration et transfiguration dans *Les Tragiques*, III, 139-232," in Les Tragiques *d'Agrippa d'Aubigné,* ed. Marie-Madeleine Fragonard and Madeleine Lozard (Paris: H. Champion, 2011) 87-112. Dubois offers an alternative reading of God's descent onto earth, arguing that the painter and God each represent two different points of observation, thus constituting an anamorphotic scene. He does, however, acknowledge that God's eyes provide access to an internal image: "Le regard du peintre voit de l'extérieur; le regard de Dieu nous fait voir de haut et dedans. L'œil se rapproche progressivement, puis est relayé par le contact (176), et pénètre ensuite à l'intérieur. La mobilité détermine une vision 'cinématographique' (au sens strict du terme, qui implique le mouvement), une vision 'radiographique' (qui fait pénétrer à l'intérieur de la matière) pour constituer un 'hologramme' ou vision en relief " (94).

[12] *Trésor de la langue française informatisé* (*TLFi*), s.v. "enthousiasme." The *TRFi* defines "enthousiasme" as it would have been understood in the middle of the sixteenth century, as a "délire sacré qui saisit l'interprète de la divinité; transport, exaltation du poète sous l'effet de l'inspiration," and traces it etymology: " Empr. au gr.ἐνθουσιασμός 'possession divine,' formé sur le verbe ἐνθουσιάζω 'être inspiré par la divinité,' lui-même dér. de l'adj. ἐνθους', forme contractée de ἐνθεος 'inspiré par un dieu pour par les dieux'."

[13] Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani addresses the authority granted to the poet by God: "Et *voir* est ce privilège accordé à son fidèle témoin par Dieu," and "L'opposition entre la fable, ou la fiction, ou la feinte, et la vérité, qui recouvre l'opposition entre le mensonge, la fausse interprétation, et le vrai sens, est constamment soutenue par le violent désir de recevoir et d'imposer une vision qui dise le vrai visage des choses. *Le poète-prophète et d'abord un œil*, avant d'être une voix." See "'Arrière les fables de notre vérité!': La fiction dans l'histoire, l'histoire dans la fiction chez Aubigné," in *Entre Clio et*

Vision as a reliable form of knowledge inherits its importance from yet another source, albeit a more "earthly" one. The positive epistemological value accorded to the sense of sight makes up the very backbone of the poem as the role of poet-as-eye-witness positions the author-narrator alongside a long lineage of historians who base their writings on experience above all else.[14] *Les Tragiques* is not strictly speaking a historical work, even if it is based on a defined set of historical events.[15] D'Aubigné willingly sheds his laurels, attributing his earlier lyric poetry to a case of "giovane erranza" as he abandons the lute of love songs for the trumpet of war (I 55-78). Chameleon-like, he is a warrior, a witness, a historian, a prophet, and a poet. He may evoke the Muse of Tragedy, Melpomene, in *Misères*, but she emerges from a putrid grave rather than from the fresh fountain of Hippocrene (I 79-83). His mission is to salvage the unofficial version of events from the margins and from oblivion[16]: his text is a re-write, a revision, a correction. Instructed by God and a

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Melpomène: les fictions de l'histoire chez Agrippa d'Aubigné, ed. Olivier Pot (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), 440 (emphasis mine).

[14] Ibid., 419-441. Mathieu-Castellani identifies the same two elements – scripture and the witness – as fundamental to d'Aubigné's quest for and revelation of the truth. Also see Rebecca C. Harmon, "Witnessing words," esp. ch. 1. In this dissertation, Harmon analyses the notion and figure of the witness in d'Aubigné's works. Her study offers valuable insight into the "amnesia clauses" that circulate in the sixteenth century and provides important documentation to counter misconceptions about iconography and doctrine among the adherents of the Reformed Church. The research, while deeply engaged with innovations in a variety of fields with respect to "ocular preoccupations" and the place of vision in epistemology, does not consider the contemporary developments in optical theories and technologies. Harmon's reading of *Les Tragiques* is primarily concerned with the importance of visuality within a judiciary schema and as it relates to questions of memory and collective experience.

[15] The precise genre of the poem evades scholars, as classifying it under a clear and clean category continues to challenge and fascinate those who study this work. See Agnès Conacher, "Les *Tragiques* d'Agrippa D'Aubigné: Les qualités d'un témoignage ou écho d'une histoire qui est arrivée et d'une histoire qui aurait pu être," *French Studies*: *A Quarterly Review* 57, no. 1 (2003): 11-25. Conacher questions the classification of the text as epic, tragedy or witness literature, and her analysis follows the cantos of *Les Tragiques* to identify their progression from an "épopée au et du quotidien" to an "épopée negative," culminating in an "épopée mystique." Also see Philipp John Usher, "D'Aubigné's *Tragiques*: A Wasteland of Graffiti," in *Epic Arts in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 160-216. Usher, too, addresses the difficulties of classifying the poem and its status as an epic (164-165), and his study argues that d'Aubigné's "Calvinist epic" redefines the genre, and that art and architecture prominently participate in this redefinition. For other studies that comment on the genre of *Les Tragiques* and its hybrid nature, especially with regard to history, see Jeanneret, "Mimesis et intertexte" ; Olivier Millet, "Entre documentation et apocalypse: *Babylone* et *Borbonias* de Des Masures, *Les Tragiques* d'Aubigné et le modèle scaligérien de l'épopée historique," in Pot, *Entre Clio et Melpomène*, 390-418 ; Jean-Raymond Fanlo, *Tracés, ruptures: La Composition instable des* Tragiques (Paris: H. Champion, 1990), esp. ch. 2; Lestringant, *Lire* Les Tragiques, esp. 50-51.

[16] For a thorough discussion of the "amnesia clauses" implemented in the second half of the sixteenth century as a means of erasing the violent tensions between French Catholics and Protestants and restoring peace, see Harmon, "Witnessing Words," esp. Introduction and p.20.

vehicle of his Word,[17] his focus is not on the history of France's civil wars alone. Echoing medieval historiographies more than Renaissance models because of the prominent role given to the sacred,[18]*Les Tragiques* exposes the history of France's religious wars and the injustices committed against Protestants within a strictly defined Christian frame and timeline that culminates in the Apocalypse and concludes with God's judgment. And though the verses of *Les Tragiques* clearly set it apart from the ambitions of the author's own *Histoire universelle* in prose, elements of an *ars historica* are nonetheless present and consciously welded into the poem's construction.[19] Of these aspects, it is d'Aubigné's reliance on vision and visual components as both source and means of representation of a body of knowledge that is of interest here. As discussed in Chapter 3, for d'Aubigné's immediate predecessors and contemporaries who implement and propagate the Thucydidean tradition, an *ars historica* is inseparable from the act of seeing,[20] and historiography is essentially an autopsy.[21] Although d'Aubigné's interpretation of the profane is subordinated to the understanding of a sacred order, the twelve-syllable declaration in *Misères*, "Car mes yeux sont témoin du sujet de mes vers" (I

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[17] "Conduis, très saint Esprit, en cet endroit ma bouche,/ Que par la passion plus exprès je ne touche/ Que ne permet ta règle, et que juge léger,/ Je n'attire sur moi jugement pour juger. / Je n'annoncerai donc que ce que tu annonces,/ Mais je prononce autant comme ta loi prononce ;/ Je ne marque de tous que l'homme condamné/ A qui mieux il vaudrait n'avoir pas été né," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, VII 803-810.

[18] For the increasing penchant for writing about "second causes," or secular rather than sacred matters, in Renaissance historiography, see Breisach, *Historiography*, 181-182. For the study of past as a means of uncovering some divine purpose, see Grafton, *What Was History*, 175.

[19] See Barbara Ertlé-Perrier, "Agrippa d'Aubigné homme de science," in *Agrippa d'Aubigné épistolier: des lettres à l'œuvre* (Paris: H. Champion, 2008), esp. 388-390. Ertlé-Perrier's study of the correspondences offers further evidence about d'Aubigé's active consideration of historical writing; Also see Jeanneret, "Mimesis et intertexte." Jeanneret examines how d'Aubigné borrows from history as a technique to achieve an "idéal mimétique" (103) in his depiction of the "vrai." To this he opposes the theological mode that emerges in the poem and which he relates to "vraisemblance." Also see Olivier Pot, "Le concept d'"histoire universelle' ou quand l'historien se fait géographe," *Albineana* 19 (2007): 23-65. Pot offers a thorough analysis of d'Aubigné's engagement with historiography and the representation of the religious wars both temporally and spatially in the context of the *Histoire universelle.*

[20] Grafton, *What Was History*, 181-182.

[21] "Le savoir doit se fonder sur l'autopsie et s'organiser sur la base des données qu'elle procure. Des deux moyens de la connaissance historique, l'œil (*opsis*) et l'oreille (*akoê*), seul le premier peut conduire à une vision claire et distincte (*saphôs eidenai*). Encore faut-il en faire un bon usage: l'autopsie n'est pas une donnée immédiate, il convient de la filtrer par toute une procédure de critique des témoignages pour établir les faits avec autant d'exactitude qu'il est possible. L'oreille, en revanche, n'est jamais sûre. Car, ce qui se colporte et se transmet n'a pas été éprouvé (*abasanitstôt*)," Hartog, *Evidence de l'histoire*, 62-63.

371), fully embraces the ocular tradition. In this verse, we once again find the entire content of *Les Tragiques* supported by empirical, and more specifically, visual pillars.

Observation not only provides the raw material of knowledge, but borrowing vision's epistemological clout from the world of historians reaffirms and crystallizes the poet's authority in a project that seeks to counter the dominant accounts of the *guerres de Religion*.[22] The poet-historian embarks on his quest, with God and his own eyes as his guides:

> Pour Mercures croisés, au lieu de Pyramides,
> J'ai de jour le pilier, de nuit les feux pour guides.
> Astres, secourez-moi: ces chemins enlacés
> Sont par l'antiquité des siècles effacés,
> Si bien que l'herbe verde en ses sentiers accrue
> En fait une prairie épaisse, haute et drue,
> Là où étaient les feux des Prophètes plus vieux;
> Je tends comme je puis le cordeau de mes yeux,
> Puis je cours au matin; …(I 21-29)

The depiction of an untamed nature covering and dominating old paths and monuments, disguising them to the point of rendering them unrecognizable, communicates the effacement and transformation of symbols of a pagan Antiquity.[23] Relying on such signs would be detrimental for it would divert the poet from his path and from his quest in this revisionist narrative. Instead, d'Aubigné actively searches with his own eyes, and in a rather curious and telling manner at that. In one of the rare – if not the singular – occasions where a specific theory of vision is implied ("Je tends comme je puis le cordeau de mes yeux"), we find on the one hand an image that recalls the theories of extramission,[24] in which rays emerging from the eyes of the viewing subject apprehend exterior objects, and moreover, in which the viewing subject is in an active position with regard to the outside world and the knowledge that he or she acquires. The poet asserts his agency by revealing the very way by which he believes he sees. On the other hand, the idea that he "stretches or extends the rope of his

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[22] For the relationship between authority and vision in *Les Tragiques*, especially as it relates to historiography, see Lestringant, *Lire* Les Tragiques*,* esp. 50-57; Conacher, "*Les Tragiques* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné"; Ertlé-Perrier, "Agrippa d'Aubigné homme de science," esp. 388-390; Harmon, "Witnessing Words," ch.1.

[23] Frank Lestringant comments that "il convient ici de lire les vers 21-22 comme des vers rapportés, dont les hémistiches se correspondent terme à terme: la colonne de fumée se superpose aux hermès brisés et le feu nocturne fait s'évanouir les flambantes Pyramides. En définitive les signes caducs de l'Antiquité païenne sont abolis et recouvertes par les signes nouveaux de l'Ecriture Sainte," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, 379-380n22.

[24] "Selon une conception platonicienne en vogue à la Renaissance et notamment dans la poésie amoureuse, la vue se fait par émission d'un rayon visuel, analogue ici à une corde tendu," ibid., 380n28.

eye" transforms sight into something concrete and akin to the sense of touch as he applies his rope to navigate an unknown space.[25] This in turn reminds us of another instance in *Les Tragiques* and which I have already evoked, in which God uses his finger to better see (III 161-178). The poet's vision mirrors that of God, and both engage in a similar autopsy of the body of events, and of France herself:

> France, puisque tu perds tes membres en la sorte,
> Apprête le suaire et te compte pour morte:
> Ton pouls faible, inégal, le trouble de ton œil,
> Ne demande plus rien qu'un funeste cercueil. [I 609-612]

The image of a divided France, or of France as a sick and moribund body, dominates the pages of *Misères*, and the eye is ready to observe. Here, seeing or witnessing that which is before the eyes is literally inseparable from the examination of a cadaver or that of a dying patient. The eye does not stop at a scrutiny of external signs of illness, but penetrates the lesions and dissects the body for an internal view:

> Le corps tout feu dedans, tout glace dehors,
> Demande la bière et bientôt est fait corps.
> Mais France, on voit doubler dedans toi l'avarice;
> Sur le seuil du tombeau les vieillards ont ce vice:
> Quand le malade amasse et couverte et linceux
> Et tire tout à soi, c'est un signe piteux.
> On voit périr en toi la chaleur naturelle,
> Le feu de charité, toute amour mutuelle;
> Les déluges épais achèvent de noyer
> Tous chauds désirs au cœur qui était leur foyer;
> Mais ce foyer du cœur a perdu l'avantage
> Du feu et des esprits qui faisaient le courage. (I 647-658, emphasis mine)

The repetition of the verb "voir" subjects the body to a thorough inspection, which extends beyond what is outside ("*dehors*"), and the adverbs "dedans" and "en toi" invite the eye into the inner folds, which in this excerpt also lead to an assessment of the heart. But who exactly is the observer, or perhaps, observers? Though not nearly as explicit as "nous" in which we may indisputably include the poet himself, the ambiguous pronoun "on" used in this particular context – an astute eye that accurately deciphers reality – suggests that it represents a collective where the poet is present. The scientific study of France, where knowledge is grounded in empirical evidence, transforms the theatre of historical atrocities into a *theatrum anatomicum*. D'Aubigné fuses the eye of the historian with that of the anatomist and becomes the master who

[25] Here, we may recall a second, and familiar, image of the example used by Descartes in the opening pages of his *Dioptrique* (1637), where a tactile mode, the baton, is employed to "see" objects and obstacles in a dark room.

reunites students and disciples around the dying corpse to see, and more importantly, to teach others how to see. Indeed, "Je vois," "J'ai vu," "Je vis," and other occurrences in which d'Aubigné depicts the horrors of France's turbulent conflicts in the first person are woven in with the ocular experience of other viewing subjects. The act of seeing, however, is not by any means limited to the author-narrator, and the verb "voir" takes on other subjects in the poem. The presence of other groups of eyes, however, does not as easily fit into this positive qualification of the sense of sight, and not all subject pronouns share this privilege when it comes to seeing and knowing. Other eyes are not and cannot be cited to attest to vision's epistemological value. In fact, they raise questions about and even seem to contradict d'Aubigné's own faith in the epistemological merits of the sense of sight. In stark contrast to the value and necessity of vision in gathering empirical evidence is an acknowledgement that vision is also highly limited and deeply flawed.

The Seduction of Appearances & the Limits of Vision

D'Aubigné's depiction of an erroneous or deceptive vision falls into two categories. On the one hand, the faulty knowledge is attributed to the organ of sight itself, which due to a particular flaw or deformation, is unable to see correctly. On the other hand, the discrepancy between the appearance and the essence of the object that is beheld challenges the eye's ability to discern the real from the false. What meets the eye does not always coincide with the reality that hides beneath or is dissimulated behind the surface, and the eyes can be easily seduced by beautiful exteriors that conceal hideous truths.

In a work that places such significant emphasis on vision and the visual, and equates the sense of sight with knowledge, it is not surprising if d'Aubigné forges a relationship between a lack of sight or an ocular impediment and ignorance or immorality.[26] D'Aubigné's blacklist of those whom he holds accountable for the cleavage between the children of France implicates many and spares few as it includes the royal family, ministers, members of the Ligue, the pope, Catholics and Protestants, and even Henri IV, whose conversion

[26] In her study on blindness and the treatment of the blind, the historian Zina Weygand examines a number of historical and literary documents to conclude that from the Middle Ages until the middle of the seventeenth century, the blind were generally depicted in negative ways and associated with immoral and questionable traits and behavior. See "Du Moyen Âge à l'âge classique: Une vision paradoxale de la cécité et des aveugles," in *Vivre sans voir: les aveugles dans la société française, du Moyen Âge au siècle de Louis Braille* (Paris: Créaphis, 2003), 21-72.

to the Catholic faith d'Aubigné interprets as a most bitter betrayal. Among the characteristics that these figures have in common and which sets them apart from the poet and "ce grand Dieu [qui] voit du feu de son clair œil" (I 687) is their impaired sense of sight.

The Prince of Navarre is the first blind figure of the poem, appearing in its *Preface* and d'Aubigné's aprophetic warning:

> Bien que tu as autour de toi
> Des cœurs et des yeux pleins de foi,
> J'ai peur qu'une Dalide fine
> Coupe ta force et tes cheveux,
> Te livre à la gent philistine,
> Qui *te prive de tes bons yeux*. (P 313-318, emphasis mine)

Comparing the King and his mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrée, to Samson and Dalila, d'Aubigné attributes Henri IV's abjuration to blindness caused by love. As Dalila with Samson, d'Aubigné holds Gabrielle d'Estrée responsible for the King's impaired vision that prompted him to renounce the Reformed Church and consequently extinguish the hopes of Protestants. As the figure who, more than anyone else perhaps, had the power to secure peace and a place for Protestants in France, his decision to convert not only signifies an oversight (or lack of sight) on his own part, but it perpetuates the darkness into which his predecessors had plunged France and its people.

In *Misères*, it is the French themselves, Catholics and Protestants alike, who are described as blind. The two sons of France are depicted as children who gouge each other's eyes out because of their mutual rivalry and hatred, "Leur conflit se rallume et fait si furieux/ Que d'un gauche Malheur ils se crèvent les yeux" (I 115-116), justifying the label "le Français aveuglé en ce siècle" (I 1167). The fraternal violence, however, is in large part due to maternal incompetence, and Catherine de' Medici has the honor of wearing the crown and title of "mère non-mère." D'Aubigné fires accusations at the Queen for being a sadist, taking pleasure as her children tear each other apart:

> Enfin, pour assouvir ton esprit et ta vue,
> *Tu vois* le feu qui brûle et le couteau qui tue.
> *Tu as vu* à ton gré deux camps de deux côtés,
> Tous deux pour toi, tous deux à ton gré tourmentés,
> (…)
> Par eux *tu vois* déjà la terre ivre, inhumaine,
> Du sang noble français et de l'étranger pleine,
> Accablés par le fer que tu as émoulu;

> Mais c'est beaucoup plus tard que tu n'eusses voulu:
> Tu n'as ta soif de sang qu'à demi arrosée,
> Ainsi que d'un peu d'eau la flamme est embrasée. (I 769-772, 777-782)

With Catherine as the viewing subject, followed by the repetition of the verb "voir," the emphasis here is on the Medici queen's ability to see. And yet, she observes the destruction and fratricide and allows for the blood of French subjects to be shed on French soil at the hands of their own brothers. If her inaction is not linked to blindness, it is only to amplify her bloodthirsty, cruel, and demonic nature.

Catherine's inhumanity, fueled and quenched by images of dismemberment and death, is only one factor leading the children of France to blindly take arms against one another, for the French subjects are no better off if those who are meant to govern them are in turn visually impaired. In *Princes*, d'Aubigné targets rulers, whose blindness he had already evoked at the end of *Misères* in a prayer to God, where their faulty eyes were symptomatic of a faulty faith.[27] Once again, in this great chain of impaired vision, if the rulers are criticized for their "impudiques yeux" (II 416), or "leurs louches vues" (II 609), it is because those who advise and steer them are flawed as well. In an image evoking body politics, d'Aubigné explains that "Car les plus grands, qui sont des princes le conseil, / Sont des princes le cœur, le sens, l'oreille et l'œil" (II 335-336). Consequently, he reasons that "Si ton cœur est méchant, ta cervelle insensée, /Si l'ouïr et le voir trahissent ta pensée (…) où auras-tu puissance/ De fuir les dangers et garder l'assurance?" (II 336-337, 341-342). Counsellors are compared to the eyes and ears of rulers, and their corruption or betrayal not only endangers the prince, but compromises the overall wellbeing of the political and social body. France's body, as d'Aubigné's autopsy has already revealed, is sick, and its eyes, among other organs, is failing. Troubles of vision extend beyond the realm of princes and their counsellors to the justice system in *La Chambre dorée*. Almost all of the "ministers of injustice" or allegories of vice bear signs of an ocular malady, many of which are included in chapter three of Daza de Valdés's *The Use of Eyeglasses*,[28] and unlike weaknesses of the eye such as myopia

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[27] "Les Princes n'ont point d'yeux pour voir tes [Dieu] grandes merveilles," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, I 1297.

[28] For the description of the eyes of the allegorical figures of vice, see *Les Tragiques*, III 251-507. The descriptions of ocular problems in "Common Vision Problems Caused by Natural or Acquired Defects" in Daza de Valdés's book on eyeglasses include having a color inside the eye, seeing everything "tinted or black," having a "cloud in front of their eyes," seeing "fog or smoke," "seeing according to their mood: if they are angry, they see yellow; if melancholy, they see green; if they are cruel, they see red; and if they are calm, they see white." See *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 1:75-77.

and presbyopia, they cannot be cured by lenses alone.[29] Echoing the Dantean *contrapasso,* God's judgment in the seventh canto, renders blind those who are eternally condemned, removing their privilege of seeing and contemplating the Divine face.[30]

Whether they are entirely deprived of their vision or plagued by an ocular malady, all levels of the social body – princes, advisors, French subjects – experience a fundamental impediment in their sight as they are influenced by the equally flawed allegorical ministers of injustice on earth, and they are accordingly punished by God himself in the afterlife. The complete loss of their sense of sight, rather than being an inherent condition, is more likely a consequence of untreated myopia.[31] D'Aubigné reproaches princes, tyrants and corrupt ministers for looking too closely at themselves rather than gazing into the heavens and being guided by the true faith. The consequences of this relationship between blindness and ignorance are two-fold and even opposite. On the one hand, this association validates the author's position, for he who is free of an ocular ailment can see and therefore know the truth about France's civil war. On the other hand, the image of a flawed eye or an organ vulnerable to error undermines that very vision upon which the narrator builds his authority. Perhaps an even greater challenge to vision's place in the epistemological hierarchy comes not from an unhealthy eye, but one that, though in perfect physiological condition, is still incapable of seeing because it falls prey to the illusions of appearance, the same subject matter that informed the reports of Boccalini's *menante*.[32]

Like the news bulletins of the *Ragguagli*, an overwhelming number of references to the separation between appearance and essence, or to the notion of a "disguise," appear in the second canto, *Princes*, which

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[29] "(…) all those defects that are caused by illnesses, such as defective humor, cataracts, film on the cornea, growth over the idea and other similar diseases that disturb vision in several ways, but cannot be helped with any kind of glasses," Valdés, *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 1:79.

[30] D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, VII 217-225 (emphasis mine).

[31] In the chapter "Unaccustomed Vision," Valdés explains the case of "people who, having been born nearsighted, [and who] have never used eyeglasses because of neglect, embarrassment, or something of that nature. After a few years, if they attempt to use eyeglasses, they cannot see with any of them. This is because by neglecting their nearsightedness, it has become much worse and more dangerous, which is to say, 'unaccustomed'," *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 1:85.

[32] For a discussion of the dangers of appearances, especially in the context of a faltering system of resemblance, see Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, "L'unité en jeux de miroirs," in *Essai sur l'univers religieux d'Agrippa d'Aubigné* (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions Interuniversitaires, 1991), 137-159.

is, as its title suggests, a mordant commentary on the corruption of rulers and their councellors. Under d'Aubigné's quill, the culture of dissimulation, embodied by Castiglione's courtier and propagated in the concept of *sprezzatura* almost a century before the publication of *Les Tragiques*, becomes a sinister matter. Instead of Castiglione, d'Aubigné affiliates the concept of dissimulation with another Italian figure with a more calculating reputation:

> Nos Rois qui ont appris à machiavéliser,
> Au temps et à l'état leur âme déguiser,
> Ployant la piété au joug de leur service,
> Gardent religion pour âme de police. (II 651-654)

D'Aubigné targets the author of *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi* in one of the first noted uses in the French language of Machiavelli's name as a verb.[33] And if the novelty of the verb and its pejorative application to French kings are not enough to solicit a strong reaction or make clear d'Aubigné's accusations, the poet uses the power of rhyme to crystalize his message. Coupling "machiavéliser" and "déguiser," d'Aubigné denounces yet another Florentine import. The masked intentions of princes transforms religious adherence to yet another means of achieving political power and order. Indeed, the "Florentine venom" that has infiltrated and empoisoned France extends beyond the actions of Catherine de' Medici and finds its roots in the writings of Machiavelli. Dissimulation as the *ordre du jour* permeates and reigns in every aspect of the social structure, from court poets, to princes, to ministers, and finally, to religious figures preaching the Catholic faith.

In a society where clever disguises are ubiquitous, the eye is not always equipped to uncover a misleading sign. Distinguishing appearance from essence becomes increasingly difficult, as with princes and their feigned piety:

> Corbeaux enfarinés, les colombes font choix
> De vous, non à la plume, ains au son de la voix. (II 439-440)

Stark visual difference between the crow and the dove is easily effaced by a makeover, and princes, too, may successfully fool others into believing their adopted personas. Yet, d'Aubigné warns, their ruse will eventually come undone, and where vision fails, another sense, another means, will uncover the truth. Unable to identify

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[33] *TLFi,* s.v. "Machiavel." The *TLFi* attributes the first use of "machiavélizer" to Etienne Pasquier in Book VI of *Les Recherches de la France* and acknowledges an entry in Cotgrave's 1611*Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*. Cotgrave translates the term "machiavelizer" as "To Machiavalize it; to practice Machiavellisme," which he in turn explains as "Machiavellisme; Subtill policie, cunning roguerie."

the bird per the color of its feathers (in the firm negation "non à la plume"), the limitations of the eye are concretely exposed. What can, instead, differentiate between the two birds is their unique sounds, for the crow, however white, cannot simulate the sound of the dove. The rhyme "choix" and "voix" awards the ear with its deciphering power and thus contests the eye's epistemological superiority.

Analogous to the disguised crow and the dove is the relationship between "false poets" and d'Aubigné himself, which raises similar issues and further complicates the status of vision and visual signs. In *Princes*, d'Aubigné aggressively denounces the activity of "profane poets" who undertake the task of writing sacred verses in the service of princes. About 700 lines later in the same canto, he addresses his readers and reassures them of the value of his own poem:

The Critique of Bad Poets

(…) depuis quelque temps vos rimeurs hypocrites,
Déguisés, ont changé tant de phrases écrites
Aux profanes amours, et de *mêmes couleurs*
Dont ils servaient Satan, infâmes bateleurs,
Ils *colorent* encor leurs pompeuses prières
De fleurs des vieux païens et *fables mensongères*
(II 429-434, emphasis mine)

D'Aubigne's Own Sacred Poem

Si vous prêtez vos *yeux* au reste de mes *carmes*
Ayez encore de moi ce *tableau plein de fleurs*,
Qui sur *un vrai sujet* s'égaie en ses *couleurs*.
(II 1104-1106, emphasis mine)

D'Aubigné aggressively attacks the "rimeurs hypocrites" who paint their sacred words with the same colors as their amorous verses, falsely believing that profane words and styles and images could be transferred to divine ideas.[34] These "mauvais poètes" are clearly described as being in disguise, one that escapes the princes who give them credence. The shrewd eye of the true poet, however, is capable of seeing that the supposedly pious exterior, despite its change in form from profane to sacred, contains visual markers ("même couleur") that unveil its distortion. The references to the visual element carry negative connotations, for the colors in question are those of profane and irreverent words (and those used to serve Satan, no less), and their flowers are nothing but embellishment and artifice. As readers, then, we are warned and guarded against the false colors and flowers that are but fables.[35] D'Aubigné, too, talks about the colors with which he in turn paints

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[34] Frank Lestringant comments that "D'Aubigné condamne ici les mauvais poètes, ces 'rimeurs' que méprisait déjà Ronsard, et qui croient pouvoir remployer les procédés de la lyrique amoureuse au service du lyrisme sacré. Ce dernier n'est pas affaire de métier, mais d'inspiration, de 'fureur', de foi ardente, " D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, 419n435.

[35] For a more detailed analysis of references to flowers and colors, see Marie-Hélène Prat, "Métaphores du poète et de la poésie dans les *Tragiques*," in *Poétique d'Aubigné*: *Actes du colloque de Genève, mai 1996*, ed. Olivier Pot (Geneva: Droz, 1999),

his work, which, moreover, he depicts as a "tableau plein de fleurs." He implores the reader to lend his eyes to these visual signs, though unlike the "rimeurs hypocrites" his verses are "carmes," and thus rooted in something supernatural, prophetic, and divine. In contrast to their "fables mensongères," he applies his own palette to illustrate "un *vrai* sujet:" his flowers and colors are not ornamental, but natural. D'Aubigné sets to draw clear distinctions between his own work and that of so-called poets, but faced with the same elements – flowers and colors – in both instances, how is the reader to discern between the real and the fake? Despite his own reliance on the visual and on vision, d'Aubigné blurs and confounds the boundaries between appearance and essence and thus makes way for the voices that challenge the epistemological merit of visual perception.

Trusting one's vision and falling prey to appearances is not limited to the domain of representation and pervades ideological and metaphysical levels, and this carries serious implications for the Protestant minority in a country of Catholic rulers. There are those who "vêtent souvent/ Nos saintes passions pour les produire au vent" (II 949-50), and who "prennent masque du vrai, et fardés d'équité,/ Au véritable font crime de vérité" (II 853-854), spies and traitors who wear the masks of the true faith only to better arm themselves in its dismantling and destruction. Then, there are the princes and their councellors:

> (…) depuis quelque temps, les plus subtils esprits
> A déguiser le mal, ont finement appris
> A nos princes fardés la trompeuse manière
> De revêtir le Diable en Ange de lumière:
> Encore qu'à leurs repas ils fassent disputer
> De la vertu, que nul n'oserait imiter (II 949-954)

"Déguiser," "princes fardés," "trompeuse manière," "revêtir": appearances multiply as veiled rulers, advised by dishonest ministers who themselves dissimulate, conceal Satan behind the guise of an Angel. Their faith is therefore nothing but an illusion, and their apparent ideals nothing but hypocrisy. This, in turn, promotes an image of justice and peace that is in reality a pure fabrication, and in *La Chambre dorée* where the main object of criticism is the justice system, d'Aubigné depicts Peace in a state of consternation, speaking of the fake Peace that has taken her place:

> Que le monde (…) n'a pas connaissance
> Qu'elle est fille d'enfer, guerre de conscience
> *Fausse paix* qui voulait dérober mon manteau

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esp. 80-82. According to Prat, flowers and colors generally carry negative connotations in the work and are associated with seduction and disguise.

> Pour cacher dessous lui le feu et le couteau,
> A porter dans le sein des agneaux de l'Eglise
> Et la guerre et la mort qu'un nom de *paix déguise*. (III 69-79 emphasis mine)

Like Boccalini's *Ragguagli*, in which Fedeltà is replaced by *infedeltà*, "la fausse Paix," wrapped up in the garb of true Peace is yet another surface that hides a reality that is contrary to what people see. This pseudo-Peace, who has successfully fooled everyone ("le monde n'a pas connaissance") by its pacific exterior is instead brewing with bellicose and murderous intentions and actions which have direct and significant implications for the adherents of the Reformed Church. The complete dissociation of appearance and essence threatens Protestant lives and is responsible for the carnage taking place on French soil.

The cleavage between exterior and interior, be it in the action of rulers or in the execution of abstract ideals like peace and justice, exists because the Devil has penetrated the soul of rulers to govern their hearts and minds, and in turn, to distort reality. Satan, after all, is the master of disguise. His description and actions dominate the fifth canto, *Les Fers*, where his appearances before God, followed by his interventions on earth, paint him as a crafty chameleon:

> Quoiqu'il fût déguisé en Ange de lumière,
> Car sa face était belle et ses yeux clairs et beaux,
> Leur fureur adoucie; il déguisait ses peaux
> D'un voile pur et blanc de robes reluisantes.
> (…)
> Ainsi que ses habits il farda ses propos. (V 42-45, 48)

If elsewhere, it is men who disguise the Devil and pass him off as an "Ange de lumière" in their pursuit of a false religion (II 949-954), in *Les Fers* the fallen angel himself wears the mask that would allow him to assume his place in the court of Angels before God. Anchored in a lexical field of dissimulation (déguisé; déguisait; voile; farda) and qualified by terms related to whiteness, light, and beauty, Satan becomes unrecognizable. God's eyes, of course, are more than quick to discern the true face of the intruder,[36] but the eyes of men and women on earth are hardly as sharp. And so, when this "enchanteur rusé" appears among them, "tantôt en conseiller finement déguisé, /En prêcheur pénitent et en homme d'Eglise, /Il mutine aisément, il conjure, il

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[36] "(…) aussitôt l'œil divin / De tant d'esprits bénins tria l'esprit malin./ Il n'éblouit de Dieu la clarté singulière," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, V 39-41.

attise /Le sang, l'esprit, le cœur, et l'oreille des grands" (V 213-217).[37] Lucifer, per d'Aubigné's claims, commits his dubious deeds by exploiting people's trust in what they see. Borrowing the body of a wide range of figures, and especially those who are in positions of power –in temporal or spiritual affairs alike – and whom people are expected to trust, he promotes division and he ravages nations. The reliance on appearances does not always provide an accurate knowledge about the object at hand.

References to physiologically flawed organs of sight and notions of disguise and dissimulation, in addition to the general separation between appearance and essence permeate *Les Tragiques* and raise obvious questions about vision's reliability. That these elements are embedded in the very same textual space that champions the acquisition of knowledge and guarantees truth through ocular means, positing the sense of sight at the very heart of its epistemology and authority, comes across as a blatant contradiction.

The Insturmentalized Eye & the Lens of Faith

D'Aubigné's clear, discerning, and accurate vision is in effect of a very different kind than that of France's rulers and that of most of his compatriots, just as Boccalini's *occhiali politici* were distinct from the natural eye and the other optical devices sold at the marketplace. Like Boccalini, d'Aubigné's representation of vision and its authority is a polarized one. If he makes any concessions with regard to vision's epistemological primacy and questions the reliability of the eye by disclosing the blindness of princes or the inability of the organ of sight to distinguish reality from illusion, he does not compromise the certainty of the information he expounds. D'Aubigné asserts his authority,[38] and his approach loudly resonates with those of thinkers who, at the dawn of a period increasingly concerned with guaranteeing certitude and veracity, are in search of developing a "method." In d'Aubigné's epistemology, vision continues to play a central role in the

[37] Verses 213-252 in *Fers* trace in detail Satan's projects on earth and the various disguises he adopts to wander among men and women and implement his trickery.

[38] Catherine Randall Coats addresses the difference between Montaigne and d'Aubigné with regard to authority and the formation of the self, albeit in the context of d'Aubigné's other works, *L'Histoire universelle* and *Sa vie à ses enfants*. See "Representing and Re-Presenting the Self: Fact and Fiction in Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Sa vie à ses enfants* and the *Histoire universelle*," *South Atlantic Review* 54, no. 2 (1989): 23-40.

acquisition of knowledge, and if this vision is trustworthy, it is because it is mediated, or aided, by the instrument of faith.[39]

Vision in *Les Tragiques* operates in an identical manner to Boccalini's *occhiali politici*, even if d'Aubigné continues to understand the world through a system of affinity, resemblance, and reflection anchored in the idea of "reading the book of the world." The poet gleans clues in a visible space to decipher invisible and divine meaning, and in the final canto of the text, he explicitly lays out the structure of this system that is so intricately defined by reflection:

> Soit *l'image* de Dieu l'éternité profonde,
> De cette éternité soit *l'image* le monde,
> Du monde le soleil sera *l'image* et l'œil,
> Et l'homme est en ce monde *image* du soleil.
> Païens, qui adorez *l'image* de Nature,
> En qui la vive voix, l'exemple et l'Écriture
> N'autorise le vrai, qui dites: "Je ne crois
> Si du doigt et de l'œil je ne touche et ne vois,"
> Croyez comme Thomas, au moins après la vue.
> Il ne faut point voler au-dessus de la nue,
> La terre offre à vos sens de quoi le vrai sentir. (VII 539-550, emphasis mine)

The form of d'Aubigné's verses is in perfect harmony with its content to further highlight this mirror effect. In addition to the more obvious reoccurrence of the word "image" in the first five lines of the excerpt, the anadiplosis (albeit imperfect), where the element at the end of one verse is repeated at the beginning of the next (éternité profonde/éternité; monde/monde), creates a chain whose entities are securely intertwined, not to mention the relationship between the eye and the sun, where "l'oeil" and "soleil" appear in rhyme, and the word "oeil" is already embedded in "s**oleil**." This conception of the universe's overall structure and its emphasis on mirror images and resemblances certainly explains d'Aubigné's predilection for a visual mode of knowing and reading the world, and the apostrophe that follows crystalizes this epistemology and the role of the senses in it. Behind his criticism of the Pagans' contentment with knowledge of the physical world alone, we find praise of the senses. Sensory perception, possessed by everyone including the Pagans, forms the most

[39] Though she does consider vision within the framework of early seventeenth-century optical theories and technologies, Marie-Madeleine Fragonard's views on the different "eyes" – one human and the other godly – are similar to my own insofar as the limitations of one are transcended by the other. See *L'Essai sur l'univers religieux*. Conversely, Jean-Raymond Fanlo offers a reading that limits the eye and therefore the scope of vision altogether as the shift to a celestial perspective represents another mode of understanding the world. Our conclusions are therefore different as I continue to consider vision to be a fundamental component of d'Aubigné's epistemology, even in the metaphysical realm. Cf. Fanlo, *Tracés, ruptures*.

basic unit in apprehending the world, and if directed correctly, it could yield information about divine entities. "La terre offre à vos sens de quoi le vrai sentir": there is no need to look to the heavens to unlock metaphysical meaning, for the interpretation of visible and physical signs on earth can accomplish this task.

Despite d'Aubigné's affirmation of this particular way of understanding the world and the place of the senses within this epistemological frame, we have seen – for d'Aubigné has convincingly shown us through evoking numerous instances of blindness, dissimulation, and disguise – that using the eyes to seek out resemblances is not always reliable. In effect, the poet exposes a rift within the system of thought and participates in its unraveling as "la pensée cesse de se mouvoir dans l'élément de la resemblance. La similitude n'est plus la forme du savoir, mais plutôt l'occasion de l'*erreur*, le danger auquel on s'expose quand on n'examine pas *le lieu mal éclairé* des confusions. (…) C'est le temps des sens trompeurs."[40] In recognizing the shortcomings of vision in his discussion of blind rulers and the eye's inability to judge the disparity between appearance and essence, the poet acknowledges that the organ is insufficient in apprehending the truth. Like Boccalini's *menante*, d'Aubigné is among the privileged few who are aware of an "au-delà visuel" where knowledge and truth can be found. D'Aubigné's poem is an invitation to adopt a new way of seeing,[41] one that transcends the boundaries of the visible and penetrates into a new space that exposes difference.

D'Aubigné constantly warns us that the discrepancy between the exterior and interior of an object extends to all signs, for words, like Machiavellian rulers, can mask what they signify, and thus betray the transparency of communication. What Béroalde saw as potential for interpretation in the variability of language serves as a cautionary tale in d'Aubigné's poem, for misleading appearances can lead to faulty understanding.The poet laments the "new times," in which things are no longer designated by their rightful names and are instead dissimulated. Comparing his own deceptive epoch to a more sincere past, d'Aubigné writes:

Nos anciens, amateurs de la franche justice,

[40] Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, 65.

[41] In an insightful piece, Kathleen Perry Long reads the relationship of the human and the divine as an anamorphotic painting. Just as anamorphosis unites two incompatible spaces within the same frame, she, too, considers the divine to be a visible space, and though hidden, accessible once approached through the proper perspective. See "Improper Perspective: Anamorphosis in d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques," Mediaevalia* 22 (1999): 103-126.

> Avaient de fâcheux noms nommé l'horrible vice:
> Ils appelaient brigand ce qu'on dit entre nous
> Homme qui s'accommode, et ce nom est plus doux;
> Ils tenaient pour larron un qui fait son ménage,
> Pour poltron un finet qui prend son avantage;
> Ils nommaient trahison ce qui est un bon tour,
> Ils appelaient putain une femme d'amour,
> Ils nommaient maquereau un subtil personnage
> Qui sait solliciter et porter un message. (II 241-250)

The poet nostalgically longs for the days when signfier and signifed, when exterior and interior, when appearance and essence, were intrinsically united, when "de fâcheux noms" were appropriately used to name "l'horrible vice." He deplores language's transformation as the same vices are now designated by "un nom plus doux." The use of a single word in the past ("brigand," "larron," "poltron," "trahison," "putain," "maquereau") as opposed to the present which favors a plurality of words or a technique of circumlocution ("homme qui s'accomode," "un qui fait son ménage," "un finet qui prend son avantage," "ce qui est un bon tour," "une femme d'amour," "un subtil personage qui sait solliciter et porter un message") is also telling. The much weaker and more diluted bond between signifier and signified usurps and upsets the direct relationship between word and thing, providing approximate descriptions rather than precise and fitting denominations.[42] Applying softer names to hideous things consequently leads to the separation of Beauty and Truth, a phenomenon to which the author staunchly responds with an "esthetique du laid."[43]

His contemporaries may have embraced the vogue of beautiful exteriors, and their eyes may have succumbed to rich and seductive appearances, but d'Aubigné and his lynx eyes are too sharp to be tricked by illusions of beauty. D'Aubigné follows the example of Virtue who uncovers Fortune's ruse, and who defends her more modest demeanor against the glitz of her fickle rival ("Je foule ces beautés desquelles Fortune use/ Pour ravir par les yeux une âme qu'elle abuse" (II 1339-1340)) to condemn the eyes whose weakness for beauty detracts them from pursuing the Truth. The poet decries those who are blind to, or who turn their

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[42] For a commentary on the question of language, the problem of accepting words as essentially linked to the things they describe, and more generally, of "nomination," see Marie-Hélène Prat, "Le discours de l'analogie dans *Les Tragiques* et les problèmes du langage véridique," in Fragonard and Lozard, *Les Tragiques d'Agrippa d'Aubigné*, esp. 58-60; Fragonard, *L'Essai sur l'univers religieux*, 159.

[43] A similar observation is made by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, *L'Essai sur l'univers religieux*, 151. Also see Usher, "D'Aubigné's *Tragiques*."

eyes away from, the dire and gruesome reality unfolding on France's soil in favor of more pleasant scenes, and he rebukes those who perpetuate this mentality by continuing to bury ugly deeds under alluring garb.[44] In the *Preface*, he addresses the phenomenon of "selective eyes," conditioned to reject that which does not have an appealing exterior, recalling the different perceptions of Michelangelo and the passerby in *ragguaglio* I.4 before the façade of Seneca's home. These eyes seduced by beauty consequently neglect a more precious and spiritual truth that lies beyond the unpretentious, and at times even unsightly, appearance:

> Ces monts ferrés, ces âpres lieux,
> Ne sont pas si doux à nos yeux,
> Mais l'âme y trouve ses délices;
> Et là où l'œil est contenté
> De braves et somptueux vices,
> L'œil de l'âme y est tourmenté. (P 343-348)

Referring to the rough and rugged landscape of Mount Sinai, d'Aubigné contrasts the eyes of the flesh to the eyes of the soul. The "âpres lieux" repulse the physical eyes, which in their quest for luxury and grandeur, refuse to penetrate beyond appearances to seize its divine significance.[45] The physical and spiritual eyes do not seek out the same objects: where one is "contenté," the other is "tourmenté." Weak and undiscerning, the physical eyes only gravitate toward beautiful objects. They ignore the tragic scenes that surround them for they are seduced by delightful illusions instead. Before "le front hideux de nos calamités," "l'oeil par force se détourne à ces choses" (I 679, 681). D'Aubigné explicitly denounces the five senses in the final canto, *Jugement*, for exposing the mind to earthly desires, and he reprimands those who create such incentives and temptations. If the eyes of the flesh are thus governed by desire and pleasure, and if they are thus conditioned to ignore signs when they appear in monstrous or modest forms, how, then, can they be reliable instruments of knowledge? How can the eye be at the same time the organ of truth and of misleading illusions? These are the limits of visible spaces and the very boundaries that d'Aubigné aims to transcend in order to uncover the truth, equipped with his lens of faith as Galileo with his telescope. This truth, however, is not obtained through interpreting the kinship between objects, but rather, by gaining access to the space beyond, to the

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[44] Other occurrences in *Les Tragiques* include II 17-20, II 154-156, II 815-818, IV 819-824, V 755-758, VI 1105-1110.

[45] See Usher, "D'Aubigné's *Tragiques*," 166-167. Usher analyzes the same passage, and though the focus of his study differs from mine, his identification of uncovering "Calvinist spaces" in art and architecture support my own ideas about accessing new visual spaces.

"au-delà visuel," in order to expose another, and previously blurry or inconceivable, set of visible objects whose essence is in stark contrast to their appearance. This reaffirms the authority built on vision's trustworthiness, as the growing separation between Truth and Beauty, between essence and appearance, is made possible through the intervention and assistance of the divine lens.

D'Aubigné presents Beauty as the opiate of the masses, a substance that anesthetizes them against a horrendous, painful truth, and thus, he makes it his mission to firmly reject it and instead emphasizes the new visible space that is characterized by the bond between the ugly and the true. As early on as his *Preface*, he holds this new eye to himself and to his own writings, and he disinherits his earlier works like *Le Printemps*, "Un pire et plus heureux aîné,/ Plus beau et moins plein de sagesse" (P 56-57), stating that "Il me déplut, car il plaisait" (P 72). Rejecting one textual "offspring," the poet writes his preface as a missive to the new and true heir, *Les Tragiques*, which reflect d'Aubigné aversion for beauty when it conceals an ugly truth:

> Porte, comme au sénat romain,
> L'avis et l'habit du vilain
> Qui vint du Danube sauvage,
> Et montra hideux, effronté,
> De la façon non du langage,
> La mal-plaisante vérité (P 19-24)

The poet depicts his work as a foreign entity, a stranger, and like himself – Protestant and exiled – an outsider that will disrupt the *status quo* by introducing unappealing truths in an unfamiliar language. Indeed, his revision of France's religious wars that challenge the dominant narrative will be anything but pleasant and pleasing, and this is a conviction that he reiterates on several occasions throughout the poem.

Abandoned from their sight, Truth is subsequently abandoned from the tongue of the masses. "Moins vaut l'utile vérité que le faux agréable," the poet deplores, "Sur la langue d'aucun à présent n'est porté/Cet épineux fardeau qu'on nomme vérité" (II 154-156). The opposition of the true and the false also confronts the notions of usefulness and delight. We recall that d'Aubigné explicitly dismisses any element that would make his poem "delight" his audience, having already availed himself of those earlier works whose primary goal was to please. It is also true that his primary objective is not a didactic one, as he first and foremost seeks to move his readers. Exposing the ugly, thorny truth, then, is not meant (at least primarily) to

offer an *exemplum*, but to awaken the public and solicit a strong emotional reaction by turning them into witnesses and actors of the horrors that surround them.

What enables d'Aubigné to act as such a guide, to be, in a sense, the corrective and magnifying lens through which his readers can see the real face of events, is precisely the fact that his vision is distinct from the one that pervades the masses, be it the rulers, their counsellors, or their subjects. In an apostrophe to the tyrannical ministers of the Palais de Justice, the poet exclaims:

> Sachez que l'innocent ne perdra point sa peine:
> Vous en avez chez vous une marque certaine
> Dans votre grand Palais, où vous n'avez point lu,
> Oyant vous n'oyez point, *voyant vous n'avez vu*
> Ce qui prend sur vos chefs en sa voûte effacée,
> Par un Prophète ancien une histoire tracée
> Dont les traits par-dessus *d'autres traits déguisés*
> Ne se découvrent plus *qu'aux esprits avisés*. (III 681-688, emphasis mine)

References to reading, seeing, painted images, and disguise immediately divulge the passage's visual mode. Reading and seeing are joined by rhyme to designate activities that are enjoined in the deciphering of signs, recalling d'Aubigné's place within a Renaissance system of thought. The eyesight of the ministers is evoked only to be taken away by an abrupt negation ("voyant vous n'avez vu"), which is in turn followed by a description of what their weak eye has missed. The oversight itself occurs because of an effect of layering, where one image masks another that lies beneath it, thus putting both the activity of seeing/reading *and* the sign to be seen/read in question. The truth is not acquired by contemplating the images and objects and signs that populate the visible space, but by venturing beyond them to uncover other visible objects. But who are these "esprits avisés" who can so shrewdly make out these hidden places? Obviously, the poet counts himself among them, for here, he is the one who expounds knowledge of their existence and guides the eyes of the tyrannical ministers and the readers alike over the dome and the images that have escaped them. The use of the second person pronoun "vous" clearly differentiates the poet from his interlocutors, and this intentional exclusion and distance is fundamental to understanding d'Aubigné's position, and by extension, his solution. The poet's eyesight, unlike that of many of his compatriots, is intact, and if he is in a position to act as guide and correct the vision of others, it is because his own vision has been purified and mediated by divine light and will.

The poet calls for new eyes and for a new way of seeing ("voyons d'un œil nouveau" I 1264), and though he may not have a telescope, his, too, is a "perception instrumentalisée," though the mechanism that enables his eyes to extend beyond the visible space is his "enthousiasm" and faith. He is among those who wear "la foi pour lunette,"[46] which in turn grants him his discerning sense of sight and access to an "au-delà visuel."[47] As such, he, like the wearers of the *occhiali politici*, sees beyond the appearances and dissimulations that characterize his epoch, he can cut into the body of his country and observe in detail the diseases that are responsible for its demise, and he is even able to reach the divine realm. His instrumentalized vision allows him to navigate the "lieux mal éclairés des confusions,"[48] to transcend the visible signs of earthly injustice and see the signs for a greater plan of divine justice. Like the marks on the lunar surface that appear as shadows before the naked eye, but whose crater-like composition is revealed only to the individual who is equipped with the appropriate instrument, the natural eye may see groups of stars and luminous bodies in the sky, but the precise arrangement of those stars and their meaning is reserved for those in possession of an unshakable faith. Such an enterprise would require "autre vie, autres yeux" [49], a spiritual purification that can in all likelihood only occur upon death. The poet, however, is not an average man: elected by God as messenger, his near-death experience that prompts the "vision of Talcy " in the second half of *Fers* transforms him into an astronomer of sorts "pour voir les beaux secrets et tableaux que j'écris" (V 1200).[50]

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[46] "(…)celui, de qui l'œil prend la Foi pour Lunetes," Du Bartas, *La Sepmaine,* 6.

[47] See Jeanneret, "Mimesis et intertexte." Jeanneret describes the shift in the text from a preoccupation with history to one with eschatology, which are respectively linked to the notions of "vrai" and "vraisemblance." He describes how the "vision myope de l'historien" (105), associated with a horizontal perspective, transforms over the course of the poem to become increasingly theological, and therefore adopts a vertical perspective. He equates this to a concern with "histoire" and "la nécessité d'un au-delà de l'histoire" (ibid.) a metamorphosis that corresponds with my own reading with respect to the natural and instrumentalized eye.

[48] Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, 65.

[49] "Ravis-nous de la terre au beau pourpris des cieux,/ Commençant de donner *autre vie, autres yeux*/ *À l'aveugle mortel*; car sa masse mortelle/ Ne pourrait vivre et voir une lumière telle," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, VI 19-22 (emphasis mine).

[50] For Frank Lestringant, the "au-delà visuel" marks a turning point away from history and from d'Aubigné's role as a strict witness: "Mais un tel argument d'autorité est naturellement impuissant à rendre compte de ce qui échappe par définition à l'histoire. Dès lors que le spectacle devient surnaturel – non seulement avec les tableaux célestes des *Fers* mais dès avant, dans le ravissement qui saisit, au terme des *Princes*, le jouvenceau rêvant après sa mésaventures à la Cour (II, 1175-1486)-, il faut pour élargir en quelque sorte le principe d'autopsie à la totalité passée, présente et à venir de l'Histoire universelle, l'argument prophétique qui doute d'ubiquité et de pérennité l'*histôr* – le témoin. Cette fonction est précisément dévolue au mythe de Jonas, qui fait à l'automne de 1572 coïncider le destin du poète et celui de la

Like Galileo with the assistance of his telescope, d'Aubigné is aided by his "enthousiasme" and an angel who unveils an "au-delà visuel." The scene that appears before d'Aubigné's eyes could very well be what an astronomer sees as he peaks through his instrument:

> A la gauche du ciel, au lieu de ces tableaux,
> Eblouissent les yeux les astres clairs et beaux:
> Infinis millions de brillantes étoiles,
> Que les vapeurs d'en bas n'offusquaient de leurs voiles,
> En lignes, points et ronds, parfaits ou imparfaits,
> Font ce que nous lisons après dans les effets. (V 1239-1244)

Through the lens of the divine instrument, d'Aubigné sees beyond the physical barriers that hinder the naked and earthly eye and instead beholds the millions of luminous bodies, echoing Galileo's observations and disbelief in the *Starry Messenger* about the multitude of stars that make up the Milky Way. The geometric shapes and arrangements of the stars ("en lignes, point et fond, parfaits ou imparfaits"), too, resemble the sketches of the constellations that Galileo provides of his celestial examinations.[51] The Angel proceeds to interpret the meaning of these arrangements for d'Aubigné, explaining that the future is engraved in the stars he beholds.[52]

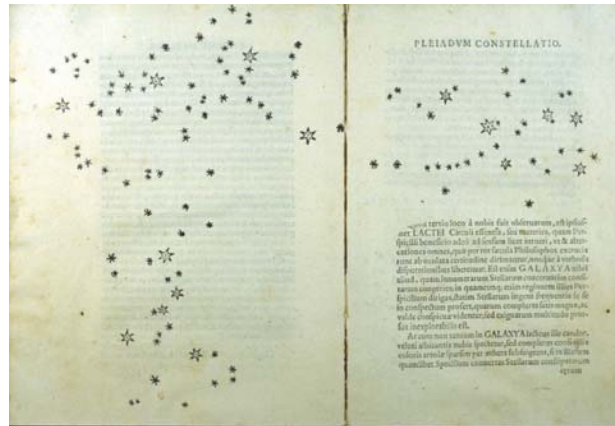

PLEIADVM CONSTELLATIO.

Figure 10. Galileo Galilei, Sidereus nuncius, frontispiece (Venice: Thomam Baglionum, 1610)

communauté entière des persécutés, ouvrant au survivant l'espace d'une 'vision' qui transcende les bornes ordinaires du récit historique," *Lire les Tragiques*, 51.

[51] In his notes on these lines, Frank Lestringant offers a different hypothesis: "L'avenir se lit dans les constellations. Il ne s'agit plus de tableaux figuratifs, comme pour le passé et le présent, mais d'une écriture abstraite, géométrique, 'en lignes, points et ronds' qui fait peut-être à des caractères hébraïques, et suppose, pour être comprise d'un simple mortel comme d'Aubigné, le truchement divin de l'ange," *Les Tragiques*, 494n1245.

[52] "'*Pour jamais engravée/Est dedans le haut ciel que tu créas jadis/La vraie éternité de tout ce que tu dis',*" D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, V 1250-1252 (emphasis mine).

The "lesson" continues as the Angel stresses the secret and exclusive nature of the scene that the poet has the privilege of viewing:

> C'est le registre saint des actions secrètes,
> Fermé d'autant de sceaux qu'il y a de planètes.
> Le prophète dompteur des lions indomptés
> Le nomme en ses écrits l'écrit des vérités.
> Tout y est bien marqué, nul humain ne l'explique;
> Ce livre n'est ouvert qu'à la troupe angélique,
> Ou aux élus de Dieu, quand en perfection
> L'âme et le corps goûteront la résurrection. (V 1253-1260)

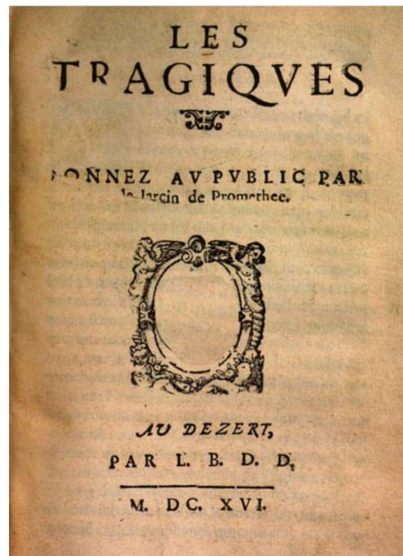
"Action secrètes," "fermé," "sceaux": the truth that is written in the constellations is hidden as though in a highly secure vault and beyond the limits of human vision, and which the absolute negative "nul-ne" ("nul humain ne l'explique") and the exclusive negation "ne que" ("n'est ouvert qu'à la troupe angélique/ou aux élus de Dieu") emphasize even more assertively. And yet, though they may be invisible to most eyes, these celestial patterns, these seals – at once a mark of authenticity and an imprint or signature – these signs, in sum, exist in clear sight of the poet who gazes upon them and learns that "Ces étoiles obscures/ Ecrivent à regret les choses plus impures" (V 1381-1382). D'Aubigné may continue to interpret the inherent meaning of things through their signatures, but he introduces a twist into the older épistémè. Having already identified the dangers of relying on appearances and the erroneous analogies that may ensue, and rather than succumbing to skepticism and questioning the certainty with which things can be known, he applies the new, instrumentalized visual experience to guarantee the truth of what he sees and interprets. Where the naked eye deceives, the assisted eye discerns: the act of interpreting the signature of things as a means of knowing the world does not change, but by deferring the visual and visible space to a zone beyond its known boundaries, the poet encounters a previously unchartered and uncharted layer of visible objects, more hidden and therefore more insightful and true. Alternatively, he uses the discrepancy between the two visible spaces (as with the separation of Beauty and Truth) to gain knowledge through difference, the key element of the "methods" of Bacon and Descartes, and eventually of the new order, that emerge in the seventeenth century.

From Knowledge to Representation:
D'Aubigné's Mirrors & Lenses

The demotion of the natural eye in d'Aubigné's epistemology has no repercussions on vision's critical role in apprehension of reality, for the weaknesses and limitations of the organ of sight are now replaced by an infallible instrument that continues to provide information through visual means. Once d'Aubigné resolves the apparent contradictions in an ocular regime of knowledge and secures vision's place within the epistemological system, it is only natural that he elect a visual mode of representation to share this information. Prompted by an Angel on God's behalf, d'Aubigné records his findings so that his readers may aspire to the same purity of sight and spirit that will one day allow them to see the divine light and experience divine grace. If the poet's faith served as an optical supplement in his own acquisition of knowledge, now the poet himself, and by extension, his poem-offspring, become the "instrument à ces effets divers" (VII, 7) that calibrates the reader's vision on behalf of God's will.

The frontispiece of *Les Tragiques* (Figure 11), relatively bare and unadorned, contains one rather modest image, which announces, from the very beginning, the visual mode of representation that the poem will employ. Placed at the very center of the page, an oval is framed by four figures. The interior of the oval is blank, and at first glance the image as a whole resembles a mirror. This mirror serves two functions. It is, more evidently, a promise of faithful representation, and as we shall shortly discover, one that d'Aubigné fulfills through the use of *ekphrasis*, and more generally, of *enargeia*. The mirror also serves a second purpose. To borrow Michel de Certeau's acute analysis of the instrument in a number of fifteenth-century paintings, "le miroir est un lieu placé *à l'intérieur* du cadre peint et souvent décoré comme l'ostensoir ou le reliquaire qui circonscrit la manifestation d'un autre monde. À l'intérieur, il donne à voir un *au-delà* – un autre temps (la morts), une autre dimension, (le deuil, le vice, etc.) – qui n'est pas visible sur la scène représentée par la peinture et qui est pourtant déjà à l'œuvre."[53] In other words, d'Aubigné's poem makes a second promise, namely to direct the gaze of the reader to other spaces beyond the ones that are immediately visible, be it in the revelation of a buried version of history or in the depiction of the heavens and its secrets.

[53] De Certeau, *La Fable Mystique.II*, 65.



LES
TRAGIQVES

ONNEZ AV PVBLIC PAR
larcin de Promethee.

AV DEZERT,
PAR L. B. D. D.

M. DC. XVI.

Figure 11. Agrippa d'Aubigné, Les Tragiques, frontispiece (n.p., 1616)

As a result, from the very onset of *Les Tragiques*, the reader finds him- or herself before a "poem-painting" or a "painted poem," for d'Aubigné's text is a self-proclaimed 'tableau' and is recognized as such by his contemporaries. In addition to the numerous references to literal framed paintings that decorate the celestial space of *Fers*, the author makes a conscious effort throughout the text to fashion his poem in painterly terms. In the opening, *Aux Lecteurs*, the author detaches himself from the narrative voice, calling himself a 'larron Prométhée' who has stolen and published the manuscript of his master. Here, he describes the first of seven cantos as "un *tableau* piteux du Royaume en general" (A.L. 56, emphasis mine). A sonnet by Daniel Chamier that comprises one of the preliminary poems in the undated second edition of *Les Tragiques* applies the notion to the penultimate canto, *Vengeances*,[54] addressing the tyrants and the condemned who, in "la belle peinture/des tableaux d'Aubigné" (5-6), are meant to recognize the horrors that await them. In *Misères*, the author-narrator denounces the frivolous writings of his youth and seeks to correct his *giovane erranza* by announcing the project of *Les Tragiques*. Dressing himself as a painter, he declares "Je veux *peindre* la France une mère affligée" (I 97, emphasis mine). The equivalence between painting and writing is

[54] In the text of the poem, it is written that the sonnet is to precede the livre of *Jugements*, while the note by Frank Lestringant clarifies that "il s'agit, non de *Jugement*, mais de *Vengeances*, le livre VI des *Tragiques*, comme l'indique sans équivoque l'apostrophe 'ô Tyrans !' du v. 13. Dans le langage de l'Ancien Testament en effet, jugements de Dieu et Vengeances de Dieu sont équivalents," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, 370n5.

disseminated throughout the poem, and the poet thus anchors and encloses his reader in the domain of the visual.

In *Fers*, we find the "celestial model" behind d'Aubigné's own painterly approach. As a response to paintings by the "esprits noirs" that decorate the walls of the Vatican and depict the triumph of Catholics over Protestants to appease the sadistic eyes and heart of the Pope or Antichrist, the angels or "esprits saints" respond with paintings of their own.[55] Based on observation rather than imagination, the "tableaux" of the Angels follow careful and mathematical measurements (each of the Angels "représentait au vif d'un compas mesuré," V 266), and depict "d'une science exquise,/ Les hontes de Satan, les combats de l'Eglise" (V 271-272), illustrating not Catholic victories, but Catholic cruelty and Protestant resistance and martyrdom. Added to these pictorial records of events are dates and prose traced by the hand of God.[56] D'Aubigné's ekphrastic descriptions transform words into brush strokes, contours, and colors that become replicas of the real version of historical events. The text, in its representation of a representation, becomes the mirror that propagates a double, and therefore an authentic image, to be displayed before the reader.

The lifelike illustrations are by no means limited to the contents of the numerous paintings that populate the poem. In effect, *enargeia* dominates the text and legitimizes the author's claim to creating a poem-portrait or poem-painting. Indeed, *enargeia* is the preferred rhetorical device of the witness – be it in a historical or judiciary context – as the itemized and thorough descriptions of the orator recreate a mirror image of events through language to better immerse his or her public in those very scenes. The public is now a complicit eye-witness, and given vision's reaffirmed authority, it can trust the certainty and veracity of what it beholds. Furthermore, the presence of these images solicits an emotional response in the reader, transforming him or her into a participant in the events. The merits of *enargeia* as a mode of representation, in general and in *Les Tragiques*, have received ample attention from scholars, and I will not repeat what they have

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[55] See Usher, "D'Aubigné's *Tragiques*," 190-199. Here, Usher describes Vasari's Vatican paintings and their relationship to the celestial canvases as an example of how the author evokes art to destroy it, and how Calvinist art and architecture replace pre-existing forms and representations.

[56] "Dieu met en cette main la plume pour écrire /Où un jour il mettra le glaive de son ire: /Les conseils plus secrets, les heures et les jours, /Les actes et le temps sont par soigneux discours/Ajoutés au pinceau ; …," ibid., V 307-311.

already developed so extensively.[57] The various implications of this technique are of interest in this study insofar as they affirm the poet's mirror-like operation or his "aesthetic of reflection," which seeks to realistically reproduce events and alert the viewer to the existence of that which may lie outside of his field of vision. Depicting objects that have escaped the eye of history or that have been strategically buried, the poet-as-instrument unearths France's horrible crimes against its Protestant subjects, unveils the corruption and hypocrisy of its secular and spiritual leaders, and through *enargeia*, makes textual sketches of his observations which he in turn shares with readers.[58] The detail with which d'Aubigné's striking visual mode records events not only re-presents the events before the eyes of the reader and revives that which was in the past, it also ensures that the eyes of the reader do not miss anything, that they see exactly what d'Aubigné sees *as he sees it*. For if d'Aubigné as instrument is going to be effective, he needs to align the eyes of the reader with his own.[59]

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[57] Jean-Raymond Fanlo attributes the dominance of a visual mode of representation to three elements: "une protestation d'authenticité, la recherche d'une intensité émouvante, et l'effort, par l'intermédiaire d'une vision synoptique, vers l'intelligibilité," *Tracés, ruptures*, 44. Furthemore, it is a question of "description sans apprêt, qui s'attache non pas à séduire par les détails pittoresques et inutiles, mais à mettre sous les yeux du lecteur les actions ou les données essentielles des événements, " (ibid.). The role of ekphrasis and *enargeia* as a means rendering intelligible the information that is communicated to the reader is also affirmed by Frank Lestringant, who ascribes the emotional response provoked in the readers to the realistic depictions in their capacity as "imagines agentes": "La 'lecture' des Guerres de Religion par les martyrs et les anges va donc s'effectuer sur le mode de la contemplation visuelle. Le passage de la chronique à une juxtaposition d'*ekphrases* particulières trouve sa justification dans l'efficacité rhétorique de l'image: les figures actives (*imagines agentes*), directement appréhendées dans une posture dramatique, touchent davantage les sens du spectateur qu'une chronologie explicative. Alors les tableaux des guerres de Religion frappent l'imagination et y inscrivent durablement les traces d'un choc affectif. Une fois de plus, le *movere* l'emporte sur le *docere*, l'émotion sur 'enseignement," *Lire* Les Tragiques*,* 68-69. Also see Olivier Pot, "Les tableaux des *Tragiques* ou le paradoxe de l'image," in Pot, *Poétiques d'Aubignés:* 103-134. Pot questions the status of the paintings as perfect imitations because of their attempt at representing the ineffable. To overcome this challenge of representing what cannot be represented, Pot interprets "tableaux" as tabular representations and taxonomies in addition to paintings, and suggests that "les *Tragiques* nous inviteraient donc à 'penser' l'image (tableau, emblème, ou métaphore) au-delà de la notion étriquée de visuel" (118), in a process of "désymagination," in which "l'image se trouve comprise dans le modèle alors qu'inversement image et modèle ne font qu'un dans cette élévation vers une 'image sans image' désignant l'intériorité la plus pure où les contraires sont appelés à coïncider,"(122-123). For an examination of the general importance of ekphrasis and *enargeia* for the orator, see Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Franham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). Also see Grafton, *What was History*, 28, for a discussion of the strong visual component and tabular organization of historical writing.

[58] For an argument that compares d'Aubigné's "tableaux" to engravings rather than paintings – a less luxurious form of representation, more akin to textual impression, and closer to history and truth – see Marie-Hélène Prat, "Métaphores du poète," 84-93.

[59] See Mitchel David Greenberg, "The Poetics of Trompe-l'œil: D'Aubigné's 'tableaux céstes'," *Neophilologus* 63 (1979): 4-22. In his study on the "tableaux" of *Fers*, Greenberg rightfully remarks that d'Aubigné exercises great control over the gaze of the reader. Rebecca C. Harmon extends this idea of superimposed and aligned perspectives to argue that the vision and visuality become means through which the poet transfers his own status as witness and actor/participant to the reader. See "Witnessing Words," 42.

The idea of a superimposed vision or visual field invites us to interpret the image on the frontispiece of *Les Tragiques* in a second way. The elliptic shape can also be an aperture and lens, turning the book into a *camera obscura* or a Keplerian eye, in which the world is literally a *monde à l'envers*, a refracted, upside-down version of the outside object rather than its direct duplicate or reflection. In d'Aubigné's poem, the notion of a topsy-turvy world is, in the words of Jean Céard, "le coeur même du livre,"[60] for the poet himself recognizes that the world and turbulent times that he inhabits are in fact the inverse of how things should be.[61] Consequently the pages of *Les Tragiques*, like those of the *Ragguagli*, become a retinal screen upon which the refracted and upside-down image of the world appear, and unlike the mirror image or reflection that is based on the principle of "sameness" or "similarity," the aesthetic of refraction works to expose difference. If we imagine upright images – things as they ought to be – to have a positive value, then the textual refractions consist in transforming these positive values into negative ones, and d'Aubigné saturates his text and bombards his readers with such metamorphoses, using antithesis, chiasmus, and metanoia as the privileged rhetorical devices.[62]

In describing the devastating and devastated atmosphere of his times in the opening canto of *Les Tragiques*, d'Aubigné contrasts the idyllic landscapes of poetry to the horrific and bloody battlefields of a divided French reality:

> Ces ruisselets d'argent, que les Grecs nous feignaient,
> Où leurs poètes vains buvaient et se baignaient,
> Ne courent plus ici: *mais* les ondes si claires
> Qui eurent les saphirs et les perles contraires
> Sont rouges de nos morts; le doux bruit de leurs flots,
> Leur murmure plaisant heurte contre des os. (I 59-64 emphasis mine)

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[60] Jean Céard, "Le thème du 'monde à l'envers' dans l'œuvre d'Agrippa d'Aubigné," in *L'Image du monde renversé et ses représentations littéraires et para-littéraires de la fin ddu XVIe siècle au milieu du XVIIe siècle: Colloque International, Tours, 17-19 nocembre 1997*, ed. Jean Lafond and Augustin Redondo (Paris: Vrin, 1979) 118. The analyses that follow are greatly indebted to and echo much of Céard's pointed study on the subject, and though we examine the same passages and draw similar conclusions, my chapter situates the analysis of the *topos* in a larger context insofar as it elucidates the optical properties of d'Aubigné's poem. For other discussions of the "monde à l'envers," see Fragonard, *L'Essai sur l'univers religieux,* esp. 119-126.

[61] "Le sage justicier est traîné au supplice, /Le malfaiteur lui fait son procès ; l'injustice/ Est principe de droit; *comme au monde à l'envers*/ Le vieil père est fouetté de son enfant pervers," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, I 234-236 (emphasis mine). For a more detailed commentary on the rhyme envers/pervers, see Céard, "Le thème du 'monde à l'envers'," 118.

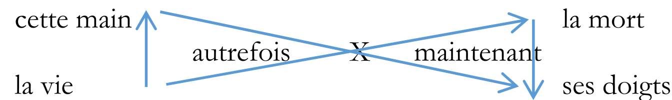
[62] See Céard, "Le thème du 'monde à l'envers'"; Lestringant, *Lire* Les Tragiques *d'Agrippa d'Aubigné,* 34 for comments on antithesis; Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani "Violence d'Aubigné," in Pot, *Poétiques d'Aubigné*, 26; Fragonard, *L'Essais sur l'univers religieux*, esp. 114 for a discussion of antithesis, but also 124 for an analysis of the reversal in which life imitates art.

Like the small streams they describe, the first two lines flow smoothly and without interruption, though they come to an abrupt halt when they reach the *hic et nunc*, as the past (feignaient, buvaient, se baignaeint) turns into the present (courent) and the clause ends after the first caesura. And though the words with which they share the rest of the alexendrin, "les ondes si claires," appear to partake in the same idyllic spirit as the earlier verses, the conjunction "mais" that separates them implies a shift in nature from positive to negative, and thus acts as a refractive node. The flow of the first two positive verses gives way to a choppy and turbulent movement as the subsequent clauses "les ondes… de nos morts" and "le doux bruit… contre des os" are each fragmented between two verses and mark yet another refraction. The positive descriptions ("les ondes si claires/ qui eurent les saphirs et les perles contraires;" "le doux bruit de leurs flots") are left hanging and remain incomplete at the end of the verse, and the *enjambements* that complete the clause ("sont rouges de nos morts;" "heurte contre des os") evoke macabre images. The extended metaphors of death and battle that occupy the verses that follow and expose the poet's project and tone also participate in this reversal: d'Aubigné abandons the lute of lyric for the trumpet of war (I 73-74), and Melpomene rises not from Hipprocrene, but from "des tombeaux rafraîachis" (I 80-81).

Misères also targets the people who, denatured themselves, are responsible for this inversion and degeneration of events. The poet makes himself and his trained readers witness to the atrocities committed by "les mères non-mères" (I 497),[63] itself a refracted and upside-down image. Melpomene addresses mother France in a heart-wrenching lament: "O France désolée! ô terre sanguinaire!/ Non pas terre, mais cendre: ô mère! si c'est mère/ Que trahir ses enfants au douceur de son sein" (I 89-92). The idea of a "terre" correlated with fertility and life undergoes a first refraction when it is qualified as "sanguinaire," but it is really the metanoia, the negation of "terre" and its correction as "cendre," that completes the refraction and projects the image of death. Applying the "refractive technique" where a past, and positive, element transforms into something negative in its present state, d'Aubigné evokes the maternal figure more generally to reiterate the shift from life to death: "Cette main s'employait pour la vie autrefois/Maintenant à la mort elle emploie ses

[63] "Cette rage s'est vue, et les mères non-mères/Nous ont de leurs forfaits pour témoins oculaires," D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, I 495-498.

doigts" (I 515-516). The point of refraction occurs in the space between the two verses as the temporal adverbs "autrefois" and "maintenant" mark the shift from one vector to another, and "la vie" becomes "la mort." Furthermore, the chiasmic structure of the two verses formally constructs this transposition:



The abstract mother-figure later takes on the more concrete form and face of Catherine de' Medici:

> Elle change en discord l'accord des éléments.
> En paisible minuit on oit ses hurlements,
> Ses sifflements, ses cris, alors que l'enragée
> Tourne la terre en cendre, et en sang l'eau changée. (I 895-898)

We immediately remark the antithetic pairs ("accord/discord," "paisible minuit/hurlements" "terre/cendre" "eau/sang") in which all of the positive elements in the binary are transformed into negative ones, be it through the intermediary of prepositions of change (terre *en* cendre) or through a reversal of the order of juxtaposed terms where the negative form appears first to highlight its triumph (en discord l'accord; en sang l'eau). The repetition of the image of earth reduced to ashes recalls Melpomene's cry and crystalizes the relationship between France and the matriarch. Catherine is here seen as a key instigator of France's troubles and of the topsy-turviness that so ruthlessly defines d'Aubigné's world.

Similar crimes performed by other figures, including the Pope,[64] are described through similar refractive techniques that invert, and in d'Aubigné's eyes, pervert the order of things. In stark contrast to the chain of reflections or "images" that the poet will evoke in *Jugement* when mapping out the structure of the universe and the affinity between the microcosm and the macrocosm, we find objects and people that are joined through an element of resemblance, and yet, are inherently different in essence. The kings of the past are the tyrants of the present: "Les Rois, qui *sont* du peuple et les Rois et les pères, /Du troupeau domestic *sont* les loups sanguinaires " (I 197-198, emphasis mine).[65] What is remarkable in this particular inversion is that the

[64] D'Aubigné uses direct discourse to attribute the following lines to the Pope: "'Je dispense, dit-il, du droit contre le droit; / Celui que j'ai damné, quand le ciel le voudroit, /Ne peut être sauvé; j'autorise le vice; /Je fais le fait non fait, de justice injustice ;/je sauve les damnés en un petit moment ;/J'en loge dans le ciel à coup un régiment ;/ Je fais de voue un Roi, je mets les Rois aux fanges;/Je fais les Saints, sous moi obéissent les Anges ;/ Je puis (cause première à tout cet univers)/Mettre l'enfer au ciel et le ciel aux enfers'," ibid., I 1235-1244.

[65] See Céard,"Le thème du 'monde à l'envers'," 119 for an analysis of the same lines with respect to the verb "être."

"refractive node" is not, as in the previous instances we have examined, a word that implies difference or change (the preposition "en"; temporal adverbs; the conjunction "mais"…). The verb "être," the verb of similitude and of essence *par excellence*, is here not a point of reflection, but of refraction. "Les rois" are kings and fathers, terms that carry a positive charge. And yet, they are also "les loups sanguinaires". The same subject, therefore, is projected as two diametrically opposite images (père/loup) and yet unusually superimposed through an essential connection by the verb "être." [66]

To this essentially unnatural image and inversion of kings corresponds the topsy-turvy image of the very spaces that the "troupeau domestic" is doomed to occupy:

> Les places de repos *sont* places étrangères,
> Les villes du milieu *sont* les villes frontières;
> Le village se garde, et nos propres maisons
> Nous *sont* le plus souvent garnisons et prisons. (I 225-228 emphasis mine)

In an identical juxtaposition of antithetical terms joined by the verb "être," d'Aubigné exposes not only the inversion itself, but the alarming degree to which it has occurred. The French subjects are before a true experience of the *unheimlich* as the familiar space of the home is literally being upturned to lead to an increasing sentiment of marginalization and alienation (the shift from "place de repos" to "étrangère," from "milieu" to "frontière;" the rhyme maison/prison): a tragic picture indeed, for this reversal is no longer a fleeting characteristic, but an essential property.

These are the conditions that prompt Peace and Justice to flee earth in *La Chambre dorée* - as Fedeltà fled Parnassus in the *Ragguagli* –and to plead before God to restore order on earth, marking one of the first instances that call for a correction of the topsy-turvy world. Justice implores God:

> "Remets, ô Dieu, ta fille en son propre héritage,
> Le bon sente le bien, le méchant son ouvrage:
> L'un reçoit le prix, l'autre le châtiment,
> Afin que devant toi chemine droitement
> *La terre ci-après*. Baisse en elle ta face,
> Et par le poing me loge en ma première place." (III 49-54, emphasis mine)

[66] "Le paraître n'est plus la manifestation de l'être, mais son masque et sa trahison," Céard, "Le thème du 'monde à l'envers'," 121. Marie-Hélène Prat also discusses the dangers of the verb "être" in her analysis of the theme of the double and of language in particular: "Le pire ennemi est alors le verbe être, qui pose une identité, une essence sans mentionner la subjectivité du locuteur et la médiation du langage. La restauration d'un discours véridique passe donc par l'explication, c'est-à-dire par *nommer*, qui en mentionnant l'acte de langage permet de le percevoir comme intermédiaire – et donc, éventuellement, de le relativiser; *nommer* ou *appeler*, qui décrivent le processus même de désignation, relatifs et révisables, sont en ce sens plus authentiques que *nom* qui constate un écart figé entre les mots et les choses, mais a perdu le dynamisme de l'activité linguistique." "Le discours de l'analogie," 59.

Unlike the previous passages that juxtapose antithetical terms to portray the image of *le monde à l'envers*, the elements that are combined here (le bon/le bien/le prix; le méchant/le châtiment) present things as they ought to be. Indeed, Justice is deeply preoccupied by the notion of a return to one's place (*son propre heritage; ma première place*), which would in turn effect a reversal of the inverted image, turning it upright ("afin que devant toi *chemine droitement*/la terre").

A commitment to divine justice after scenes of earthly injustice in the third canto inspires hope that the inversion will be straightened and order restored as images of cold, sterility, and death are replaced by warmth, fertility, and life,[67] and similar promises progressively appear in the following cantos. Though just as the correction of the inverted retinal image takes place beyond the space of the eye itself, that of d'Aubigné's topsy-turvy reality will not change in the space of the book nor during his time, even though he continues to hint at its inevitable occurance in *Jugement.* After the Apocalypse, and on Judgment Day, God addresses both the blessed and the damned. He begins his discourse by speaking to the elected souls who will join him in his celestial court, and after a number of celebratory verses, the attention, and now God's fury, turn to the eternally condemned:

God's address to the blessed

" Vous qui m'avez vêtu au temps de la **froidure**,
Vous qui avez pour moi souffert peine et **injure**,
Qui à ma sèche soif et à mon âpre faim
Donnâtes de bon cœur votre eau et votre pain,
Venez, race du ciel, **venez élus du Père**;
Vos péchés sont éteints, le Juge est votre frère;
Venez donc, bienheureux, triompher pour [jamais]
Au royaume éternel de victoire et de paix."
(VII 871-878, emphasis mine)

God's address to the damned

" Vous qui avez laissé mes membres aux **froidures**,
Qui leur avez versé injures sur **injures**,
Qui à ma sèche soif et à mon âpre faim
Donnâtes fiel pour eau et pierre au lieu de pain,
Allez, maudits, allez grincer vos dents rebelles
Au gouffre ténébreux des peines éternelles!"
(VII 887-892, emphasis mine)

At once mirror image and inversion, the same "aesthetic of refraction" is applied on Judgment Day to bestow reward or punishment as it befits the individual, and to restore everyone and everything to its rightful place, to finally turn the *monde à l'envers* upright.[68] The parallel construction of the two speeches with identical terms

[67] D'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, III 654-668.

[68] The same observation is made by Jean Céard: "son espérance en Dieu lui assure que ce monde à l'envers sera, par sa main, de nouveau retourné," "Le thème du 'monde à l'envers',"125. We can also read his conclusion that "le nouveau monde, né d'un autre renversement de ce monde renversé, est à la fois le même et un autre, totalement semblable au monde d'avant la faute, et pourtant totalement différent," (ibid., 126) in light of the mechanism of vision, for the outside object and the right-side-up image processed by the mind are at once the same and totally different.

better highlights the different actions of the blessed and the damned during their time on earth, and as a result, reinforces the different treatments they receive by God. Those who suffered for their faith become the "bienheureux" who are welcomed ("venez") by God, not the judge but father and brother; those, instead, who acted as persecutors are shunned and sent away ("allez") by a severe divinity, "ce Juge, et non père" (VII 885).

The aesthetic of refraction therefore coexists alongside the paintings in d'Aubigné's representation of France's *troubles religieux*. The poem exploits both interpretations of the image on its frontispiece, at once a mirror that reflects to produce identical images and a lens that refracts to form inverted projections. If optical theories and technologies are blatantly absent from the verses of *Les Tragiques*, the poem's visual modes nonetheless parallel the ocular regime that is ushered in during the first third of the seventeenth century, adopting the same visual experiences and modes of representation as the *Ragguagli*. In both the acquisition of knowledge and its representation, d'Aubigné plays on the plurality of vision and the eye, both deeply embedded in the binaries of natural/instrumentalized, direct/mediated vision, reflection/refraction, and similarity/difference. In his elaboration of an epistemology of sight, the contradictions between the witness's reliable eye and the weak and even non-existent eye-sight of princes and ministers, d'Aubigné does not dismount or destabilize the value of *vision* as a source of knowledge, but rather the mechanism or means through which this vision occurs. He therefore echoes his contemporaries in the scientific community by exposing the tension between the natural eye and its instrumentalized alternative, and he participates in advocating an instrumentalized vision in line with figures like Galileo and Bacon.[69] If d'Aubigné opts for directness in his religious belief as a member of the Reformed Church, he favors mediation when it comes to vision, if that medium is to be understood as a pure faith. Acquiring knowledge through baroque eyes still relies on the sense of sight, but one that is corrected and assisted by an instrument, a transformation that also coincides with the more general transition in the period's system of thought. Though d'Aubigné continues to read the signs in the book of the world to uncover invisible meaning in visible spaces, he simultaneously

[69] Ofer Gal and Raz-Chen Morris describe these tensions as "a debate between two versions of empiricism, between what one may call Renaissance and Baroque concepts of directness and mediation, a debate about the relative import of eye and instrument," *Baroque Science*, 90.

expands and collapses this epistemological order through his instrumentalized vision. Through the lens of faith, he is able to find visible signs beyond the confines of the visible, which enable him to interpret signs of an even more secret nature than those accessed by the naked eye. On the other hand, he exposes the limits of similitude and affinity by unmasking the hypocrisy of France's rulers and by demonstrating the discrepancies between ideas (of Kings, of Beauty, of Peace) and their embodiments. Representing his world through baroque eyes, d'Aubigné applies both an aesthetic of reflection and one of refraction, painting vividly realistic images of what he has witnessed, but also showcasing refracted and inverted projections that strip objects of their appearances and reveal them in their true, denatured state.

PART III.

OPTICS & LITERARY POLEMICS

Chapter 6.
Introduction

In August 24, 1609, Galileo Galilei wrote a letter to Leonardo Donato, the Doge of Venice, to promote and praise the utility of his newly improved telescope in both terrestrial and maritime military endeavors. In the letter, the Tuscan mathematician writes of an instrument that "brings visible objects so close to the eye, and represents them so largely and so distinctly, so that that which is at a distance of, for example, nine miles, appears to us as though it were only a mile away."[1] After providing a number of examples, he then concludes that the visual aid's advantages are numerous and will not go unnoticed by any sensible person. At the time Galileo wrote this letter, little did he know that his noble instrument would also come to serve on another kind of battlefield, one in which words, rather than cannons were ignited.

The subsequent two chapters will examine two literary polemics in the first half of the seventeenth century, one in Italy around Giambattista Marino's *L'Adone* (1623), and the other in France around Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1637), which adopt the lens as an instrument of reading and criticism. What we find in the two polemics, though not entirely in an identical way, are critics divided into two camps with regard to a central text – *L'Adone* in Italy, *Le Cid* in France – divisions that correspond to two distinct visual modes. There are those who prize the use of optical instruments in their approach and those who are wary of the artificial device and favor instead the natural eye. These tensions in the language of literary criticism strongly echo the debates taking place in the scientific community, though such references to the mechanisms and instruments of vision, be it the newly invented telescope, the eyeglasses (whose invention dates back to the late thirteenth century), or the eye itself, have escaped the attention of scholars, who have, in their treatment of vision and visuality in these texts, done so within the frame of representation and illusion. Indeed, this is

[1] "(…) un nuovo artifizio di un occhiale (…) il quale conduce gl'oggetti visibili così vicini all'occhio, et così grandi et distinti gli rappresenta, che quello che è distante, v.g., nove miglia, ci apparisce come se fusse lontano un miglio solo," Galileo to Leonardo Donato, Letter 228, 24 August 1609, in *Le opere di Galileo Galilei: Edizione nazionale sotto gli auspicii di sua maesta il re d'Italia*, ed. Antonio Favaro, et. al., vol. 10 (Florence: G. Barbera, 1900) 250. All subsequent references to Galileo's letters will be cited from this edition, unless noted otherwise.

understandable insofar as the Baroque has a propensity for games and illusions that deceive the eye,[2] and the chapters of Part Two have exemplified the dangers of relying on appearances. The same chapters have also elucidated how writers have attempted to combat the unraveling of the eye's authority to preserve vision's epistemological legitimacy, and it is precisely for this reason that an analysis of visual references in literature as informed by its scientific context is a valuable one. By examining these parallels in dialogue with the history of optics, we will see that if the transformations in the epistemology of vision, along with corresponding models and the dynamics between eye and instrument – are so attractive to writers for talking about literature, it is because the writers recognize their own experiences in the scientific conversations, and they explore the potential of these new technologies and their implications for the expression of their own arguments. As a result, the study of the two polemics will address the general question of the eye's reliability rather than questions of verisimilitude or illusion on a textual level – notions that are without a doubt at the heart of the debates and the object of much scholarship .The focus, therefore, will be on the integration of vision and optical devices, on how ways of seeing correspond to ways of reading and evaluating texts.

The polemic in Italy revolves around the Neapolitan poet, Giambattista Marino (1569-1625), who is considered one of the key figures of baroque poetry in Italy. The poem at the center of the debates is his *L'Adone* of 1623, which tells the stories of the adventures and misadventures of Venus and Adonis, all the while weaving in accounts of natural philosophy and history to culminate in over 40,000 verses. Marino died in 1625, two years after his text was printed in Paris, and within two years of his passing, Tommaso Stigliani, a long-time rival, published *Dello occhiale opera difensiva* in 1627.[3] Transforming the lens from an instrument of observation in terrestrial and maritime enterprises to one of acerbic criticism, Stigliani sounded the first trumpets of the literary war against a different *marino*. His *Occhiale* or *Lens* subjects Marino and his *Adone* to a rigorous analysis, from more general structural or poetic flaws of the poem to accusations of plagiarism, factual errors, or deviation from the purity of the Tuscan tongue in individual verses, thus exposing the work

[2] "C'est le temps privilégié du trompe-l'œil, de l'illusion comique, du théâtre qui se dédouble et représente un théâtre, du quiproquo, des songes et visions; c'est le temps des sens trompeurs; c'est le temps où les métaphores, les comparaisons et les allégories définissent l'espace poétique du langage," Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, 65.
[3] Tommaso Stigliani, *Dello occhiale opera difensiva* (Venice: Pietro Carampello, 1627). All references to Stigliani's *Occhiale* are taken from this edition.

as a literary monster or abomination. Not everyone shared this opinion of the poem, and a number of writers jumped to Marino's defense, or at the very least, wrote to mitigate Stiglini's negative review, and many of the works adopted and exploited the optical reference used by Stigliani in their own titles or responses. The works that will be examined here are *La Difesa dell'*Adone (*The Defense of the* Adone) by Girolamo Aleandro, published in 1629 and considered to the official response on behalf of the Marinisti, or Marino's supporters; *L'occhiale appannato* (*The Fogged/Blurry Lens*), published in the same year, by Scipione Errico, another supporter of Marino's, in the form of a dialogue between two fictional characters Trissino and Carlo; the more moderate *L'uccellatura di Vicenzo Foresi* (*The Joke*) by Niccolò Cillani, published in 1630; and finally, *L'occhiale stritolato* (*The Broken Lens*) in 1643, by Ludovico Aprosio who had already attacked Stigliani on numerous other occasions regarding other matters.

Turning to the second polemic, *Le Cid*, though based on historical events and already present in the Spanish literary tradition long before being adapted for the French stage, was written and performed in 1637 as a tragi-comedy by the dramatist Pierre Corneille (1606-1684). The play, which debuted in Paris in the *Théâtre du Marais,* opposes family obligation and duty to love and personal desire, and its ending, which announced the marriage of the two young lovers, Chimène and Rodrigue, stirred great debate about the play's lack of adherence to the rules of verisimilitude, as it was thought to be highly unlikely that a woman, especially one possessing great status and virtue, would wed the man who killed her father. This deviation from the dramatic code, however, did not hinder the public from appreciating and applauding the play, and though this element became one of the principle points of objection in the *Querelle*, it was not what initiated it. The criticism did not follow the performance or publication of the play, but a letter that Corneille wrote in which he praised his own poetic prowess, which was seen as being subversive to the laws of the Republic of Letters, since he had judged himself based on the opinion of the public (and essentially his own opinion of himself) rather than that of fellow poets. The *Querelle*, which began in the winter of 1637, was comprised of many voices and over thirty documents. These were written in defense of or against Corneille and his primary detractor, fellow dramatist Georges de Scudéry, and they even involved the newly established Académie

Française, founded in 1634. Although, given the success that the play enjoyed in the eyes of the public, the Académie was hesitant – for the sake of its own reputation – to chastise it too severely.

Though the two polemics are separated by almost a decade, and though they differ in very basic ways – from the genre of the criticized work, to the ability of its author to respond, to the duration of the debates – they raise similar questions and concerns with regard to the conventions by which poetry, broadly defined, should be created and evaluated. In addition, both polemics contribute to the (continuing) formation of two important figures, that of the critic and that of the public, which in turn correspond to two different models of knowing, experiencing, and judging a literary work. Moreover, these polemics of the first half of the seventeenth century bring to light a number of elements that would fuel a later debate, the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. In a recent and enlightening rereading of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, Larry F. Norman investigates the reflections on literature by a group of writers who are operating in a post-Galilean and post-Cartesian world.[4] By emphasizing the recognition, on the part of those favoring the Ancients, of the time that separates them from their classical idols, his study shifts the focus to the way in which the opposing groups valued, read, and judged their works, and how, in turn, this influenced literary production in the late seventeenth century. With the idea of methodical reasoning emerging as one of the defining characteristics that separates the Ancients from the Moderns, Norman not only demonstrates that the admiration toward the Greek tradition actually spurred tremendous creativity among the Ancients, thus dissociating the labels "Ancients" and "Modern" from the notions of "imitation" and "innovation," but he also exposes two very different experiences of literature, which posits the (pro-Modern) critic's analysis based on reason and method against the (pro-Ancient) reader's feelings or sensualist impressions. Where the attitude of the Moderns is affiliated with the "cult of reason,"[5] an insistence on philosophical thought that

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[4] Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[5] Ibid., 4.

seeks to tame poetry and subjugate it to its laws, those favoring the Ancients privilege instead the materiality of the poetic language and disorder.[6]

The questions of imitation and innovation, of verisimilitude and regularity, are certainly present in the polemics around *L'Adone* and *Le Cid*, but the oppositions between the analytical approach and the more natural or affective response are also rehearsed in these debates of the early seventeenth century, a period for which Galileo's discoveries still represent undigested novelties, and one that has not yet, or perhaps only barely, caught a glimpse of Descartes' method. If the second part of the seventeenth century, with the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, represents a rift between two experiences of literature, one described as the "mechanical economy of engineered parts,"[7] and the other as a sensualist approach that announces the sublime, the earlier debates establish an almost identical dichotomy and they turn to vision and its instruments to do so.

The two polemics, while being treated in separate chapters, form part of a diptych in a similar fashion to those that comprised the previous part of this study. They could be read and understood as two independent case studies, but their examination is made more fruitful through their juxtaposition, especially with regard to the visual experiences that are at work. The explicit mention of optical instruments, be it in the title or the text, is far more common in the Italian debate than in the French. This is perhaps indebted to Stigliani's choice of title, his *Occhiale*, which in turn inspired his respondents to completely exploit the optical reference. They recognized an incredible and powerful metaphor in the lens, and they turned the instrument

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[6] In the first half of the seventeenth century and in the Italian tradition, we find this tension addressed directly by Scipione Errico, one of the respondents in the *Adone* polemic. His comedy, *Le rivolte di Parnaso* (Venice: Bartolomeo Fontana, 1626), stages a competition between a number of classical and contemporary poets, including Marino, who try to woo Calliope and win her affections. In the end, she chooses Homer: "La Signora Calliope non hà volute alcuno delli Poeti Italiani, mà è ritornata all'antico amore d'Homero" (142). In his 1643 novel *Le guerre di Parnaso* (Lecce: Argo, 2004), Errico imagines the literary upheaval that emerges upon Apollo's departure from Mount Parnassus. Rehearsing the contemporary debates about poetry and the place of Aristotelian principles though the various revolts and coups that occur during Apollo's absence, Errico promotes the idea of liberating poetry from the yoke of history and philosophy. This responds perfectly to Norman's suggestion that "the defense of the ancients, then, must be seen in the wider context of a broad defense of a certain autonomy for poetry, of its license to break with the reigning cult of reason." *Shock of the Ancients*, 4.

[7] Norman, *Shock of the Ancients*, 197.

on the critic himself. With the exception of one text,[8] none of the documents in the *Querelle du Cid* bears any optical devices in the title, and though a handful of lenticular objects are mentioned in some of the documents themselves, their presence is fairly scare and subtle. And yet, the debates on both sides of the Alps rely on the same visual modes, and the oppositions between an instrumentalized eye and a natural one function to identical ends. It is through this comparison with the bolder, more direct colors of the Italian polemic that those same features of the French *Querelle*, however more subtle, are able to emerge in a more striking manner. But what of these "visual modes"? And what of the instruments? What of these dynamics between the natural eye and the instrument?

A Tale of Two Instruments

When Galileo took his newly improved telescope to the sky and published the results of his observations in his *Sidereus nuncius* or *Starry Messenger* of 1610, he unveiled the composition of the Milky Way as a group of densely packed stars, he sketched the first accurate portrait of the moon, and he was the first to discover the four satellites of Jupiter, "four wandering stars, known or observed by no one before us."[9] All of these elements, Galileo says, "were discovered and observed a few days ago by means of a glass contrived by me after I had been inspired by divine grace."[10] The telescope and its observations appear here as two novelties, though they differ in nature. The telescope is an invention devised by Galileo,[11] a new object that did not exist before, whereas the "finding" or "discovery," or even of "getting again," also present in the verb "reperire" in the original Latin, implies that the existence of those entities preceded Galileo's observations.[12]

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[8] *Le Souhait du Cid en faveur de Scuderi: Une paire de lunettes pour faire mieux ses observations*, in *La Querelle du* Cid, ed. Jean-Marc Civardi (Paris: Champion, 2004).

[9] Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius or the Sidereal Messenger*, trans. Albert Van Helden, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 38. All subsequent English citations of Galileo's text will be drawn from this edition, referenced as *Sidereal Messenger*, with *Sidereus nuncius* being reserved for the original Latin text.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Despite his claim which suggests that he is the inventor of the instrument, Galileo acknowledges the Dutch origin of the object almost immediately after when evoking a letter from Paris from Jacques Badovere that contained a description of the device (ibid., 39).

[12] "Quae omnia ope Perspicilli *à me excogitati* divina prius illuminante gratia, pauci abhinc diebus *reperta*, atque obserrvata fuerunt," Galileo, *Sidereus nuncius,* 5v (emphasis mine).

By revisiting the heavens with the use of his instrument ("Perspicilli beneficio," an expression repeated several times in the *Sidereus Nuncius*), Galileo unveiled an entirely different picture of the heavens, thus challenging the authority of the Ancients, but also that of the human eye by bringing to light its natural limitations. The instrument clarifies the essence of the Milky Way, which is not some nebulous formation, but rather, a body of densely configured stars.[13] The moons or satellites of Jupiter, which are not visible to the naked eye, would have remained unknown entities had Galileo not pointed his telescope to the skies. And without Galileo's description and sketches of the Moon, people would have continued to think of the lunar surface as smooth and perfect, and even more ink would have been spilt to continue theorizing those "dark spots" perceived from afar. Instead, Galileo's observation showed that the heavenly body was in reality more akin to the earth, its surface composed of craters, similar to the hills and valleys we find on our own planet.[14] Just as notions of an immutable and perfect celestial realm are shaken and shattered, so, too, is the authority of the natural eye, whose direct observations yield erroneous results or fail to perform a comprehensive empirical study. The natural eye, then, has a natural limit. There are objects that can *only* be seen through an instrument, and others whose appearance, as observed by the naked eye, does not correspond to their true form, which can, again, only be observed with the aid of an instrument that extends the human eye beyond its natural limits and enhances human perception. This discrepancy between the appearance of an object and its true form is one of the central components of the literary polemics that we will examine, and the opponents of both Marino and Corneille will turn to a visual experience that will allow them to redefine the readers' field

[13] "What was observed by us in the third place is the nature or the matter of the Milky Way itself, which, with the aid of the spyglass, may be observed so well that all the disputes that for so many generations have vexed philosophers are destroyed by visible certainty, and we are liberated from wordy arguments," Galileo, *Sidereal Messenger*, 64.

[14] "Anyone will then understand with the certainty of the senses that the Moon is by no means endowed with a smooth and polished surface, but is rough and uneven and, just as the face of the Earthy itself, croweded everywhere with vast prominences, deep chasms, and convolutions," ibid., 38, and later 40-51.

of vision in order to expose the true form of *L'Adone* and *Le Cid* respectively. These detractors, however, do not stop at addressing the limitations of the eye, but also consider its defets.

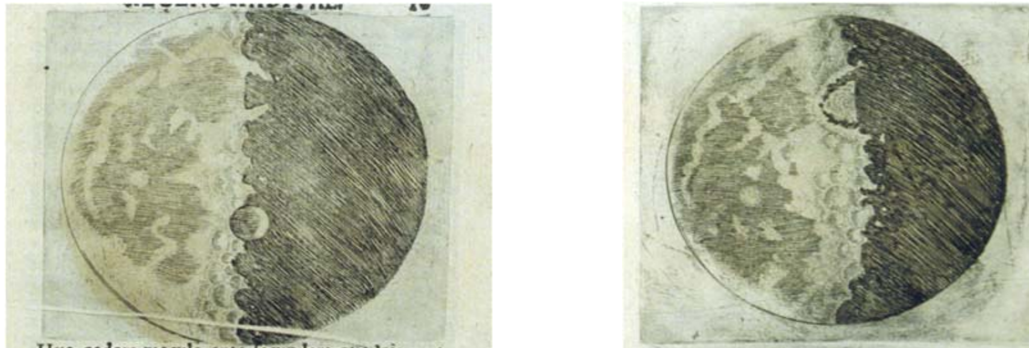

Figure 12. Galileo Galilei. Sidereus nuncius. (Venice: Thomam Baglionum, 1610). Sketches of the lunar surface, fol. 10.

A corollary that we may consider, then, is the distinction between the *limitations* of the eye, and the *pathologies* of the eye, which respectively necessitate a telescope and eyeglasses. Though separated by almost three centuries, the two instruments represent two moments within the same historical narrative, as the telescope would not have existed without spectacles. I will not reproduce the entire history of the telescope's invention in these pages and will refer the reader to Albert van Helden's seminal work, "The Invention of the Telescope," and the more recent publication, "The Long Road to the Discovery of the Telescope," by Rolf Willach, though a number of salient points do merit our attention.[15] The first, and most basic, perhaps, is that early telescopes were created in the workshops of spectacle makers: the instrument that became known as the "cannocchiale" emerged from the folds of the "occhiale."[16] In addition, both Van Helden and Willach remind us that the invention of the telescope, much like that of eyeglasses, was largely indebted to practical, rather than theoretical, knowledge.[17] A lack of understanding of the science behind lenses not only yielded consequences such as creating and prescribing spectacles for presbyopes based on age bracket (not entirely

[15] Van Helden, "The Invention of the Telescope"; Rolf Willach, "The Long Route to the Invention of the Telescope," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series* 98, no.5 (2008), i-116.

[16] "Optical examinations of the earliest surviving telescopes clearly indicate that the lenses of all these instruments are of spectacle glass," Willach, "The Long Route," 2.

[17] Van Helden, "The Invention of the Telescope," 12; Willach,"The Long Route," for information on grinding glass and the lack of theoretical knowledge (89-90), and for a reference to Kepler and the first real theoretical work dedicated to the subject (97).

erroneous perhaps, though certainly imprecise), but it also delayed the process of effectively combining lenses, for even when the intuition to do so existed, results were achieved through trial-and-error rather than calculation. In effect, in the absence of concrete and mathematical knowledge about the refractive mechanism of lenses, it was their application in the treatment of ocular ailments that provided valuable insight into their practical potential.[18] Integrated in the body of the telescope, the lenses that were once objects of correction – a remedy for a deformation or weakness – transformed into vehicles of extension with the ability to stretch the natural limits of human vision. With the spectacle makers and curious natural philosophers in possession of both the raw material and the practical knowledge to combine them, the transition from a "telescopic system" to a "telescope" *tout court* was therefore a question of reconceptualization.[19] Rethinking the purpose of the lenses would lead to the improvements that would later allow Galileo to observe and discover the Medicean planets.

Despite the filiation, then, the two instruments serve rather distinct functions. Van Helden, in referring to a passage in Della Porta's *Magia naturalis*, brings forward the elements that characterize each of the two instruments: "Porta," he writes, "is speaking here strictly about the *correction* of defective vision, not about the *extension* of normal vision."[20] "Correction" and "extension" are independent functions, and they correspond to two distinct instruments, with spectacles treating defective eyesight and the telescope enriching the capabilities of the natural eye.[21] This differentiation is not just a retrospective imposition by modern

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[18] "Why, however, should we ever consider using a concave lens in any combination in an effort to achieve the desired effect? After all, concave lenses make things appear smaller! The answer lies in the function of concave spectacle lenses. They are used by myopes, i.e. people who cannot see things that are far away, " Van Helden, "The Invention of the Telescope," 18.

[19] "It was possible in the sixteenth century to recognize the magnifying effect of a system of two spectacle glasses of good quality. But such devices would not have been "telescopes" in the true sense of our definition (chapter 1). Their resolving powers were considerably worse than the resolution of the human eye. We have therefore termed them 'telescopic systems' because they had exactly the same lens arrangement as the lateral real telescopes. But their lack of resolving power made it clear that a device, which only magnified a distant object without improving the visibility of details, was of no practical significance," Willach, "The Long Route," 93; For the example of Della Porta and lens combination as a corrective mechanism, see Van Helden, "The Invention of the Telescope," 15.

[20] Van Helden, "The Invention of the Telescope," 15.

[21] "Speaking about spectacles is not only speaking about vision, but also about *defective* vision," Katrien Vanagt, "Medical perspectives on eyeglasses," 116.

scholars, as seventeenth-century thinkers also recognized the two instruments as performing different functions. One of the most notable examples is perhaps that of Benito Daza de Valdes and his *Uso de los anteojos* (*The Use of Eyeglasses*) published in 1623.[22] Divided into three parts, the first two address ocular issues from a more scientific perspective, discussing the nature and properties of the eye and the various remedies available to treat ailments. The third and final "libro" transposes the scientific material onto a fictional plane in the form of four dialogues, featuring an optometrist, a doctor, and at least two other characters who are having problems with their vision. While the focus of the book is on ocular ailments and on eyeglasses as corrective instruments, the telescope does make an appearance in the fourth dialogue. Eyeglasses, which dominate the content of the dialogues, are cited as instruments of correction, and there are a variety of expressions used in the original Spanish, such as "dar vista" (literally, "to give vision or sight") and "para soplir su falta" ("to remediate its deficiency"), or the more commonly used verb "remediar," that emphasize this reparative function. In the final dialogue, where the telescope is the prime object of discussion, it is immediately distinguished from those in which the treatment of eyeglasses is the focus. Each of the dialogues bear subtitles that synthesize their contents. The headings of the three dialogues on spectacles are mostly characterized by the ailments that will be addressed in the dialogue:

> Dialogo I. En que se trata de la vista Corta, y de la Gastada
> Dialogo II. En que se trata de la vista inabituada, y tambien de la encontrada, y desigual
> Dialogo III. En que se trata de algunas vistas imperfectas, y de otras dificultades tocantes á los antojos, y al uso dellos[23]

The dialogue on the telescope, however, shifts the emphasis from ailment to instrument, with the contents presented as "Dialogo IIII. En que se trata de los antojos Visorios, ò cañones con que se alança à ver á distancia de muchas leguas."[24]

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[22] Also see Bacon, *Novum organum,* 1:39, in which Bacon distinguishes between the function of spectacles and the newly-invented telescopes and microscopes.
[23] Vlades, *Use of Eyeglasses,* 221, 228, 237.

[24] Ibid., 250.

DIALOGO III
EN QVE SE TRATA DE
algunas viſtas imperfectas, y de otras dificultades tocantes á los antojos, y al uſo dellos.

SEGVNDA PARTE
DE ESTE DIALOGO.
EN QVE SE TRATA DE
el daño que hazen á la viſta los antojos de vidro y mal labrados, y el provecho que ſe ſigue de vſar los de Criſtal.

DIALOGO IIII.
EN QVE SE TRATA DE
los antojos Viſorios, ò cañones con que ſe alcança à ver à diſtancia de muchas leguas.

Figure 13. Benito Daza de Valdés. Uso de los antojos (Seville: Diego Perez, 1623) Section headings (65r, 79r, 90 v; facs. 237, 244, 250)

The additional qualification as the "antojos visorios" or "cañones" clearly distinguishes the object from the one encountered on previous occasions, which is, at most, accompanied by the substance of the lens ("de vidro"/of glass, or "de cristal"/of crystal). The canon-like device is also not affiliated with ailments, but rather, with gazing at that which is far away ("distancia de muchas leguas"). Unlike the spectacles, the telescope is never cited as an instrument of correction, but rather, as one that allows the individual to see things that are at a distance and inaccessible to the naked eye. As eager townspeople gather around the "Maestro" or Optometrist and his new telescopes, they compare what they see through the optical device with what they see (or don't see) with their own eyes, expressing both awe and disbelief. The Maestro tells his guests that he has pointed the device to the city of Carmona, which is "at least six leagues away," and the Doctor who looks through the eyepiece describes the castle and the tower spire – and even the number of birds that are gathered on it. Other telescopes of different lengths point to different scenes at different distances, and the Maestro and his guests discuss observations of the yellow socks of a man climbing a hill or the people in the town square (pp. 172-1732), and even that of the moon's craters (173),[25] recalling the promise made by Galileo in his letter to Leonardo Donato,[26] and affirming the Tuscan's claims in his *Sidereus Nuncius*. What follows in the dialogue is an explanation of how the telescope functions, of why it cannot magnify stars, of how one could build various types of telescopes, and of various experiments conducted by

[25] Ibid, 172.

[26] "(…) et parimente potendosi in terra scorpire dentro alle piazze, alloggiamenti et ripari dell'inimico da qualche eminenza benchè lontana, o pure anco nella campagna aperta vedere et particolarmente distinguere, con nostro grandissimo vantaggio, ogni suo moto et preparamento," Galileo to Leonardo Donato. Letter 228, 24 August 1609, in *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 10, 251.

the Maestro using these devices. Unlike the previous three dialogues, the central concern here, then, is not one of correction, but one of extension. "Correction" and "extension" therefore correspond to two distinct instruments, the eyeglasses and the telescope, respectively. With "antojos" used exclusively for eyeglasses and "visorio" for the telescope, Valdes even assigns a different name to each of the instruments, delineating two distinct objects with distinct functions. This specificity regarding the object's identity, as we shall soon see, is effaced or blurred in the Italian polemics, where the word "occhiale" encompasses both meanings, and therefore problematizes the intended function.

Establishing the instrument's identity becomes all the more important because the functions of "correction" and "extension" – and their representative instruments – also correspond to two theoretical models with respect to seeing and knowing.

Table 1. Correction vs. Extension

CORRECTION	EXTENSION
- the problem originates in the viewing subject or beholder, who suffers from *defective* vision	- the problem originates in the object, which lies beyond the grasp of *normal* human vision
- the problem is unique to the *individual* viewing subject who has a particular visual ailment	- the problem is common to *all* viewing subjects
- the object being viewed is visible and readily accessible to, and therefore *knowable* by, the norm, but not to the individual subject with flawed vision	- the object is hardly visible or altogether invisible, and therefore *unknown* in part or in its entirety, to all viewing subects

Underlying the difference between "correction" and "extension" is the fundamental opposition between a defective vision and a normal one. From this, we infer that the natural eye, and consequently, the viewing subject, are governed by certain standards, that is, that which a healthy eye should be able to see. Conceived otherwise, the inability to perceive an object that can be observed and known by the norm signals a visual ailment. In contrast, an object that remains unknown because of its size or distance is one that challenges the limits of natural vision. Where there exists a discrepancy between the vision of an individual and that of the norm, corrective glasses restore the eyes to the accepted standard of health. The telescope, on the other hand, transcends the boundaries of the norm, creating an overture upon a new field of vision and exposing the eye

to entirely new objects of knowledge. Both instruments supplement the natural eye, albeit in different ways: where the spectacles perform a normative function, the telescope performs a super-normative one.

In the literary polemics, the attribution of an instrument to a given viewing subject is based on a number of assumptions, or rather, expectations concerning the body of knowledge available to and possessed by a given individual or group. It is also deeply intertwined with the individual writers' definition of a norm and their adherence to it. Thinking about the normative or super-normative functions of the device invites us to ask a number of questions: (1) Is the critic bringing something *new* to the attention of the reader, an interpretation or a piece of information that would have completely escaped him/her otherwise? (2) Is the critic bringing something *new* to the attention of the reader that *clarifies* and *revises* a previous understanding because the matter is now being looked at more closely and in greater detail? (3) And finally, is the critic *correcting* a deviation from an *established* set of guidelines or from elements considered to be common knowledge? The chapters that follow examine the nuances of these dynamics much more thoroughly, but those who tend to privilege the use of instruments, or those who adopt an "instrumentalized" mode of evaluating *L'Adone* and *Le Cid*, are those who wish to criticize the work and undermine its success. In their analyses, or better yet, endless scrutiny, of the texts, the critics seem to suggest that if the readers come to have some familiarity with the proper poetic conventions, then they will abandon their initial favorable impressions and they, too, will see the work as a fundamentally flawed piece of literature. In other words, the lens functions as a telescope that extends the vision of the reader beyond what he or she is expected to know, exposing him or her to new knowledge (the conventions of poetry), and giving him or her the tools to distinguish between the appealing appearance of the work they behold and its true, flawed, form. In turn, the critics' comments and lens, placed before the eyes of the authors of the works in questions, acts as a pair of corrective spectacles in an effort to draw attention to the defect, and in order to recalibrate it according to the literary norms from which it has deviated.

The Eye & the Instrument

Given the eye's limitations and potential defects, we may be inclined to think that the instrument – be it a pair of glasses or a telescope – is superior to the eye. If we turn again to Valdes, with the exception of

the fourth dialogue on the telescope, the entire book is dedicated to examining the various ailments of the eye and how to treat them. In the fourth dialogue, "vista" (natural sight) and "visorio" (the telescope) continue to be contrasted, with one interlocutor claiming that "it is a wonderful thing to be able to see with a telescope that which cannot be seen with the naked eye – especially because you can see more comfortably and more clearly."[27] His optometry book seems only to tilt the scale in favor of the instrument, though if we look to Kepler and Galileo, we see two different dynamics. Both Kepler and Galileo endorse the role of vision in the acquisition of knowledge, though in strikingly different ways and for different reasons, the details of which are thoroughly examined by Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris in their collaborative study. The contrast, however, is elegantly summarized as such:

> Kepler's optics dictated that all vision is mediated, hence the instrument is no worse than the eye. Galileo, unperturbed by Kepler's careful optical and epistemological deliberations, is significantly more radical in his stand for the instrument: the *eye* mediates and distorts; the instrument provides the standard of trustworthy perception against which the eye should be judged. In a sense, Galileo reintroduces the distinction between artificial and natural vision that Kepler labored to abolish, reversing the epistemological hierarchy. The two ways of observation, he is arguing, provide data of entirely different value, not to be conflated or compared.[28]

Kepler did not denounce the instrument, though the mathematical properties of light allowed for the equation of the natural eye and the instrument and reinstated the eye's trustworthiness in the acquisition of knowledge while playing a vital role in the transformation of optics from the science of vision to that of light.[29] Similarly, we may consider the attitude of a figure like Grassi who, like Kepler, acknowledged the advantages of the telescope, but who also echoed the Jesuits who placed their faith in the evidence provided by the naked eye.[30] Galileo, instead, privileged the instrument at the expense of the eye, which as we have seen, has a restricted field and is also vulnerable to illness and degradation over time. The instrument, constructed based on mathematical principles, is not prone to these ailments, and it can surpass the natural

[27] Valdes, *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 173.
[28] Chen-Morris and Gal, *Baroque Science*, 93.

[29] "Kepler turned optics into a mathematical-physical study of the production of images by light. Light optics dissolved the dichotomy between instrument and eye, mediated and directed observation, and set the stage of the a new type of observation," ibid., 20.

[30] For Grassi and the Jesuits, the instrument "does not change the principal onus of evidence and argument. This lies, always, with what 'could be observed without any instrument and by observation with the unaided eye'," ibid., 91.

organ in the distances it perceives and the accuracy with which it perceives them. What we find then, are different outlooks with regard to the dynamic between the natural eye and the instrumentalized one.

The way in which each of the two modes of vision participates in the acquisition of knowledge also reflects the transformation in the nature of "experience" itself. Peter Dear's excellent study paints a convincing picture of how the sixteenth-century idea of *experience*, as evidence available to a group as "a universal statement of fact," [31] gradually morphs into the new seventeenth-century *experiment*, more individual and exclusive, which in turn must be shared by the collective to be made into "experience." Continuing Dear's logic, which posits the "evident phenomena" of experience against the "constructed observation" and therefore private knowledge of privileged individuals who possess the means to realize such experiments, we may see here a parallel with the natural eye's perception of an object versus the "constructed observation" of the instrumentalized eye, aided by a telescope. This is illustrated in one particular exchange between two of the characters in Valdés's fourth dialogue about the telescope. As the Doctor looks through the telescope that the Optometrist had pointed to the city of Carmona, he describes in detail everything that appears before his eyes. Another guest, Julian, who has not yet used the instrument, cannot believe it:

> *Julian*: Are you telling us the truth, doctor? I can't see Carmona at all with my own eyes ("con mi vista").
> *Doctor*: Look through this telescope ("este visorio") and you will see if I'm joking.
> *Julian*: It is true that I see a piece of a tower and some parapets – but I could not swear that they are those of Carmona.
> *Doctor*: It's obvious that you have not been there because you don't recognize what you're looking at.[32]

The Doctor's enhanced telescopic vision grants him access to knowledge that is not available to the norm, and the results of his experiment – the detailed landscape of Carmona – differs greatly from the collective experience, embodied in the character of Julian, who does not possess this same privilege when it comes to both the body of knowledge and the means by which it is acquired. When the Doctor invites Julian to take a look for himself, he works to transform his personal experiment into a collective experience. And yet, Julian's reaction – his ability to see what the Doctor sees without being able to identify it – and the Doctor's response

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[31] Peter Dear, "Jesuit Mathematical Science and the Reconstitution of Experience in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 18, no. 2 (1987) 141.
[32] Valdes, *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 172.

expose the discrepancy between the knowledge of the two, thus establishing a hierarchy between them, and situating the Doctor in the position of guide or mentor, one who helps train the eye of the novice observer.

In the literary polemics, the judgement of the critic, founded on analysis and convention, is diametrically opposed to that of the public, based on an affective and natural response, and this divide mimics the two visual (natural vs. instrumentalized) and empirical modes (experience vs. experiment). The pages that follow will show how the mechanisms of vision are adapted and adopted by the various agents participating in the literary debates around *L'Adone* and *Le Cid*, and how the epistemological function of these visual means comes to fulfill an aesthetic function as well. We shall discover that the relationship between the natural eye and the instrument, especially with regard to defining or redefining normative literary practice and the criteria by which the merits of a work are to be determined, is a most fitting representation of the ongoing development of a diverse critical body, comprised of individual critics, of average readers and spectators, as well as official institutions.

Chapter 7.
The Critical Occhiale:
Lenses, Readers, and Critics in the Polemics around Marino's *L'Adone*

Depravatum confpicillum arguit oculum.[1]

When we think of optics and poetics in seventeenth-century Italy, Giambattista Marino's *L'Adone* (1623) and Emanuele Tesauro's *Cannocchiale aristotelico* (1654, and then in 1670) mark two fundamental moments in the integration of the telescope into literature. Marino, one of the key figures of the Italian Baroque and the literary vanguard, master of the metaphor and of the *meraviglia*, applauded the "ammirabile stromento" and Galileo in the tenth canto of his poem.[2] In the opening apostrophe, the Poet evokes and implores Urania, the muse of astronomy and astrology:

> Movi la penna mia, tu che'l ciel movi
> E detta a novo stil concetti novi. (X.2.7-8)

New style, new content, but also, new networks of ideas: Marino expresses a clear desire to establish his own style as something new, and the "concetti novi" of which he writes are the baroque metaphor, one of the defining elements of the literature of the Seicento, and which Tesauro later formalizes and theorizes in his *Cannocchiale*. The "concetto" is essentially a reconceptualization of the metaphor, an exercise in wit and imagination, one that aims to test the elasticity of the human mind. Upsetting and surpassing the transparent relationship that joins tenor and vehicle to create links between the most distant of objects, the "concetto" exploits the richness of words and enriches them in turn by creating new associations with things; and in so doing, it tests the *ingegno* of the reader, for only those of the most astute intellect can understand and appreciate these connections.[3] If Tesauro elects to make the telescope the emblem of his treatise, the very vehicle of the metaphor, it is precisely because of the instrument's ability to draw near distant entities, even or especially if they lie beyond the field of natural vision. That Marino's declaration or request be made before

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[1] Lodovico Aprosio, *L'occhiale stritolato di Scipio Glareano per risposta al Signor Cavalier Tommaso Stigliani* (Venice: Taddeo Pavoni, 1642), 183. All citations are from this edition.

[2] Giambattista Marino, *L'Adone*, ed. Giovanni Pozzi (Milan: Adelphi, 1988), X.42.3.

[3] See Yves Hersant's introduction to the translation and commentary of selected exerpts from the *Cannocchiale aristotelico* in his *La Métaphore baroque: D'Aristote à Tesauro* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000). Hersant also provides a valuable glossary of terms, which includes definitions of "acutezza" (173), "concetto" (178-179), and "ingegno" (187-190).

Urania, and that it appear in the canto that also celebrates Galileo, his instrument, and the telescopic observations, is far from coincidence. Galileo and his findings are described in a most appropriate setting, as Adonis, guided by Mercury, journeys to the moon. Against the lunar backdrop, Mercury speaks of a future time, in which the mysteries about the moon's surface and its dark spots shall be revealed, a time in which:

> mercé d'un ammirabile stromento
> per cui ciò ch'è lontan vicino appare
> e, con un occhio chiuso e l'altro intento
> specolando ciascun l'orbe lunare,
> scorciar potrà lunghissimi intervalli
> per un picciol cannone e duo cristalli. (X.42.3-8)

The passage's prophetic tone is reminiscent of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, where the journey of Christopher Columbus and the discovery of the New World are anticipated. In fact, Marino draws an explicit comparison between the terrestrial and celestial discoveries, though he is quick to assert Galileo's superiority. Columbus may have discovered, "al basso mondo (…) novo cielo e nova terra" (X.45.3-4), but Galileo, with the aid of his "organo celeste" (X.46.2) will discover "novi luci e nove cose" (X.45.8).[4] If Columbus moved beyond the pillars of Hercules, Galileo will move beyond the lunar sphere, thus expanding the boundaries of the natural world itself and allowing us to rethink what is knowable.[5] Given Marino's encyclopedic ambitions in his poem, as well as his call for a new kind of poetry, the figure of Galileo and his accomplishments seem to offer a promising model on both epistemological and aesthetic levels. "Galileo," writes Thomas E. Mussio, "becomes the figure through which Marino begins to resolve the problem of how to investigate the unknown without infringing upon the divine. Instead of the solution given by Dante – of knowledge as received through divine revelation – Marino has Galileo actively discovering new things in the

[4] Marino had already expressed similar ideas in similar terms in the poetic portrait of Galileo in his *Galeria* (Milan: Giovanni Battista Bidelli, 1620), in which he compared the mathematician to Jason and Christopher Columbus, deeming him superior to his two predecessors in matters of exploration. The "novo Ciel, nova terra, e novo impero" of terrestrial explorations are overshadowed by Galileo's discoveries of "novi orbi, novi lumi, e novi moti" (193).

[5] "The implied analogy between Columbus and Jason recalls the violence that the epic hero typically provokes in his quest and the danger to which he exposes his companions. Galileo becomes a new type of epic hero for Marino, who rather than crossing the boundaries between the natural and supernatural, is capable of gently pushing back the natural boundaries," Thomas E. Mussio, "Galileo, the New Endymion: Progress and Knowledge in G. B. Marino's *Adone*," *Italian Quarterly* 38, no. 147-148 (2001), 24.

natural world."[6] Though Mussio acknowledges that the analogy between the two men is not perfect, he is correct to say that the consequences of Galileo's observations also appeal to Marino because of their potential significance for poetry: "Despite what may be seen as the radically undisciplined nature of Marino's poem, Marino is like Galileo in one important way – he prefers to see his activity as poet as introducing to the world, as inventors and discoverers do, 'nove cose'."[7] The new scientific instrument and the knowledge that it produces, along with the new visual experience and its consequences, are thus seen as a befitting means to talk about poetic innovation, though it is precisely this insistence on innovation that inspires Stigliani to write his *Occhiale* and to use the lens to a different end.

If Marino sought to transform the face of Seicento poetry, Stigliani aimed to preserve and reinforce the ideas of the Cinquecento. Marino, one of the most influential literary personalities of the early decades of the seventeenth century, passed away two years prior to the *Occhiale*'s publication, so when the poet and writer from Matera published his *Dello occhiale opera difensiva* in 1627,[8] the rival against whom he directed his criticism was no longer in a position to defend himself. "Poema eroico," "romanzo," "poème de la paix," "poema amoroso"[9]: whatever its label, Marino's *L'Adone* (1623), which embeds the tale of the amorous adventures and misadventures of Venus and Adonis in a variety of digressions colored by encyclopaedic ambitions, represents a drastic departure from the prized poetics of the previous century for Stigliani and for all those who, for centuries to come, would read the poem with a classicizing eye. Indeed, the literary landscape of seventeenth-century Italy is defined by these two diverging and conflictual tendencies: one normative, and the other experimental.

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[6] Mussio, "Galileo, the New Endymion," 22. In his study, Mussio contrasts Galileo with other figures evoked over the course of the poem, like Acteon or Paris, whose gaze is marred by desire when it falls upon the female figure. If Galileo, like Endymion, is able to freely look upon and admire the moon, it is because his gaze is characterized by disinterested observation and "cool objectivity" (23).

[7] Ibid., 24.

[8] Stigliani, *Occhiale*.

[9] These were terms used by Stigliani, Marino, Jean Chapelain, and Scipione Errico respectively to identify the genre of the *Adone*.

Already in the Cinquecento, writers found themselves between old and new forms as they tried to situate themselves in relation to the works of the ancients.[10] As they turned to the models of Antiquity for rules with respect to known genres, which then became the criteria by which works were judged and evaluated, they also struggled with those emerging forms and genres that were not found in the classical sources. The subordination of poetry to moral philosophy that is described by Larry Norman with regard to the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* was also the aspiration in sixteenth-century Italy, with the emphasis on the moral end of poetry, its priority to first teach, then move, and lastly, delight.[11] As Bernard Weinberg describes in his study on literary criticism during this period, the search for criteria and the adherence to these standards, be they derived from antiquity or recently established, was deeply entrenched in the cinquecento mentality, "hence *the normative and perceptive quality* of much of the critical writing in the period."[12] Where the Cinquecento was characterized by a need for rules and order, the early Seicento was marked by the transgression of those rules,[13] a craving for freedom and creativity, even if the later decades would mark a return to order. The new poetry of the Seicento was marked by experimentation and a desire for complete independence from past traditions, which the literary scholar Paolo Procaccioli elegantly describes as "l'espressione di un bisogno irrefrenabile di novità dopo le lunghe stagioni del culto della tradizione imposto dal classicismo." [14] This implied the rejection of rhetoric as an essential and rigid organizing element for

[10] Sixteenth-century Italy also witnessed its fair share of polemics Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, Guarini's *Il pastor fido* to name just a few, and Bernard Weinberg's two-volume study offers incredibly valuable insight into the debates around literary theory and practice during that time period. See *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

[11] See Norma, *The Shock of the Ancients*, 6. For the subordination of poetry to moral philosophy, see Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 798. For the desired effect of poetry on the audience, see ibid., 805.

[12] Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 806, emphasis mine.

[13] "All'oggettività subentrò la soggettività, alla regola la sua trasgressione, alla misura la dismisura, all'armonioso e decoroso il bizzarro, al serio il ludico, alla semplicità l'artificio, alla quiete il movimento e anzi la mutabilità continua, al virtuosismo dell'eleganza e della raffinatezza quello della stravaganza, alla ricerca dell'esemplarità universale la proposta dell'originalità individuale, al rapporto privilegiato con gli autori e i testi del passato quello con lettori chiamati a decodificare una pagina spesso ermetica, all'ampiezza descrittiva e argomentativa la brevità icastica." Paolo Procaccioli, "La discussione delle regole polemiche e trattati di letteratura e d'arte," in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, eds. Nino Borsellino and Walter Pedullà, vol.6, *Il secolo barocco, arte e scienza del Seicento* (Milan: F. Motta, 1999), 448.

[14] Ibid., 460.

stylistic and moral ends, an overturning of the Cinquecento hierarchy that saw the dominance of a rhetorical approach over a poetical one.[15]

These were the ideals that Stigliani was determined to preserve and which Marino rebelliously challenged, and what was, at its inception, fueled by the personal rivalry between Stigliani and Marino thus grew into the polemic around the *Adone* and provided the fertile grounds for a more general theorization of Seicento poetics.[16] Indeed, scholars often cite the *Occhiale* as signaling the beginning of the trajectory that saw the unfurling of tensions between baroque and classical tendencies, with Tesuaro's C*annocchiale* marking the apogee of the former and the Academia degli Arcadi announcing the triumph of the latter in the waning decades of the century.[17] It therefore comes as little surprise if scholars of the polemic and of the "Occhiale" texts have privileged an analysis that seeks to define and understand the unique positions of each of the authors within the shifting literary landscape. Such contributions are highly valuable to the study and appreciation of the individual writers and to the painting of a more comprehensive picture of how Seicento thinkers envisioned the art of literature. The appeal of this particular critical path, however, has led scholars to overlook the curious title of Stigliani's work and the uses of "occhiale" in the titles and texts of those who responded to his scathing commentary.[18]

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[15] Ibid., 447. For the dynamic between rhetorical and poetic approaches in sixteenth-century Italian literature, see Weinberg, *History of Criticism,* 806.

[16] "La polemica personale contro il Marino s'è risolta così interamente in una più seria polemica contro il gusto generale del secolo," Franco Croce, "La critica dei barocchi moderati," in *Tre momenti del barocco letterario italiano* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1966), 107. This sentiment is echoed by Pierantonio Frare, "La nuova critica della meravigliosa acutezza," in *Storia della critica letteraria in Italia*, ed. Giorgio Baroni (Turin: UTET libreria, 1997), 246. For the rivalry between Marino and Stigliani, see Emilio Russo, *Studi su Tasso e Marino* (Rome: Antenore, 2005), esp. ch. 3-5 and accompanying notes; Croce, "La critica dei barocchi moderati," 96-98.

[17] For an overview of the transformation of the *Adone* polemic and the development of ideas about poetics over the course of the seventeenth century, see Franco Croce's indispensable essay, "La critica dei barocchi moderati," esp. 95-220. Also see Frare, "La nuova critica," 223-277. On the decline of the Baroque and the attitudes toward Seicento literature that led to the classicizing Accademia degli Arcadi, see Vernon Hyde Minor, "Cattivo gusto and some aspects of baroque rhetoric," in *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 4-25. For a summary of the reception and legacy of Seicento, and in particular, "baroque" literature in Italy, starting in the late seventeenth century and continuing into the twentieth, see Giovanni Getto, "La polemica sul barocco," in *Letteratura e critica nel tempo* (Milan: C. Marzorati, 1954), 131-218.

[18] For the positions adopted by Stigliani, Aleandro, Errico, Villani, and Aprosio, see Ottavio Besomi, "Tommaso Stigliani: tra parodia e critica," *Biblioteca dell'*'Archivum Romanicum', 11 (1973): 3-117; Croce, "La critica dei barocchi moderati," 108 (Errico), 109 (Aleandro), and 115-128 (Villani); Frare, "La nuova critica," 242 (Aleandro), 243-244 (Villani), 245-247 (Errico); Susanna N. Peters, "Metaphor and Meraviglia – Tradition and Innovation in *Adone* of G.B.

The lenticular device that appears in the *Adone* as the means of furthering human knowledge and promoting poetic exploration and discovery beyond prescribed rules undergoes a number of alterations under Stigliani's pen. Stigliani himself was no stranger to Galileo and to the new optical instrument, having been made responsible for the editing of Galileo's *Il Saggiatore* (*The Assayer*) of 1623,[19] and he continues to exploit the object as an instrument of extension in his own *Occhiale* to unveil new knowledge about his rival's flawed poem. Far from embracing the "occhiale's" potential in defining a new path for poetry, however, he uses it as a corrective mechanism to uphold the norm. If we recall from the previous chapter, the functions of "extension" and "correction" correspond to the telescope and the spectacles respectively, and unfolding the full meaning of the word "occhiale" shall be our first point of investigation. The use of the lenticular instrument did not end with Stigliani, for those who responded to him recognized in it a powerful image to be exploited. If Marino was unable to defend himself against Stigliani's allegations of plagiarism or his attacks on every aspect of the *Adone*'s form and content, his influence extended well beyond the grave as friends and supporters adopted this role in their responses to the *Occhiale* over the two decades that followed its publication. The official response of the Marinisti to Stigliani's criticism came from the poet Girolamo Aleandro (1575-1629), who wrote his *Difesa dell'Adone* (1629) at the behest of a fellow Marinist poet and member of the Accademia dei Lincei, the Bolognese Claudio Achillini.[20] The same year, another Marinist, Scipione Errico (1592-1670) from Messina, responded with his own *Occhiale appannato* in support of the Neapolitan poet, written as a dialogue between a certain Gaspare Trissino and Carlo Bartolomeo Arbora.[21] A

Marino," *Lingua e stile* 7 (1972), 322-223, 331; Giorgio Santangelo, *Scipione Errico critico e poeta del Seicento* (Palermo: U. Manfredi, 1970).

[19] "Cesarini had commissioned Stigliani to see Galileo's *Saggiatore* through the press in Rome in 1623. When it appeared, Galileo discovered to his amazement that Stigliani had inserted his own name into the text. The great astronomer had originally claimed that philosophers could leaven their treatises with poetic delights, just as poets could sow scientific speculations in their poems, 'come tra i nostril antichi fece Dante nella sua *Commedia*, e come tra' moderni ha fatto il Cavalier Stigliani nel suo *mondo Nuovo*'!" Elizabeth Cropper, "Novelty, Translation, Theft: Controversy in the 1620s," in *The Domenichino Affair: Novelty, Imitation, and Theft in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 167.

[20] Girolamo Aleandro, *Difesa dell'Adone* (Venice: Giacomo Scaglia, 1629). All citations are taken from this edition.

[21] Scipione Errico. *L'occhiale appannato dialogo di Scipione Herrico nel quale si difende l'Adone del Cavalier Gio.Battista Marino, contra l'Occhiale del Cavalier Fra Tommaso Stigliano* (Messina: Gio.Franc. Biano, 1629). All references from the *Occhiale appannato* are taken from this edition.

more moderate commentary, *L'uccellatura di Vincenzo Foresi*, was published in 1630 by the poet and critic Nicola Villani (1590-1636) under a pseudonym,[22] and in 1642, Lodovico (Angelo) Aprosio (1607-1681), whose critical repertory had already included Stigliani and his works, released his *Occhiale stritolato*. The respondents adapted the lens to their positions regarding the poem and its critique, and they unanimously decried Stigliani's poor taste and cowardly act, dismissed its petty observations and misguided interpretations as dangerous and senseless distortions, and they denounced Stigliani's pursuit of a vendetta under the guise of a genuine critical assessment. This transformation, too, will be examined in these pages.

While some critics have acknowledged the significance of the optical references against the backdrop of contemporary visual technologies, namely the widespread use of and disagreements surrounding Galileo's telescope, their remarks neglect the full extent of the instrument's implications. In his study on Scipione Errico, the literary historian and critic Giorgio Santangelo recognizes the poet's contribution to the debate around the *Adone*, and presents Errico as a champion of the Moderns, not only because of his support for Marino, but because of his awareness of and esteem for novelty, be it in literature or science. The scholar may applaud Errico's "recupero, in senso scientifico, di certi termini quale, per dare un esempio, la parola *occhiale* ch'è quasi emblematica della nuova scienza del secolo,"[23] but he fails to examine this alliance in greater depth. In fact, a closer consideration would reveal that Errico, while making reference to the new technology, does so only to reject it. In a more recent article, the art historian Maria H. Loh, who positions her argument against the Baxendallian period-eye in order to "attend to the idea of a culturally and group-specific lens or, more appropriately (…) telescope,"[24] engages more meaningfully with the consequences of the instrument in the visual and literary realms, though her remarks about the "Occhiale" authors also remain cursory.[25] Even

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[22] Nicola Villani, *L'uccellatura di Vincenzo Foresi all'Occhiale del Cavaliere Fra Tomaso Stigliani contro l'Adone del Cavalier Gio: Battista Marini, e alla difesa di Girolamo Aleandro* (Venice: Antonio Pinelli, 1630). All references from the *Uccellatura* are taken from this edition.

[23] Santangelo, *Scipione Errico*, 99-100.

[24] Maria H. Loh, "New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Baroque Practice and Theory," *The Art Bulletin*, 86, no. 3 (2004), 478.

[25] "Through his critical loupe, Stigliani observed four different areas in which *L'Adone* failed (….) Aleandro wondered whether Stigliani's 'telescope' might not need adjusting, and Scipione Herrico entitled his response *The Blurry Telescope* (*L'occhiale appanto*) to ridicule Stigliani's pedantic optic, " (ibid., 497). Similar observations are made by Jonathan Unglaub,

Andrea Battistini's book *Galileo e i gesuiti: miti letterari e retorica della scienza*,[26] which otherwise convincingly transposes the repercussions of Galileo's instrument and observations to literature and problematizes the relationship between the New Science and the novel, falls short. In his explanation of the invention's role in the democratization of knowledge, and its affinity with the human "ingegno," he arrives at the following conclusion:

> Il cannocchiale, insomma, si comportava proprio come l'ingegno, la prerogativa umana di avvicinare cose lontane. Dopo il precedente dell'*Occhiale* di Tommaso Stigliani, che si valse della metafora ottica per stroncare l'*Adone*, seguito a breve distanza, con intenti apologetici, dall'*Occhiale appannato* di Scipione Errico, dall'*Antiocchiale* di Agostino Lampugnani e dall'*Occhiale stritolato* di Angelico Aprosio, scese in campo il più acuto ingegno barroco, Emanuele Tesauro, con il suo *Cannocchiale aristotelico* (…).[27]

The mechanism of the optical device that allows for the rapprochement of distant objects certainly befits the skilled mind and wit of the individual, and as such, holds true for Marino, and later, Tesauro and his theoretical treatise. To include Stigliani and the authors of the responding "occhiale" texts in the same category, however, is rather hasty and not entirely accurate, especially as there is no further treatment of these texts in Battistini's study to justify or elucidate this inclusion.[28] Tesauro's *Cannocchiale* engages in a cerebral exercise that establishes connections where *a priori* none exists. Stigliani's *Occhiale* no doubt participates in expanding the human mind by bringing new knowledge to the attention of his reader, though, as we shall soon discover, it has little to do with the enhancement of imaginative operations. As for the respondents, their overwhelmingly negative reception of the instrument may be specific to the "occhiale stiglianesco," which they refute unanimously, but they never cast the instrument in a positive light, nor do they offer an alternative that would earn them a place in the company of a Marino or a Tesauro whose attitudes toward the device are favorable.

"Poussin, Marino, and Painting in the Ovidian Age," in *Poussin and the Poetics of Painting: Pictorial Narrative and the Legacy of Tasso* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135, 137.

[26] Andrea Battistini, *Galileo e i gesuiti: miti letterari e retorica della scienza* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2000).

[27] Ibid., 36.

[28] In his examination of the differences between the literature of the second half of the Cinquecento and that of the Seicento, Paolo Procaccioli also highlights the filation of the title of Tesauro's treatise and those of the Occhiale texts without studying the implications of those instruments. "La discussione delle regole," 454.

Despite their varying degrees of engagement with the New Science, these assessments of the "Occhiale" texts are all essentially founded on a rather dangerous presumption, namely that the instrument in question, in the works of Stigliani and his respondents, is uniquely a telescope. This chapter therefore begins by dismantling this assumption, which has eclipsed a more exhaustive understanding of the object's significance. By demonstrating that the "occhiale" is dual and hybrid, that it is a telescope as well as a pair of spectacles, we are then able to glean a number of theoretical considerations that recall the familiar opposition between the natural and the instrumentalized eye. In turn, these differences in vision and the differing approaches toward vision aids allow us to read the texts around the *Adone* polemic in a new way, where the focus is no longer on the transformation of Seicento poetics, but rather, on the dynamics between author, reader, and critic.

"Occhiale": A Hybrid Instrument

If the instrument evoked in the tenth canto of Marino's *Adone* and used as the emblem of Tesauro's *Cannocchiale* is unmistakably a telescope, the identity of the "occhiale" in Stigliani's title and in the works of his respondents is not as easily determined. For while the historical context of the early decades of the seventeenth century may privilege the telescope, the word embodies at once the new invention and its thirteenth-century relative, the spectacles, even if they are more commonly transcribed as the plural "occhial*i*" in the Italian. Ignoring this second possibility, the studies that evoke the texts in the "Occhiale" debates exclusively privilege the modern instrument. The fact that the texts are contemporaries of the telescope and Galileo's celestial observations prompts an immediate link and partially rationalizes why scholars have gravitated toward the more recent invention.[29] Moreover, this interpretation of the word is philologically accurate and grounded in valid arguments, though as no scholarship has investigated the full implication of the ocular references in these texts within the historico-scientific framework of the visual theories and

[29] Anglophone scholars who have studied the *Occhiale* texts have, to my knowledge, unanimously translated the word as "spyglass" or "telescope". We find "*Dello occhiale opera difensiva* (*The Spyglass, a Defensive Work*, 1627)," "*Occhiale Appannato* (*Tarnished Spyglass*, 1629)," "*Antiocchiale* (*Anti-spyglass*, 1629)," and "*Occhiale stritolato* (*Smashed Spyglass*, 1642)," in Crystal Hall, "Galileo, Poetry, and Patronage: Giulio Strozzi's *Venetia edificata* and the Place of Galileo in Seventeenth-Century Italian Poetry," *Renaissance Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2013), 1326; "*The Telescope* (*Dello occhiale*)" and "*The Blurry Telescope* (*L'occhiale appanto*)" in Loh, "New and Improved," 497; a reference to Stigliani's instrument as a "spyglass" in Unglaub, "Poussin, Marino, and Painting," 135, 137.

technologies, no one has considered the second possibility of "spectacles." To unquestionably settle on "spyglass" or "telescope" would be to eclipse an entire dimension of the narrative and to omit a theoretically significant component of this debate, for as we saw in the opening chapter of this section, the two instruments perform distinct functions and therefore correspond to two different models of seeing and knowing with respect to an established norm. As the texts of the *Adone* polemic will demonstrate, the word oscillates between the two vision aids, at times to delineate the function specific to one instrument, while in other instances, it conflates both instruments and reveals a hybrid identity.

It is true that "occhiale" was Galileo's preferred word for his instrument when he communicated in the vernacular, though other terms or qualifiers ("cannone," "occhiale di lunga vista") were also employed. The word "telescopium," while coined in 1611,[30] was not nearly as widespread, and one has only to review Galileo's letters to remark his preference for the existing "occhiale," notwithstanding the confusion that it may cause.[31] The application of the word by Galileo and those in his circle undoubtedly attests to its broad and contemporary understanding as "telescope," and could in many ways justify the interpretations by today's scholars. We must nonetheless remember that this meaning existed alongside one with much deeper roots, thus challenging the homogenous reading of the scholars who have favored the spyglass and telescope in their treatment of the texts that participate in the "Occhiale" debates. In effect, there is ample evidence of the word being used in the singular to designate spectacles, both before and after the telescope's invention. We find this in dictionaries, such as that of the Accademia della Crusca – official proponent and promoter of the Tuscan tongue – or Jean Nicot's 1609 *Le Thresor des trois langues, espagnoles, Françoise et italienne*;[32] in works of

[30] "Galileo does not call his instrument *telescopio* or *Telescopium* in his earlier letters and pamphlets. *Mio occhiale*, which he uses here, is a favorite of his; elsewhere he uses *perspicillium; telescopio* seems to have been first used by him in a letter on September 1, 1611," Marjorie Nicolson, "The Telescope and Imagination," *Modern Philology* 32, no.3 (1935), 242n28. Also see Edward Rosen, *The Naming of the Telescope* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1947), 3-5. In the Italian translation of the *Sidereus nuncius*, the notes also explain that "in italiano Galileo utilizzava *occhiale*, parola che indicava le lenti o gli occhiali da lettura che erano fabbricati sull'isola di Murano, tuttuora famosa per la lavorazione del vetro," Galileo Galileo, *Sidereus Nuncius ovvero Avviso Sidereo*, trans. Tiziana Bascelli (Venice: Marcianum Press, 2009) 75n6.

[31] See Galileo, *Opere*, esp. vols. 10 and 11. The third edition of the *Crusca*'s dictionary also admits the new instrument under the definition of "occhiale". [31] *Lessicografia della Crusca in rete*, s.v. "occhiale," 3rd ed.

[32] *Lessicografia della Crusca in rete*, s.v. "occhiale," 1st and 2nd ed. The entry itself is in the singular, even when a search is conducted for the plural, and it defines the word as "strumento di cristallo, o di vetro, che si tiene davanti agli occhj, per aiutar la vista. Lat. *specillum*, *conspicilium*." A search for the word "occhiale" in both the first and second editions, of 1612

fiction and non-fiction as instruments associated with weak eyesight, age, or reading;[33] and in texts with a religious or moral tenor,[34] used as mechanisms of correction or distortion. In addition to supporting the claim about the polyvalence of the word "occhiale," all the more so in the texts published prior to 1609 and in which the meaning is undisputedly "spectacles," these texts, and those of the latter category in particular, also demonstrate the ways in which the occhiale-as-spectacles comes to serve as a corrective measure or how it is denounced for its distortive properties. Similarly, in the polemic around the *Adone*, we will find instances in which the "occhiale" designates a pair of glasses, and the division between Stigliani and his respondents is expressed through the position they adopt with respect to the value of the spectacles as helpful or harmful. To overlook the ambiguity of "occhiale" would therefore be to neglect its greatest asset, for multiplicity

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and 1623 respectively, yields identical results. The two examples that follow both apply the word in the plural and clearly designate eyeglasses, and they are as follows: "Non è ancora venti anni, che si trovò l'arte di fare gli *occhiali*, che fanno veder bene, che è una delle migliori arti, e delle più necessarie, che 'l Mondo abbia," and "E disse dove appicchi tu gli *occhiali*, O come fiuti tu l'anno le rose ?" (ibid., emphasis mine). The date of the first edition follows the invention of the Dutch telescope and, if we are to look to the Italian peninsula, Galileo's enhancements of the instrument. We also note that the Latin words used in the definitions are "specillum" or "conspicilium," and not "perspecillum," the word employed by Galileo to designate the telescope in the original *Sidereus nuncius* (Venice, 1610). The word also appears in the singular in Jean Nicot's trilingual dictionary: "Occhiale: strumento di vetro che si tiene davanti a gli occhi per aiutar la vista, *lunette.antojo*," *Le Thresor des trois langues, francoise, italienne, et espagnole* (Geneva: Phlippe Albert & Alexandre Pernet, 1609), 309. An almost identical definition appears in Adriano Politi's *Dittionario Toscano* (Rome: Giacomo Mascardi, 1613), 504. The contribution by Politi, and the lack of information on the telescope, is all the more significant since he was in Galileo's circle.

[33] "Quando il lettore vede una scrittura di minute lettere, & si diffida di poterla leggere, si serve dell'occhiale, col cui mezo ne viene à gli occhi suoi à presentarsi più grande: & questo non aviene per la mutatione di quella scrittura, ma solamente per l'uso spetiale di quell'occhiale," Giovanni Lanspergio, *Vita della beata vergine Gertruda*, trans. Vicenzo Buondi (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, 1562), 55; "Ecco uno de i primi frutti, che io hò colto dello arbore muliebre, ecco la fede della mia vita, ecco il bastone della mia vecchiezza, ecco l'occhiale de i miei anni (…)," Luigi Transillo, *Il Cavallarizzo comedia ingegnosa* (Venice: Giovanni Pietro Gioannini, 1608) 45; Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Aggeo* (1494), "Predica 16" (in *Edizione nazionale delle opere di Girolamo Savonarola*, Roma: Angelo Belardetti Editore, 1965) 270-271; "(…) un occhiale di cristallino di questiche si fanno per corta vista," Panfilo Fenario, *Delle virtù morali necessarie per conseguire l'humana felicità* (Venice: Giacomo Antonio Somascho, 1605), 44.

[34] See, for example, Girolamo Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Aggeo*, 271, in which the distortion effectuated by the passions on the soul is compared to that of colored lenses. Another writer, Panfilo Fenario, talks about prudence as "un'occhiale della mente; per tal mezzo si vede, e conosce ciò che si deve dire, e fare con diritto riguardo a persone, cagioni, modo, luogo, tempo. Ma chi non è prudente, non havendo mezo buono a vedere il vero, fa giudicio prepostero, e sinistra deliberatione," *Delle virtù morali*, 35. Fabio Glissenti, in turn, contrasts the "occhiale della ragione" with that of the "openione mondana," in *Discorsi Morali*, 377. In another simile, the author draws on the utility of eyeglasses: "Perciò noi dovremmo servirsi di questa bellezza corporale, non altramente di quello, che facciamo del vetro dell'occhiale, il quale giova in farci rimirare meglio l'altre cose, ma per se stesso e reputato di poco valore: perche ecci molto caro l'atto della vista, che si fa con l'occhiale, ma di lui facciamo poco stima. Così della bellezza corporale dovremmo servirsene come d'un incitamento, ò d'un ritratto per venire in cognitione della eccellenza del Creatore, che in qualche particella riluce nella cosa creata," (ibid., 396).

means malleability, and the instrument, as it appears in the writings of Stigliani and his respondents, is undoubtedly dual in nature and is manipulated according to its context.

Stigliani's Hybrid ***Occhiale***

The first reference to the object in the *Occhiale* appears in the first page of the "Prima censura" in which Stigliani evaluates the *Adone* in general terms and criticizes the poem's failure to adhere to Aristotelian poetics and Cinquecento ideals. The entanglement of the literary enterprise with Stigliani's personal vendetta against Marino becomes evident as the critic sets himself against his rival in a clever chiasmus and explains the motivations that lead him to compose the *Occhiale*:

> Dalle ragioni, che si son dette nel contenuto de' trè superiori Libri, per risposta à quanto il Cavalier Marino hà contra di me pubblicato nella sua Galleria, nella sua Sampogna, e nel suo Adone: s*i vede, manifestamente e si raffigura* (*quasi appunto col mezzo d'un buono occhiale*) quale io sia in materia di costumi quale in materia di poesia, e di belle lettere, e quale insieme sia egli medesimo in materia pur di lettere belle, e di poesia, per non dir'anche di costumi. (9-10, emphasis mine)

"Un buono occhiale" does not provide enough information for us to deduce the defining characteristics of the instrument, though Stigliani's declared purpose – to enhance the vision of the reader and offer greater clarity with regard to the two authors and their respective poetic prowess – resonates strongly with the function of the telescope. An almost identical claim in the closing pages of the book corroborates this attribution:

> Il titolo dell'opera per qual cagion io abbia voluto, che sia Occhiale, già s'accennò addietro, cioè perche ponendola davanti agli occhi altrui, sà chiaramente, e fedelmente vedere, che cosa sia il Marino, ancorche tanto altiero, e che cosa sia lo Stigliani, ancorche tutto mansueto. Fà, dico, l'occhiale conoscerci ambedue al vivo non ostante ancora l'artifizioso applauso mendicato all'uno da' suoi amici interessati, e non ostante l'artifiziosa depressione procurata all'altro da gli stessi. (514-515)

The description of a device that strips away layers of artifice in order to expose the two men in their authentic form privileges the interpretation of the instrument as telescope. Furthermore, in an attempt to convince the reader of the value of his critical occhiale, Stigliani vouches for its exceptional quality – the clarity with which one may view objects ("fà chiaramente…vedere") – and subsequently, its reliability ("fà… fedelmente vedere"). The occhiale is therefore an advantageous tool because it facilitates access to distant or invisible information, and it guarantees the trustworthiness of what is observed. To limit the occhiale to this unique

function, however, would be a mistake, as Stigliani's lenticular device is much more versatile than what these passages lead us to believe.

With the exception of the two references at the beginning and the end of his *Occhiale*, and his response to Marino's depiction of Galileo and the telescope in the tenth canto of the *Adone*, Stigliani makes no other explicit mentions of optical devices. Instead, he adopts a rhetoric of clarification and correction that, depending on the context, calls for a telescope or a pair of spectacles. Before he embarks on his harangue of Marino and the poem, Stigliani outlines his project and his goals in the early pages of his book, which we will examine in two parts:

> Voglio, compilando il Quarto Libro, dare ancora sopra l'Adone il mio pieno parere, senza il quale alcuna parte della studiosa gioventù potrebbe forse rimanere per alcun mese ingannata da questo confettato componimento il quale altro non essendo in vero, che un morto mascherato da vivo; ed avendo tolta in prestito una anima posticcia, e straniera: falsamente camina, e bugiardamente rispira, e rifiata. Voglio, dico, con questo aggiungimento di Libro sottraere all'Adone tutti i predetti puntelli segreti, e tutte l'occulte forcine che lo sostentano in aria. (11-12)

The language of artifice, the small, or the invisible dominates this passage as Stigliani attacks Marino's poem. He presents his own criticism as an essential and invaluable instrument without which readers would fall prey to the *Adone*'s seductive illusions. The cumulation of references to costumes and deceit ("mascherato," "posticcia," "straniera," "bugiardamente") favors comparison of the poem's heightened dissimulation to a well-disguised zombie, a dead creature that has adopted the appearance and motions of a living being to fool those who behold it. Stigliani's mission, therefore, is to unmask and unveil this monster, to penetrate its every crevice and discern every minute detail ("sottraere all'Adone *tutti* i *predetti segreti*, e *tutte l'occulte forcine* che lo sostentano in aria," emphasis mine), and to bury the poem and the reputation of its author once and for all. In this first part, the reader occupies the seat of viewing subject, and Stigliani hypothesizes the deceptive façade of the viewed object (the *Adone*). The critic also divulges his method of examination, which is essentially a magnification of those invisible or imperceptible details that will confirm or reject the uniformity of the poem's true form and appearance, just as Galileo did by divulging the true face of the moon and the composition of the Milky Way.

In the second part of his proposal, Stigliani discloses the two possible outcomes that his investigation could yield:

> (...) lo sostentano in aria: e se dopo ciò esso rimarrà in piedi, siasi in buon'ora, ch'anch'io l'avrò caro (poiche con questa sperienza verrò ad imparar quel, che prima non sapeva) ma se esso non rimarrà, abbiasi la dovuta pazienza; overo emendandosi secondo la mia data norma torni di nuovo à raddirizzarsi percioche non è lecito nell'arti, e nelle scienze gabbar nessuno, ma tanto meno un Mondo tutto. La mia intenzione io protesto tuttavia esser quì la medesima che è stata nel terzo libro ove hò discorso degli altri volumi, cioè non d'esercitar dispetto verso l'autore, ma d'usar correzzione verso l'opera. (12-13)

In the presentation of the first of the two possible conclusions, Stigliani aligns himself with the reader as a viewing subject. He claims that if the *Adone* is able to withstand his scrutiny, then he will learn something new from this experience – or, following Peter Dear's argument, we may be tempted to say, experiment ("con questa sperienza verrò ad imparar quel, che prima non sapeva") – and he, too, will participate in the admiration of the work. If, instead, the work falls apart as he anticipates, then he will have attained his primary goal, which is to rid his readers, the "studiosa gioventù," of illusions about the poem. In both instances, the "occhiale" can very well be a telescope, whose enhanced resolution and magnifying properties extend the vision of the reader to reveal the essence of the poem-object. If unveiling the object's true form amounts to a correction, it is based on Stigliani's claim that the "real" *Adone* is not immediately known to the average reader and therefore exists beyond his or her natural field of perception. The correction here parallels the kind instigated by Galileo when he declared that the spots on the moon's surface as observed by the naked eye were in fact a collection of craters.[35] Stigliani's *Occhiale* operates in the same manner as it exposes the truth about the *Adone*.

And yet, when he describes the second possible result, that the closer investigation of the *Adone* would lead to its collapse, he shifts the viewing subject from the reader (and himself) to the *Adone*, and metonymically, its author, thus betraying his second and perhaps real ambition. Here, Stigliani's aim transforms from one of extension to one of modification and revision. In fact, Stigliani states quite explicitly that all hope would not be lost for the *Adone* if it were to be amended according to his own norms or standards ("emendendosi secondo la mia data norma"), which are one and the same as those of Aristotelian poetics,[36] and he affirms at the end of the passage that his intention is "d'usar correzion verso l'opera." The

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[35] See Galileo, *Sidereus nuncius* (1610), 7r-7v.

[36] "Risulta evidente, intanto, come l'identificazione dei difetti del *Furioso* nella Censura e dell'*Adone* nell'*Occhiale* avvenga attraverso la misurazione dello scarto che il testo denuncia rispetto alla norma dettata (o derivate) da Aristotele," Besomi, "Stigliani tra critica e parodia," 223.

critic, as a number of scholars have accurately remarked, presents himself as the champion of the norm, or of a normative body (from the poetic principles of the Cinquecento to the linguistic standards of the Crusca), and he situates his rival well outside of its boundaries. The problem in this specific situation stems from the faulty or defective vision of the poet who defies the standards of literary practice and good taste. However close the instrument may appear to the telescope when it is directly mentioned, the occhiale's function before Marino's eyes is unmistakably one of correction. The viewing subjects that Stigliani addresses are mutliple, and the *Occhiale* is very much a hybrid instrument with both the telescope and eyeglasses embedded in its core.

Reframing the *Occhiale*:
The Respondents' Interpretation of the Hybrid Instrument

Stigliani's respondents in turn interpret and fully exploit this duality in their own works. Of the four respondents, only Aleandro and Errico directly address Stigliani's choice of title. Girolamo Aleandro, who is the first to react to the *Occhiale* on behalf of Claudio Achillini and Marino's followers, dedicates an entire section of his *Difesa* to its discussion. In "Del titolo del libro," Aleandro questions the logic behind Stigliani's decision and analyzes the implications of the "occhiale stiglianesco":

> *Poco accorgimento (s'io bene avviso) su quello del Cavalier Stigliani in dar titolo d'Occhiale al suo libro, nel quale fa professione di scoprire i diffetti dell'Adone. Imperciocche da cotal titolo uno de' due effetti pare ne segua, o di disprezzo de'lettori, o di gloria al Marini (il che è contro il suo intendimento) mentre pretende, che nell'Adone v'habbiano infiniti e grossissimi errori, si come in tanti luoghi va egli à piena bocca esaggerando. Conciosiacosa che mostri ben di tener per ignoranti, e quasi ciechi tutti coloro, i quali colleggerli non se ne avveggano: onde per iscoprir tanti, e si gran falli, faccia loro mestieri d'adoperare l'Occhiale Stiglianesco. O pure s'ha à dire, che se per entro all'Adone vi sono diffetti, vengano questi coperti dal gran splendore delle sue bellezze; si che per rintracciarneli v'abbisogni un occhiale, nella guisa c'ha fatto il Galilei per iscoprire le macchie Solari. Ma sicome ci resta pur dubbio, se possano macchie haver luogo in quel luminoso corpo, o pure altra cosa sia, che per la gran lontananza faccia frode alla nostra veduta, così non può essere così agevole all'Occhiale Stiglianesco il far credere, che l'Adone macolato sia nella maniera, ch'egli pretende, conoscendosi esser lui tanto lontano dal poter ciò dimostrare, quanto lontano dal sapere è l'ignorare.* (A9v-A10r)

The analogy that compares the poem and its flaws to the sun and its sunspots, in addition to the reference to Galileo, leave no doubt as to the occhiale's form and function. Aleandro clearly reads the word as telescope, and the "occhiale stiglianesco" parallels that of the Tuscan mathematician's insofar as it reveals otherwise invisible flaws of a luminous and spectacular body.[37] This notwithstanding, Aleandro's accusation against

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[37] This assertion is reaffirmed later on in Aleandro's text when he addresses Stigliani's comments on the tenth canto of the *Adone*, in which Marino writes about Galileo, the telescope, and the new vision of the heavens. Here, Aleandro refers to the instrument as "occhiale" on two occasions, the first in the context of its invention ("quand'egli inventò l'occhiale,

Stigliani's depiction of readers as blind or ignorant shifts the source of distortion from the object to the viewing subject. By attributing a corrective function to the occhiale, Aleandro consequently resemanticizes it as a pair of spectacles meant to remedy an ocular pathology. Even though the references to astronomy and Galileo more explicitly fuse the "occhiale" and the telescope, Aleandro's interpretation of Stigliani's title suggests that the same instrument fulfills two different roles before the eyes of the reader, once more attesting to its hybrid nature.

Through the addition of the adjective "appannato," Scipione Errico's *Occhiale appannato* undermines Stigliani's desire for and claims to clarity or a greater resolution by highlighting the tarnished, opaque, and blurry nature of the optical instrument's lens. His description of the device, as it appears in his treatment of Stigliani's title, also raises questions about the instrument itself. As Trissino's character explains to Signor Carlo,

> L'opera come vi hò detto è intitolata l'Occhiale, & con ragione, perche quantunque questo Occhiale in una sol cosa da gli altri occhiali differisca, cioè nel far veder bene le cose nella guisa che sono, tuttavia in ogni altra conditione, toltane questa, è lor similissimo: & se questa conditione pur manca avenne per difetto del compositore, il quale essendo di poca vista, senza occhiali non potea bene fabricare occhiali: però in tutte l'altre proprietà si può ben dire, che è occhialissimo occhiale. Perche se gli occhiali son posti in uso da quei, che poco vedono, questo è solo e adoperato da Gufi, ò Pipistrelli, augelli, che poco nella vista prevagliono. Gli occhiali son di vetro, & per conseguenza facilissimi à rompersi, e questo è tale, che ad ogni urto di mediocre ragione si fà in mille pezzi, & finalmente gli occhiali son composti di due vetri, & questo occhiale è diviso in due parti: nella prima si biasma l'Adone in universale, & nel la seconda si contradice in particolare. (4-5)

In Errico's playful and insightful analysis, Stigliani's choice of title and its association with the scientific instrument is taken very seriously. Errico begins by equating the book ("l'opera…intitolata l'Occhiale") and the optical device ("questo Occhiale in una sol cosa da gli altri occhiali differisca"), which in turn implies that they should perform the same function. He then attributes the *Occhiale*'s failure in implementing its designated purpose to Stigliani's own faulty vision, thus introducing another figure in the category of viewing subjects. In other words, if Stigliani's critical text is distorted, it is because the "occhialista" suffers from a visual ailment ("[i]l compositore, […] essendo di poca vista") that has gone untreated and that has, in turn, affected his workmanship. If Stigliani exclusively ascribed errors to the *Adone* and its author, in Errico's version of events,

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non havea veduto quello dell'artefice Fiamingo, benche inteso havesse, che in Fiandra era stato formato uno strumento, col quale le cose lontane così perfettamente si vedevano, come se vicine fossero, senza che altro particolare gli fusse scoperto," *Difesa*, 394-395, and the other as he offers an explanation of why the instrument, "l'occhiale del Galilei" bears Galileo's name (ibid., 395).

the defects originate in the critic-craftsman and extend to the critical apparatus itself.[38] Errico also elucidates the nature of the optical device, and his description of both its function and composition strongly suggests that he interprets Stigliani's occhiale as a pair of spectacles. The correlation between poor vision and the instrument ("essendo di *poca vista*, senza occhiali non poteva bene fabbricare occhiali," "se gli occhiali son posto in uso da quei, che *poco vedono*") paints the occhiale as an indispensable and *corrective* visual aid. The impediment is rooted in the eyes of beholder, and the lenticular device serves to rectify a pathology. The similarity between eyeglasses and the *Occhiale* as book and optical instrument is furthered as Errico compares their fragility – Stigliani's glass lenses show little resilience against rational arguments – and their form, as both are composed of two lenses or parts. It is true that the telescope, too, is comprised of two lenses, but its role is to overcome a natural limitation of the eye. It is not, as Valdes' dialogues remind us, the instrument of choice to remedy deteriorating vision. This role is instead fulfilled by eyeglasses, and though we also find descriptions that privilege a different interpretation of the "occhiale," Errico seems to favor corrective spectacles to the telescope in his remarks.

The respondents' engagement with the optical reference is hardly limited to a direct treatment of the title. Where explicit mentions of the instrument are scarce in Stigliani's own *Occhiale*, the motif of the hybrid and prosthetic visual aid permeates the comments of his adversaries and fuels their arguments. Throughout the *Difesa*, we hear echoes of the same astronomical keywords that forged the primary association between the occhiale and the telescope in Aleandro's assessment of Stigliani's title. In his response to a comment about the elements and their respective cosmic spheres, Aleandro notes that "l'Occhiale in questo luogo non ha sevito allo Stigliani, non havendo egli osservato la cagione, per la quale si dice, ch'Adone passò la sfera del foco senza offesa e senza pericolo" (383). Aleandro draws on the celestial reference to unite the occhiale and the telescope, but rather than present the device in a favorable manner, he uses Stigliani's didactic vehicle against him. By emphasizing the object's limitations, Aleandro highlights Stigliani's ignorance and discredits him. The "occhiale" is a fluid device, and Aleandro freely interchanges both the singular and plural forms to

[38] In one of Valdes' dialogues, the Optometrist warns that "it is one thing to give glasses and quite another to make them perfectly. Please understand that eyeglasses are only as good as the man who makes them," *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 151. In another dialogue, Valdes writes that "vision can be damaged by the material of which glasses are made" (163).

alter its function as required. He thus challenges and ridicules Stigliani's observation about the *Adone*'s unity: "Tratta nel terzo Capitolo dell'Unità della favola, e dice, che l'attioni del Poema non sono fra di loro sì annodate, ch'una verisimilmente dipenda dall'altra. Ma se questo gli fa parer il suo Occhiale noi, *che logora ancora non habbiam la veduta, e che d'occhiali non ci fa di mestieri,* il contrario affermar possiamo" (6, emphasis mine). The "occhiali" are unquestionably a pair of eyeglasses, not only because they appear in the plural,[39] but because of the description that precedes them: "we, who do not yet have worn-out eyesight and who do not need eyeglasses." A telescope, after all, would not be the likely visual aid of choice to remedy or assist with worn-out or degraded vision ("logora...la veduta"). The identity of the "occhiale" cannot be reduced to a single instrument.

Even in Errico's *Occhiale appannato*, where Trissino's explanation of the title favors the spectacles over the spyglass or telescope, other descriptions in the text showcase the device's other properties. If eyeglasses correct, the telescope magnifies, and Errico demonstrates, once more through Trissino as mouthpiece, that Stigliani's attention to minutiae eclipses a more holistic vision of Marino's poem.[40] One of the most problematic aspects of Stigliani's argument, in Errico's view, actually arises from such parochialism, and much of his criticism about the *Adone* is in reality unfounded because it is based on a misconception about its genre: "Si confonde l'occhialista in raccorre le conditioni dell'Epopeia non conosciute, o pur dispregiate dal Marino, trattando dell'unità, e della favola de gli Epissodi, & simili cose, & non guarda, ma presuppone per vero, che la materia della quale tratta l'Adone sia di Poema Eroico, e cosi con questo suo occhiale, parche si notino le cose minute, & non si vedino le grosse" (14). By emphasizing the errors in individual compositional elements as they relate to the epic poem, Stigliani has overlooked the bigger picture: he has neglected to identify the

[39] The use of the plural "occhiali" does not guarantee that the instrument in question is a pair of spectacles. In his response to Stigliani's remark on line 37 of the ninth canto of the *Adone*, Aleandro writes: "Io non ho mai veduto, che l'ostriche habbiano mascelle, ma lo Stigliani, che *ha buoni Occhiali, vede piu de gli altri* in queste materie, e dà quelle interpretationi, che niuno potrebbe dare, e che l'autore ne anche sognò." *Difesa*, 352-353, emphasis mine. The indication that Stigliani is able to see more than others with his "occhiali" strongly suggests that he possesses a telescope, or rather, multiple telescopes, which work to extend his vision beyond that of all other readers, thus according him this unique insight into the *Adone*.

[40] This is also present in Aleandro, for whom the telescope is no longer that instrument which propels the eyes beyond their natural limits, but one that emphasizes instead the remoteness and insignificance of the *Adone*'s flaws compared to its more resplendent whole. *Difesa*, a9v-a10r.

correct genre of the *Adone*, which in turn invalidates all of his accusations against it. The characteristic that is brought to light is that of magnification rather than correction, and it is one that Errico accentuates when, like Aleandro, he uses the occhiale in an astronomical context. In response to the size of the moon and Stigliani's inaccurate comment on its depiction in the tenth canto of the *Adone*, Trissino's interlocutor responds that "Quà lo Stigliano è degno di scusa, perche con l'occhiale gli parve la Luna più grande del solito"(65). The lunar reference establishes an unmistakable link between the occhiale – as instrument and text – and the telescope, though one whose magnifying properties are distorting and fallacious rather than informative and trustworthy.

Suggestions of a telescopic device thus co-exist alongside descriptions of corrective eyeglasses in the *Occhiale appannto*. When Trissino exclaims that "hora in mostrarsi *con questo occhiale su'l naso,* dichiarò haver dell'intutto perduto la vista dell'intelletto" (emphasis mine), he could not present a more manifest image of the instrument in question. Though it appears in the singular, the "occhiale" on the nose makes it improbable for us to interpret it as anything other than a pair of glasses.[41] We also encounter instances in which the context does not provide any additional information or clues regarding the instrument's properties, leaving us to ponder its identity. When Trissino dissmisses Stigliani's analysis of an excerpt from the eleventh canto of the *Adone* "perche *il suo occhiale non arriva à veder quella dottrina*, sì come anco in altra parte, volendosi far matematico con li libri di Poesia, riprende il Marino per haver detto ciò che egli non haveva studiato" (64 emphasis mine), we find ourselves before a flawed lens in general, be it in its inability to clearly magnify and therefore render visible distant material, or to correct an ocular pathology that hinders proper vision. Like

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[41] In a letter from Fillipo Salviati to Galileo, we find a description of a telescope with two lenses that rests on the nose: "quel medesimo Olandese che fece l'occhiale già al conte Marizio(l), ha trovato invenzione di multiplicare il vedere quattro volte più che il primo, *con due occhiali da portar al naso come gl'ordinarii*, con facilità grandissima," Letter 946, Verona, 13 November 1613, in *Le opere di Galileo Galilei*, vol. 11 (Florence: G. Barbera, 1901) 595. A study by John E. Greivenkamp and David L. Steed on the instrument's history, however, explains that "early attempts to create binoculars using a pair of Galilean or Dutch telescopes date back to Lipperhey in 1608. Various other attempts were reported through the 18th century, but the difficulties of alignment, focusing, and magnification match made reproducible manufacturing almost impossible. It was not until the early 1800s that Galilean binoculars were produced." "The History of Telescopes and Binoculars: An Engineering Perspective," in *Novel Optical Systems Design and Optimization XIV*, ed. R. John Koshel and G. Groot Gregory, (Bellingham, Washington: Society for Optics and Photonics, 2011) 10. Even though binoculars did exist in the early seventeenth century and emerged at almost the same time as the telescope, they were not as widely circulated as the telescope and it is therefore far more likely that the instrument that rests on the nose and to which Errico and the other respondents refer is a pair of spectacles. For the attribution of the binoculars to Lipperhey, see Van Helden, *The Invention of the Telescope*, 20n6.

Aleandro's, Errico's reading of the "occhiale" reveals its polyvalence and paints the "occhiale stiglianesco" as one that simultaneously possesses extending and corrective characteristics.

Villani's *Uccellatura* (1630), at first glance, seems to suggest a preference for the spyglass or telescope, and we find concrete evidence in support of this association. Much like Aleandro's observations about the "sfera del fuoco" or Errico's about the size of the moon, Villani evokes an image of Stigliani as an astronomer with a telescope in hand, though neither he nor his instrument is able to correctly identify what is seen.[42] These more obvious descriptions, however, intertwine with subtle ones of eyeglasses, and the most remarkable depiction of the instrument occurs when Villani begins to address Stigliani's *Censura seconda*, and in which the device, initially – and unquestionably – designating a telescope, undergoes a metamorphosis and emerges as a pair of reading glasses:

> E intanto non voglio io difendere il Marini, che talora porterò qualche suo errore; che dallo occhiale Stiglianesco non sia stato osservato. Il quale occhiale si come molte macchie ha scoperte, le quali però fin dai luschi si vedevano; così moltissime non ne ha vedute; e quelle, che vedute ha, in maniera le ha diversificate, che basterebbe, se fusse l'occhiale del Galileo, che sessanta volte minuisce, o moltiplica l'oggetto.[43] Perciò che le cose degne di lode le minima egli talmente, che formiche le fa di liofanti, e le biasimevoli talmente le aggrandisce, che di un zipolo falla una lancia. Ma chi vorrà con libero naso, e senza occhiale rimirare il poema dello Adone; conoscerà, che egli non è tanto malvaggio, quanto pare allo Stigliano, ne tanto mirabile, quanto pare all'Aleandro e alla maggior parte de letterati moderni. (198-199)

Momentarily leaving aside the value of the instrument to focus on its identity, the "macchie" are reminiscent of Galileo's observations of moon spots, and the evocation of the mathematician's name, or more precisely, of his invention ("l'occhiale del Galileo"), unequivocally refers to the modern optical invention. Villani's additional comments on the manipulation of the object's size further supports this claim as the function matches the form. And yet, after the conjunction "ma," as though on a hinge, the description changes direction and its vector points to another visual aid. Though the word "occhiale" remains in the singular, the

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[42] "Mi accorgo poi Signore Stigliani, che l'occhial vostro non è de fini; poi che non arriva a mostrarvi la sfera del Sole. che se vi arrivasse, vi havria fatto vedere, che il Sole non ha epiciclo; e che però il Marino, mentre ha voluto fare dello astrologo, ha detto uno sproposito in quei versi," *Uccellatura*, 289; "Ditemi per vita vostra Signore Stigliani, come havete vuoi fatto a misurar cosi squisitamente il corpo lunare; che habbiate compreso, la sua grandezza essere altrettanto, quanto quella della terra? Havereste voi forse gli occhi cernieri; o se havete cio fatto con l'occhiale del Galileo, o con gli strumenti di Ticone Brahe?" (ibid., 446).

[43] For the magnifying effects of Galileo's telescope, see Galileo, *Sidereus nuncius*, 6r or *Sidereal Messenger*, 39-40.

design conjured by "con libero naso, e senza occhiale" is more likely to express a desire to liberate oneself from reading glasses than from a telescope.[44]

The occhiale-as-spectacle is certainly the interpretation favored by Aprosio, whose text parallels Errico's decision to integrate the optical instrument into his own title, the *Occhiale stritolato* (1641-2), and issues similar warnings about the fragility of the visual aid's lenses. Like Errico and Aleandro, he, too, presents the "occhiale stiglianesco" as one that serves to correct defective vision. Responding to Stigliani's note about the number of metaphors in a particular line, he writes: "*66. E con roco latrar morde la sponda*. Osserva il Signore Stigliani, che in questo verso ci sono tre metafore, ciòe *roco*, *latrare*, e *morde*. Poteva avanzare di notarlo, perche chi non è talpa lo vede senz'Occhiali" (181-182). Notwithstanding the negative value he attributes to the occhiale, to which we will return in the following sections, his statement presents the instrument as an alternative to poor eyesight ("talpa"). Qualifying the instrument as a corrective device suggests that Aprosio interprets Stigliani's visual aid as a pair of spectacles. In yet another attack on Stigliani and the distortive properties of his occhiale, Aprosio provides a portait of the dim-witted critic and fashions him with "gli Occhiali su'l Naso" (204), a description which once more points to spectacles. In a similar vein, as Aprosio refutes and dismisses Stigliani's gloss of a particular verse, he evokes the visual aid: "non mi meraviglio, ch'egli habbia preso un granchio, facendo i suoi Occhiali verificare, che *depravatum conspicillum arguit oculum*" (183). The Latin phrase cited by Aprosio, "depravatum conspicillum arguit oculum" ("corrupted eyeglass(es) convinced the eye of error"), applies the word "conspicullum," which unmistakably translates into "eyeglass(es)" rather than telescope (if we recall the frontispiece of Galileo's *Sidereus nuncius*, the word he uses to describe his instrument is "perspicillum").[45] There are other references throughout the *Occhiale stritolato* that remain indecipherable and ambiguous, but Aprosio's characterizations of the instrument further the object's

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[44] Carlo Antonio Manzini, in writing about the spectacles, uses the nose as a marker: "(…) l'Occhiale, che al Naso si porta, che Semplice io chiamo," *L'Occhiale all'occhio: Dioptrica pratica* (Bologna: Herede del Benacci, 1660), 1.

[45] "[Galileo] used *organum* and *instrumentum*, which were familiar to his readers in connection with naked eye-observational instruments. But, more often than both these terms put together, he worte *perspicillum*, which he placed on his title page in plain avowal of his preference," Rosen, *The Naming of the Telescope*, 3. In the *Sidereus nuncius*, we find the words "organum" and "instrumentum" when he speaks more generally of the instrument; "perspicillum" when he speaks of the telescope, but also of lenses, as Albert Van Helden points out in his translation. See, for example, *Sidereal Messenger* 39n26.

complexity and challenge the interpretation of scholars who read the object as a telescope alone. As we have seen, the narrative that these critical texts unveil is one that is much richer than what the unique interpretation leads us to believe. Given the less habitual usage of the term in the singular to mean "eyeglasses," and combined with the word's prevalence in the correspondence of Galileo and his circle, it is certainly logical to decode "occhiale" as telescope or spyglass. Entanglement in the Galilean frenzy, however, is not without its limitations. In fact, exclusively reading "occhiale" as "spyglass" in the works of Stigliani, Aleandro, Errico, Villani, and Aprosio eliminate an entire segment of the story, one with significant implications in our understanding of these texts as works of criticism, and ultimately, as reflections on the dynamics between writer, critic, and reader.

The Critic's Prized Instrument:
A Return to the "Data Norma"

Stigliani, we may recall, identifies two principal viewing subjects, the reader and Marino, and he holds them to very different standards. When Stigliani expresses that "desidero in somma colla presente mia fatica non altro che di partorire qualche letteral profitto a' prenominati studiosi, e qualche ravvedimento ad esso autor medesimo" (13), he not only distinguishes the two figures ("pronominati studiosi," "autor"), but he differenciates between the actions he must perform before them, encapsulated in the key words "partorir" and "ravvedimento." "Partorir" denotes the literal act of giving birth,[46] and is therefore tied to the idea of generation, of bringing into the world that which does not already exist. Conversely, "ravvedimento" contains within it a repetition, a return: it is a reconsideration of that which already is. According to Stigliani, Marino, as a "man of letters" or poet, should be familiar with Aristotelian poetics as well as all those elements that have attributed to the success of the classics. The reader, on the other hand, is not expected to have any such knowledge about the intricacies that govern literary production.

In other words, while Stigliani is forgiving toward the reader regarding this presumably normal gap in knowledge, he shows no remorse toward the poet, whose failure to adhere to the established literary standard

[46] "Mandar fuor del corpo il figliuolo, e dicesi proprio delle donne, che anche si dice, fare il bambino," *Lessicografia della Crusca in rete*, s.v. "partorir."

represents a deviation from the norm (we recall the earlier mention of "la mia data norma"),[47] be it out of ignorance or rebellion. Unlike the reader's vision, which is naturally limited, Marino's is inherently flawed,[48] we may think of the entire *Occhiale* as a particularly strong pair of spectacles placed before the poet's eyes. In each of the chapters of the first book Stigliani systematically addresses the conditions that branch off the four elements essential to a "poema eroico" ("favola," "locuzione," "sentenza," and "costume," 15), and he presents each analysis in an almost formulaic manner. He defines the condition, presents the possible deviations, makes a statement about how Marino has erred in all possible ways, and finally, demonstrates, one by one, the nature of the error by drawing on concrete examples from the *Adone* or by comparing it to other works of literature, good and bad. The imperfections that he brings to light – ranging from the poem's length to its diction; from issues of verisimilitude to those of plagiarism; from creating *meraviglia* to questions of variety – clearly reflect the "data norma" which he evokes as he stipulates his project, and this, bolstered by the references to authorities such as Aristotle,[49] and classical authors like Virgil and Homer, further accentuate Marino's literary crimes.

Capitalizing on an excerpt from the *Adone* in which Marino discusses poetry and its components, Stigliani flaunts his own superiority in the art by exposing the inaccuracy of his rival's portrayal. After quoting

[47] For more on Stigliani's normative and classicizing project, see Besomi, "Stigliani tra critica e parodia"; Croce, "La critica dei barocchi moderati," 97,99 -102, 104, 106, 239; Marziano Guglielminetti, "Marino e i marinisti," in Borsellino and Pedullà, *Storia generale della letteratura italiana*, 163. For the consequences of this normative practice on the reception of Marino in literary history and the fortune of Marinist poetry, see Frare "La nuova critica," 241.

[48] At one point, the errors of the *Adone*'s author are explicitly compared to an ocular pathology. In Chapter 11 of the *Occhiale* and on the subject of variety, Stigliani cites Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* as the *exemplum* of "varietà variata," and chides the Ancients, whom Marino echoes, for their use of "varietà somiglievole": "non è senza alcuno scorno de'trapassati, che si siano sì ciecamente acquietati nella antedetta imperfezzione," *Occhiale*, 68. The "trapassati," among whom we may well include Marino, who, as we know, is deceased at the time of the *Occhiale*'s publication and perhaps even its composition, are unable to see their own erroneous use of variety, and they are therefore qualified as blind. Stigliani thus attributes their flawed writing not to natural causes or limitations, but rather, to an explicit deformation of the visual faculties.

[49] "Attesoche il diletto principale è quello, che si produce dalla buona orditura del tutto. Ma quando bene il fin dell'arte poetica non fusse (come hà voluto Aristotele, e tutti i migliori) il diletto per mezo della buona imitazione ma fusse (come dall'altro canto anno voluto alcuni pochi) l'utile morale; esso diletto sarebbe ancora l'unico mezo da conseguire esso utile, nè senza lui l'uomo il potrebbe conseguir già mai: poiche se non leggiamo un libro, non possiamo trarne esempio veruno buono, mè malvagio, nèsenza diletto possiamo leggerlo," ibid., 130-131.

the *ottavo* in its entirety,[50] itself a fairly rare occurrence in the "Seconda Censura" where the citation of individual verses are far more common, Stigliani lists all of the terms related to the poetic art as they are understood by his rival, only to unpack the passage word by word and to oppose his own correct definition to Marino's faulty one.[51] By highlighting the disparity between Marino's vision and his own, which no doubt represents the "standard," and by accusing the poet of ignorance when it comes to the *ars poetica*, Stigliani disqualifies Marino as a good poet due to his complete disregard for customary practice. Unlike contemporaries who see Marino and his poetry as bastions of innovation and novelty, the *Adone* and its author embody anomaly and degeneration in Sigliani's eyes, which he makes especially explicit in his analysis of the poem's genre:

> Percioche si come ne gli animali l'avere una testa, o l'averne due, l'esser proportionato di gambe, o sproporzionato, e'l posseder voce alta, o voce bassa non son cose più occorrenti al cane, che al gatto, o ch'alla scimia, ma possono parimente per mostruosità, o per altro, occorrere à tutti, senza corrompere la loro spezie: cosi nella poesia l'unità, o la moltiplicità dell'azzione, la bontà, o la goffezza de gli episodi, la gravità, o l'umiltà dello stile, non son cose più determinate ad una spezie, che'ad un'altra: ma possono ugualmente ritrovarsi in tutte senza mutar l'essenza di quelle; poiche in tutte le poesie si trova azzione, ed episodio, e stile.[52] (120)

Of importance is not so much the characterizing features of each genre, but rather, those corruptive mutations that could permeate any genre. In this taxonomy, rather than distinguishing among species, Stigliani establishes a number of dichotomies, dividing entities into normal and abnormal subgroups (una testa/due; proportionato/sproporzionato; voce alta/voce bassa). The deformities, he argues, rather than creating something new, only generate monstrous creatures within the same species, a truth that also extends to poetry. When we read the multiple references to the *Adone* as a monster in light of this observation,[53] the

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[50] "123 *L'invenzion, la favola, il Poema/E l'Ordine e'l Decoro, e l'Armonia./ Della tragedia suastendono il tema./La fecezia, l'Arguzia, e l'Energia,/L'Eloquenza è l'artefice fuprema./ Sovrastante con lei la Poesia./ Seco il Numero e'l Metro, e la Misura,/ Si prendon della musica la cura*," ibid., 185-186.

[51] "Qui l'autore veramente per li moltissimi errori, che piglia, mostra di non saper, che cosa sia arte poetica, ma di parlarne à caso, ed à caso anche comporre. I quali errori io registrerò tutti ad uno ad uno col replicare il testo à pezzo a pezzo," ibid., 186.

[52] We may recall the introduction and conclusion of the *Ars Poetica,* in which Horace talks about forms that borrow parts from other creatures to create monsters, though Stigliani's description here is not so much one of hybridity but degeneration (the deformed offspring of a species rather than combination of various creatures into one), which goes one step further in denouncing the *Adone* and Marino's corrupt poetry.

[53] For other references to monsters, see Stigliani, *Occhiale*, 20, 37, 40.

distance that separates Marino's poem from Stigliani's codified poetic practice becomes all the more evident, and it justifies the critic's need for a remedy in the name of preserving the purity of the poetic species.

In his unwavering commitment to defame the *Adone* and its author, Stigliani even scrutinizes the accuracy of the poem's content, especially in the second part of the *Occhiale* in which he identifies the poem's errors canto by canto, and line by line, be it in its retelling of mythological episodes, its conveying of historical or scientific information, or its use of particular words. Argus is not transformed into a peacock as Marino writes, but rather it is Juno who decorates him with the feathers of her own peacocks (199); the lines "*Del Telescopio à quest'etade ignoto Per te sia, Galileo, l'opra composta*" are counterfactual since Galileo, per his own confession in the *Saggiatore*, mentions a Dutch predecessor (263)[54]; and, as every good writer knows, and per the standards of the Crusca, the word "nocchiero" is only to be found in the masculine, and ending in "o," not "a," unless it is to make a joke ("nocchiera non si trova *appo buoni scrittori* in sesso femminile [Se non per burla una fiata appo gli Accademici della Crusca] ma solo nocchiero in maschile, e vien da nauclerus latino(…)" 243, emphasis mine). In these instances, Stigliani's goal is to define the norms and standards of literary practice and to identify knowledge that is, or should be, commonplace among the literati, in order to better situate Marino beyond the margins of this frame. The flaw, therefore, lies not in the object viewed (those practices which should be known to all those who practice the literary arts), but in the viewing subject, Marino, who misuses or abuses them.

Given the *Adone*'s shortcomings before Stigliani's poetic norm, it is by extension an imperfect object to behold once we transpose the labels of "viewing subject/object viewed" from Marino and the literary guidelines to the reader and the text. Here, we see how Stigliani's criticism not only demonstrates the ways in which Marino offends good taste with his innumerable mistakes and deviations, but how he offends his

[54] Galileo speaks of his role in the instrument's invention on two occasions. The first occasion occurs in the opening pages, after his list of observations, saying "All these things were discovered and observed a few days ago by means of a glass contrived by me after I had been inspired by divine grace," *Sidereal Messenger*, 38. A few pages later, he acknowledges the Dutch predecessor: "About 10 months ago a rumor came to our ears that a spyglass had been made by a certain Dutchman by means of which visible objects, although far removed from the eye of the observer, were distinctly perceived as though nearby. (…) The rumor was confirmed to me a few days later by a letter from Paris from the noble Frenchman Jacques Badovere. This finally caused me to apply myself totally to investigating the principles and figuring out the means by which I might arrive at the invention of a similar instrument, which I achieved shortly afterward on the basis of the science of refraction," ibid., 39.

audience as well. In Stigliani's view, not only must a work of literature adhere to poetic codification, but it must also be comprehensible to its readership: a work of literature, in other words, that fails to be understood and enjoyed by readers, fails altogether. According to the critic, the structure and sequencing of Marino's poem is so poor that the reader, under normal circumstances, would have no way of apprehending it. In an episode revolving around the material of Venus's mattress,[55] the critic expounds the limitations that the reader faces because of Marino's metaphoric language and careless sequencing. Envisioning himself in the place of the average reader, Stigliani declares that arriving at Marino's intended image – of a mattress filled with golden wool – exploits and exhausts the imagination's elasticity,[56] and that interpreting the poem on a literal level, a mattress filled with gold, would hardly makes any sense. Though Marino provides an explanation later on in the poem, Stigliani asserts that the description should have occured when the mattress was first mentioned "perche il lettore non è indovino" (172). Stigliani makes specific claims about the natural limitations of the reader's knowledge and unquestionably identifies the poem as a source of error, thus exempting the reader, who, without the critical apparatus, would be condemned to confusion.

Who is this intended audience whom the poem ought to delight and accommodate? In profound contrast to the Marinist reader who possesses and appreciates great wit and intellectual endeavours, Stigliani's ideal reader has less cerebral ambitions and is not necessarily privy to great erudition.[57] As Stigliani reminds us elsewhere, " l'adeguato uditor delle poesie non è altri, che il *communal popolo* per concorde sentenza de' migliori critici" (54, emphasis mine), and the contrast between Stigliani's priorities and those of Marino (or rather,

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[55] "Non dichiara quando verbigrazia dice, che'l letto di Venere era piumato d'oro, volendo intendere, ch'avea per piume la lana delle pecore dorate, menzonate molto dopo nella novella di Psiche, il che era necessario accennar quì: perche altrimenti il lettore, che nol sà, pensa che'l letto sia durissimo, non possendosi per umano artifizio formar piuma d'oro vero, la quale sia pastosa, e morbida da empir materasse," Stigliani, *Occhiale*, 98-99.

[56] Cf. Battistini, *Galileo e i gesuiti*. Battistini heavily insists on the the telescope's use as an instrument that extends the imagination and stimulates the fantasy of poets.

[57] "I lettori 'popolari' del Rinascimento non si trovano quindi a confronto con una 'letteratura' ad essi specifica. Ovunque, testi e libri circolano nella totalità del mondo sociale; ovunque, essi sono condivisi da lettori di condizione e cultura molto diverse," Roger Chartier, "Letture e lettori 'popolari dal rinascimento al settecento," in *Storia della lettura nel mondo occidentale*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Rome: Laterza, 1995), 324. Chartier argues that works of literature may not have been intended for a popular audience, but were nonetheless available to them, and he turns his attention to editorial practices that would have rendered books more accessible to a more general and less erudite public. Also see Roger Chartier, *L'Ordre des livres: Lecteurs, auteurs, bibliothèques en Europe entre XVIe et XVIIIe siècle* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinea, 1992).

those that Stigliani attributes to Marino), are easily encapsulated and even visualized in the cul-de-lampe that closes the twelfth chapter of the *Occhiale*:

Oltre che l'opera è anco oscu-
ra per cagion della sen-
tenza, che non è
sempre *po-*
polare,
ma spesso *filosofica*, come
s'avrà à suo
tempo. (74, emphasis mine)

"Popolare," the focal point of the configuration, thus superposes "filosofica," as though to emphasize the place it *should* occupy in the hierarchy of "sentenze." Though like other keywords,"oscura" and "sentenza," it is divided as fragments linger at the end of one line and trail at the beginning of the next, as if to mirror the violence Marino induces on language and subsequently against his readers. The "po-polare"'s broken form more accurately reflects the distortion that is at work in Marino's poem: more philosphical and opaque considerations requiring mental gymnastics remain whole, while more common or transparent images and expressions are relegated. It is here, in this position between the poet and the reader, where Stigliani applies a clever tactic that opposes him against the former and aligns him with the latter. In order to simultaneously denigrate Marino while being careful not to antagonize the reader, Stigliani calibrates the "norm" according to the level of knowledge and understanding of the average person, recalling editorial practices that manipulated and modified works of literature to make them more accessible to a less cultivated audience.[58]

The issue at hand, when it comes to the reading public, is the poem's clarity, or rather, its obscurity:

> Non è vero quello che affermano alcuni, […] cioè, che la locuzion dell'Adone sia perfettamente chiara. Se ella fusse tale, *sarebbe intesa dal commune popolo*, e non lo stancherebbe. Quel non poter finir di leggere un libro nasce dalla sola molestia, e la molestia nasce dal non attendervi, e'l non attendere è in questo caso tutt'uno col non intendere; poiche chi non attende, non intende, e'l non essere inteso è oscurità, se non per se, almeno per accidente.[59] (73-74, emphasis mine)

The poem is long and tedious, thus deterring the reader from fully engaging with the text ("attendere"), which in turn leads to challenges with understanding ("intendere") the work. Stigliani continues to insist that it is not

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[58] Roger Chartier remarks that the transformations carried out by the Bibliothèque Bleue "visent, en effet, à inscrire le texte dans une matrice culturelle qui n'est pas celle de ses destinaires originels et à en permettre ainsi des 'lectures', des compréhensions, des usages, possiblement disqualifiés par d'autres habitudes intellectuelles," *L'ordre des livres*, 26.

[59] A similar idea is repeated in the lines that follow: "Sicche il lettor di questo poema può dir con Zanni. Io lo'ntendo, ma non sò quel, che si voglia dire. Cioè io lo 'ntenderei, se potessi stare attento, ma non posso starvi," Stigliani, *Occhiale*, 74.

the reader who lacks intelligence, but the work itself that is simply too cryptic. In other words, it is not the viewing subject who suffers from a visual impediment, but rather, the viewed object that is too remote to be perceived. Stigliani's *Occhiale* thus performs a new function once it is placed before the eyes of the reader, one that enables him or her to see beyond his or her normal field of vision with increased resolution and clarity. Stigliani assures readers that the error does not originate in their unaided eye, but in the poem whose comprehension is obstructed by its excessive opacity and its "stile metaforuto." The occhiale-as-telescope presents itself as a solution by extending the reader's vision and introducing it to otherwise inaccessible information.

Indeed, without the aid of the critic's telescope, the *Adone* would remain inaccessible to the average reader. Whether it is to point out baroque word games, such as the mirror-like play on Roma/Amor, which "non s'intende senza commenta" (251),[60] or to highlight cross-references without which a particular metaphor remains obscure,[61] Stigliani's *Occhiale* is an indispensable tool for seeing beyond the poet's arcane creation, for observing the poem from the "vrai biais."[62] If, in our earlier analysis, we saw how Stigliani achieved his goal of correcting the poem and its author, here we see his commitment to the reader, to whom, by the end of his long criticism (or tirade), he has shown the two sides of the coin with examples of good and bad poetry,[63] and before whom he has, per his own hypothesis and method, defrocked the *Adone*. The craftily disguised "zombie poem" he described at the outset of his *Occhiale* is slain:

> ... che l'Adone sia stato composto tale, quale è, così non è miracolo alcuno, ch'egli ora non sia più letto. Percioche da' suoi veduti falli potete, quasi da tanti intrinsichi morbi, riconoscere la già succeduta sua morte, dalla quale era impossibile, ch'egli potesse scampare: nella maniera appunto, che dalle viscere guaste d'un copro umano anatomizato per man del cerusico possono i riguardanti (specolando à posteriori) riconoscere le radicali cause, che quello fecero infermare, ed à mal grado de medicamenti l'uccisero. (507-508)

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[60] "*Credendo Amor vi soggiornasse come Par, che prometta il suo fallace nome.* Lo scherzo sopra il nome di Roma (il quale leggendosi allo'ndietro dice Amor) **non s'intende senza commento**, e da poiche s'è inteso è una ragazzeria. Non inventata però dall'autore, ma furata di bocca a' piccioli fanciulli, che vanno à scuola, se pur non è copiata dal sommo d'una porticella, che è in Roma in strada Margutti scritta à lettere nere," ibid., 251, bolded text mine.

[61] "*Tesse di bei Meandri ampia catena*. Metafora scura la quale nessuno intenderà, se prima non avrà veduto la comparazion del Tasso, donde quella è presa," ibid., 252.

[62] Béroalde, *Le Moyen de parvenir*, CXI 450.

[63] "Sicche, Lettori miei, alla foggia, che gli antichi avevano nel simolacro di Giano un ritratto di due face contraposte, così voi avete giustamente in questo quarto libro una piccola immagine del buon poema eroico, ed un'altra del malvaggio," Stigliani, *Occhiale*, 507.

The critic here compares the poem's failings and imperfections – both poetically and morally – to that of a sick and moribund body, and he transforms the metaphor behind his textual analysis from an optical reference to an anatomical one. Comparing the text to a corpse in an anatomical theater, he fulfills the role of the surgeon-professor who dissects it before the eyes of onlooking students to determine the cause of death. Though the astronomical and the anatomical may appear to be distant images and processes, they share a common theoretical base. Both are grounded in visual observation and rely on penetrating beyond the immediately visible to access that which is otherwise hidden and unknown. Furthermore, both the anatomical theater and the occhiale-as-telescope bear a pedagogical dimension insofar as they expose spectators to information and knowledge that lies beyond the limits of their natural faculties.

Stigliani stages the instructive dimension of his project in the opening pages of his *Occhiale*. Written as an "apologia" to respond to Marino's attacks on Stigliani's own writings while simultaneously defending proper poetics and morally acceptable content, the text that specifically targets Marino's *Adone* is the last installment of a four-volume theoretical and critical apparatus that was meant to accompany the publication of his own *Mondo nuovo*. He further specifies the benefits of his project, which he describes as an "opera nella quale io son d'opinione molte cose dovere i giovani in questo secolo imparare, le quali non si sono mai più sapute" (4), before claiming that he published the critique of the *Adone* separately and in advance because he deemed it rather urgent. Three very important and complementary pieces of information emerge as Stigliani discloses his objectives. His target audience is a younger, or more generally, less experienced one ("i giovani in questo secolo"), he has didactic ambitions ("molte cose dovere […] imparare"), and finally, the material he presents to his audience is entirely new and previously unknown to his readership ("molte cose […] le quali non si sono mai più sapute"). Closer to the audience of sixteenth century poetic anthologies – with their explicative notes and aim to teach – than to Anthony Grafton's description of the humanist reader and student – already in possession of common cultural references –[64] Stigliani portays his reader as a non-

[64] For the relationship between commentary and readers in sixteenth-century Italian anthologies, see Marie-Françoise Piéjus, "Lecture et écriture selon des anthologies poétiques au XVIe siècle en Italie," in *L'Écrivain face à son public en France et en Italie à la Renaissance: Actes du colloque international de Tours, 4-6 décembre 1986*, ed. Charles Adelin Fiorato and Jean-Claude Margolin, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1989), 337-358. For a description of the humanist reader, see Anthony Grafton, "L'umanista come lettore," in Cavallo and Chartier, *Storia della lettura*, 199-242.

specialized individual, the "communal popolo." He, in his turn, becomes an Ariadne's thread that guides the reader through both the form and content of the literary labyrinth. Indeed, what prompts Stigliani to expedite the publication of this fourth volume is to hinder the *Adone*'s popularity, which he attributes in great part to "alcuni semplici lettori" (11),[65] whose naïveté and ingenuousness restrict apprehension of the text. The super-normative function of the text-as-telescope therefore consists in acknowledging this natural boundary before exposing the novice observer to new information that will expand his or her faculties.

Stigliani thus establishes himself, the critic, as a guide, an authority figure, and a guardian of tradition, literary norms, and good taste. Regardless of the identity of the instrument, what we gather from Stigliani's portrayal of the reader and the poet, and of himself within this arrangement, is that the natural eye is always insufficient, be it in the composition or the evaluation of literary works. His normative spectacles correct and regulate the defective eyesight of the deviant poet; his super-normative telescope enlightens the reader by exposing him to truths that lie beyond his field of perception while simultaneously recognizing the plenitude of his or her vision. The critical apparatus, the hybrid occhiale as both spectacle and telescope, always has a positive value and is in fact an indispensable element in ensuring the integrity of literary practice and appreciation. For Stigliani, the infallible instrumentalized eye is far superior to the naked eye that is prone to deformations and limitations. His respondents, however, beg to differ.

A Return to the Natural Eye:
Dismantling the *Occhiale Stiglianesco*

If Stigliani is a staunch supporter of instrumentalized or mediated vision, vouching for the superiority of the visual aid over the organ of sight, his respondents firmly reject this idea and defend instead the visual faculty in its natural state. Their dismantling of the lenticular critical apparatus often relies on a rhetoric of blindness and distortion, with the latter being particularly reminiscent of the arguments proposed by Galileo's opponents and other skeptics who attributed his celestial discoveries to illusions engendered by a flawed instrument. Just like Stigliani, the expectations that Aleandro, Errico, Villani, and Aprosio establish for the

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[65] "Ma perche veggo, che l'autore si và pur tuttavia con gran sollecitudine sforzando di tenerlo sù, e di ravvivarlo nella memoria d'alcuni semplici lettori (...) io mi sono à ragion mutato del mio primo proposito," Stigliani, *Occhiale*, 11.

viewing subject – the reader, Marino, and the new addition, Stigliani – and the objects viewed – the *Adone* and the *Occhiale* – determine the value of the visual aid and the dynamic between these various actors.

If, in the *Occhiale*, Marino appears as the viewing subject in need of correction, he is commended far more often than he is condemned in the works of the respondents. Though he is not entirely exempt from criticism, especially from Villani, these writers share a more mitigated view of Marino's influence on the literary landscape. They may suggest occasional amendments, but the normative discourse that filled the pages of the *Occhiale* is absent from their texts, or rather, it works to another end. Where Stigliani reprimands Marino for borrowing words from languages or dialects other than the noble Tuscan tongue, others applaud him for enriching the Italian.[66] Where Stigliani appeals to the authority of both Ancients and Moderns, and accuses Marino of ignorance vis-à-vis proper poetic practice, others offer an alternative interpretation of the guidelines to demonstrate Marino's place within a lineage,[67] or they adopt an adversarial position with regard to traditional practice, dismissing it altogether in favor of innovation. Aleandro, as the official voice of the Marinisti and a proponent of experimentation and novelty, celebrates the *Adone* as a work that refreshes and revitalizes a hackneyed genre, "cioè di dilungarsi con nuova forma di poema Epico dall'uso hormai troppo trito, e di piacere con tal opera al mondo, e d'acquistarsi gloria. (…) percioche ampio è il territorio di Parnaso; vari, e diversi sono gli armari, ne quali i buoni poemi si conservano: varie le corone e'premi di gloria che i poeti conseguiscono, se però di talento poetico dono speciale del Cielo dotati sono, quale veramente fu il Marini" (4). By reformulating what constitutes good poetry, and by extension, good taste, the respondents challenge Stigliani's "data norma" and propose another possibility in its place. By transposing and

[66] "Essendo non pur lecito, ma lodevole di trarre da quella lingua, come da abbondante miniera parole, e forme di favellare secondo il bisogno, per arricchirne, e fecondarne la nostra assai povera, e sterile: facendolo però con giudicio, e accommodando le voci alla flession delle nostre," Aleandro, *Difesa*, 58; Also see Villani, *Uccellatura*, 109, 130. On the language wars in Italy, see the recent work by Caterina Mongiat Farina, *Questioni di lingua: L'ideologia del dibattito sull'italiano nel Cinquecento* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2014).

[67] "Quanto all'uso dell'allegorie se allo Stigliani non piace, *piace con buona ragione a' piu saggi di lui*, i quali le riconoscono ne' due poemi di Homero, nell'Enea di Virgilio, nell'Orlando dell'Ariosto, nella Gerusalemme del Tasso," Aleandro, *Difesa*, 101, emphasis mine; "Ma io, per ver dire, sono d'opinione, che tal ordine all'epopea necessario non sia; e che l'ordine naturale per ragione, e per autorità sia migliore; e che *tutti i buoni Poeti* si siano serviti di questo; e non di quello. Non è dubbio alcuno, che l'arte è imitatrice della natura; e che quanto meglio imita, più diletta; e che le Poesie tanto sono migliori, quanto meglio ne rappresentano le attioni," Villani, *Uccellatura*, 30-31, emphasis mine.

recalibrating the norm, they in turn include the *Adone* within its boundaries, uphold Marino's reputation as a great poet with sound knowledge, and consequently render the "occhiale" as a corrective device useless.

Indeed, all of Stigliani's respondents denounce the use of the optical instrument that was so indispensable to the critic. In their texts, Stigliani himself becomes the object of criticism and ridicule as the viewing subject who not only suffers from a visual ailment, but who also uses a visual aid that is deeply flawed and inadequate. Aleandro's text in particular is replete with references to blindness, which could be qualified as either cause or effect, that which leads to the use of an occhiale or that which results from the continued use of a defective instrument. Conjuring imagery of light and darkness, Aleandro argues that if Stigliani fails to understand the *Adone* and to celebrate Marino's genius and glory, it is because his vision cannot tolerate such brightness: "l'ingegno lucidissimo del Marini, dal quale quanto è uscito, tutto è perfettamente chiaro: e questo parmi sia il sommo delle sue doti. E se ciò da alcuno non è veduto, la colpa non è della luce, ma di chi ha occhi di talpa" (29).[68] Echoing references by Marino himself and later, by Errico, to "goffi e pipistrelli,"[69] nocturnal creatures whose vision is not adapted to the dazzling light of the sun, Aleandro thus displaces error from the eyes of Marino to those of Stigliani. Aleandro extends the light/dark motif and further claims that Stigliani's vision has been corrupted to a point that is beyond repair, thus rending the visual aid superfluous, for "dove l'occhio dell'ingegno è dalla passione acciecato, non giovano Occhiali: e non è maraviglia, che paia scura la chiarezza della locutione" (330).[70] The "passione" to which Aleandro refers is, of course, none other than the envy and disdain that Stigliani feels toward Marino, and the authors responding to the *Occhiale* agree that the personal rivalry has blinded Stigliani's judgement or tainted the lenses through which he reads the *Adone*.

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[68] We find similar references to light, darkness, and blindness elsewhere in Aleandro: "Ma cotal detto dello Stigliani opera appunto presso à gl'intendenti quello, ch'un cieco opererebbe, se à coloro c'hanno l'uso de gli occhi persuader volesse, esser il Sole oscuro perch'egli nol vede," *Difesa*, 50; "(…) tiene la sentenza per oscura. Che direm noi, senon che'l giorno è sempre oscuro a' ciechi?" (ibid., 52-53).

[69] Errico, *L'occhiale appannato*, 4.

[70] In similar fashion, responding to Stigliani's comment about the lack of connections between various episodes, Aleandro writes: "… il senso, e l'intelletto, *i quali se corrotti non sono da reo affetto,* possono agevolmente vedere ne gli Episodi del Poema ottima connessione," *Difesa*, 17, emphasis mine.

Stigliani's jealousy is, in effect, a reoccurring theme in the responses. If the "white glass" that was used in spectacle lenses during the early modern period was "more or less colored by pollution from different substances, mostly bivalent iron, which gave the glass a greenish tinge,"[71] art certainly imitates science in the respondents' treatment of Stigliani's lenses. Be it the "falsi occhiali tinti dal verde del livore" (Aleandro 4) whose raw material is processed in the "fornace dell'Invidia per formar Occhiali Stiglianeschi" (ibid., 11), the "occhiale formato di tempra d'odio, e d'invidia" that draws Stigliani's attention to supposed flaws in the *Adone* that he otherwise overlooked in the works of others (ibid., 26), or the "occhiale acciecato" (Errico 8), the respondents break their silence before the strong bias that colors Stigliani's judgement. The image of the lenses of the "occhiale stiglianesco" tinted in the green of envy dominates the passages in which they denounce Stigliani's obvious prejudice. As Villani puts it in examining Stigliani's criticism of a particular verse, "Ne so per me vedere, come questo *notare di poma* debba, o possa rappresentarci cosa alcuna di schifo, si come pare allo Stigliano. Il che non sò, se nasca dal non usare io gli occhiali, o dallo esser verdi, e lividi i suoi" (405). As with Stigliani's *Occhiale*, the lenticular device becomes the medium of textual interpretation, and immediately after considering its necessity, he, like Aleandro and Errico before him, questions its reliability and rejects the "occhiale stiglanesco" whose green tint distorts the original text and denatures its meaning.

Reminiscent of the overall objections made before the Galilean telescope, and more specifically, to its iconoclastic discoveries, the respondents dismiss Stigliani's critical lens as an unreliable device that produces illusions or effects that are contrary to reality.[72] In a passage that follows the commentaries on unity in the *Adone* and in which Aleandro rebutes Stigliani's note about the difficulties of identifying one main character, a description of a pair of glasses creates a confusing and kaleidoscopic effect[73]: "Ma si come chi adopera quella

[71] For a discussion of composing elements of glasses that contribute to their tint, see Willach, "The Long Route," esp. 28, 32-33, 35.

[72] "Dicono che l'occhiale è caggione di quelle apparenze nella luna et di quelle stelle et pianeti non più veduti: prima, con qualche punto o inaequalità del vetro; poi, che vedendosi alcun grosso vapore da vista affatticata per mezo di lucido vetro, può facilmente apparer corpo lucido," Ottavio Brenzoni to Galileo, Letter 286, Verona, 3 April 1610, in *Opere* vol.10, 309. For an overview of the reception of the *Sidereus nuncius*, see Albert Van Helden's conclusion in Galileo, *Sidereal Messenger*, 87-113.

[73] "Se havete veduto certi occhiali, artificiosamente fatti, co'quali riguardando ogni cosa, pare che siano sei, ò otto insieme, secondo la fattura dell'occhiale. Et alcune volte, che si suol giuocare con questi, gettando in terra un giulio pare mirandolo, che siano sei, o otto, non sapendo indovinare, conoscerete chiaro, che in questo modo si possiamo vedere la

sorte d'occhiali, i quali fatti sono ad angoli e faccette, mirando con essi per esempio una moneta, gli parrà che quella moltiplichi in cento monete, così chi si lascerà ingannare dall'Occhiale Stiglianesco, stimerà fantasticamente, una cosa esser più cose, avvisandosi di vedere"(6).[74] The critical lens is therefore an untrustworthy intermediary because it completely manipulates and alters the material at hand, and rather than benefiting the knowledge of the person who uses it, it becomes a means to advance a personal agenda at the expense of the reader, the poet, and essentially, the truth. Beyond its abuse of interpretation, the occhiale fails to expose the truth because its clouded lens prohibits it from accurately observing and identifying the errors that do pervade the *Adone*. Both Errico and Villani point to questionable moments that escaped Stigliani's attention, and they reproach the critic and his instrument for these reckless oversights.[75] The matter of negligent reading is especially evident in the *Uccellatura*, whose author positions himself as a moderate observer, at a safe distance from Stigliani's devastating denegration and Aleandro's exaggerated exaltation. Reading Marino's poem with a critical eye, Villani exposes the extent of Stigliani's bias and the distorting powers of his *Occhiale*, whose lens magnifies the smallest and most petty of blemishes and minimizes those moments that are worthy of praise.[76] He chides Stigliani for stretching his interpretation of the text to a point that blatantly counters the *intentio auctoris* ("Anzi chi ben la considera, vede, si come altrove ho detto, che ella è contro la mente dello autore," 234). He intertwines both criticism and applause with regard to the *Adone* ("E voi Signore Stigliani non iscorgete questi marroni? Di si fatte cose vorrei, che mi notaste col vostro occhiale, e

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su piu Soli, si come in questa città furono veduti da tutti molti Soli, l'anno del XXVI," Alfonso di Fonte, *Le Sei giornate*, trans. Alfonso Ulloa (Venice: Domenico Farri, 1567) 76-77. Given the date of publication, the "occhiale" here refers to a pair of eyeglasses whose lenses create a kaleidoscopic effect.

[74] Aleandro evokes a similar image of a lens "fatto ad angoli" later in the *Difesa*, 321.

[75] "A.: In questa ultima cosa osservata dal Tasso, & riferita da voi peccò anco il Marino, che in un poema fatto al'uso de' Gentili, tratta del fior della passione di Christo, ma tal errore non fù visto con questo occhiale," Errico, *L'occhiale appannato*, 23; "Non vedete Signore Stigliani la maniera di quella favola? Non vedete i leggiadri furti di Marino? Un'altra volta sorbite meglio l'occhial vostro," Villani, *Uccellatura*, 63.

[76] "E intanto non voglio io difendere il Marino, che talora porterò qualche suo errore; che dallo occhiale Stiglianesco non sia stato osservato. Il quale occhiale si come molte macchie ha scoperte, le quali però fin dai luschi si vedevano; così moltissime non ne ha vedute; e quelle, che vedute ha, in maniera le ha diversificate, che basterebbe, se fusse l'occhiale del Galileo, che sessanta volte minuisce, o moltiplica l'oggetto. Perciò che le cose degne di lode le menoma egli talmente, che formiche le fa di liofanti, e le biasimevoli talmente le aggrandisce, che di un zipolo falla una lancia," Villani, *Uccellatura*, 198.

non che si sia tolto un mezzo verso, o un concettino dal Petrarca (…); cose, che non montano una frulla; et talvolta, come altrove si è detto, meritano esser lodate," Villani 234), and if he highlights the blemishes of the poem, it is less to correct Marino than it is to attack Stigliani, who performs his critical duties in a most negligent way and compromises the very integrity of the Critic.

Indeed, not only is the "occhiale" perceived as harmful to Stigliani's reputation – Aprosio bluntly challenges Stigliani's intelligence and credibility, declaring "Chi non havesse veduto l'Occhiale, non si sarebbe mai imaginato, che'l Cavaliere Stigliani fusse così poco erudito" (184) –, but it is also deterimental to the vision of the reader. "*Depravatum conspicillum arguit oculum*" (183): Aprosio's Latin phrase becomes an accurate *devise* for the destructive influence of lenses before the natural eyes. In the closing lines of Errico's *Occhiale appannato*, Signor Carlo promises Trissino that he will take a look at Stigliani's text, but states that he will not hold onto it for long: "vi ringratio del suave trattenimento, leggerò in casa aggiatamente questo occhiale, ma subito lo tornirò per tema, che non mi guasti la vista" (79). If he opts to read the book and return it in haste, he does so in the interest of preserving his eyesight, which may degenerate because of a pair of corrupt glasses.

While the threat to good eyesight may seem like ample motivation to deter readers from using the "occhiale stiglianesco," the respondents provide yet another valid reason: the "occhiale" is not a supplement, it is superfluous. In other words, it does not enhance the vision of its users – be it to correct or to expand – in any way, but instead, it brings forth that which is already known. The elements that Stigliani brings to light in Marino's poem and which he presents through his super-normative telescopic device as "enlightening" are, according to respondents, quite evident in reality. Variations of expressions relaying the idea that "anyone can see" a given point abound in the responses. These phrases range from the simple "che può ciascuno da se vedere,"[77] to statements about the self-evident nature of elements such that even those with the poorest of eyesight can perceive it.[78] Indeed, the connections that Stigliani draws are so obvious that Aleandro at one

[77] Aleandro, *Difesa*, 3, 64, 234.

[78] "Vederebbono fino i ciechi, non che quelli, che per ben vedere adoperano Occhiali, che qui si ragiona dell'ostrica, o conca, o cocchiglia, o madriperla, come dirla vogliamo," Aleandro, *Difesa*, 352; "Osserva il Signore Stigliani, che in questo verso ci sono tre metafore, ciò *roco*, *latrare*, e *morde*. Poteva avanzare di notarlo, perche chi non è talpa lo vede

point decides to give the critic a taste of his own medicine and show how ridiculous his observations really are: "*286. Spero trovar pietà, non che perdono*. M'ha fatto fi gran piacere lo Stigliani coll'insegnarmi, che questo verso è del Petrarca, ch'io son risoluto di contracambiarnelo, additandogli un mezzo verso di Virgilio, che niuno se non con immenso studio potrà rinvenire. questo si è, *Arma virumque cano*" (Aleandro 234-235). Aleandro mocks Stigliani, but in doing so, he also exposes the critic to scrutiny and reproach from readers by shedding light on the assumptions that have been made about the reader's intellect. By juxtaposing the famous Virgilian lines with the notion of "immenso studio," Aleandro suggests that in Stigliani's mind, the reader is actually completely unfamiliar with the basics of poetry.

The remarks of the other respondents about the self-evident nature of Stigliani's gloss not only decry the "occhiale" as a useless instrument, but also uncover unflattering details about the dynamic between Stigliani and the reader. Stigliani, in differentiating between the normative and the super-normative occhiale, may have been careful not to alienate his readers. His respondents, however, by showing that the instrument does nothing but reveal that which is already known under the guise of expanding the reader's knowledge, transform the relationship between Stigliani and the reader into a rather condescending one. The distorted and distorting properties of Stigliani's lens reveal the critic's superiority with respect to both poet and reader. In fact, the respondents seem to dismiss Stigliani's super-normative project altogether, characterizing his goals vis-à-vis the reader as equally normative as those the critic envisions for Marino. Any association between the telescope and a noble quest to expand knowledge is exposed as a charade, and the theoretical differences between the spectacles and the telescope are nullified, with both instruments representing an unwelcome alternative to the naked eye. For the respondents, when Stigliani assumes the role of an authority figure, he undermines the aptitude of his audience and circumscribes the reader's knowledge to a very specific boundary that conforms to his own poetic ideals.

Aleandro's discussion of Stigliani's title already paints the relationship between Stigliani and the reader as an antagonistic one, in which the critic underestimates the visual (and by extension, intellectual)

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senz'Occhiali," Approsio, *Occhiale stritolato*, 181-182; "(…) torto ha fatto al mondo, credendosi di veder egli solo con l'Occhial suo quello, che ciascuno per poco à chiusi occhi si vede," Villani, *Uccellatura,* 3-4.

faculties of the reader by imposing and enforcing the use of an ocular supplement: "*Conciosiacosa che mostri ben di tener per ignoranti, e quasi ciechi tutti coloro, i quali colleggerli non se ne avveggano: onde per iscoprir tanti, e si gran falli, faccia loro mestieri d'adoperare l'Occhiale Stiglianesco*" (a9v-a10r). Thus emerges the great tension between the instrumentalized eye, championed by Stigliani, and the natural eye, which the respondents unanimously advocate. And if they believe that the organ of sight is in itself reliable in the acquisition of knowledge, and later, of judging a piece of literature, it is because the reader's natural field of vision, and therefore intelligence, is far more vast than what Stigliani stipulates. On the subject of the *Adone's* genre, Villani attacks Stigliani with great sarcasm to challenge on the one hand his lengthy explanation about the filiation between the "romanzo' and the "eroico,"[79] and on the other hand, to question his assumptions about his readers:

> Chi credete voi, che sia tanto mellone, che ignori coteste cose? Non parlo de i letteruti pari vostri, che sete un solenne bacelliere nella scuola poetica; ma parlo etiamdio de gli scolaretti novitii, che non hanno ancora pagato la spupillatura. E crederemo, che il Marino, il quale della poesia vi harebbe letto in cattedra tutto'l tempo della vita vostra, non sapesse cotesti paradossi arcivolgari? (194-195)

By evoking the "litteruti pari vostri" and the "scolaretti novitii," with the former representing Stigliani's equals and the latter recalling the "giovani studiosi" to whom Stigliani addresses his *Occhiale*, Villani repeats the hierarchy that Stigliani had established. The knowledge and excellence of the veteran "litteruti" stands in stark contrast against the amatures who have barely registered for courses. And yet, he transforms the hierarchy by shifting expectations about the degree of knowledge possessed by the "scolaretti." By also adding the reference to Marino, he defends the poet's grasp of poetics. Marino is not an ignorant poet in need of correction, and the reader's knowledge is not so limited that the regulations of good poetic practice are invisible and inaccessible to him or her.

[79] For the distinction between the "eroico" and the "romanzo," see Sergio Zatti, *Il Modo Epico* (Bari: Laterza, 2000) 56-78. The "eroico" and the "romanzo" are defined as two epic modes following the Carolingian tales and "gesta" on the one hand, and the Arthurian tradition of quests and amorous adventures on the other. Tasso and Ariosto are cited as modern examples of each. Zatti also states that more traditional critics, with their dependence on Aristotelian poetics, exhibited a greater preference for the "eroico." On the question of genre more generally, Weinberg comments that "when the genre was an old one, such as tragedy, all that was needed was an application of the recognized standards; but when it was a new one, such as the romance or the tragicomedy, critics had to decide to what ancient genre the new one was mostly analogous and to what extent known criteria might be extended to it," *History of Criticism*, 808. The question of the *Adone'*s genre was an obvious a point of contention, and many of the challenges of the Cinquecento, about how to classify a work whose form and content eluded established categories, continued to play out in the Seicento as well.

The respondents hold the reader in much greater esteem, and not only do they value his/her judgement, they consider it *the* ultimate judgement, recalling Larry Norman's comments about affect as an alternative to analysis as a way to experience literature. According to the respondents, the reader's natural eye does not require any aid or alteration, be it to understand the work of literature or to recognize the inaccurate insinuations being spewed by Marino's rival. Errico opposes Stigliani's occhiale to the naked eye of Signor Carlo, a potential reader, with Trissino affirming that "se questi son errori del Marino, o malignità (per non dir altro), dell'oppositore, voi Signor Carlo senza adoperar tanti occhiali ben vedete" (60). The reader's natural vision is declared superior to Stigliani's artificial vision aid, and the other respondents enthusiastically endorse this dynamic. If an envious Stigliani cannot appreciate "la bellezza de' versi" of Marino's poem, "per lo contrario il cuore *d'ogni* galant huomo di nobil maraviglia dolcemente inebriano" (Aleandro 32, emphasis mine); if "in vano s'adira l'Occhialista con le sue regole Poetiche (…) dicendo, che son tutt'una, numero, metro, e misura," "ogn'uno senza il suo occhiale vede, che son cose tutte differenti" (Errico 56-57); and if Stigliani's words seek to destroy the poem, "l'orecchie almeno de'galant'huomini, i quali sanno molto ben discernere il canto dal gracchiare, il buon'oro della falsa alchimia, la luce dalle tenebre," (Aleandro 2-3) will render it triumphant. The senses become the real arbitrator and are deemed legitimate in their ability to discern beyond the petty and pompous veil of Stigliani's gloss. The value and success of a piece of literature are not determined by the judgment of the academic or literary critic, but by the reaction of the general public. The same "communal popolo" based on whom Stigliani built his case against the *Adone*, reproaching the poem's arcane nature that supposedly lay beyond the comprehension of the reading public, transforms, in the works of the respondents, into the measure of achievement. As Errico's Trissino explains:

> che un'opera fabricata dall'industria umana, per diletto de gli huomini, più degno giudice della sua perfettione, che il consentimento di quelli haver non puote (…). Si che in vano parla l'oppositore comparandolo al Sissa, ò al Vanetti, ò s'affanna in fabricar indici, & tavole delle parole non approvate da lui, perche il vero paragone della Poesia è l'applauso commune, consistendo la perfettione dell'arte Poetica più nella prattica, che nella speculatione, & per andare ad immortalarsi in Parnaso, non solo basta haver visto nel Mappamondo, dove questo monte sia posto, ma è necessario haver prattica, & cognitione delle vie, & monete di giudicio da spendere per la strada. (42-43)

The "applauso commune" becomes the scale by which the merit of a poet is assessed, and Errico further develops the opposition between critic and reader by interpreting it as a discrepancy between a theoretical or a practical approach to literature, which in turn corresponds to the tension between the mediated and the

natural eye. The dynamic he envisions between the intellectual critic or academic and the reader is quite distinct from what we observed in Stigliani's *Occhiale*. Stigliani may not devalorize the reader in the same way he does the poet, but he does place the public below himself in matters of knowledge regarding poetic guidelines, good poetry, and good taste. Errico's statement bestows much greater authority to the reader and makes him a critic in his own right. He literally brings acclaim back down to earth: it is no longer granted from the ivory tower or lectern at the top of Mount Parnassus, but based on a more grounded experience of a dynamic literary terrain. It is not the rigid framework of a given theoretical text on poetics that ought to determine the success of a poem, and as such, the poem does not exist as an abstract entity before it crystallizes on paper. The work of literature is accorded the freedom to explore and experiment, and the reaction it sollicts among its audience is what will speak to its victory. Aleandro echoes similar sentiments in his *Difesa* when he calls Stigliani a "rigido maestro" whose obstinate adherence to grammatrical rules does not allow for a fair judgement of the *Adone*'s accomplishments. Contrary to all of Stigliani's claims about the *Adone*'s illegibility and unpopularity, Aleandro portrays a public that has fully embraced and exhalted the work, and he concludes that "finalmente l'applauso del mondo è quello, che fa i poeti autorevoli" (61-62). With the critics' choice being overturned in favor of the peoples' choice, the natural reading experience emerges as victor over the instrumentalized one.

It may strike us as surprising that Stigliani's opponents, who demand more ample space for innovation in literature, are also those who endorse the natural eye over technological inventions, while Stigliani, as a traditional and classicizing authority, embraces the optical devices in his critique. Rather than equate technology with enhancement and novelty, Aleandro, Errico, Villani, and Aprosio see it as a mechanism of control and restriction. Regardless of the distinction that exists in the *Occhiale* between the normative and super-normative lenses, the respondents see the device as a uniquely normative vehicle, one that calibrates and codifies the interpretation of the reader and tunes it according to the standards of the official institutions and academies. The natural eye, on the other hand, represents a liberation from this mechanization of vision, allowing for greater autonomy in one's approach to text. Less than a decade after the publication of Stigliani's *Occhiale* and the initiation of this debate in Italy, another polemic would erupt across

the Alps that would draw on visual experiences in order to judge Pierre Corneille's tragicomedy, *Le Cid*. This time, however, the instrument also falls into the hands of the *Académie Française*, producing a radically different outcome.

Chapter 8.
"Contentement Raisonnable":
Toward the Rationalization of the Eye in the Querelle du *Cid*

> Je ne dois qu'à moy seul toute ma Renommée,
> Et pense toute fois n'avoir point de rival
> A qui je fasse tort en le traitant d'égal.[1] (321)

While these verses may resonate with those of a great warrior, or echo the lines uttered in *Le Cid* by the character of Don Diègue,[2] the father of the play's protagonist, Rodrigue, they are not expressed by a fictional figure, but by Corneille himself. Though just as the list of military accomplishments was unable to shield Don Diègue from the words and insults his rival, Corneille's words of self-praise, rather than extend his glory, instigated harsh critical responses. The Querelle du *Cid* erupted in the winter of 1637, but the strong reactions and objections did not immediately follow the play's representation or publication, but rather, ensued after the dramatist wrote his "autobiographie sentimentale et littéraire," *Excuse à Ariste*.[3] In the letter, Corneille describes the love that inspired him to write, considers himself too talented to be a simple writer of "chansons," and he takes into account the conditions under which writers must work.[4] Dissatisfied with the little compensation he had received for his accomplishment, Corneille wrote the *Excuse à Ariste* in part out of retaliation, and he used this text as a platform to flaunt his skills as a dramatic poet, using the great success of his play to furbish his own image. Thus, it was Corneille's haughtiness, and not his play, that opened the floodgates and resulted in the outpour of texts – almost forty documents – against or in favor of *Le Cid* and

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[1] Unless noted otherwise, all quotes from the primary texts of the Querelle du *Cid* are taken from the critical edition compiled by Jean-Marc Civardi, *La Querelle du* Cid (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004). Attributions of various anonymous texts to specific authors are derived from this edition as well.

[2] "Pour s'instruire d'exemple, en dépit de l'envie,/Il lira seulement l'histoire de ma vie./ Là, dans un long tissu de belles actions,/Il verra comme il faut dompter des nations,/ Attaquer une place, ordonner une armée,/ Et sur de grands exploits bâtir sa renommée," Corneille, *Le Cid* in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Georges Couton, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard/Pléiade), I.3.185-190.

[3] Jean-Marc Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid,* 290.

[4] For the professionalization of writers in France and the development of their autonomy over the course of the seventeenth century, see Alain Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985).

its author. In a great reversal, and initiated by his own hubris, the recently ennobled author of this publically acclaimed play found himself living out his own real-life tragicomedy.[5]

The Querelle du *Cid* is about *Le Cid* only in appearance, or at least, in part. On the one hand, it is spurred by the scandal of Corneille's letter and what it meant for literary practice, and on the other hand, by the scandal of the play and what it meant for dramatic poetry. In other words, with *Excuse à Ariste* and the statement about his poetic prowess, Corneille entangled himself in two related debates, the consequences of which far transcended the short-lived duration of the polemic: the first having to do with the notion of the public and its legitimacy, and the other, with regularity. The two concepts have been articulated at length by literary scholars and through a variety of approaches, and while the specificities of these arguments are less relevant to this study, they do nonetheless merit a brief survey to help us situate *Le Cid* and the Querelle in their social, cultural, and literary context. By writing the *Excuse à Ariste*, by taking full credit for the success of the play, and by crowning the play's audience as sole arbitrator in judging its merit, Corneille, as Hélène Merlin and Christian Jouhaud have remarked, violated the traditions of the Republic of Letters, a legitimizing body whose members formed a sort of confraternity that was responsible for reviewing and commenting on the works of peers.[6] By skipping this intermediary step and dethroning his fellow poets, Corneille fueled their ire, which resulted in a new strategy on their part:

> The restoration of Aristotle's rules, or what one presented as such (…) ought to permit one, despite the promiscuity of the shared spectacle, to divide the public into three groups. The learned (*les doctes*) are initiated by their knowledge of the rules into the secrets of representation. The cultivated folk (*honnêtes gens*) are capable of being moved by the correct effects of the regulated theater even though they do not always perceive its reasons. The populace is incapable of understanding, feeling, or being touched; tragedy makes them laugh.[7]

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[5] In his examination of the relationship between literature and power, Christian Jouhaud also compares the polemic to a "sort of theatricalized spectacle on the public stage in which questions of the theater are treated," "Power and Literature: The Terms of the Exchange 1624-1642," in *Administration of Aesthetics: Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere*, trans. Mary-Ann Quinn, ed. Richard Burt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 40. Also see Hélène Merlin, *Public et littérature en France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1994) 162, 202-203.

[6] Hélène Merlin has developed this idea more generally in her study, and within the context of the *Querelle* specifically. See *Public et littérature*, esp. ch. 5. According to Merlin, for Scudéry, Corneille's public success and his claim to glory independently of the praise of his fellow poets represented a threat to the Republic of Letters, and Scudéry used this act of tyranny to undermine his rival's legitimacy (160-170). These ideas are echoed by Christian Jouhaud, who addresses Corneille's rupture with the "friendly and professional solidarities of literary men" (38), "Power and Literature," esp. 38-42. Also see Civardi, who contrasts the views of Scudéry as a representative of the Republic of Letters to those of the new public being created. *Querelle du* Cid, 145.

[7] Christian Jouhaud, "Power and Literature," 41.

Jouhaud's description provides a clear synopsis of the circumstances. We see the power of judgement shift from an elite group of learned individuals to an emerging entity whose interests are more *mondains* than *savants*. We also take note of the fact that "public" is not synonymous with "populace," and that those who made up the *parterre* of the theater were not from the popular stratum of society.[8]

In this passage, Jouhaud also touches upon another element, that of regularity and rules, which constitutes the second part of the larger debate of the Querelle. Rules and regulations, Jouhaud seems to suggest, appear as a means of preserving the place of the *doctes*, those representatives of the Republic of Letters, within the new hierarchy of the "public." If they alone cannot be made judge, then they will shape the ways by which the burgeoning body of the *honnêtes gens* comes to understand and appreciate literature. They will condition their knowledge and their taste.[9] It is also noteworthy that the concept of regularity is not systematically applied in the early seventeenth century. The audience, as Jean-Marc Civardi has observed, is not necessarily familiar or affected by the conventions of dramatic poetry, and it is precisely those elements of the tragicomedy considered "irregular" that most pleased them.[10] Among the practitioners and theorists, many actively and consciously promoted "irregularity," including Georges de Scudéry, who figures in the

[8] On the organization of groups in both society (la cour/la ville) and in theater (la galerie/ parterre), see Erich Auerbach's essay "La Cour et la Ville," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 133-179. Although focused on the second half of the seventeenth century, Auerbach studies the groups that populate each of these spaces to demonstrate their heterogeneity. He also demonstrates that the *parterre* is not filled by the "peuple," but rather, by a largely bourgeois audience (150-151), and he cautions against equating "ville" and "peuple" (137), showing instead that the *ville* includes places like salons, which become alternative spaces to the court; On the transformation of the *savant* from the model of the Renaissance humanist to that of the *honnête homme* or the *mondain* of the seventeenth century, see Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*; On the emergence of a public and the various meanings of this notion in the seventeenth century, see Merlin, *Public et littérrature*. Also see Jouhaud, "Power and Literature."

[9] For new editorial and publishing practices and strategies to cater to a new audience, see Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, esp. ch. 4 "La formation des publics," 123-172. In another study, Jacques Morel, who opposes the *doctes* and the *gout mondain* (17), lists the various types of texts such as prefaces and treatises, that were used in the formation of the *honnêtes gens*. Once more, the "peuple" is excluded from this training as it goes to theater only for amusement rather than for any cultural motivation. "Les conditions de la critique théâtrale," in *Actes de Las Vegas: Théorie dramatique, Théophile de Viau, les contes de fées: actes du XXII colloque de la North American Society for Seventeenth Century French Literature, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1-3 mars*, ed. Marie-France Hilgar (Paris; Seattle: Papers on Seventeenth-Century Literature, 1991) 13-18. On the proliferation of prefaces as well as the creation of new public spaces, see Civardi, *La Querelle du* Cid, 217.

[10] Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid*, 360-363. Civardi also demonstrates that the modern genre of the tragicomedy, practiced by both Scudéry and Corneille, privileged irregularity and delight over the regularity and instruction of the old tragedy (ibid., 225-226).

Querelle as Corneille's main adversary and detractor, and even those concepts that are characterized as the bastions of classical doctrine, like imitation, were used by them to advance their literary project.[11]

Unlike the Italian polemic, whose hostilities were limited to a handful of figures, the cast of characters in the Querelle du *Cid* is vast and varied. Even though the quarrel occurs during Corneille's lifetime, his intervention in the polemic is minimal, and only three of the documents, *Excuse à Ariste*, a rondeau, and a *Lettre apologitique* are firmly attributed to him.[12] The *Excuse à Ariste*, and therefore Corneille's role in the polemic, is essentially that of a catalyst that prompts and expedites critical responses to a play that had initially been met with high praise. The debate includes some of the major figures of the period, like fellow dramatists Georges de Scudéry and Jean de Mairet; members of the Académie Française, like Jean Chapelain and Guez de Balzac; Richelieu's invisible hand; the writer and theologian Jean-Pierre Camus; the novelists Paul Scarron and Charles Sorel; in addition to a number of anonymous voices. The content of the documents is equally diverse because of the angle from which they choose to introduce themselves into the dialogue and the social or cultural group with which they choose to identify. Writing as or on behalf of the *doctes*, the *honnêtes gens*, or the *bourgeois*, some criticize the author, others criticize the work; some turn their words against the critics, and against Scudéry in particular, while others approach the debate with a more

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[11] In an essay examining the notion of imitation as it relates to the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable* in the seventeenth century, Georges Forestier demonstrates that the dynamic and differentiation between the two terms was important to the partisans of regularity as well as to the defenders of irregularity. The same concept, he argues, was interpreted in different ways, and especially in its relationship to the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable*, to advance two different agendas. "(…) dans les deux camps, les mêmes concepts sont à l'œuvre, mais qu'ils sont compris dans un sens tout à fait opposé. Ainsi, pour les irréguliers, tout peut et doit être imité au théâtre: le poète dramatique ne doit se limiter ni dans le nombre d'actions mises sur la scène, ni dans la durée, ni dans le nombre de lieux. Et ceci au nom de l'imitation." "Imitation parfaite et vraisemblable absolue: Réflexions sur un paradoxe classique," *Poétique* 82 (1990), 189. Also see p. 190 for a discussion of irregularity.

[12] Although some of the texts comprising the *Querelle du Cid* are signed, others have been attributed while some still remain anonymous or unattributed as their authorship has not yet been determined. For a discussion of attributions and their history see Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid*. Corneille's true response is considered to appear decades later, in his *Avertissement* of the 1648 edition of *Le Cid*, and later, in his *Examen du* Cid of 1660 as well as the modifications applied to the play by its author. For a summary, see Eveline Dutertre, *Scudéry, théoricien du classicisme* (Paris; Seattle: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1991) 44-47. Christian Jouhaud's analysis of *Horace*, the first play written by Corneille following the quarrel, also demonstrates that the playwright was already adapting a different approach, both stylistically and with respect to the bodies of power, namely the Académie Française and Richelieu. See "L'écrivain et le ministre: Corneille et Richelieu," in *XVIIe Siècle* 182 (1994) : 135-142. Also see Civardi's Conclusion, in *La Querelle du* Cid, 265-270.

reconciliatory tone. There are those who provide a thorough analysis of the play to either counter or support the criticism, and others whose contribution is of a satirical or parodic nature.

Like Stigliani and the two parts of his *Occhiale*, those who attacked *Le Cid* did so by highlighting the flaws on both major and minor levels, from bigger structural issues to the minutia of individual verses. In fact, the objections raised against Corneille's play also strongly resonate with those that Stigliani raised in his text, and for good reason, as many of those involved in the Querelle, from Scudéry to Chapelain, were not only familiar with the various Italian polemics that marked the Cinquecento, but actively looked to Italian commentaries of the Ancients as a source of their knowledge of those works.[13] Corneille, like Marino, was accused of plagiarism, and his role as creator of the play was subject to discussion. The existence of the Spanish literary source, Guillén de Castro's *Las Mocedeades del Cid* of 1618, did not escape anyone's attention, and Corneille's contribution was oftentimes viewed as a translation rather than an invention by both critics and proponents. It comes as little surprise, then, if the lines "je ne dois qu'à moy seul toute ma Renommée" in Corneille's *Excuse* struck a chord with some of his readers, and the first response to his letter, attributed to the dramatist Jean de Mairet, focuses on the question of authorship and authenticity. Written under an ironic pseudonym of Don Balthazar de la Verdad and bearing the title *L'Auteur du vrai* Cid *espagnol,* the text equates translation with plagiarism, reproaches Corneille for his arrogance, and uses Corneille's own words against him to expose the playwright as a fraud: "(…) & mon Cid fera foy/ Que le tien luy devoit toute sa renommée" (334). Georges the Scudéry, who is the principal critic in this polemic, also denounces the text as

[13] Various studies have been published on the connection between Italian and French letters in the early seventeenth century. See Colbert Searles, "Italian Influences as Seen in the Sentiments of the French Academy on the Cid," *Romanic Review* 3 (1912) 362 -390. Searles provides a list of Italian books in Chapelain's possession and provides a comparison between their content and that of Chapelain's commentaries in the *Sentiments de l'Académie Française*. The texts of the *Adone* polemic do not appear on the list, though Chapelain wrote the French preface to *L'Adone*'s first edition, which was published in Paris. Eveline Dutertre's study on Scudéry emphasizes his reliance on Italian sources as a means to show that the writer and critic, who did not know Latin or Greek, was a very different breed of "savant" as compared to the humanists of the sixteenth century. See *Scudéry théoricien du classicisme*, 7-8. Civardi also makes note of the role of modern sources and commentaries as a gateway to the writings of the Ancients, and comments on how French writers relied on the Italians. See *La Querelle du Cid*, 167 and 356 (on Scudéry), 171 (on Durval), 186 (on Chapelain's preface to Marino's *L'Adone*), and especially 243-246 ("Le retard par rapport à l'Italie"). In these later pages, Civardi makes reference to the polemic around Marino and suggests that Richelieu was aware of these debates (144). On the importance of the Italian Renaissance for seventeenth-century French writers, also see Emmanuel Bury, "Frontières du classicisme," in "La Périodisation de l'âge classique," edited by Jean Rohou, *Littératures Classiques* 34 (1998), 222, 230-231.

heavily plagiarized, recognizing Guillén de Castro as the true author (373) and even providing a long list, in his *Observations sur le* Cid, of instances of literary theft or "larcins" (422-429).

That the play's origins are traced to Spain is problematic on two other levels. As a literary model, and in the theatrical domain especially, the material from the Iberian peninsula was frowned upon for its irregularity.[14] Secondly, as a story based on historical events, it brought the debate on the relationship between history and literature, between the truth (*le vrai*) and the verisimilar (*le vraisemblable*), to the forefront.[15] The premise of the play is simple enough. It is set in the political frame of the Castilian monarchy, with Rodrigue and Chimène as two star-crossed lovers: boy and girl fell in love, but their fathers despise each other. Boy kills girl's father in order to defend *his* father's honor, girl must seek boy's death to avenge *her* father, but of course, they are still madly in love. Amidst this political and personal conflict, boy becomes a national hero, the *Cid*, after defeating the Moorish invaders, and in the end, the love story is resolved when King Ferdinand predicts that the two will eventually marry in the near future. The marriage of the two lovers, though historically accurate, provoked a strong reaction from the critics, who argued that the idea of a woman marrying her father's assassin was dishonorable and contrary to the rules of *vraisemblance* and *bienséance* alike; that theatre, like literature, was meant to show things as they ought to be in order to fulfill its moral and didactic function. The play, far from punishing vice, seemed instead to reward it, and as such, it deviated from the very goal of dramatic poetry. In addition to its failure to adhere to the most basic rules of verisimilitude and moral instruction, the play exhibited yet another fundamental oversight, which amplified all the more its disrespect for verisimilitude: the unity of time.[16] Stigliani may have criticized Marino's lengthy poem with its endless digressions, but as a poem, it was not bound by the rule of the two suns, and its actions were free to

[14] See Civardi, *Querelle du Cid*, 170 and 243. Emmanuel Bury, in his examination of French classicism, briefly discusses the Spanish Siglo de Oro and how its principles differ from those underlying the French literary tradition of the same period. See "Frontières du classicisme," 223.

[15] See Forestier, "Imitation parfaite," 189. Forestier problematizes the relationship of these two elements with regard to imitation, showing how imitation is linked to the *vraisemblable* for those who aspire to write "regular plays," whereas those advocating for irregularity align imitation with the *vrai*.

[16] Already in 1630, Chapelain had written on the unity of time in his *Lettre sur la règle des vingt-quatre heures*. Within the polemic, Durval, in his *Discours à Cliton sur* Les Observations du Cid, *avec un traité de la disposition du poème dramatique et de la prétendue règle des vingt-quatre heures*, includes a treatise that addresses the topic. Forestier considers this latter to be "le plus important traité anti-régulier de l'époque." "Imitation parfaite," 189.

unfold beyond the span of twenty-four hours. As a theatrical piece, Corneille's *Le Cid*, on the other hand, was also scrutinized for breaking this particular rule.

As with the Italian polemics, we find ourselves before a set of criteria by which a piece of literature is to be judged, a set of criteria that is not, however, unanimously accepted. In the words of Christian Jouhaud, "le débat sur la question de savoir qui ou quoi garantit la valeur d'une œuvre était l'enjeu central de la querelle du Cid."[17] Once again, among those who criticized the work, conventions based on Aristotelian poetics defined the standard or the norm against which the quality of the work was measured. Those who chastised Corneille for his shortcomings and for his deviations with respect to these standards, and who wished to counter the spectator's favorable impressions of the performance by way of their rigorous reading, parallel Stigliani's attitudes and ambitions regarding Marino's poem. As with the previous chapter, the "critic's lens" will form one of the major threads of the analysis here, and though the voices against Corneille and his play are many, Scudéry will receive special attention because of his substantial contribution to the debates. The second thread looks at those authors who, much like Stigliani's respondents, reject the critic's claims and the Aristotlian principles along with it, and who, instead, advocate for the natural, direct, and affective response of the audience to the play. Indeed, the notion of the "applauso commune" or "common applause" that stood in contrast to the critic's norms and conventions in the polemic around *L'Adone* also appears in the Querelle du *Cid*. The French polemic, however, introduces another element, which will be our third thread: to the judgement of the individual critic and that of the public, we also add that of a rising official institution, the Académie Française.

As with the previous chapter, it is the references to optical devices and visual experiences that will guide our interpretation of the Querelle. While most scholars have considered vision and visuality with regard to matters of verisimilitude (especially based on references in the text to painterly practices), or of theatrical representation or illusion, discussions of the visual experience or of optical instruments are rather uncommon, if not entirely absent. The interdisciplinary study by Françoise Siguret on theater in early seventeenth-century France – as text, representation, and space – combines an examination of art,

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[17] Jouhaud, "L'écrivain et le ministre," 136.

architecture, and optics to address the question of perception.[18] The primary focus of the book with regard to optics, however, is on the depiction of the eye, whose structure is compared to that of a theatrical piece, and on the notion of perspective and its distortion as a regulating and organizational principle. Even though her work is situated in the first half of the seventeenth century, she mentions neither the telescope nor the transformations of the visual experience based on the instrument's invention. More recently, Jean-Marc Civardi has transposed Siguret's thoughts to the Querelle in his critical edition of its texts. Citing explicit comparisons in the works of seventeenth-century writers and observing the flexibility of spelling and language in his analysis of theatrical representation, Civardi connects the word "desseins," as it relates to the dramaturge, to the pictorial "dessins," thus emphasizing the similarities between painting and theater, between "dramaturgie" and "pratiques picturales et graphiques," especially as they related to order and regularity.[19] The exception to such a treatment of vision as dependent on painting and perspective is Clotilde Thouret's brief article, "Voir, juger, découvrir: la place du regard dans la Querelle du *Cid*," which offers a valuable examination of the act of seeing in the debates. Thouret rightfully draws a connection between seeing and judging, and she accurately remarks that there are different modes of vision operating on the two sides of the debate, each with very different value.[20] She equates the eye's vulnerability to being fooled or misled with passivity on the one hand, and its ability to be moved by representations and to draw connections between the stage and real experience with activity on the other.[21] Her analysis therefore draws a contrast between the passive eye of the critics, with Scudéry and the Académie as the two framing figures, and the active eye of the respondents and proponents of public applause. Finally, she comments on how this passivity, initially considered dangerous because of the spectators' potential exposure to vice and morally

[18]See Françoise Siguret, *L'Œil surpris: Perception et représentation dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993).

[19] See *La Querelle du* Cid, 254-257.

[20] See Clotilde Thouret, "Voir, juger, découvrir: la place du regard dans la Querelle du *Cid*," in "L'œil classique," eds. Tom Conley and Sylvaine Guyot, *Littératures Classiques* 82, no. 3 (2013): 99-111.

[21] Echoing the distinction between the passive and active eye is Françoise Siguret's analysis of "voir" and "regarder." See *L'Œil surpris*, 30-34.

questionable content, is embraced by the Académie, who instead recognizes it as a valuable opportunity to communicate moral teachings through imperceptible channels.

Thouret's distinction between a passive and active eye may recall to some degree my own differentiation between the instrumentalized and natural one, yet they are not entirely identical. Furthermore, though she acknowledges the importance of developments in optics as part of the context of the debates on two occasions, stating that "leurs élaborations théoriques s'appuient sur un savoir optique nouveau, ou plutôt sur un certain usage de ce savoir, puisqu'il se trouve placé dans l'orbite du pouvoir et inscrit dans une hiérarchie sociale claire," and that "de façon un peu surprenante, la modernité scientifique ne se trouve pas du côté de la modernité poétique,"[22] she does not elaborate on the "savoir optique nouveau" or the "modernité scientifique." As we have seen with scholarship on the Italian polemics, the history of optics and of its instruments is relegated to the background as a faint ornament and only mentioned in cursory fashion without further investigation of what those developments are or how they may impact the visual experience, and therefore, why their consideration may be of importance in the analysis of the acts of seeing in the texts in which they appear. There are certainly a number of deeply-woven connections between Thouret's analysis and my own, though my emphasis on cultivating a stronger dialogue between the literature and its scientific context also allows for some considerations that nuance those that emerge from the contrast between a "passive" and an "active" eye. While explicit mentions of optical devices are scarce in the Querelle when compared to the texts of the Italian polemic, the analytical or instrumentalized reading of the critic and the affective reaction or "natural eye" of the spectator persist across the Alps. One difference, however, is the addition of the Académie Française. The institution does not introduce a new type of visual experience, but rather, favors the existing instrumentalized mode while using it to a different means. If the object, at the level of individuals – whatever their status or reputation – serves first an epistemological and then an aesthetic function, in the hands of the Académie, it also acquires a political dimension to rationalize the sense of sight and inaugurate a very different kind of relationship between literature and power.

[22] Thouret, "Voir, juger, découvrir," 108 and 111.

The Instrumentalized Eye of the Critic

Motivated in part by a sense of resentment and rivalry and in part by a sense of obligation to uphold the rules of good dramatic creation and to protect the Republic of Letters, Scudéry's *Observations sur le* Cid was the first document to offer a meticulous critical reading of the play, even if it was preceded by Mairet's *L'Auteur du vrai* Cid. Though published anonymously, Scudéry was quickly unmasked, and he acknowledged his authorship in his letter to the Académie Française (*Lettre de M. de Scudéry à l'illustre Académie*) in which he directly solicited the involvement of the recently established institution and its members. In addition to these two texts, Scudéry also authored the *Preuve des passages allégués dans les* Observations sur le Cid *à Messieurs de l'Académie*, in which he drew on sixteenth-century Italian writers and polemics and cross-referenced Aristotle's *Poetics* to further highlight the errors committed by the author of the *Cid*. Finally, he penned a number of letters, one addressed to the *Académie Française* after it rendered its judgement, and another to Guez de Balzac, who had himself written to Scudéry on the matter. As the most vocal and assertive of the critics, it is his texts that we will primarily focus on here, all the while drawing from others that echoed his sentiments against Corneille and his play.

Just as Stigliani exposed his method in the early pages of his *Occhiale* (his "sperienza" that sought to expose the hidden pillars and secret pins of *L'Adone*), so we find Scudéry, whose approach is reminiscent of Descartes' search for absolute truths in his *Discours de la méthode* (1637). Like Descartes, Scudéry uses the image of demolition, claiming that he, too, will immediately aim for the foundational elements rather than take the structure apart column by column (372) as he works on building his own sturdy argument against *Le Cid*.[23] If, for Descartes, that unshakable foundation is the *cogito*, for Scudéry, the grounds upon which the Republic of Letters is built is "le sentiment d'Aristote, & celuy de tous les Sçavans qui l'on suivy, establit pour maxime indubitable, que l'invention est la principale partian [sic], & du Poete, & du Poème" (ibid.). While

[23] "Il est vrai que nous ne voyons point qu'on jette par terre toutes les maisons d'une ville, pour le seul dessin de les refaire d'autre façon, et d'en rendre les rues plus belles; mais on voit bien que plusieurs font abattre les leurs pour les rebâtir, et que même quelquefois ils y sont contrait, quand elles sont en danger, de tomber d'elles-mêmes, et que les fondements n'en sont pas bien fermes. (…) A l'exemple de quoi je me persuadai (….) que, pour toutes les opinions que j'avais reçues jusques alors en ma créances, je ne pouvais mieux faire que d'entreprendre une bonne fois de les en ôter, afin d'y en remettre par après, ou d'autres meilleurs, ou bien les mêmes, lorsque je les aurais ajustées au niveau de la raison," René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode,* ed. Fréderic de Buzon (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 86.

relying on the authority of the Ancients may seem like a hindrance or challenge when discussing the tragicomedy, Scudéry does not waver from his mission, and uses the existing precepts of the comedy and the tragedy to codify the modern genre.[24] The foundational notion of invention, in turn, allows him to address Corneille's role as the creator of the play (he is nothing but a translator and a thief) and to also discuss the opposition between the *vrai* and the *vraisemblable*, the truth of history and the verisimilitude of literature.

As he outlines his objections to Corneille's play, Scudéry makes a promise to show that the work is essentially plagiarized, but he also makes a second declaration:

> Je n'auray pas plus de peine, à prouver qu'il choque les principales Regles Dramatiques, & j'espere le faire avoüer à tous ceux qui voudront se souvenir apres moy, qu'entre toutes les regles dont je parle, celle qui sans doute est la plus importante, & comme la fondamentale de tout l'Ouvrage, est celle de la vraysemblance. (375)

Reinforcing the architectural image and the place of verisimilitude as a foundational element of poetic creation, this statement reveals three additional, and related, characteristics of Scudéry's text and attitude. The first element is his insistence on regularity. The earlier period of Scudéry's career, the one that preceded the Querelle, placed him on the side of the "irregulars." Over time, however, Scudéry began to gravitate more and more toward regularity, and Eveline Dutertre, who sees in Scudéry a theorist of classicism, traces his transformation and his adherence to regularity over the course of his career. Identifying the publication of the *Observations* as a turning point, she remarks that "pour se conformer aux règles qu'il y a énoncées, Scudéry change de manière et, renonçant à l'inspiration baroque de ses premières tragi-comédies, il s'efforce d'écrire des pièces regulières."[25] As such, when Scudéry lists his objections to the liberties taken by Corneille in *Le Cid*, namely:

> Que le Subjet n'en vaut rien du tout,
> Qu'il choque les principales regles du Poème Dramatique,
> Qu'il manque de jugement en sa conduite,
> Qu'il a beaucoup de meschans vers,
> Que presque tout ce qu'il a de beautez sont derrobees. (372)

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[24] On Scudéry and his alignment with the "Modernes," see Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid*, 247-248.

[25] Dutertre, *Scudéry théoricien du classicisme*, 9. Forestier also identifies the publication of the *Observations* as a turning point for Scudéry, "Imitation parfaite," 190. Also see Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid*, 170-172 for Sucdéry's "evolution."

he argues, according to Dutertre, at least in the first three complaints, in favor of "les grandes règles 'classiques'."[26] In other words, we see, in Scudéry's text and in the reasons he provides as the basis of his criticism, the regularity of classicism emerging in reaction to the irregularity that Corneille's supporters will attempt to uphold.[27]

The poet, however is not the unique addressee of this theorization of the dramatic poem. In a rogue move in his *Excuse à Ariste*, Corneille transported his play beyond the boundaries of the Republic of Letters and thus eliminated the judgement of its members as intermediary. Instead, he bestowed this task directly upon those who attended his play.[28] Scudéry's role, in addition to correcting the poet, is also to guide and shape – both train and define – this audience. In the passage cited above, he draws a clear distinction between his own knowledge and that of his readers: if he is to make them recognize the play's deviation from the established conventions, he therefore assumes no prior knowledge on the part of the reader. There is also the temporal relationship ("tout ceux qui voudront se souvenir apres moy") that situates Scudéry in the role of predecessor, as one who plays a key part in generating or transferring knowledge to those who follow, much like Béroalde's *Moyen de parvenir*, which offered itself as a guidebook or a medium to its readers. The pedagogical lineage envisioned by Scudéry is made more explicit in the subsequent pages: "Aussi ces Grands Maistres anciens, qui m'ont appris ce que je monstre icy à ceux qui l'ignorent" (376). As a student, Scudéry takes the word of the Ancients as the standard or criterion by which a work should be created and also judged.[29] As a teacher, he shares them with those who are not familiar with the precepts so that they, too, will

[26] Dutertre, *Scudéry théoricien du classicisme*, 10.

[27] See Civard, *La Querelle du* Cid, 236-237. Although initially reticent to adopt the two labels "Baroque" and "Classical," Civardi acknowledges the dichotomy, placing Scudéry, Mairet, and Chapelain on the side of the latter, and Corneille and Durval on the side of the former. He does, however, caution that this delineation simplifies the situation, as there are several areas of overlap between the two, at least in this moment in France's literary history. For an analysis of the crossovers between the two aesthetics during these decades of the seventeenth century, see Bury, "Frontières du classicisme." Rather than define classicism as a strict historical moment or aesthetic, Bury proposes to consider it as a process instead, with the various literary polemics marking the phases in its maturation.

[28] "Corneille avance ainsi, de façon cohérente, une nouvelle souveraineté fondée, elle, sur l'élection – le succès, le plaisir –du *public*," Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 168.

[29] See Civardi, "Notice" preceding the text of *La Preuve* in *La Querelle du* Cid, 691- 696. Civardi draws on a number of sources to emphasize the critic's relationship to the authority of the Ancients, to the humanist tradition, and to the writers of sixteenth-century Italy. Also see Dutertre, *Scudéry théoricien du classicisme*, 12-13. Dutertre also observes that in

be in a position to observe and evaluate.

Scudéry, like Stigliani, fashions himself as a learned scholar who possesses knowledge of literary conventions. The "data norma," however, is not as clearly "given" in the France of the 1630s, where, as we have seen, regularity still exists alongside irregularity, and where the prevalence of those regular conventions are only in the process of unfolding.[30] As a representative of the Republic of Letters, Scudéry sees himself as the keeper of a body of knowledge that escapes his audience, for had they been in possession of the rules that he applies to the analysis of *Le Cid*, they would not have been fooled, and they would not have held it in such high esteem. If the true form of Corneille's poem escapes the knowledge and understanding of most readers or spectators, it is because their collective experience based on the natural eye does not extend beyond the pleasure of the performance.[31] Instead, Scudéry, as the *savant*, shares the results of his privileged or private reading experiment with the readers so that the individual recognition of the poem's flaws might become a new, and more accurate, collective experience. The critic, who knows that there is valuable information beyond the readers' field of vision, presents his findings by way of his critical *Observations*, following in the footsteps of Stigliani with his *Occhiale* or the Optometrist and his new telescopes in the fourth dialogue of Valdes's text.

The visual mode that Scudéry espouses, and the one that those who supported his position reiterate, appears in the opening lines of his anonymous *Observations sur le Cid*. Though he never refers to optical devices in his text, the language he adopts is deeply rooted in the visual experience, especially in the limitations of the natural eye, prone to accepting appearances as reality. The discrepancy between appearance and true form is front and center as he deploys his criticism against Corneille's *Le Cid* and its success:

> Il est de certaines Pieces, comme de certains animaux qui sont en la Nature, qui de loin semblent des Etoiles, & qui de prés ne sont que des vermisseaux. Tout ce qui brille n'est pas toujours precieux, on voit des beautez d'illusion, comme des beautez effectives, & souvent l'aparence du bien, se fait prendre pour le bien mesme. Aussi

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many instances, Scudéry attributes some of his own ideas to a classical origin or presents ideas under the guise of the Ancients that have been muddled with his own (ibid., 14).

[30] See Civardi, *La Querelle du* Cid, 243-246 for a brief account of the advances in Italy and France's relationship to Italian works and commentaries.

[31] See Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 172-177. Scudéry, recognizing that it is not enough to simply denounce the authority of the people, denounces pleasure as a defining measure of success and shifts the focus to the opposition between reason and the sense of sight.

> ne m'estonnay-je pas beaucoup, que le peuple qui porte le jugement dans les yeux, se laisse tromper par celuy de tous les sens, le plus facile à decevoir: Mais (…) qu'un fantosme ait abusé le sçavoir comme l'ignorance, & la Cour aussi bien que le Bourgeois, j'avoüe que ce prodige m'estonne, et que ce n'est qu'en ce bizarre evenement que je trouve LE CID merveilleux.[32] (367-368)

Scudéry explicitly addresses vision's epistemological value: not only is the eye inherently prone to error, and therefore unreliable as a source of knowledge and judgement, it is, within the hierarchy of senses, the least reliable of them all. Vision's epistemological value is also associated with a social and cultural hierarchy as Scudéry draws a distinction between the "people" (le peuple) or the bourgeoisie – the ignorant – and members of the court – the cultured –, acknowledging that while it may not be surprising that the common spectator be fooled by the play, perceiving it to be something greater than what it is in reality, it is astonishing that those in the higher echelons of society, with their erudition, should be equally led astray.[33] Of course, in order not to offend his readers, Scudéry quickly displaces the blame to the object and its masterful disguise, which have succeeded in bedazzling spectators on a superficial level, hence the references to illusion and deceit, to seductive appearances (beauties created by illusion vs. real beauties; appearance of good vs. good itself).

Scudéry's observations in showing the contrast between appearance and reality mimic the process and results of Galileo's telescopic observations without explicitly referring to the instrument:

> It is most beautiful and pleasing to the eye to look upon the lunar body, distant from us about sixty terrestrial diameters, from so near as if it were distant by only two of these measures, so that the diameter of the same Moon appears as if it were thirty times, the surface nine-hundred times, and the solid body about twenty-seven thousand times larger than when observed only with the naked eye. Anyone will then understand with the certainty of the senses that the Moon is by no means endowed with a smooth and polished surface, but is rough and uneven and, just as the face of the Earth itself, crowded everywhere with vast prominences, deep chasms, and convulsion.[34]

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[32] Georges Forestier cites these same lines in the context of a comparison between *L'Illusion comique* and *Le Cid*, and interprets the passage within the framework of theatrical illusion. Cf. "Introduction," in "L'illusion au XVIIe siècle," eds. Patrick Dandrey and Georges Forestier, *Littératures Classiques*, 44 (Winter 2002): 7-12. Similarly, Clotilde Thouret, in her analysis of the same passage, comments on the need for taking more than one look at an object to discern truth, and she connects the issue of distance and proximity to theatrical illusion and theatrical space, also evoking *L'Illusion comique*. Cf. "Voir, juger, découvrir," 100.

[33] For the heterogeneity of the audience, see Auerbach, "La cour et la ville"; Jouhaud, "Power and Literature"; Merlin, *Public et littérature*, esp. ch. 5 and 6 for the Querelle.

[34] Galileo, *Sidereal Messenger*, 37-38.

The scientific language, with its precisions of magnification, and the more positive tone of this passage may set it apart from Scudéry's, but both individuals participate in the same exercise. The object of study, in both cases, cannot be known to the naked eye, and both the critic and the mathematician require an instrument to observe these distant objects and bring them closer to the eye for proper examination. And both, in seeing the object at close proximity, depict it in terms that do not correspond to what had been or could be apprehended from afar through the natural eye alone. Scudéry begins his passage with a reference to false or inaccurate impressions based on distance (the animals that appear like stars from afar) that are then corrected upon closer investigation, just like Galileo who, with the aid of his instrument, uncovered the true form of the moon, "by no means endowed with a smooth and polished surface, but (…) rough and uneven." This is not the only occasion in which Scudéry turns to astronomical images. About two-thirds of the way through his *Observations*, having already pointed to the play's considerable errors, he writes: "Mais voyons un peu, si ce soleil qui croit estre aux Cieux est sans taches, ou si malgré son esclat pretendu, nous aurons la veuë assez forte, pour le regarder fixement & pour les apercevoir" (406). With the reference to a flawed or maculate sun, we cannot help but think of Galileo's observations on sunspots (shattering previously held ideas about the sun's perfect surface) or even on the moon, once considered a glorious, celestial body, and then, upon closer examination, revealed to be closer in description to the Earth than to a heavenly entity. Once again, we find Scudéry in the position of guide. He is privy to knowledge that is unknown to his readers, but he invites them ("voyons") to partake in the same experiment. He shares his private observations so as to transform it into public experience, one that is more informed than the collective and misleading response to the play's performance.

In reality, the question of distance and proximity corresponds to another opposition, between the play as it was performed and therefore seen, and the play as text, which was then read following its performance. In his first letter to the Académie Française,[35] which he writes after the *Observations*, Scudéry says that "Le Cid Imprimé, n'estoit plus le Cid que l'on a creu voir" (566). The performance – which is

[35] *Lettre de M. de Scudéry à l'illustre Académie,* in *La Querelle du Cid*, ed. Jean-Marc Civardi, 565-640.

admired from afar – is revealed as profoundly flawed when inspected up close through textual analysis.[36] Already in his *Observations*, Scudéry had compared the charm of the performance to that of a rainbow in order to emphasize its fleeting and ephemeral nature. The dynamic play-as-performance, as an entity occurring in time, is less conducive to rigorous study, and as such, it comes as no surprise that the audience, guided by senses rather than reason, takes delight in it. The play-as-text, on the other hand, presents the critic with a static object of study: crystallized on paper, it is more easily subject to observation and scrutiny. The public space of the theater, the audience's response, in sum, the collective *experience* stands in opposition to the private space of the critic's cabinet, where he carries out his singular study or *experiment*, whose results must be shared with the masses in order to expose the true form of the play.

Another contribution to the Querelle, the anonymous *Lettre à *** sour le nom d'Ariste,* whose goal, according to Civardi, is to solicit Balzac's support in favor of Scudéry, also attributes the different receptions of the play to experiencing it in its different forms, and its author applauds Scudéry for his comments. His tone, however, especially with regard to the audience's response, is much more aggressive, and the visual references, too, establish a very different dynamic between the *savant* and the public:

> J'advoüe que les sentimens de ces amis pour ce Poëme avoient preoccupé mon esprit devant que j'en eusse faict la lecture, je donnois quelque chose à l'aprobation du peuple, encore que je le cogneusse mauvais juge: mais je m'aperceus bien-tost apres que c'estoit l'ignorance, & non pas sa beauté qui causoit son admiration: Je fis donc resolution de guerir ses idolatres de leur aveuglement, & le dessein que j'avois de le desabuser, me faisoit prendre la plume quand un autre plus digne observateur m'a prevenu, qui me la faict tomber des mains & qui s'en est acquitté avec beaucoup plus d'honneur que je n'eusse peu faire. (732-733).

The anonymous author expresses his reservations and distrust with regard to the public's response and attributes its poor judgement not to the charms and beauty of the play, as Scudéry had done, but to the audience's own ignorance. The author of this text attributes the lack of judgement to blindness,[37] a visual

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[36] For a discussion of the importance of the difference between the printed version of *Le Cid* and the performance, and the corresponding spatial division between the "cabinet" and the "theater," see Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 172-174, 178-179. Also see Civardi, *La Querelle du Cid*, 150-153.

[37] "Pour dire le vray ils [les honnests [sic] gens] y reussissent bien souvent parmi le vulgaire qui n'a pas la veuë bonne & qui ne voyant ces choses que de fort loing, n'a garde de les voir comme elles sont; mais ces petites finesses ne trompent jamais les honnests gens qui ont la veuë meilleure, & qui les voyent de plus pres," La Pinelière, *Le Parnasse ou la critique des poètes*, qtd in Civardi*, La Querelle du Cid*, 137. In this instance, La Pinelière is situated somewhere between the anonymous author of the *Lettre* and Scudéry as he diagnoses the "vulgaire" with farsightedness, and therefore, with the inability of seeing things accurately from up close, whereas the "honnests gens," whose vision, and therefore judgement, represents that of a healthy norm, is perfectly capable of capturing the true form of things even from up close.

ailment, and announces his own goals as one of correction or reparation ("guerir"), thus establishing a more antagonistic relationship between critic and audience, one that, in effect, echoes the previously examined relationship between critic and writer because of its corrective ambitions. Scudéry, while tempted to associate the entirety of the public with the "peuple" or "populace," could not negate that the play had also pleased a portion of the "honnêtes gens," whom he did not wish to offend.[38] By coloring his language with references to astronomy, he is able to mitigate his sentiments toward the audience by presenting his work as a form of "extension" of its knowledge – acting as guide in the process of rendering previously inaccessible material accessible, rather than as a tyrannical pedant prescribing aggressive corrections.

Though Scudéry may at times appear to be just as critical of the audience as he is of the play's author, he remains faithful to his role as guide and consistently cultivates this image of himself in relation to his reader. Even when he seems to question the reader and Corneille in similar fashion, such as in his reaction to the character of Chimène, who exonerates Rodrigue even after he has killed her father ("O jugement de l'Autheur à quoy songez-vous? O raison de l'Auditeur qu'estes vous devenuë ?" 399), the role that he has assigned to each party throughout his *Observations* does not change. As a poet, Corneille's lack of judgement is inexcusable, and the product of his flawed judgement is a flawed dramatic poem. The reader or spectator, on the other hand, may fall short of Scudéry's standard, but the critic embraces the ostensive failure as a teaching opportunity. As we have already seen, rather than alienate and antagonize the reader, Scudéry's text as mechanism of extension focuses on transforming the criticism of Corneille's play into a shared experience in an attempt to convert the (hasty and uninformed) public applause into a more forceful collective condemnation. If in his analysis of a particular scene in the play, Scudéry denounces the absence of *bienséance* and later claims that "j'y remarque une faute de jugement assez grande" (399) because of the lack of logic in a given sequence of events, he does not lambast the readers for neglecting to see this point. Instead, he invites them to join him in observing the error from his vantage point ("Et pour la voir avec moy, il faut se souvenir que (…)," ibid.).

This attitude continues until the closing pages of the *Observations*, with an apostrophe to the reader:

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[38] See Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 170-171.

> Apres ce que vous venez de voir, *jugez* (Lecteur) si un Ouvrage dont le sujet ne vaut rien, qui choque les principales regles du Poeme Dramatique, qui *manque de jugement* en sa conduite, qui a beaucoup de meschants vers, & dont presques toutes les beautez sont derobees, peut legitement pretendre, à la gloire de n'avoir point esté surpassé, que luy attribue son Autheur, avec si peu de *raison* ? (429, emphasis mine)

At the very end of his observations, Scudéry encourages his readers to reconsider the play based on the information that he has shared with them, transforming his singular and privileged experience as the *savant* into a collective experience, thus undoing the previously-held beliefs about Corneille's play in favor of a more informed and more accurate image.[39] In effect, by sharing this text with his readers, it is as though he had given them a telescope so that they, too, could see what he sees, and they, too, could judge for themselves the work that has since been revealed to them in its true form.

Based on the visual mode espoused by Scudéry, the natural eye has little value or authority when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge, and in turn, to the evaluation of a literary work, for the spectator's eyesight is subject to limitations. "Judgement" and "reason," those reoccurring concepts in Scudéry text, correspond to the instrumentalized vision championed by Stigliani, suggesting that merits of a work should be determined not by sentiment, but by regularity; not by the naked eye, but by an analytical instrument: "Le seul vrai public sera le collectif dirigé par la faculté souveraine de la raison."[40] Just as the eye of the character of Julian in Valdes' fourth dialogue must be trained to look through the new telescope and recognize the landscape it beholds,[41] the eye of the spectator is being shaped by Scudéry's instructions and analysis. This view, however, is firmly rejected by those who advocate for delight over didactics, but we will see them reappear in the response of the Académie Française.

The *Sentiment Commun* & the Eye of the Public

If Scudéry's instrumentalized visual mode corresponds to an exclusive and individual means of knowledge, that of Corneille's supporters (or of Scudéry's critics) is strongly anchored in the collective

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[39] "Face à celui qui s'est défié d'autorité privée intervient celui qui, ému pour la 'cause commune,' sort, malgré sa répugnance initiale, du secret de son sentiment particulier pour publier la vérité et *désiller les yeux* des honnêtes gens," Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 158, emphasis mine.

[40] Ibid., 173. For Merlin, the difference in judgement is linked to the reading of the play as opposed to viewing it in the theater.

[41] Valdes, *The Use of Eyeglasses*, 172.

experience. The anonymous author of the *Lettre du désintéressé au sieur Mairet* addresses the discrepancy between the knowledge of the individual critic and that of the public, and his language frames the opposition in visual terms:

> Mais peut-estre vous estes-vous creu plus considerable, & qu'apres avoir attiré Monsieur Corneille au combat, vous seriez assez puissant pour le ruiner, & faire voir à *tous ceux qui* ont estimé le Cid, que leur ignorance est la cause de leur approbation, & qu'à *vous seul* l'aventure estoit deuë de rompre le charme qui *nous* silloit les yeux, & *nous* faire voir la verité cachée. (838, emphasis mine)

Taking Scudéry (and not Mairet, who is the intended addressee of his letter) as his interlocutor, the author contrasts the reaction of the critic ("vous seul") with that of the public ("tous ceux qui ont estimé le Cid," later coupled with "nous") by sarcastically recognizing Scudéry's superiority as guide. As the designated subject of the verb "faire voir," repeated twice in the passage, Scudéry appears as the agent who demonstrates, whose aim is to make something known to the pubic, who literally makes the public see that which it presumably does not or cannot see. He is the figure who seeks to shows them the limitations of their natural vision – and who wishes to extend their vision to expose those supposedly hidden truths. Those who support Corneille or who oppose Scudéry's views therefore have two related goals: to undermine Scudéry's authority, and consequently, to question the analytical approach by establishing the public response – the collective experience – and pleasure, rather than reason, as the true and legitimate judge of *Le Cid*'s merit.[42]

Unlike the Italian polemic, in which Stigliani's respondents use the critic's own emblem against him to question his vision as well as the accuracy of his critical apparatus, the respondents in the Querelle have no such immediate image at their disposal. And yet, Scudéry's undoing, though expressed in a variety of forms, also inspires a strategy grounded in visual terms, which even includes explicit references to optical instruments. We recall that Scudéry, in his *Observations*, unequivocally denounced vision as a reliable form of knowledge, dismissing the sense of sight as the least reliable of all the senses. In the *Défense du Cid*, attributed to the writer and theologian Jean-Pierre Camus and one of the first texts to respond to Scudéry, we find a "defense" of the eye's authority alongside the more general defense of Corneille's play:

> Et faisant le Philosophe, il dit que le peuple se laisse tromper par celuy de tous les sens le plus facile à decevoir, il feroit plus que tous les maistres du mestier, s'il nous pouvoit montrer qu'un sens soit plus avantagé que l'autre

[42] For a discussion of the relationship between pleasure and power, especially as it relates to royal power, see Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 177, 190.

> contre la tromperie, tous sont en estat également de l'estre, & de ne l'estre pas si l'on prend la raison commune de leur objet, comme pour la veuë, la couleur en general. Pour l'ouye, la voix & les sons (…). (464-465).

Camus directly responds to Scudéry's "epistemology of vision" by defending the importance of the senses, or at least, by trying to exempt them from blame.[43] Scudéry may have identified the source of error to be in the seductive appearance of the play, but he dethroned the sense of sight entirely in his statement when he called it the sense that was easiest to deceive, and therefore, when he pointed to an inherent weakness of the eye. Camus may not go as far as placing vision at the top of the hierarchy of the senses, but at the very least, he restores it from being at the very bottom in terms of reliability and authority. Moreover, Camus situates the source of error outside of the eye itself, "alors tous les sens peuvent estre deceuz, non pas plus l'un que l'autre, la tromperie leur venant ou de la distance trop grande de l'objet, ou de l'organe indisposé, ou du milieu preoccupé par où passe l'image" (465). By evoking the distance of the object, some ocular ailment or malady, which is not the condition of the natural eye, and the space through which an image must pass, Camus exempts the organ of sight from any inherent flaws.

If the eye in general is exonerated from all blame, Scudéry's in particular is not, for his respondents depict him as suffering from a visual ailment that distorts his perception, much like Stigliani's respondents did in evoking the critic's weak eyesight. Camus declares that his goal is to show Scudéry "tout doucement que sa veuë est preoccupée, & son organe vicie comme d'un fievreux" (459). Echoing his earlier "defense" of the senses, Camus therefore cites Scudéry as an example of those outstanding circumstances that would render the eye unreliable: the "organe vicie" recalls the "organe indisposé," and the repercussions are a "veuë preoccupée," a vision occupied in advance with other objects, and therefore unable to accurately perceive the play.

Just as Stigliani's opponents attribute his error-infested interpretation of *L'Adone* to envy, which they in turn associated with blindness or lenses tinted in green, Camus, along with a number of others, evokes Scudéry's jealousy in reaction to Corneille's success. He argues that "(…) n'ayant personne au monde qui ne trouve son esgal ou son superieur en excellence, de là vient le vice d'envie qui est un desplaisir de la gloire

[43] See Thouret, "Voir, juger, découvrir," 103. Thouret also notes Camus' contribution to restoring the authority of the eye and in highlighting Scudéry's deviation from the tradition that ranks the eye at the top of the hierarchy of the senses.

d'un autre, & voicy la delicatesse de nostre Censeur. Pour *ne point voir* en France pres de luy un homme que tout le monde esleve par loüange" (466, emphasis mine). Beyond being "blinded by envy," Scudéry is considered to exercise poor judgement by those who do not agree with his analysis, who equate this shortcoming with poor vision. The sarcastic remark by the anonymous author of the *Lettre du desintéressé* about Scudéry's sense of superiority is validated, for the ego of the *savant* has in fact blinded him so that he cannot see that which all of France is able to see. Elsewhere, yet another contributor to the polemic offers further evidence to corroborate Camus' point about the critic's "organe vicie" or "veuë preoccupée" as it relates to a false sense of enlightenment and erudition, this time asserting that "Les deux soleils d'Aristote ne sçauroient donner assez de clairеté à un aveugle qui se trouve dans les tenebres dont l'esprit & jugment de Scuderi est environné, pensant avoir trop de lumiere il n'a veu goute (…)" (*Le Souhait du Cid en faveur de Scudéri* 672).

Conversely, the author of *La Voix publique*, also anonymous, gives the critic a taste of his own medicine, suggesting that "si vous blasmés le Cid vous n'en cognoissés pas moins le merite: puise que vous avés eü les yeux assés penetrans pour y remarquer de si petits deffauts vous avés peu voir toutes ses graces, qui n'ont esté cachées à personne" (526). If the critic's vision is good enough to catch the minute flaws of the play, then surely it could not have missed all of those other elements that are worthy of praise and recognized by everyone else. If Scudéry fails to mention *these* observations, then it must be because he is too envious to recognize the legitimacy of Corneille's work. Like the previous texts, the comment in this document compares Scudéry's vision to that of the collective, and the author turns Scudéry's supposed visual acuity against him to show, on the one hand, the degree to which he deviates from the reaction of the audience, and on the other, the extent to which Scudéry's text, like Stigliani's, distorts the truth. This distortion, which entails the exaggeration of the poem's flaws without recognizing its merits also appears in *L'Inconnu et veritable ami de messiers de Scudéry et Corneille*, recalling earlier comments by Stigliani's respondents who attack the critic's textual telescope precisely because it manipulates the size and proportion of errors and virtues.[44]

[44] Commenting on the merits of both *Le Cid* and Scudéry *L'Amant liberal*, the author writes that " (…) en cela, comme en la pluspart des choses du monde, chacun suit son inclination naturelle, et supporte les legeres fautes des Autheurs, ou les fait passer pour grandes aupres de ceux qui n'y entendent rien," *Querelle du Cid*, 558.

Where optical devices play an explicit role in the texts of the Italian polemic, their function is mostly inferred in the context of the *Querelle*. They are, however, not entirely absent from the debates in France, for we do find references to a "lunette d'approche" (telescope) and to lunettes (eyeglasses). Compared to the Italian polemics, the presence of these objects in the French quarrel is perhaps all the more powerful because there is no immediate justification for their use. Stigliani, by choosing to entitle his work the *Occhiale*, fed the minds of his respondents with an image that they were only too enthusiastic to exploit and enrich. Unlike their Italian counterparts, those who engaged in the Querelle du *Cid* did not have a ready optical prompt, but their spontaneous decision to include optical devices speaks to the writers' recognition of the potential of these devices. Although what prevails in the French texts are the visual modes rather than the instruments, their integration, even if to a lesser degree when compared to the Italian texts, is evidence of growing interest in optical motifs as befitting means to describe ways of reading, critiquing, and juding a work of literature.

In all of the Querelle's documents, the telescope makes one sole appearance in Camus's *Défense du* Cid. As Camus responds to Scudéry's minute analysis of the play's individual lines, he comments on a particular "error" identified by the critic, who had qualified two words in the same verse of the play as creating a poor rhyme: "Il dit que ce mot d'essay & celui de generosité font une fausse rime, je ne croy pas qu'avec *des lunettes d'approche*, la meilleure veuë du monde puisse voir qu'il y ait à son dire, ny rime ny raison. Ou est-il icy question de les faire rimer?" (481, emphasis mine). As we know, Scudéry, in describing his project for analyzing Corneille's play, did not mention a telescope, but applied a "telescopic" mode of vision to examine the play more closely and to reveal the true form that lay behind its pleasing appearance, just as Galileo did to unveil the true face of the moon. Here, Camus names the instrument and applies it to the same end, that is, to scrutinize the play, though he arrives at an entirely different conclusion. Like Galileo's opponents who attributed the results of his telescopic observations, and those of Jupiter's moons in particular, to illusions created by an unreliable instrument,[45] Camus, too, suggests that the critic's observations are simply imagined, for anyone else who is to partake in the experiment will see no such errors. Camus

[45] For a brief overview of the reception of the telescope and Galileo's observations in particular, see Albert Van Helden's remarks in the conclusion of his translation of the the *Sidereus nuncius*, *Sidereal Messenger*, esp. 95-112. Also see Ronchi, *Scritti di Ottica*, 277-283 for a survey of those who challenged Galileo and resisted his findings.

nullifies Scudéry's individual experiment and the new information that it presents, and in doing so, deals another blow to the critic and his instrument by deeming them both useless.[46]

The second optical reference is to be found in the anonymous *Le Souhait du Cid en faveur de M. de Scudéri: une paire de lunettes pour faire mieux ses observations*, and this time, it designates a pair of glasses. Though the term "lunette(s)" is also likely to generate some ambiguity and confusion about the instrument's identity, the qualifiers "lunettes *d'approche*" and "*une paire de* lunettes" clearly distinguish between the seventeenth-century invention and its thirteenth-century predecessor. Camus' "lunette d'approche" was being used to observe distant objects in the hopes of understanding something that was not immediately evident. The "paire de lunettes" of the *Souhait* serves an entirely different purpose. Glasses, we recall, perform a normative function by correcting a pathological or flawed sense of sight, one that has deviated from that of the collective. This is precisely the role that the "lunettes" of *Le Souhait* adopt: "Il est vray qu'autre que luy n'eust pas voulu mettre la main à la bourse ny à la plume pour corriger si mal les fautes d'autruy: Cette charité seroit loüable si en le relevant il ne choppoit pas plus lourdement, comme ces lunettes feront voir sans le dire" (664). Reminiscent of Scipione Errico's *Occhiale appannato*, in which the critic's poor vision is said to justify his need to construct a pair of glasses, which were in turn flawed, the author of the *Souhait* first highlights the ambitions of the critic to correct Corneille's play and then points to its disastrous consequences. If Scudéry's glasses resembled earlier models that were prescribed and distributed based on age bracket, the author if the *Souhait* presents himself as a skilled and knowledgeable optometrist whose own pair of corrective glasses seeks to undo the harm caused by the critic's lenses all the while restoring Scudéry's vision.

The critic's weak eyesight and his (mis)interpretation of the play are seen as intricately linked by the author of the *Souhait*, who in his discussion of Scudéry's comment on a particular scene of *Le Cid*, remarks that the error is in the eye of the beholder: "A ouyr parler Arias [character in play] on voit bien qu'il vient de la part du Roy, s'il n'a pas monstré sa commission c'est que le Secretaire n'avoit pas eu le loisir de l'expedier,

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[46] The futility of Scudéry's text or "observations" is mentioned by the author of *La Voix publique*. Referring to Scudéry's comparison of his own plays with Corneille's, he writes that "les bons Espris cognoissent assez le merite des uns & des autres sans l'ayde de vos observations," *Querelle du Cid*, 527. The idea that Scudéry's text does nothing but repeat what is already known also resonates with the comments of Stigliani's respondents, who dismissed the "occhiale" since it showed that which was already evident.

ou bien qu'il sçavoit bien que *son critique n'avoit pas encore des lunettes pour la lire*" (678, emphasis mine). Scudéry's ailing vision and inability to see without glasses is woven into the plot of the play itself and made to bear consequences on the actions of the characters, clearly demonstrating his role – as reader or spectator – in the creation of the play and its meaning. Reading or viewing with poor vision, the author of the *Souhait* seems to suggest, leads to misunderstandings of the object one beholds, justifying all the more his own project to present the critic with the "paire de lunettes pour mieux faire ses observations." This project, however, is admittedly too ambitious, for Scudery's vision is considered to be so poor that the author of the *Souhait* has very little hope for correcting it:

> J'ay perdu un peu de temps à lire ses Observations, & peut estre plus mal employé à dresser ces lunettes qui luy seront inutiles, se plaisant en son aveuglement, faisant des fautes à dessein, il les laisse par negligence, il les voit sans les corriger (…). (688)

If reading the *Observations* was a waste of time, then any attempt at correcting Scudéry's defective vision is futile, for just as Valdés warns us in his optometry treatise that an untreated eye could deteriorate to the point where no restoration is possible, the author of the *Souhait* implies that the critic's eyesight cannot be recovered.

But what is this disease that is at the root of Scudéry's visual impediment and that so desperately requires correction? Scudéry suffers from Aristotelianism or from an overdose of "reason." The *Poetics*, or the authority of the ancients more generally becomes the lens that conditions his reading and judgement of Corneille's play, the lens that he employs in his super-normative telescope to extend the natural vision of the readers to see the play's supposed true form. The respondents reject Scudéry's instrumentalized vision, supernormative or normative, and place their confidence in the authority of the natural eye and the affective response to the play as a measure of its merits. If, in the case of the author of *Le Souhait*, they place a pair of glasses before the eyes of the critic, it is to rid him of his Aristotelian myopia and to recalibrate his vision to that of what *they* consider to be the norm, which is none other than the public applause.

Countering the belligerent accusations of plagiarism against Corneille, Camus lauds the playwright's decision to bring the Spanish story into the French tradition, and he cites its reception as validation of Corneille's choice:

il a fait veoir le bon-heur de son choix par l'heureux évenement qui est reüssi, & *par l'universelle approbation de tous les bons esprits*, le Censeur & ses partisans exceptez, mais ils ont interest en la cause, comme blessez par l'eblouyssement d'une si grande gloire. Tant de redites d'une mesme piece accueillies par des applaudissemens qui ont respondu à toutes les repetitions sont-ce pas des preuves concluantes tirees de l'effet, que son élection luy a esté fortunee? (471, emphasis mine)

The collective experience, described in the most positive of terms, stands in contrast to the reaction of "le Censeur & ses partisans," explicitly singled out for not sharing this judgement and blamed for being blinded by the dramatist's glory. The singular experiment of the critic uncovered information that was contrary to the public experience, and try as he might to share these findings, the observations made through the critical apparatus are dismissed in favor of those made by the naked eye of the play's spectators, which are sufficient as "preuves concluantes," the conclusive evidence required to confirm *Le Cid*'s success. As in the Italian polemic, we find an opposition between two visual modes, between the instrumentalized eye of the critic, with his minute analysis on the one hand, and then, the natural eye of the reader or spectator, who has an affective response regardless of, or perhaps in spite of, adherences to any sort of poetic code.[47]

The idea of "le sentiment commun" or the "approbation générale" (Camus, *Défense*, 457) permeates the works of those who praise the play based on affect, and where Scudéry and his proponents evoke the authority of Aristotle and the ancients, those who support Corneille cite the King and all the great minds of the kingdom.[48] The dramatist Jean-Gilbert Durval, to whom Jean-Marc Civardi attributes the *Discours à Cliton*, addresses the question of the public applause and whether it is an accurate means by which to judge the play:

Sçavoir s'il y a raison solide & legitime de la bonne opinion generalement conceuë d'un tel poëme: c'est ce qui doit estre examiné entre les habiles du mestier dans une conference raisonnable, & non suspecte. Cependant puis que les honnestes gens ne font pas tous des vers ny des poëmes, bien que la Poësie soit aimée de tous, si le plus grand nombre a donné son jugement en faveur du Cid, quel tort en reçoivent tant d'autres pieces qui ont passé pour belles? & quelle plaincte en peuvent faire les Maistres de l'Art, qui ne soit indigne de leur courage & de leur sagesse. (596-597)

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[47] "Contrairement à ce que laisse entendre la formule des *Observations*, il y a une médiation entre les yeux et le jugement: elle consiste dans les émotions, par lesquelles s'établit la relation du spectateur avec les personnages," Thouret, "Voir, juger, découvrir," 105. Thouret's study establishes a very clear connection between the natural eye and affect, and the eye's value in judging the merits of the play. Her argument thus contrasts a passive vision (as represented by Scudéry and the other critics) and an active one (depicted by the respondents).

[48] "Il s'est assés rendu considerable pour nous obliger à le traitter favorablement, puis qu'il a eu l'honneur de plaire au Roy & aux grands Esprits du Royaume. Apres les Eloges qu'il a eu d'eux, ce seroit perdre le temps de faire son Apologie," *La Voix publique*, in *La Querelle du* Cid*,* 525-526.

Situating the "honnêtes gens" as a significant group among the play's audience, Durval further dissects this group, composed of both practitioners of the art and those who may not have no such familiarity or experience. *Le Cid*, which has been criticized by the *doctes*, has been well received in the "opinion générale," a good portion of which is comprised of the *honnestes gens*. This taxonomy among the *honnestes gens* is noteworthy, for it breaks down and problematizes the established hierarchy observed by Jouhaud and quoted at the beginning of this chapter, which drew a distinction between the *doctes* and the cultivated *honnestes gens*, who did not necessarily possess specialized knowledge of poetic practice. That Durval, himself the author of an important treatise that accompanied the *Discours à Cliton*, would identify with the *honnestes gens* undermines the supposed authority and legitimacy of Scudéry and his fellow *savants*, for someone *with* familiarity and expertise in the field has judged the play favorably. In the final statement of the passage, Durval raises an incisive question and interrogates the position of the poet: what if the poet, familiar though he may be with the art of poetry and its conventions, agrees with the public when he applauds plays that he ought to hold in disdain and when he dislikes those works deemed "beautiful" (in other words, those adhering to the rules)? Even among those who are cognizant of the rules, then, there is a separation between individuals who dogmatically adhere to them, and others who, like Durval (and Corneille) wish to liberate themselves from the yoke of codified poetic creation.[49]

Responding directly to Scudéry's *Observations* and the social hierarchy that the critic established as he expressed his dismay over the play's unanimously positive reception among both the learned and the ignorant, the court and the bourgeoisie, Durval acknowledges that the "merveilleux applaudissement" is formed of two distinct yet concurrent voices, one that corresponds to the "juste concert des personnes de condition" (597-598), and the other, a "rumeur populaire,(…) plustot (…) un consentement indiscret qu'une approbation judicieuse" (598) that nonetheless "ne produisent qu'un mesme effect qui est l'estime presente que l'on donne aux bons Autheurs, & à leurs ouvrages" (ibid.). The reason for this, Durval explains, is the eloquence of the author who succeeds in moving his audience. By confessing that he, too, was lured by the

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[49] See Civardi, *La Querelle du* Cid, 236. Civardi, who places Durval on the side of the Baroque, explains that on the other side of the attempts toward "la rationalisation du théâtre" lies a praise of irregularity. He calls Durval's treatises on the 24-hour rule that accompanies his *Discours à Cliton* "une sorte de charte de l'irregularité," (ibid., 226).

charms and illusions of the play (598), and consequently, by siding with the audience, Durval makes a firm statement about the criteria for judging the work: pleasure and delight supersede the rules, even in the minds of poets.

Indeed, in the works of Corneille's partisans, be it in their discussion of the creation of a work of literature or in its reception and evaluation, the senses, or more generally, something other than reason and calculation take precedence. Camus, in his *Défense*, opposes poetic fury to reflection, "une certaine fecondité d'esprit qui devance toutes nos reflexions" (462), and continues to state that "nous sentons en la lecture des Poëtes que là où cette fureur deffaut leurs pensees n'agissent que foiblement, sur nous et les mouvements qui en naissent resent toujours à nos ames languissans & peu efficaces" (ibid.). Mirroring Durval's response to Scudéry, in which the play's success before both the "learned" and the "ignorant" was justified by the dramatic poem's power to move, Camus, too, places emphasis on affect. The importance of the play's ability to delight rather than its adherence to an established code is perhaps most elegantly expressed in Guez de Balzac's letter to Scudéry. Though the Académie Française had already rendered its official response to the *Querelle*, Balzac, who was among its founding members, wrote a separate letter addressed to the author of the *Observations.* If the letter of the Académie Française, as we will shortly discover, both praises and criticizes the play, Balzac unequivocally speaks in its favor and that of its audience:

> Considerez neantmoins, Monsieur, que toute la France entre en cause avec luy, & que peut-estre il n'y a pas un des Juges dont vous estes convenus ensemble, qui n'ait loüé ce que vous desirez qu'il condamne. De sorte que quand vos argumens seroient invincibles, & que vostre adversaire y acquiesceroit, il auroit toujours dequoi se consoler glorieusement de la perte de son procés, & vous pourroit dire que c'est quelque chose de plus d'avoir satisfait tout un Royaume, que d'avoir fait une piece reguliere. (1093)

Balzac emphasizes the imbalance here between Scudéry's views on the one hand and those of "toute la France," tilted in favor of Corneille.[50] The public reaction trumps the critical evaluation, and the tensions between the critic and the public or spectators become, by extension, a tension between perfection – the degree to which a work of literature adheres to prescribed rules – and natural delight: "pleasing an entire Kingdom is something more than having created a regular play."

[50] See Merlin, *Public et littérature*, 182 on the importance of using "France" as a unifying principle among the audience.

Corneille's supporters and Scudéry's critics aggressively put into question the importance of rules and regularity. If Scudéry disavowed the charms of the performance with the errors revealed through close reading when he opened his *Observations* with a remark on distance – how things from afar seem like stars, though up close, are but maggots – and thus, introduced the necessity of his telescopic text, we find a staunch refusal in the works of the respondents to take part in his new visual experiment. There is a conscious desire to rely solely on the natural eye, even if it means living in the world of appearances. In *Le Jugement du* Cid, the novelist Charles Sorel, who takes Corneille's side in the quarrel, reverses the terms of Scudéry's opening lines: "Ces sortes de pieces qui se recitent dans les lieux publics, ne veulent pas estres considerées de si pres: elles n'ont besoin que d'un certain esclat, & il ne nous importe qu'il soit trompeur, pourveu qu'il plaise" (781). Sorel prefers the experience of the natural eye, even if it means participating in an illusion. The natural eye and the affective reaction become the standard by which a work of literature is to be judged, not some rigorous analysis or "instrumentalized vision" based on constraints and conventions. Through an accumulation of statements that follow the formula "je say que (…) mais (…)," Sorel acknowledges the ways in which Corneille deviates from the norm as defined by Scudéry, though he dismisses the claims after the conjunction "mais," affirming that in spite of Corneille's departure from these rules, the play continues to be beautiful and it continues to please the audience (784-785).

Placing himself in the position of those readers or spectators whom Scudéry attempts to convert using his super-normative telescope, Sorel thus juxtaposes the two conflicting definitions of the "norm": "Je n'ay jamais leu Aristote, & ne sçay point les regles du theatre, mais je regle le merite des pieces selon le plaisir que j'y reçoy" (781), adding later on that "nous autres qui sommes du peuple, et qui aymons tout ce qui est bizarre & extraordinare, sans nous soucier des regles d'Aristote" (790). The use of the word "regles" here is very telling: first as a noun referring to the "regulating" and "normative" code of Aristotelian poetics; and then as a verb, to define the new "measure" which is the delight it solicits in its audience. As the word "regle" is resemanticized, the regulation or norm is redefined, overturning the critic's lens in favor of the people's choice, with the natural reading or viewing experience emerging as victor over the instrumentalized one. In effect, the conditions defining the rules are entirely reversed, for if the rules of Scudéry and Aristotle

corresponded to a regular play, the new rules as stipulated by Sorel and those who praise *Le Cid*, prize instead the "bizarre & extraordinaire." The natural eye, it seems, embraces baroque irregularity over classical order.

Those who participate in the quarrel in support of the play occupy a variety of positions: Durval writes as a "maistre de l'art" or a fellow poet; Camus is a learned man; Balzac is a member of the Académie Française; and Sorel aligns himself with the "des honnestes gens d'entre le peuple." Whether it is to outright advocate that "le sens commun n'est pas entierement banny de la teste de ceux qui ne sont ny sçavans, ni Autheurs" (781), as Sorel claims to do, or to add their authority as learned figures to the public voice and its opinion of the play, they rise in unison to affirm the judgement of the crowd, which privileges feeling over analysis. Thus far, the French polemic, despite the greater number of actors involved, seems to parallel the Italian one, especially as the natural eye or common applause effectively dismantles the critical apparatus. Although, if in the debates around Marino's *L'Adone*, the respondents emerged as clear victor, the situation is blurred in France, where an additional, and official, entity also renders its judgement. After months of silence, the Académie Française, in large part at the hand of Jean Chapelain, finally shared its thoughts.

Rules, Regulations, and the Rationalization of the Eye: The Verdict of the *Académie Française*

> Prononcez, O MES JUGES, un arrest digne de vous, & qui face sçavoir à toutes l'Europe, que le Cid n'est point le chef-d'œuvre du plus grand homme de France, mais ouy bien la moins judicieuse Piece de Monsieur Corneille mesme. Vous le devez, & pour vostre gloire en particulier, & pour celle de nostre Nation en general, qui s'y trouve intéressé: veu qui ont eu des Tassos & des Guarinis, croyroient que nos plus grands Maistres, ne sont que des apprentifs. C'est la plus importante et la plus belle action publique, par où vostre illustre Academie, puisse commencer les siennes: tout le monde l'attend de vous, & c'est pour l'obtenir que je vous presente cette juste requeste. (568)

These are the lines with which Scudéry closes his letter to the Académie Française, the letter that draws the institution in the debates around *Le Cid*.[51] Just like Galileo, who in an attempt to gain support for his new invention and shield his observations from criticism, solicited the Medici family and name,[52] Scudéry, too, tries to bolster and safeguard his own observations by seeking the endorsement of the Académie. If, in his *Observations*, he had positioned himself above the readers-spectators, acting as a guide who would lead them to

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[51] See ibid., 210-217 on the necessity of the intervention of a third party.

[52] See Ronchi, *Scritti di Ottica*, 275-277 for Galileo's political motivations in naming the satellites of Jupiter after the Medici.

make a sound judgement of the play upon seeing it in its true form, here, he subjects his own judgement to validation before an even more powerful and authoritative body in the hopes that the Académie Française would corroborate his arguments. By appealing to ideals of national identity, and by using literature as a vehicle of promoting France and French culture at home and abroad, Scudéry situates *Le Cid* and its presumed success in a larger context and denounces both as a threat to the nation's reputation. In doing so, he transposes the argument from a strictly literary field to a political one. The project of the individual critic is here extended to that of a national institution.

The Académie did not intervene immediately, though as many scholars have remarked, the *Querelle* provided the newly-established institution with a golden opportunity to justify its existence and to define its role.[53] And yet, its response, which revolves around two principle axes, "benefit to the public" and "reason," already manifests the power that it would come to exert, foregrounding the defining elements of classical theater – as literature and as a mechanism of absolute power – in the second half of the seventeenth century.[54] The *Sentiments de l'Académie Française* opens by praising the work of the Critic in general, for when it is not motivated by jealousy or glory, it can greatly benefit both the public and the advancement of poetry (930-933). The critical reading of a text is described as "cette heureuse violence" from which one "a tiré la Vérité du fons des abysmes" (933), and though the reference is not an optical one, the Académie affirms the function of the critic in rendering accessible that which is not immediately visible or available. Justifying its own involvement in the debates, the Académie cites "l'utilité publique" (935), and this moral mission will also profoundly shape its judgement of the play. Scudéry had already articulated the primacy of theater's didactic function through its representation of virtue triumphing over vice, especially as it was tied to questions of verisimilitude and *bienséance*, and it is only amplified by the Académie. Taking into account the public reaction on the one hand and the goals of theater on the other, the letter distinguishes between the "agréable" and the "bon" (935), arguing that the former does not necessarily imply the latter. If Durval, in his *Discours à Cliton*,

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[53] Jouhaud, "Power and Literature," esp. 37-38; Merlin, *Littérature et public*, esp. 153.

[54] See Jouaud, "Power and Literature," 66 for a description of the role of the Académie in the organization of the theatrical space itself as a mechanism to direct the gaze of the audience toward the figures of power. Also see Siguret, *L'Œil surpris*, 133-135, which connects the spatial organization of theater with linear perspective.

proposed his text as a systematic study of whether the play *should have* pleased and then affirmed that its ability to move its audience made it worthy of praise, the Académie subjects the play to the same question, though it arrives at the diametrically opposite conclusion. In describing its guiding question, the *Sentiments* identifies its aim as follows:

> ne regarder pas tant si elle avoit pleu, que si en effet elle *avoit deu plaire*. La Nature & la Verité ont mis un certain prix aux choses, qui ne peut estre changé par celuy que le hazard ou l'opinion y mettent; & c'est se condamner soy mesme que d'en faire jugement selon ce qu'elle paroissent & non pas selon ce qu'elles sont. (935-936, emphasis mine)

The Académie Française does not deny the success that the play enjoyed in the public's eye, though it does question the validity of this assessment. By suggesting that the audience was wrong to have taken delight in the play (or that the play was wrong to have delighted the audience), the Académie already introduces boundaries and regulations with regard to "delight," which is more of a natural and affective reaction than a calculated reflection. The dichotomy between contingency ("le hazard," "l'opinion") and absolute values dictated by "La Nature" and "la Vérité" reinforces the desire for control, hence the second opposition between "ce qu'elles paroissent" and "ce qu'elles sont," and the claim that to trust things as they appear to be rather than as they are marks a fundamental lapse in judgement. The natural eye and sensory experience more generally make the individual vulnerable to the seduction or illusion of appearances: true and informed judgement can only occur when the eye has been extended to see beyond the surface, beyond whatever boundary, to observe an object's true form. Bringing together the two elements that had characterized the opposing camps of the quarrel – one advocating for *docere* and the other for *delectare* – the Académie claims that the two are in reality one and the same, though the judgement of the masses must be affirmed by that of the experts who will be able to evaluate if a "pièce agréable" is also "bonne" : "nous ne dirons pas sur la foy du Peuple, qu'un ouvrage de Poësie soit bon parce qu'il l'aura contenté, si les doctes aussi n'en sont contens"(937). The people are free to like or dislike works as they please, but they are not the real arbitrators and theirs is not the ultimate verdict: their collective reception is tested against the findings of the experts and their exclusive knowledge.

To clarify its position further, the Académie proposes that "nous pouvons dire tous ensemble qu'une Piece de theatre est bonne quand elle produit *un contentement raisonnable*" (937, emphasis mine). The naked eye

is not reliable enough to properly evaluate what it sees, for its field of perception is limited to apparent beauties. In order to ensure that what it is witnessing is also good and morally sound, the eye must be properly trained, especially if it is to exercise good judgement before plays comprised of irregular elements:

> D'ailleurs, il est comme impossible de plaire à qui que ce soit par le desordre & par la confusion, & s'il se trouve que les Pieces irregulieres contentent quelquesfois, ce n'est que pour ce qu'elles ont quelque chose de regulier; ce n'est que pour quelques beautés veritables & extraordinaires, qui emportent si loin l'esprit, que de long temps après il n'est capable d'apercevoir les diormités [sic.] dont elles sont suivies, & qui font couler insensiblement les defaux pendant que les yeux de l'entendement sont encore esblouïs par l'éclat de ses lumieres. (938)

Disorder and irregularity are deemed incompatible with delight, especially if that delight is defined as a "contentement raisonnable." If a play has succeeded in pleasing the audience in spite of its irregularity, then surely there must be some regular elements that appeal to the audience. We may recognize in this formulation part of Sorel's statements in his *Jugement*, in which he applauded the play's irregularities and identified the source of its appeal as "tout ce qui est bizarre et extraordinaire" (790). The Académie's description shifts the emphasis to that which is regular ("pour ce qu'elle ont quelque chose de regulier") and highlights the "beautés veritables." And yet, even in this positive overturn, if the eye is not reigned in by reason, this experience proves dangerous and problematic, for those same beauties overwhelm and blind the mind, impeding it from recognizing any eventual error or flaw, and consequently, they hinder the spectator from knowing and judging the play accurately.

Weighing in on the issue of "vrai vs. vraisemblant," the Académie stresses the importance of verisimilitude because of the moral implications. The Académie reproaches the author of *Le Cid* for his choice of subject and its representation, and the language of the *Sentiment* becomes progressively more prescriptive, with a long list of things that the poet must do. In dictating the actions of the poet, the Académie welds together the principle of verisimilitude, and more generally, Aristotelian principles, with reason:

> Il est des verités monstrueuses, ou qu'il faut supprimer pour le bien de la société, ou que si l'on ne les peut tenir cachées, il faut se contenter de remarquer comme des choses estranges. C'est principalement en ces rencontres que le Poëte a droit de preferer la vray-semblance à la verité, & de travailler plustost sur un sujet feint & *raisonnable*, que sur un veritable qui ne fust pas conforme à la *raison*. Que s'il est obligé de traitter une matiere historique de cette nature, c'est alors qu'il la doit reduire aux termes de la bienseance, sans avoir egard à la verité, & qu'il la doit plustot changer toute entiere que de luy laisser rien qui soit incompatible avec les regles de son Art;

> lequel se proposant l'idée universelle des choses, les espure des defaux, & des irregularités particulieres que l'histoire par la severité de ses loix est contrainte d'y souffrir.[55] (948-949, emphasis mine)

The cascade of commands ("il faut,""il doit") establishes a very precise frame within which the poet must operate, enforcing *vraisemblance* to ensure that the play conveys the proper moral message, even if it means deviating from historical truths, for the sake of "le bien de la société."[56] The privileging of the verisimilar to the truth is not only dictated by the rules of *bienséance*, but it is the reasonable course of action. The word "reason" is worth repeating, for all other elements – vraisemblance, bienséance – are derivatives of this supreme faculty.

The Académie also sees itself as responsible for training the public's eye, which has grown too accustomed to the bad habits of poets.[57] The role of this official body, as judge of what is and is not legitimate, is therefore two-fold: to act as a regulating entity that ensures that what the poet produces adheres to the defined rules, and to teach the audience how to see, so that they may take pleasure only in those plays that are both "bonnes" and "agréables." The eye of the public must be trained and given the right instruments, its reason sharpened so as not to be overwhelmed by violent passions:

> Car les passions violentes bien exprimées, font souvent en ceux qui les voyent une partie de l'effect, qu'elles font en ceux qui les ressentent veritablement. Elles ostent à tous la liberté de l'esprit, & font que les uns se plaisent à voir representer les fautes, que les autres se plaisent à commettre. Ce sont ces puissans mouvemens, qui ont tiré des Spectateurs du Cid cette grande approbation, & qui doivent aussi la faire excuser. L'Autheur s'est facilement rendu maistre de leur ame, apres y avoir excité le trouble & l'esmotion; leur esprit flatté par quelques endroits agreables, est devenu aisément flatteur de tout le reste, & les charmes esclatans de quelques parties leur ont donné de l'amour pour tout le corps. S'ils eussent esté moins ingenieux, ils eussent esté moins sensibles; ils eussent veu les defaux que nous voyons en cette Piece s'ils ne se fussent point trop arrestés à en regarder les beautez (…). (1032)

While recalling the terms presented in Durval's *Discours* about the poet's ability to profoundly move the spectators irrespective of social or cultural background, the Académie's statement is far less favorable toward this effect. In fact, the Académie casts the passions as a threat to the intellectual faculties, acting as a force

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[55] See *Sentiments de l'Académie,* in *La Querelle du* Cid, 956-957 for other instances in which Aristotelian principles are coupled with reason.

[56] Though the Académie is not fond of Corneille's choice, it claims that it would have been preferable for the author to alter the ending "pour la rendre plus utile au peuple," ibid., 952.

[57] On the subject of the unity of place in *Le Cid*, the authors of the *Sentiments* write that "Quant au Theatre, il n'y a personne à qui il ne soit evident qu'il est mal entendu dans ce Poëme, & qu'une mesme Scene y represente plusieurs lieux. Il est vray que c'est un defaut que l'on trouve en la pluspart de nos Poëmes Dramatiques, & auquel il semble que la negligence des Poëtes ait accoustumé les Spectateurs," ibid., 997.

that blinds the spectator from the play's flaws. The discussions of the dynamic between reason and passion occur in relation to the positions occupied by the poet, the spectator, and the Académie. The poet is seen as instigator, as the one who commits errors but with great eloquence and skill, charming and bedazzling those who attend his spectacles. He stir the passions and takes hold of the spectators' minds and hearts, becoming the "maistre de leur ame" and keeping them from recognizing the errors of the work. The spectator is impressionable and could become a victim to these violent passions, but the statement presents an alternative image of this figure. Though set in hypothetical terms, a less naïve ("moins ingénieux") spectator would also be less sensitive or impressionable ("moins sensible"), s/he would have the same kind of astute vision that the members of the Académie possess. "Ils eussent veu les defaux que nous voyons en cette Piece": the two pronouns "ils" (the spectators) and "nous" (the Academics), simultaneously create exclusion and inclusion. In reality and in their present state, the spectators' vision is one that allows itself to be fooled by beautiful appearances, and it is therefore unlike that of the members of the Académie. Ideally, however, and with adequate training, they, too, would see "les defaux que nous voyons"; they, too, would share that exclusive and privileged knowledge that would expose the poem in its true form; they, too, would be primed to judge the piece according to reason rather than sentiment. Under the control of the Académie, there is no room for raw and sensuous experiences. There is only mechanized and rationalized vision, a "contentement raisonnable." It is only when the vision of the public aligns itself with that of the institution that its judgement is legitimate.

Coda

Though the opposition between an instrumentalized and a natural eye is prominent in both the Italian and French debates, a number of important elements differentiate the polemic around *L'Adone* from the one around *Le Cid*. In Italy, the critic's "occhiale" is a hybrid device whose protean function and form correspond to a specific viewing subject. Before the eyes of the readers, the lens functions as a super-normative telescope that extends and expands the knowledge of the beholder, while before the eyes of the poet, it serves as a corrective and normative pair of spectacles with the goal of recalibrating the flawed poem according to Cinquecento ideals. The respondents disavow the instrument, whatever its identity, claiming that

it is a source of error or harm, and in doing so, they reinstate the legitimacy of the natural eye. In France, the references to instruments are more rare, but the two general visual modes remain. And yet, the visual modes are concentrated more on the figures of the critic and the audience. In other words, the critic (Scudéry), who advocates for supplementing the natural eye with a visual aid, does so mostly with regard to the public rather than the poet. There is no doubt that Scudéry aims to correct Corneille's text, but this correction, unlike his experience with the audience, is seldom expressed in visual terms. Where such references are made in Scudéry's text, the visual mode is almost exclusively a telescopic one as the critic works to train the eye of the audience and extend it beyond its normal field of perception, turning private experiment into public experience. The only explicit mention of a pair of corrective spectacles occurs in the work of one of Scudéry's detractors in *Le Souhait du Cid*, whose author reaffirms the validity of affective response over an analytical reading, and therefore applies the glasses to the eyes of the critic whose "regulative" ambitions have made *him* deviate from the norm of public praise. Indeed, the definition of "norm" and the validation of judgement are more pronounced in the French debates than they are in Italy. And then, there is the presence of a third party that is exclusive to the French polemic: the Académie Française. The debates in Italy are limited to a sphere of individuals. The triumph of the natural eye in the *Adone* polemic was simply due to the fact that Stigliani was outnumbered. Moreover, while these texts influenced theorists who rewrote and rethought Italian poetics in the seventeenth century, those thoughts were never made into official doctrine. In Italy, and in France prior to the Académie's response, the two modes of vision existed in tension. Unlike the Italian polemic, however, what began as a debate among individuals in France was elevated to an official level, and when the Académie opted for regularity and reason, it in turn promoted the instrumentalized mode of vision to the only valid visual mode. Though a number of spaces would emerge in France over the course of the seventeenth century to discuss and judge literature (we may think most notably of the salons), all considerations would exist – be it in accord or discord – alongside an established and prescribed norm.[58] In

[58] "La norme esthétique fut très tôt mise en avant, avec la querelle du *Cid* et les *Sentiments de l'Académie* qu'elle suscita, première manifestation de l'académisme officiel. (…) L'influence de la vie académique sur les questions de poétique se fit sentir de façon plus diffuse: si elle contribua à codifier les formes (les *Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid* participent de la mise en place des règles des 'unités' dans le genre théâtre), elle participa surtout à la codification du goût," Viala, *La Naissance de l'écrivain*, 35. These considerations are followed by thoughts on the imposition of a norm in language (35-39).

France, by the decree of the Académie, the instrument officially supplanted the natural organ of sight, announcing the dusk of the baroque eye.

PART IV.

EPILOGUE

Epilogue

Whether they take current affairs or contemporary literature as their object of study, the texts united here problematize not only the authority of vision, but the ideas associated with it. They simultaneously challenge and affirm vision's epistemological value by opposing the natural eye and the instrument, or the two corresponding visual modes, exposing the heterogeneous nature of visual perception. The mechanism through which we see, be it the eye, the spectacles, or the telescope, conditions what we see, which in turn shapes what we know and how we understand reality. Béroalde refers to lenses in his frontispiece, and by offering us his text as a means or a *moyen*, he transforms his book into a lens that aims to form the viewing subject or reader. Boccalini ridicules the naïve perception of a poet who sees the world through nothing but his own eyes and who profoundly misreads reality; he creates a marketplace where eyeglasses and telescopes are sold alongside a variety of curious objects that serve to conceal and manipulate; he coins the *occhiali politici*, that insightful and dangerous instrument that penetrates beyond appearances and therefore stands in opposition to both the naked eye and the deceitful lenses. D'Aubigné, in his revision of France's religious wars, presents a spectrum of viewing subjects, from blind rulers, to visually-impaired individuals, to the poet-prophet whose "other eyes" – his lens of faith – enable him to see through earthly corruption and beyond the physical in a search for truth. The literary polemics, by taking literature itself as their object of scrutiny and interpretation, demonstrate how the reception of a text literally depends on the lens through which it is read.

With the advent of the telescope, the increased scientific understanding of lenses more generally, and revelations about the structure of the eye in these early decades of the seventeenth century, to interrogate the authority of *vision* must take into consideration the complexity of vision itself, which may occur through the natural eye or the artificial instrument. Both modes, individually, are inseparable from vision, but vision is also characterized by the dynamic between them. Many of the authors examined here express great doubt about the reliability of the *eye* in the acquisition of knowledge, but they place considerable faith in the instrument, which still guarantees *vision's* role in that process. Conversely, lenses are not yet unanimously considered superior to the naked eye, and lenticular devices continue to inspire suspicion among members of both the scientific and literary communities, such as Galileo's detractors and the "respondents" to Stigliani and

Scudéry in the polemics. This is seeing the world through baroque eyes: vision, suspended somewhere between the eye and the instrument.

The baroque *eye*: if I have elected to foreground the natural organ of sight despite the multiplicity of "vision," it is because in the early seventeenth century, and following Kepler's comparison of the organ and the *camera obscura*, the eye itself becomes an instrument. The eye is at once natural and mechanical, functioning in an identical manner to those same devices that assist and enhance it. It is susceptible to corruption and limited in its capacity, and yet indispensable to the observation of the world. The eye itself, in sum, performs this multiplicity and embodies the tension between the two visual modes.

The visual mode notwithstanding, both the natural eye and the instrument are lenticular forms, and while the notion of mediation seems more evident when considering the optical devices, Kepler's findings turn vision into a necessarily mediated process, so that the perception through the eye, while "natural," is not neutral. If the mirror was the optical emblem of the Renaissance, the seventeenth century announces and privileges the lenticular over the specular. The notion of "*looking at*" reality cedes to that of *looking through* or *beyond* something, through appearances and beyond the visible. "Seeing" cedes to "observing," and as the texts of this study have shown, literature identifies the potential of lenses as a means of knowledge and representation, recognizing in them a connection to power and infusing them with an aesthetic function. Thinking of literature as a lens rather than a mirror invites us to consider not simply the representative function of literature, but its transformative role as well.

PART V.

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