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Loret's Marketing Revolution
Audience Representation as Positioning Strategy in Seventeenth-Century Newspapers

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Mémoires du livre
Studies in Book Culture

LORET'S MARKETING REVOLUTION: Audience Representation as Positioning Strategy in Seventeenth-Century Newspapers[1]

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ABSTRACT

The inception of Jean Loret's *Lettre en vers* in 1652 constituted a major evolution in information culture. Borrowing the concepts of positioning and segmentation from marketing studies, this article insists on Loret's *tour de force*: by portraying Marie de Nemours as the reader and recipient of the news, he conferred the veneer of a private and handwritten correspondence to an object that was public and sold. This formula, which I describe as "addressed information," presented multiple advantages: it created a new, affective, intimate, and agentive relationship between the readers and the information, renewed audience segmentation, and distinguished the Lettre en vers from the competing gazettes of the time. The article also studies Loret's depictions of a wider audience and demonstrates the later success of his formula in France, especially in the case of the *Mercure galant*.

RÉSUMÉ

La publication imprimée de la *Lettre en vers* de Jean Loret en 1652 transforme la culture de l'information imprimée dans la France du XVII[e] siècle. En s'appuyant sur des concepts empruntés aux études marketing (segmentation, positionnement), le présent article analyse ce tour de force sur nouveaux frais. En posant Marie de Nemours comme lectrice et destinataire des nouvelles, Loret confère l'apparence d'une correspondance privée et manuscrite à un objet pourtant public et destiné à la vente. Cette formule, que je qualifie « d'information adressée », présente de multiples avantages : elle crée un rapport nouveau — intime, affectif et agentif — entre lectorat et information, renouvelle la segmentation des publics et démarque la *Lettre en vers* des gazettes concurrentes. L'article étudie également les représentations du lectorat élargi dans la même lettre en vers et commente le succès ultérieur de cette « information adressée », notamment le cas du *Mercure galant*.

Keywords
Marketing, early modern newspapers, Loret, information culture, audience segmentation

Mots-clés
Marketing, presse d'Ancien Régime, Loret, culture de l'information, public

On September 29, 1652, the first printed editions of Jean Loret's weekly newsletter in verse began to circulate, printed, in Paris.[2] Its form was unique for a printed gazette: in contrast to other outlets before him, which relayed news anonymously without mentioning a recipient, Loret opened each of his letters by figuring the reader to whom the content was addressed—his dedicatee, Marie de Nemours, also known as Mademoiselle de Longueville:

> Princesse blanche comme ivoire…
> Depuis le glorieux moment
> Ou j'eus l'honneur et l'allégresse
> D'être logé chez Votre Altesse…
> Je fais dessein de vous écrire
> Les bruits qui courent quelquefois
> Parmi la cour et les bourgeois.[3]

This conceit, which I refer to below as a kind of *addressed information*, was a marketing *tour de force*: it gave the veneer of a private, intimate correspondence to a public, printed product.[4] Its success appears to have been immediate and long-lasting. In 1655, Loret's newsletter was copied in Lyon. From 1656 onward, the form was imitated by Charles Robinet in his *La Muse royale*, a gazette dedicated to the Princesse Palatine (in this case, Anne de Gonzague of Clèves), and it was taken up in the following decade by the "continuateurs de Loret"[5]—journalists who continued to address their versified newsletters to a variety of aristocratic dedicatees after Loret's death in 1665. In 1672, the form gave rise to the epistolary prose format of Donneau de Visé's *Mercure galant*. It then became commonplace in later European printed newspapers, as shown by Marion Brétéché with the Dutch *Lettres historiques*, and in the eighteenth-century media in general.[6] In the case of the *Mercure galant*, notably, the female reader addressee was no longer a high-ranking lady of the court, but rather an "amie de province": someone anonymous, and—above all else—fictional. This evolution, from a readily identifiable aristocratic female addressee to an unnamed woman

from the province, suggests that the core of Loret's formula depended less on the identity of the stated addressee and more on the mere fact of addressing his news to *someone*—and, in particular, to a woman. Indeed, this surprising and innovative form distinguished Loret's *Lettre en vers* and its successors from other competing French and European outlets, in a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive printed information market.[7] In doing so, Loret transformed information culture by offering audiences an unprecedented means of relating to and consuming information: one that was at once affective and agentive, both entertaining and engaging.[8]

Taking Loret's *Lettre en vers* as a case study, this essay considers representations of readers in seventeenth-century newspapers as a *product positioning* strategy, instead of as a reflection of an actual readership.[9] A key step in any strategic marketing process, product positioning refers to the sum of decisions and actions undertaken—from design to promotion—to separate a product from its competition and to connect it to predetermined market segment(s).[10] *Segmentation*, in this sense, emerges as another key concept in this study. The operation consists in approaching the market by subdividing it according to relevant criteria (for instance, age, gender, professions, common interests) and designing products directed at these segments.[11] Applied to seventeenth-century literature, the concept of segmentation therefore reminds us that consumer groups are neither uniform nor fixed. It allows us to go beyond the vaguely defined, monolithic blocks on which audience criticism often relies, such as the "*public mondain*" or "*les doctes*": indeed, a *mondain* and a *docte* can be the same person, depending on how a product targets them. Of course, the dedication to the Marie de Longueville cannot be considered a purely commercial undertaking; the rhetorical device has clear social and political implications. In addressing his letter to Mademoiselle de Longueville, Loret granted its dedicatee material visibility and fame. This had profound political implications for Marie de Nemours, because it compensated for her father's machinations to diminish her position.[12] But Loret's *Lettre en vers* is also a product, printed (a process that implies investment and labour), sold, and bought.[13] To approach the *Lettre en vers* in terms of positioning means to consider representations of readers not as a reflection of the actual readership, but as an action,[14] which, in turn, highlights how addressed information enabled Loret to distinguish his newsletter from its competitors. In this article, what will be at issue is the question of "desired

positioning"—that is, the product design strategy as opposed to its effective success or the real perceptions of consumers. What is at stake, in other words, is a question concerning the cultural imaginary: understanding the "desired positioning" of French newspapers from the seventeenth century requires that we identify and analyze the cultural setting Loret drew on to make his product stand out. Such an approach has the advantage of circumventing a frequent pitfall for seventeenth-century studies—namely, the dearth of reliable data about audiences and readership. My approach to the seventeenth-century print market will therefore not be quantitative, but qualitative. Marketing concepts will allow me to study the conception of Loret's newsletter in relation to its competitors and to define, on the one hand, the product's intrinsic attributes and, on the other hand, the audience segments these attributes actually target. In what follows, I therefore use the term *audience* to refer exclusively to the audience targeted and constructed by the newspapers, never in the sense of their actual, real readership.[15]

While the use of a concept from the study of marketing might seem, at first glance, anachronistic, the methods and questions of the discipline correspond to widespread discourses and practices in the seventeenth century and thus offer considerable hermeneutic value.[16] Studying fifteenth-century book trade, Kathleen Rassuli reminds, in reference to Stanley Hollander's work, that "many marketing phenomena … have existed in one form or another in centuries."[17] Contrary to some of its common connotations, *marketing* is neither a synonym for (false) advertising, nor necessarily a matter of money. In fact, it encompasses the research, design, and techniques employed to maximize a product's capacity to reach its target audience within a given market. In other words, marketing concepts prove relevant as soon as there is a market, competition, and the desire to attract consumers—whether to sell a product or to gain political support. Printed information in the seventeenth century corresponds exactly to this definition: Gilles Feyel has demonstrated both the extent and the complexity of this information market in France, a "dual" setting in which numerous gazettes, newspapers, and periodicals circulated, competing on both national and international scales.[18] The existence and survival of such publications was not a given, and many gazettes saw only a handful of issues before disappearing.[19] A gazette's ability to exist hinged on its ability to set itself apart from in its competitors in terms of form, or content. To survive,

in other words, a gazette had to position itself effectively, reach out to defined reader segments, or conquer new ones.[20]

In what follows, I provide a brief overview of the various positioning strategies used in the seventeenth-century press, highlighting the absence of representations of readers in a vast majority of gazettes. I then reframe Loret's formal experiment, the textual originality of his newsletter, as a marketing innovation in terms of positioning. Finally, I expand this analysis to encompass additional representations of other readers in Loret's work, as well as in that of his imitators and successors: how do these ancillary representations of readers participate in the positioning of the publication and what do they contribute to the representation of the main recipient identified at the outset of the newsletter?

Positioning Strategies in the Seventeenth-Century Press: A Brief Overview

To fully grasp the specificity of Loret's formula, we must first acknowledge that his model of addressed information was rather singular, and immediately separated him from his competitors in the print news market. In the vast majority of seventeenth-century European media outlets, the reader's presence is *marginal* (relegated to paratexts), *indirect* (referred to in the third person), or *implied* (in cases where the content suggests a certain kind of reader).[21] The reader, in other words, typically lacks a diegetic centre in the text. As we will see below, the *Mercure français* and the *Gazette de Renaudot,* for instance, privilege a neutral style of information ("Le 29 du [mois] passé, le foudre tomba sur…"[22]), as do *The Parliament Scout* ("The Commons took into consideration, that part of the Directory to marriage…") and *The Faithful Scout* ("It is certified from *Cambridge*, that two *Petticoat-Preachers*…).[23] Readers are only referred to in the journal's paratexts, often indirectly. The numerous English newspapers from 1640 to 1660 studied by Joad Raymond similarly did not address their news to an identifiable reader.[24] Even the *Danske Mercurius*—the Danish Mercury—launched in 1666 and whose versified form was directly inspired by Loret's newsletter (by then succeeded by Robinet's, Subligny's, and other versified outlets), did not retain the explicit address which characterized Loret's original publication.[25] Two noteworthy exceptions include, on the one hand, the *Mazarinades*,[26] whose dizzying political context, the period of civil war

known as the Fronde, encouraged experimentation with form, and, on the other, the *Extraordinaires* of the *Gazette*.[27]

In fact, the various European newspapers published during this period, including those of Loret and his successors, drew on many other strategies besides representing an identifiable reader in order to position themselves effectively on the print market. The paper's title, whether a full page or a typeset banner, is the most obvious example: a *Journal des savants* does not target the same market segments as a *Gazette* or as the *Nouvelles ordinaires*; this is not to say that these publications are not ultimately read by the same people, only that the positioning is different. Moreover, these printed works commonly played with the identity of the fictional messengers, whether it is the god Mercurius, or an anonymous emissary: the *Mercure français*, the *Mercure galant*, the *Kingdom Faithful And Impartial Scout*, or the *Mercurius pragmaticus* each target different audience segments. Geographical origin, often emphasized in the title, fulfills a similar audience-targeting function: the fact that a gazette comes from Leiden or Amsterdam implicitly promises information other than what is available in a gazette from France.[28] The formatting and typesetting of a journal equally serve to position the publication: for example, Renaudot favoured the in-4° format to distinguish his gazette "from all the *occasionnels* spreading throughout Paris,"[29] and the elegant central border and italicized letters of the verses visually signal the more refined, literary quality of the information in his paper as opposed to the compact paragraphs of small, rank-and-file Roman typeface that characterized the rest of the *Gazette*.[30] Formal aspects, too, served as a means of distinction: the idea of presenting information in verse rather than in prose is a clear example, since it adorns potentially identical content with the appeal of verse and rhyme. Indeed, when Loret republished his *Lettre en vers* in 1658 under the new title *La Muse historique*, the "rebranding" emphasized the poetic and historical quality of the missives in order to differentiate the outlet from gazettes composed in prose.[31] In the framing prefatory texts, one also builds a case for the newspaper in question, by sketching the contours of the target audience—occasionally by directly addressing the reader—or detailing the quality of the paper's content by explicitly juxtaposing it to that of its competition. Finally, we might also note that the type of news offered by a paper obviously differentiates it from other publications—Loret's literary and theatrical news is neither the political news of the *Gazette*, nor the scholarly reviews of the *Journal des*

savants. This differentiation in content, however, is not really "positioning" unless it is made visible and rendered salient to the consumer—hence the various signalling strategies discussed above.

The infrequent representation of readers in seventeenth-century European newspapers is rather striking when we consider that the structure of European newspapers had its origins in correspondence. The "articles" published in the *Gazette de France* were in reality compilations of letters received from various correspondents.[32] For this reason, one might expect to find representations of authors and readers, senders and receivers—textual traces of correspondents and recipients. Renaudot, however, effaces such traces in his paper, and the vast majority of articles present the following neutral style of discourse, which is typical of the *Gazette*:

> De Varsovie. On nous écrit de L'Ukraine que les Tartares voyant que les Kalmuks… sont aussi rentrés dans la Crimée, [sont] fort joyeux d'avoir été si tôt délivrés de ces ennemis qui ont presque toujours eu l'avantage sur eux.[33]

While a *nous* occasionally grounds the enunciation, most of the content of the paper is relayed without an explicit narrator, often by means of the impersonal third-person pronoun *on*. The decision to eliminate traces of an identifiable reader and correspondent stems at least in part from a question of positioning. In order to fight private correspondences and *gazettes à la main*[34]—handwritten gazettes or *gazetins* that circulated clandestinely—, a printed newspaper such as the *Gazette* presents its news as the objective truth—which, of course, is only another form of positioning. The news does not originate from any specific correspondent, is not addressed to any one person in particular, and no specific reader is represented; it appears as public, unmediated information. In fact, the disappearance of some direct address found in the *Gazette* in its first years—such as "je *vous* l'avais bien promis que mes premières nouvelles seraient"[35]—stems from the directive given to Renaudot that he stick to "a simple narration of facts" and avoid any political analysis or stated point of view.[36]

The relative scarcity of reader representations does not, therefore, mean the absence of a target audience—quite the opposite, in fact. But segmentation was based above all on usefulness, social and professional categories, political sympathies, or the demand for news in general—what Marion Brétéché aptly calls "l'appétit nouvelliste."[37] From a gender perspective, the

absence of reader representations and the predominance of positioning strategies based on professional activity aligns the seventeenth-century press quite closely with the twentieth-century media landscape: ungendered press is mostly a sign of a fundamentally "masculine" press. [38]

Addressed News as a New Positioning Strategy

In directly addressing his news to a high-ranking noblewoman and celebrating her in his verses, Loret thus bucks the conventions of printed press in his time. In order to transcend the traditional positioning strategies based on segmentation by social and professional categories, or by the usefulness of the gazettes to a given (male) sector of society—statesmen, merchants, men of letters, Protestants, Catholics, and so on—Loret instead targets anyone who adheres to a shared set of values and representations: those constructed by the *galanterie*, the new French cultural paradigm.[39] Such positioning has the capacity to reach any reader, man or woman, bourgeois or noble; people of the sword (*gens d'épée*), of the robe (*robins*), or of letters; and many more: indeed, anyone who identifies with this new cultural paradigm. Moreover, Loret appeals to all these categories simultaneously by offering a novel relationship to information—something different than the utilitarian approach on which his competitors relied.

First, by adopting the form of a letter addressed to a woman, Loret gives the veneer of private, even intimate correspondence to a decidedly public product. In a Europe where "Gazettes et journaux supplantent les correspondances privées comme sources d'information du plus grand nombre,"[40] one begins to find, both in France and in England, the expression of a healthy skepticism towards printed news outlets and some suggestion that private correspondence is more reliable, less mercenary, and gives more unmediated access to news, as if providing first-hand knowledge.[41] In 1684, Madeleine de Scudéry underscored this division when she proposed what resembles an audience segmentation, between those who

> ne se soucient guère de ces grands événements qu'on trouve dans les gazettes [et ceux] qui aiment mieux ce qu'on appelle les nouvelles du cabinet, qui ne se disent qu'à l'oreille et qui ne sont bien sues que par des personnes du monde bien instruites, qui ont le jugement exquis et le goût délicat.[42]

The difference between the two audiences sketched by Scudéry is as much a matter of content as it is of mean. It is transmitting information directly "to the ear" (*à l'oreille*) that makes something *nouvelles du cabinet,* which is precisely the kind of intimacy simulated by Loret's *Lettre en vers*. Though printed and sold, Loret's newsletter presents itself as a missive penned to "plaire à une grande princesse et à un petit nombre de personnes de sa confidence qui méritaient que l'on eût soin de leur agréer."[43] However obvious it might seem, the significance of this conceit should not be underestimated. Within a given market, consumers "trust more their beliefs than the objective features of a product."[44] And indeed, readers were taken in: in 1678, Pierre Bayle, intrigued by the epistolary structure of the *Mercure galant*, quite seriously asked his brother "si la dame à qui il écrit n'est pas une supposition pour avoir lieu de donner l'air de lettre à son *Mercure*."[45] In a society where the *Gazette* makes undifferentiated information widely available, Loret's letters in verse promise first-hand *nouvelles du cabinet*—information seemingly close, targeted, intimate. If the type of news presented in Loret's letters does indeed differ from that of other gazettes, it is the simulacrum of the reader, the addressee's inscription in writing, that makes this difference immediately perceptible: this is not "just everybody's" news, but precious information whispered directly into the "ear" of "Mademoiselle de Longueville, princesse de haute naissance et de rare mérite,"[46] now suddenly made available to the public, as if by a happy accident.

The *Lettre en vers* in this way presents itself as the outlet of a certain sector of society, offering the reader the appeal of belonging—if only in the time-space of the gazette—to the circle of one of the most captivating personalities of the court. This is another advantage of addressed information. The process largely corresponds to Geoffrey Turnovsky's analysis of Madeleine de Scudéry's novels and short stories: namely, that the (textual) representation of a small circle of intimates does not reflect the actual readership of these works, but rather constituted a way of a attracting a large audience of readers who dreamt of basking in the intimacy of a princess's entourage—the same audience who made Scudéry's novels bestsellers.[47] Loret stokes precisely this desire for intimacy and proximity when he portrays his addressee in great detail:

> Dimanche, lorsque pour vous voir
> J'arrivai dans votre parloir,
> Soudain une belle lumière
> Me vint donner dans la visière.

En fus-je, alors, tout ébloui ?
Si je le fus ? oui, vraiment oui.
Je crûs voir à travers les grilles
La chaste Diane et ses filles,
Qui jetaient vers moi tant d'éclat
Que j'en pensai tomber tout plat ;
Mais, enfin, un respect extrême
Me vint saisir à l'heure-même,
Qui me secourut de tout point,
Et fit que je ne tombai point.[48]

In this "salon de papier"[49] in the fullest sense, Loret promises to visit Longueville's parlour and to see her "in person," by the conjuring magic of text and print.

The other fundamental element of Loret's formula is the gender of his recipient. Historiography has long taken the framing representation of female readers as a straightforward reflection of actual readership, often positing the *Mercure galant* as a forerunner to women's magazines.[50] However, the trope of addressing news to a female dedicatee does not mean that an exclusively female readership is being targeted. This distinction can be readily gleaned from the careful positioning at work in the *Muse historique*, in which it is actually the *diversity* of the reading public that is described at length: "les princes et les princesses, les grands seigneurs et les dames de notre cour, les hommes mêmes de longue robe et de profession sérieuse et studieuse, quittent leurs autres emplois pour quelques moments afin de se récréer à [la lecture de la *Lettre en vers*]."[51] Representations of female readers correspond instead to the model described by Stephen Neale in 1980 of a contract between the producer and the public. Representing a woman recipient produces specific expectations, triggers certain cultural associations, on which Loret relies to differentiate his *Lettre en* vers from its competitors.[52]

What kind of reader expectations are created by the gender of Loret's addressee? First, the female-gendered addressee signals content that is both interesting and readily accessible, in concert with the elegant visual presentation of the *Lettre en vers* (border, columns, italics). In stereotypical representations in the seventeenth century, women were often depicted as being unable to concentrate for long periods of time and as lacking the education necessary to tackle overly technical subjects.[53] Loret draws on

gendered expectations about female readership during the period. Addressing news to a woman implied the material would be pleasant and accessible, and that it would avoid endless descriptions of military feats or tedious technical details—all stereotypes which Loret's newsletter both profits from and reinforces. Therefore, by marking the gender of the reader, the outlet paradoxically positions itself as "unmarked," intended for non-specialist readers without discouraging specialized readers, and ultimately targets the widest possible audience. Because Loret's newsletter concerns Mademoiselle de Longueville, however, the news discussed will nevertheless be perceived as important and of high quality: the daughter of Henri II of Orléans is knowledgeable about war and politics, and she has a keen eye for arts and culture—a status sought by many. In other words, Loret promises quality news adapted to match the "available reading time" of multiple subsets of the population.[54]

The "contract" between Loret and his reader also inscribes the news within an affective, engaging, and playful relationship, thereby ensuring a novel "proximity" to the reader that is still crucial in today's press marketing.[55] With the *Lettre en vers*, reading the news no longer appears to be a serious, off-putting, or purely informational affair—a practice that would not conform to the expectations invoked by representations of a female reader. Loret manages to imbue print news with the allure of what private correspondence used to offer: an intimate social pastime, a form of entertainment that solicited the emotional reactions of readers. Certainly, the fact that Loret's news is presented *in verse* plays an essential role, but it is the reader representations that allow Loret to promote, week after week, this active and pleasant mode of reading. In his addresses to the princess, he worries about pleasing her and adequately "entertaining" (*divertir*) her, offering her verses which she will deem "soit mauvais, soit bons."[56] By emphasizing form above all else, the representation of the reader increases the efficacy of Loret's *vers burlesques*. Reading the *Lettre en vers*, as opposed to the arid prose of the *Gazette*, is not merely about learning things, but also about appreciating the way these things are told. The *Lettre en vers*, in this sense, is properly a literary endeavour.[57] Through the figure of his addressee, Loret constructs, letter after letter, an original, pleasing relationship between the audience and his news. Here again, his brand identity strongly differs from the utilitarian seriousness or importance of competing gazettes and which, ultimately, manages to target a much larger audience. This is the

thrust of Loret's claim when he claims he writes "pour vous divertir," when he regrets that "N'ayant rien à mettre… que des sujets fort sérieux," that "les lignes suivantes / Ne soient pas beaucoup ravissantes," or when he is afraid of "ennuyer Votre Altesse."[58] He goes so far as to blur the line between fact and fiction, mixing news with "quelques contes nouveaux / soit qu'ils soient vrais, ou qu'ils soient faux."[59]

Finally, representations of the reader's reactions to Loret's endeavour give additional value to the *Lettre en vers*. A seventeenth-century version of celebrity brand endorsements, the patronage of Mademoiselle de Longueville attests to the quality and relevance of Loret's news. And Loret would not fail to regularly note the favourable judgment of his dedicatee, explaining by means of a characteristic understatement how the Duchess had "gracieusement accepté, chaque dimanche, mes ouvrages,"[60] noting that his verses owe his thanks to her.

The subsequent adjustments to Loret's model of direct address that his successors later would implement largely confirm the characteristics of addressed information outlined above, especially as they relate to gender. Charles Robinet, for instance, who dedicated his newsletter to "Princesse Palatine" and later to "Madame," used the Loret formula without modification. Mayolas, who immediately followed Loret, likewise retained the model of his predecessor. But when he began dedicating his letters to the king in the early 1670s, Mayolas had to compensate for this change in the recipient's gender by adding fashionable texts at the end of his letters, such as thoughts on a mirror or a watch. Finally, the *Mercure galant*, which designated an anonymous and fictional female recipient, reaped the same benefits of Loret's model, with the exception of the valorization provided by a prestigious name. As if to compensate for this loss, Donneau de Visé increased the number of important dedicatees at court throughout 1677 and, from 1678 onward, he slipped into his speeches to the Dauphin, his dedicatee and reader, praise for the *Mercure*.

A Wider Audience: Representing the Readership Community

In addition to his main addressee, Mademoiselle de Longueville, Loret also represents a community of readers—and this primarily for the purposes of positioning. Such representations appear in the preface to the *Muse historique* but also in the body of Loret's letters. By acknowledging a wider community of readers, Loret risks *a priori* mitigating the private and intimate interpersonal quality of the *Lettre en vers*. To avoid this pitfall, he mostly speaks of his audience in the third person, creating a salient grammatical difference (and distance) that allows him to avoid a dilution of the specificity, and intimacy, of his framing address to the Duchess:

> Princesse, à présent que mes vers
> Sont vus de cent lecteurs divers,
> Le métier qu'il faut que je fasse
> Bien plus qu'autrefois m'embarrasse.[61]

The form is rather ingenious, for it allows Loret to highlight his success and to pique a mimetic desire while maintaining the illusion of intimacy with his original dedicatee. Moreover, he manages to present his gazette as a matter for heated debate when he complains that:

> Quelques beaux esprits tempérés
> Souhaitent qu'ils [his verses] soient modérés.
> D'autres veulent que la Gazette
> Sente un peu l'épine-vinette.
> D'ailleurs ma rime n'est point bonne
> Quand je n'égratigne personne.
> Bref, mes vers, tant ici qu'aux champs,
> Sont méchants s'ils ne sont méchants.
> Voyez quelle est mon infortune !
> Si je pique un peu j'importune,
> Et lors que je ne pique pas
> Mes vers sont froids et sans appâts.[62]

By representing a community of readers debating his *Lettre en vers* and claiming to pen verses that "égratine," he positions himself as discordant voice, embodied, less neutral—and therefore more interesting—than that of Renaudot's *Gazette*. This conceit also corresponds to the tastes that Sorel would identify 20 years later among his contemporaries:

> Quand les sujets dont on écrit sont plausibles, comme si c'est une question du temps, ou une critique de quelque ouvrage nouveau, cela est fort recherché, tant les esprits

> du siècle aiment à voir que les personnes les plus remarquables soient censurées.[63]

Through his depictions of public debate revolving around his "vers méchants"—nasty verses (and certainly not "méchants vers"—bad verses), Loret presents his *Lettre en vers* as both a timely publication and as one that comments on noteworthy people.

The representation of Longueville as arch-arbiter of his verses had helped develop an affective relationship to the news. This is a positioning function that he also now confers on his "other" readers:

> Ma faible et journalière tête
> Ne peut pas produire toujours
> De ces raisonnables discours
> Qui charment lecteur et lectrice,
> Car cela dépend du caprice.[64]

Establishing readers as judges of his verses corresponds to the modern marketing strategy of engaging a "participatory public," first in the sense of "interaction with media content" and, now, in the sense of "participation in media production."[65] By representing debate and judgement, Loret invites his public to select, to reject, but also to approve—in short, to have a form of agency, which mobilizes readers' attention, builds their loyalty, and creates a personal relationship to his *Lettre en vers*. In 1656, the famous episode of the shepherdess Nanon pushed this positioning strategy even further. Yves Giraud has retraced several weeks' worth of verses between Loret and a mysterious lover, the *bergère Nanon*.[66] Fictional or not, this Nanon sequence is a masterstroke, since, in addition to securing the loyalty of the readership around this episodic romance, it gives the *Lettre en vers* and its author the sheen of *galanterie*, which again further distinguishes Loret's publication from other newspapers. This is a positioning component that the representation of Longueville alone could not have fulfilled: the daughter of a *pair de France* and of a Bourbon-Condé never could have declared her love for Loret—especially not in print.

However, it was in the publications of Loret's successors and, in particular, in Donneau de Visé's *Mercure galant*, that the marketing potential of readership representations was most fully realized. For instance, represented readerships effectively took over the function and content traditionally

assigned to prefaces. In 1672, in the first issue of the *Mercure galant*, Donneau de Visé addressed his fictitious reader and enumerated the diversity of subjects covered in his newspaper, which offered something to "please everyone."[67] In the first volume of 1677, after a three-year hiatus, he augmented such prefatory speech, and this time distributed it among various characters assembled in a refined space. The advantage here over the original monologue lies in the possibility of representing the reactions of his fictional readers: De Visé no longer is limited to evoking the varied contents of his publication, but additionally can portray the enthusiastic responses from a valorized and diversified audience and, by extension, encourage an equally positive reaction from the reading public.[68] Another example: in 1673, Donneau de Visé was still looking for an ideal marketing formula that would enable him to transform the *Mercure galant* into the most effective cultural and political platform of Louis XIV's government. After two volumes mostly dedicated to the king's military campaign in Holland, De Visé pivoted, devoting his publication to more literary content. To promote this "repositioning," he chose to represent a community of readers reacting to his *Mercure galant*:

> – Ah ! ne me parlez point, dit une femme en s'adressant au reste de la compagnie, du second et troisième tome du *Mercure Galant* ! Ils sont, à ce qu'on dit, trop remplis de guerre et de nouvellistes, et je n'ai pas seulement voulu les lire.
> – [To which a man answers:] Si les Ruelles veulent des histoires, on trouve des Mélancoliques qui les traitent de bagatelles. Mais comme le nombre de ces derniers est moins grand, l'auteur en mettra beaucoup dans les volumes qu'il donnera dorénavant au public, et réduira en peu de lignes toutes les autres nouvelles.
> – L'auteur fera bien, reprit la première qui avait parlé, de mettre à l'avenir beaucoup d'histoires dans les tomes du *Mercure* qu'il donnera au public. Les femmes en veulent, et comme ce sont elles font réussir les ouvrages, ceux qui ne trouveront point le secret de leur plaire, ne réussiront jamais.[69]

Interestingly, this text represents what we would now call "market research." Donneau de Visé breaks down his audience into different segments (e.g., women, the "*mélancoliques*") to which he attributes different characteristics. He then determines the contents of his periodical based on

the most promising segments: women, but not the melancholics, who are not in high enough number. Through a fictitious market study, De Visé shows his work in perfect harmony with the desires and affections of the valorized market segment—the best part of the reading public—which the reader is implicitly invited to join.

This kind of representation of readers uniquely reinforced the community positioning of seventeenth-century European newspapers—from Loret's *Lettre en vers* to Donneau de Visé's *Mercure galant*. A fundamentally collaborative work, the *Mercure galant* published, each month, pieces sent by readers as well as the public's reactions to them.[70] The origins of this "user-generated content" *avant la lettre* could have been effaced, or neutralized, however. In other words, De Visé could just as easily have chosen to withhold the names of correspondents and contributors as Renaudot did in his *Gazette*. In contrast, by insisting week after week on the names of the readers sending songs, *énigmes*, and *pièces galantes*, the *Mercure* presented itself as the dynamic and fashionable news outlet of a gallant society—a society in which, through reading, consumers of the journal are invited to participate. Among Donneau de Visé's competitors the opposite was also true, and representations of readers would be used to foster a different kind of community, this time among the *Mercure*'s detractors, as a means to denigrate the periodical:

> Ce sot livre qu'on voit dans les mains des bourgeois
> Règlement à toutes les lunes
> N'est-ce point l'égoût du Parnasse françois ?[71]

***

In contrast to a European press characterized by its neutral and anonymous enunciative frameworks—news that appears to emanate from no one and to be addressed to no one in particular—and which targeted audiences solely based on the usefulness of a newspaper's content, Loret's marketing formula appealed instead to both affect and intellect. It set itself apart by virtue of the intimate quality of its information—transmitted as if *à l'oreille*. Pleasant in its form and serious in its content, at once private and public, Loret's *Lettre en vers* targeted readers who adhered to the values that would soon become those of *la France galante*. The gradual construction of this positioning was based on a number of interrelated elements—typography, the gradual incorporation (and versification) of news items—but the

reliance on "addressed information," presenting news through a direct and intimate second-person address to an identified reader, undoubtedly represents a new and innovative element in this constellation of positioning strategies. Loret's revolution in information culture relies on marketing strategies, on make-believe, and on exploiting the representations and desires of an entire society—paradoxically, the truth lies in the appearance.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

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Notes

[1] This article is supported by the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale. Thanks to Doyle Calhoun for translating it from French into English, and to the editors of *Studies in Book Culture* for their outstanding work.

[2] Gilles Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 579. On Loret, see Stella Spriet, "*La Muse historique* de Loret. Le récit d'une Fronde en vers burlesque" in *Mineurs, Minorités, Marginalités au Grand Siècle*, ed. Marta Teixeira Anacleto (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019), 181–97. Research on Loret and the material bibliography of his *Lettres en vers* is still to be done.

[3] "Princess white as ivory / … Since the glorious moment / I was honored and happy enough / To be accommodated by your Highness / I have been intending to write to you / The rumours that spread from time to time / Within the court and among the bourgeois." Jean Loret, newsletter from May 12, 1650 in *La Muse historique*, ed. Jules Ravenel et al. (Paris: Jeannet, 1857), t. I, 11.

[4] See Jennifer Perlmutter, "Journalistic Intimacy and *Le Mercure galant*," in *Actes du 39e congrès de la NASSCFL*, eds. Russell Ganim and Thomas M. Carr (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2009), 223–31.

[5] This expression was coined by Rotschild *et al.* in *Les Continuateurs de Loret* (Paris: Morgand, 1881–1889) to describe the authors of the many letters in verse appearing immediately after Loret's death in 1665, including Charles Robinet, Perdou de Subligny, and La Gravète de Mayolas.

[6] Marion Brétéché, *Les Compagnons de Mercure. Journalisme et politique dans l'Europe de Louis XIV* (Ceyzérieux : Champ Vallon, 2015), 179–81.

[7] Between 1648 and 1652, Paris witnessed more than 4000 printed pamphlets circulating throughout the city; see Christian Jouhaud, *Mazarinades: la Fronde des mots* (Paris: Aubier, 1985). This was almost three times more than what previous political crises had witnessed; see Jeffrey Sawyer, *Printed Poison* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1990), 27. I use "Lettre en vers" instead of "*Muse historique*" to focus on the published newsletter instead of its later compilation.

[8] On this relationship to news in seventeenth-century France, see for instance Chloé Hogg, *Absolutist Attachments* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2019). It also relates to phenomena observed in modern media; see for instance perspective from Anna Gibbs, "Affect Theory and Audience," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, ed. Virgnia Nightingale (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 251–66, and Zizi Papacharissi, "Toward New Journalism," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 27–40.

[9] On this opposition, see Jouhaud, *Mazarinades* and GRIHL, *Écriture et action* (Paris: EHESS, 2016).

[10] On positioning in relation to competition see the foundational works Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors* (New York: Free Press, 1998) and Philip Kotler, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation, and Control*, 15th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2016).

[11] Wendell Smith, "Product Differentiation and Market Segmentation as Alternative Marketing Strategies," *Journal of Marketing* 21, no. 1 (1956): 3–8.

[12] On these events, see Sarah Hanley, "Marie d'Orléans-Longueville," *Dictionnaire de la SIEFAR* (2014): http://siefar.org/dictionnaire/fr/Marie_d%27Orl%C3%A9ans-Longueville. I thank Yohann Deguin for his important insights on Marie de Nemours. On similar literary strategies in seventeenth-century France, see Juliette Cherbuliez, *The Place of Exile* (Lewisburg: Bucknell, 2005), as well as Nicolas Schapira, *Un professionnel des lettres au XVIIe siècle* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2003), 227–46, and Christophe Schuwey, "Une trajectoire exemplaire au début des années 1660 : Antoine Baudeau de Somaize," *XVIIe siècle* 284, no. 3 (2019): 543–47.

[13] According to the existing research on Loret, he started with a manuscript letter in 1650, and began to print it in 1652, just a few copies; he only made it something current and regular starting in 1655. Although this research has a blind spot (it does not explain the existence of a version in Lyon), the timeline is not directly relevant to the matter of positioning. In 1652, Loret's *Lettre en vers* became a product—seemingly a very successful one—that was in competition with other newspapers.

[14] On the distinction between reflection and action, see Jouhaud, *Mazarinades*; GRIHL, *Écriture et action*.

[15] For an operational definition of audience that includes people being read to, see Wendy Griswold et al., "Readers as Audience," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, 19–39.

[16] For a sociological perspective and a complete definition of marketing, see Franck Cochoy, *Une histoire du marketing* (Paris: La Découverte), 1999. Practices covered by the term "marketing" existed before marketing became an autonomous field of study, see note 17. On the seventeenth-century French literary market, see Geoffrey Turnovsky, *The Literary Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) and Christophe Schuwey, *Un entrepreneur des lettres* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020), 21–26.

[17] Kathleen, M. Rassuli, "Evidence of Marketing Strategy in the Early Printed Book Trade: An Application of Hollander's Historical Approach," in *Historical Perspectives in Marketing: Essays in Honor of Stanley C. Hollander*, eds. Terence Nevett and Ronald Fullerton (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988), 91. For a recent survey of historical marketing, see Brian Jones, "A History of Historical Research in Marketing," in *Marketing Theory: A Student Text*, eds. M.J. Baker and M. Saren, 51–82. Sage Books, 2010, http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446280096.n3.

[18] Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle*, 309–602. For England, see Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). See also the description by Jouhaud (*Mazarinades*, 29), of the market of the mazarinades: "Il fallait être très rapide, en prise sur une actualité virevoltante, quitte à faire du neuf avec du vieux en rééditant certaines pièces un mois ou un mois et demi plus tard, avec quelques menues transformations. Le danger était d'être périmé avant d'être écoulé, périmé par les événements ou par la trouvaille d'un concurrent [it was necessary to be very fast, in touch with ever-changing current events, even if this meant making the new out of the old by reissuing certain pieces a month or a month-and-a-half later, with some minor changes. The danger was to be out of date before being sold out, to be made out of date by events or by the discovery of a competitor.]"

[19] For a list of newspapers, see Jean Sgard, ed., *Dictionnaire des journaux* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), http://dictionnaire-journaux.gazettes18e.fr.

[20] Even in the very hypothetical case where the sole purpose of a printed verse letter is to represent the dedicatee, this representation would only be effective if it reaches a certain audience, which relies again on a good positioning strategy.

[21] On implied readers, see the remarkable summary in Aude Volpilhac, *Le secret de bien lire* (Paris: Champion, 2015), 21–22.

[22] "On the 29th of last month, a lightning bolt struck." Renaudot, *Gazette*, no. 12, 1657.

[23] Included in Joad Raymond, ed., *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England: 1641–1660* (New York: St Matin's Press, 1993), 161.

[24] Raymond, ed., *Making the News*. An exception can be found for instance in *The Kindomes Weekly Intelligencer* (160), which claims, "There is one thing worthy of your observation," but does not really provide a depiction of the reader.

[25] Anders Bording, *Den Danske Mercurius*, ed. Paul Ries (Copenhagen: DSL, 1984).

[26] Jouhaud, *Mazarinades*, chapter 1.

[27] The *Extraordinaires* were detailed accounts of specific events or documents. Their modes of address mostly relied on second- and first-person pronouns and were not nearly as developed as that of Loret. Yet this specific form is, once again, a matter of positioning: this was one of the ways in which the *Extraordinaires* differentiated themselves from regular issues of the *Gazette*.

[28] Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle*, 504–46.

[29] "…de tous les occasionnels alors colportés dans Paris." Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle*, 150. Ronald Fullerton links book format to audience segmentation in "The Historical Development of Segmentation: The Example of the German Book Trade 1800–1928," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4, no. 1 (2012): 56–67.

[30] On the italics as a commercial practice in seventeenth-century France, see Miriam Speyer, "Les dieux écrivent-ils en italiques ? Typographie et mise en livre de pièces en vers et en prose", *L'habillage du livre et du texte aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, eds. Anne-Elisabeth Spica et al. (Nancy: Éditions universitaires de Lorraine, 2019), 79–92.

[31] "Le nom de *Gazette*, qu'on lui a donné autrefois, n'est point quitté par mépris ; ce n'est que pour le laisser aux relations qui sont faites en prose, au lieu que, celles dont nous parlons étant en vers, on se doit bien imaginer qu'elles sont débitées par l'une des Muses […] de sorte qu'à bon droit la dignité de *Muse historique* lui est attribuée. [The name *Gazette*, formerly used, is not abandoned out of contempt; it is only to leave it to the news written in prose. Since the news we tell is in verse, we must well imagine that it arises from one of the Muses […], which means that the dignity of the *Muse historique* is conferred with good reason." *La Muse historique*, 6.

[32] Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle, 172–92* and Stéphane Haffemayer, *L'information dans la France du XVII*e *siècle : La Gazette de Renaudot, de 1647 à 1663* (Paris: Champion, 2002).

[33] "From Varsovia. News comes from Ukraine that the Tartares, when they saw that the Kalmuks … had also returned to Crimea, [were] very happy to be freed so soon from enemies who had almost always an advantage over them." *Nouvelles ordinaires* [*Gazette de France*], January 4, 1653.

[34] This was Renaudot's mission; see Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle*, 132–37.

[35] "I had promised you that my first news would be…" Renaudot, *Gazette*, January 1, 1632.

[36] "…a single et simple narration des choses." Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle*, 152.

[37] "the crave for news", Brétéché, *Les Compagnons de Mercure,* 19.

[38] See Carolyn M. Byerly, "The Geography of Women and Media Scholarship," in *The Handbook of Gender, Sex, and Media*, ed. Karen Ross (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 8–9 ("Absence"), and Joke Hermes, "Media Representations of Social Structure: Gender," in *Media Studies*, ed. Eoin Devereux (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 198.

[39] Alain Viala, *La France galante* (Paris: PuF, 2008).

[40] "Gazettes and newspapers overturn private correspondence as a source of information for the greatest number of people." Stéphane Haffemayer, "Transferts culturels dans la presse européenne au XVII[e] siècle," *Temps des médias* 11, no. 2 (2008): 25.

[41] See Schapira, *Un professionnel des lettres*, 265–68. In England, Ben Jonson's comedies on news had attacked the print market since the 1620s. See Roger Chartier, *Inscrire et effacer* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 96; —although manuscript news was also under heavy criticism: see Fritz Levy, "Staging the News," in *Print, Manuscript, Performance. The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, eds. A.F. Moretti and M.D. Bristol (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2000), 252–78.

[42] "do not concern themselves with the great events found in the gazettes [and those] who prefer what we call the *nouvelles du cabinet*, which are told only by word of mouth and are well known only by people who really know, who have exquisite judgment and a delicate taste." The first occurrence of this conversation can be found in *Clélie* (vol. 4, 1122–49). It is augmented in 1684 in *Conversations nouvelles sur divers sujets*, 531–33. I am quoting the latest version here. Note that the distinction between the types of short story is precisely one of the points that is amplified in the second version compared to the first.

[43] Loret, *La Muse historique*, 6.

[44] "Il se fit davantage à ses croyances qu'aux caractéristiques objectives du produit." Viot, *Le Marketing,* 113.

[45] "[T]he lady to whom he writes is not some conceit to make his *Mercure* look like a letter." Pierre Bayle, letter to Jacob Bayle, November 26, 1678 in *Correspondance de Pierre Bayle*, eds. Anthony McKenna et al. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004), vol. 3, 92.

[46] Loret, *La Muse historique*, 6.

[47] Geoffrey Turnovsky, "Authorial Modesty and Its Readers: Mondanité and Modernity in Seventeenth-Century France," *Modern Language Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2011): 461–92. This argument is developed and extended in his forthcoming book.

[48] "Sunday, when in order to see you / I arrived in your parlour, / Suddenly a beautiful light / Shot through my visor. / Was I, then, all dazzled? / Was I? Yes, I truly was. / I thought I could see through the grate / The chaste Diana and her daughters, / Who sent out so much light / That I thought I would fall flat. / But, at last, a great respect / Caught hold of me at the very hour, / It rescued me in every way, / And made sure that I did not fall." Loret, December 18, 1650 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 1, 68.

[49] Schuwey, *Un entrepreneur des lettres*, 419–48. On such conceits, see also Allison Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France, 1650–1715: Seditious Frivolity* (Lewisburg: Bucknell, 2013).

[50] Monique Vincent (2005) called the *Mercure galant* la "première revue féminine d'information et de culture : 1672-1710 [the first presentation of the first women's magazine of information and culture: 1672–1710]."

[51] "[T]he princes and princesses, the great lords and ladies of our court, the men of long robes and of serious and learned professions, leave their other jobs for a few moments in order to enjoy themselves [reading the *Lettre en vers*]." Loret, *La Muse historique*, 7. In the *Mercure galant*, the participatory audience comprises both men and women.

[52] Stephen Neale, *Genre* (London: Bfi, 1980). See also Hermes, "Media Representations," 198.

[53] On this topic, see for instance Linda Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture sous l'Ancien Régime* [1993] (Paris: Champion, 2005); Joan de Jean, *Ancients Against Moderns* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996); as well as the fascinating insights from Katherine Dauge-Roth, "Femmes lunatiques: Women and the Moon in Early Modern France," *Dalhousie French Studies* 71 (2005): 3–29.

[54] Nicolas Clément, *Mieux vendre sa publication : le marketing de presse* (Paris: Victoires, 2007), 35–36. On the relevance of attention span in the seventeenth century, see Schuwey, *Un entrepreneur*, 174–76.

[55] Clément, *Mieux vendre*, 33.

[56] "Either good, or bad." Loret, July 27, 1655 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 2, 70.

[57] Schuwey, *Un entrepreneur*, 239–47.

[58] Loret, May 29, 1655, August 28, 1655 and November 10, 1654 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 2, 54, 89, and 404.

[59] "To entertain you," "Having nothing to put down … except very serious subjects," "the following lines / Are not very enchanting," "boring Your Highness," "a few tales / whether they are true or false." Loret, November 5, 1650 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 1, 55.

[60] Loret, October 5, 1658 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 2, 535.

[61] "Princess, now that my lines / Are seen by a hundred different readers / The job I have to do / Gives me even more trouble than before." Loret, January 18, 1653 in *La Muse historique*, 331. Exception to be found for instance on November 13, 1655 in the closing verses: "Princesse à qui j'écris ces lignes / Et vous, ô curieux insignes" in *La Muse historique*, 122.

[62] "Some temperate *beaux esprits* / Wish they [his verses] were more moderate / Others want the Gazette / To be a bit more sour. / But my rhyme is not good / When I don't bother anyone. / In short, my verses, either here or in the countryside, / Are bad if they are not wicked. / See how great is my misfortune! / If I sting a little I bother, / And when I do not sting / My verses are cold and without appeal." Loret, January 18, 1653 in *La Muse historique*, vol. 1, 331.

[63] "When the subjects one writes about are plausible, as if it were a hot topic, or some review of some new work, this is much sought-after, because these days' fashion is to see the most remarkable people being criticized." Charles Sorel, *De la connaissance des bons livres* (Paris: Pralard, 1671), 21.

[64] "My weak and ordinary head / Cannot always produce / Those reasonable speeches / Which charm the reader [men and women], / For this depends on my mood." Loret, February 22, 1653, in *La Muse historique*, vol. 1, 343.

[65] Nico Carpentier, "New Configurations of the Audience," in *The Handbook of Media Audiences*, 192–93. On audience as critics in the Early Modern French press, see Sara Harvey, "Les figures du critique dans la presse périodique littéraire : le cas du *Mercure galant* (1672–1721)," in *À qui lira*, *Littérature, livre et librairie en France au XVII^e siècle*, eds. Mathilde Bombart et al. (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2020), 271–81.

[66] Yves Giraud, "'Nos lecteurs nous écrivent' La correspondance versifiée du gazetier Loret et de la Bergère Nanon (1656)", *Littératures classiques* 18 (1993): 197–209.

[67] *Mercure galant*, vol. 1, Paris : Girard, 1672: "Le libraire au lecteur."

[68] See Sara Harvey, "Récit de publication, récit de publiciste : de quelques discours préfaciels dans le *Mercure galant*," in *L'art de la préface au siècle des Lumières*, ed. Ioana Galleron (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 133–43.

[69] "'Ah, don't talk to me,' said one woman, addressing the rest of the company, 'of the second and third volume of the *Mercure galant*. They are, it is said, too full of war and *nouvellistes* and I just didn't want to read them. …'Perhaps the *ruelles* [salons] want stories, but there are also melancholic readers who will think of them as trifles. But since there are fewer of the latter, the author will put many of these stories in the volumes he publishes henceforth, reducing the rest of the news to a few lines. 'The author will do well,' said the first speaker, 'to put many stories in future the volumes of the *Mercure* that he publishes. Women want them, and since they are responsible for the work's success, those who do not discover how to please them will never succeed.'" *Mercure galant* 3 (1673): 261–66.

[70] Among the numerous articles on reader contributions to the *Mercure galant*, see Sara Harvey, "Commerces et auctorialités dans les Extraordinaires du *Mercure galant* (1678–1680)," in *Auctorialité, voix et publics dans le* Mercure galant*, XVII^e siècle* 270, no. 1 (2016): 81–96 and, in the same issue, Geoffrey Turnovsky, "Les lecteurs du *Mercure galant*. Trois aperçus," 65–80. See also the introduction and contributions in Sara Harvey, ed., *La Critique au présent* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019).

[71] "This awful book that we find in the hands of the bourgeois / Like clockwork, with each new moon: / Is it not the sewer of the French Parnassus?" [Untitled], in *Recueil des plus belles épigrammes des poètes français* (Paris: Clerc, 1698), vol. 1, 271. Also in Denis-François Camusat, *Histoire critique des journaux* (Amsterdam: Bernard, 1734), t. 2, 205.

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