

CULTURES OF PLAY, 1300-1700



Julie D. Campbell

# Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532-1615

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*Cultures of Play, 1300-1700* provides a forum for investigating the full scope of medieval and early modern play, from toys and games to dramatic performances, from etiquette manuals and literary texts to bulls and tractates, from jousting to duels, and from education to early scientific investigation. Inspired by the foundational work of Johan Huizinga as well as later contributions by Roger Caillois, Eugen Fink, and Bernard Suits, this series publishes monographs and essay collections that address the ludic aspects of premodern life. The accent of this series falls on cultural practices that have thus far eluded traditional disciplinary models. Our goal is to make legible modes of thought and action that until recently seemed untraceable, thereby shaping the growing scholarly discourses on playfulness both past and present.

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*Julie D. Campbell*

Amsterdam University Press



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# Table of Contents

List of Illustrations	7
Acknowledgments	9
Note on the Texts	11
Introduction: Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532–1615	13
1. At Play in Italy and France Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Social Continuities	59
2. Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive and the Dames des Roches Proto-Salon Entertainment in Lyon and Poitiers	77
3. Antoinette de Loynes and Madeleine de l'Aubespine Entertainment among the Parisian <i>Noblesse de robe</i>	111
4. Claude-Catherine de Clermont Amusement and Escapism among the <i>Noblesse d'épée</i> and Royal Milieu	143
5. Marguerite de Valois and Proto- <i>Précieuse</i> Taste	187
6. <i>L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte</i> A <i>Divertissement</i> for the Circle of Marguerite de Valois	217
Conclusion: Sixteenth-Century <i>Société Mondaine</i> and the Persistence of Entertainment Practices	245
Appendix: Estienne Pasquier and His Social Network	253
Bibliography	259
Index	281





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# List of Illustrations

Figure 1	Estienne Pasquier (1529–1615). By Léonard Gaultier (1617). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.	31
Figure 2	Marie-Catherine de Pierre-Vive (ca. 1498–1570). By Claude Duflos (1665–1727). National Galleries Scotland. Mrs A. G. Macqueen Ferguson Gift 1950.	85
Figure 3	Frontispiece, <i>La Puce de Madame des Roches</i> (1579). Douglas H. Gordon Collection of French Books, Small Special Collections. University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA.	92
Figure 4	Madeleine de l'Aubespine (1546–1596), <i>madame</i> de Villeroy. By L'anonyme Lécurieux (1571). Bibliothèque nationale de France.	127
Figure 5	Claude-Catherine de Clermont (1543–1603), <i>duchesse</i> de Retz. By François Quesnel (1571). Bibliothèque nationale de France.	145
Figure 6	Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615). By François Clouet (1569). Bibliothèque nationale de France.	189
Figure 7	Frontispiece, <i>L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte</i> (1603). Bibliothèque nationale de France.	219
Figure 8	Estienne Pasquier's social network: Selected members mentioned in this study.	258







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# Acknowledgments

I began thinking about how to follow Estienne Pasquier's path through the fascinating literary society of his time to consider women's activities in it over a decade ago. During that period, the plan for this book has taken a variety of twists and turns, and I have many people to thank for helping me along the way. Sarah Gwyneth Ross read an early book proposal and made excellent suggestions for shaping it. Anne Larsen and Diana Robin read drafts and provided invaluable feedback. Merry Wiesner-Hanks invited me to give a plenary talk on Claude-Catherine de Clermont's agency in Pasquier's world for the conference *Attending to Early Modern Women*, 2018, which made me think more about her centrality to this work. Erika Gaffney saw the book's potential for an entirely different series (*Cultures of Play*) than I had first envisioned, and I loved the idea. Bret Rothstein then provided critically important guidance for the new direction.

Very early in my consideration of texts that I ultimately used here, the staffs of the Bibliothèque nationale de France's site Richelieu and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal were helpful. More recently I have been grateful beyond measure for the Bibliothèque nationale de France's digital library, Gallica. Staff members of the University of Virginia Library, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the National Galleries of Scotland have paved the way for my use of images from their institutions. I especially owe thanks to Eastern Illinois University, which has provided support for this project through a Council on Faculty Research Grant for travel and two Special CU Awards for research, as well as a sabbatical that provided time to complete the manuscript.

In addition to following Pasquier, I also followed the Italian actress Isabella Andreini into French literary society, as I was interested in her friendship with the lady-in-waiting, Marie de Beaulieu, and her connections at the French court in general. Early on, Mawry Bouchard was kind enough to share a conference paper on *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte* with me when I was first learning about Beaulieu. During the time I was working on this book, I was also translating Andreini's *Fragmenti di alcune scritture* (1617) as *Lovers' Debates for the Stage* (2022), in the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, with Pamela Brown and Eric Nicholson, who were always supportive of my exploration of the diva's presence in France. I especially owe thanks to Eric for his willingness to help me sort out Italian translation questions, in particular, those owing to sixteenth-century printing errors.



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Thomas Over helped me create Pasquier's social network diagram for the appendix, and for his tech support and general support of my work I am deeply grateful. Finally, my parents, Don and Sharon Campbell, would have been very pleased to see this book in print; I therefore dedicate it in loving memory of them.



## Note on the Texts

Because this study relies on examinations of primary and secondary texts in French and Italian, I have provided English translations of the quotations that I use. Translations are mine unless otherwise attributed. I do make use of translations of major primary texts when modern translations are available. For example, I refer to George Bull's translation of Baldesar Castiglione's *Courtier* (1967) and Mark Musa's translation of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (1996), as well as Anna Klosowska's translation of Madeleine de l'Aubespine's verse (2007), but I provide my translation of quotations from Marie de Beaulieu's *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte* (1603).

Regarding spelling and use of accents in foreign language texts and document titles, I retain the original styles in most cases. I have changed "u" to "v" when appropriate and added the accent aigu when it would help make sense of the French word in question.

When I began work on this project, I was consulting the original manuscripts of the Villeroy Album, *Manuscrit français* 1663 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Retz Album, *Manuscrit français* 25,455 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. When I obtained copies of Colette Winn, François Rouget, Stephen Murphy, and Jean Balsamo's new editions of those texts, I transitioned my references to quoted material from the original manuscripts to references to the pages of the new editions. I also make use of Winn and Rouget's edition of Marguerite de Valois's *Album de poésies*.





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# Introduction: Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532–1615

**Abstract:** Italianate artifacts of conversation and literary game-playing in sixteenth-century France foreshadow those of seventeenth-century salon culture. They do so despite anti-Italianism that arose during the earlier period and the later view that salon entertainment originated primarily in the *hôtel* de Rambouillet. Examining the critical context of social practices in these periods shows that the activities of largely women-led circles in the sixteenth century illustrate the complex precursors of the seventeenth-century groups. Johan Huizinga and Eugen Fink provide a theoretical path across these periods indicating how the ludic activities in the sixteenth century produced influences that would shape attitudes and activities of salon culture to come. Estienne Pasquier illustrates practices of sixteenth-century literary society that spilled over into the seventeenth century.

**Key Words:** games and play, entertainment, women, sixteenth century, periodization, networks

*During this time, not only were the customary amusements and entertainments continued in the usual style, but everyone did his best to contribute something more, and especially in the games that were played nearly every evening.*

– Baldesare Castiglione<sup>1</sup>

1 Castiglione, *Courtier*, 45. All quotes from this work will be from Bull. Castiglione, *Il Libro del cortegiano*, np. He writes, “nel qual tempo non solamente si continuava nell’usato stile delle feste, & piaceri ordinarii, ma ogn’uno si sforzava d’accrescere qualche cosa, & massimamente ne i giochi: a i quali quasi ogni sera s’attendeva.”

*The circle of lovers of Tasso's pastoral drama may be extended to include Claude Catherine de Clermont, maréchale de Retz.... Closely linked to Marguerite de Valois and the duchesse de Nevers [Henriette de Clèves], the maréchale held a prestigious literary salon, often frequented by both princesses: this little circle probably was entertained by readings and performances of these now fashionable pieces, the pastoral and the tragi-comedy.*

– Aurore Evain<sup>2</sup>

*Finally, we have all understood that the rupture between the century of François I and the century of Louis XIV does not exist.*

– Franco Simone<sup>3</sup>

*Culture arises in the form of play.*

– Johan Huizinga<sup>4</sup>

In her little-known work *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte* (1603), dedicated to Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615), the author and *fille d'honneur* Marie de Beaulieu (before 1563–after 1603), includes a poem composed of lines from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* that she translates into French:

Sono un deserto, e fere aspre, e seluage,  
 Vivendo, e lagrimando impari,  
 Come nulla qua qui diletta, e dura  
 Prego che'l piante mia finisca morite,  
 Che mia virtu non può contra l'affanno,  
 E cieca al suo morir l'alma consente.

[Followed by]

Je suis un desert, & un [sic] beste aspre & sauvage, vivant & pleurant,  
 j'apprens, Comme nulle felicité ne dure icy bas, Je prie que ma mort finisse

2 Evain, “Les reines et princesses de France,” 92. She writes, “Le cercle des amatrices du Tasse et de la pastorale dramatique peut encore s’élargir à Claude-Catherine de Clermont, maréchale de Retz.... Très liée à Marguerite de Valois et à la duchesse de Nevers, la maréchale tient un prestigieux salon littéraire, souvent fréquenté par les deux princesses: ce petit cercle se divertit probablement aux lectures et représentations de ces pièces à la mode que sont désormais la pastorale et la tragi-comédie.” Translations are mine unless otherwise attributed.

3 Simone, “La Critique littéraire,” 21. He writes, “Enfin, nous avons tous compris que la rupture entre le siècle de François Ier et le siècle de Louis XIV n’existe pas.”

4 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, trans. Hull, 46. All quotes from this work will be from Hull’s translation. Huizinga writes, “Im folgenden soll vielmehr gezeigt werden, daß Kultur in Form von Spiel entsteht, daß Kultur anfänglich gespielt wird,” in *Homo Ludens: Vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel*, 51.

ma plainte, Ma vertu ne peut rien contre ma peine: Et mon ame aveugle  
consent à sa mort.<sup>5</sup>

The gloom and despair of these lines belie the fact that Beaulieu is engaging in a popular game, one in which players take lines from Petrarch's poetry and combine them to suit the particular aims of their own compositions. Playing games with lines by Petrarch was a popular feature of sixteenth-century ludic literary society, one that followed a well-worn path from Italy to France via the transmission of "parlour games," such as those illustrated in Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (1528, first epigraph) or *Cinquante jeux divers d'honnête entretien* (1555) translated by Hubert-Philippe de Villiers from Innocenzio Ringhieri's *Cento giuochi liberali, et d'ingegno* (1551).<sup>6</sup> De Villiers's work is dedicated to Marguerite de Bourbon, *duchesse de Nevers* (1516–1559), and Ringhieri's is dedicated to Catherine de' Medici (1519–1589).<sup>7</sup> In *Cinquante jeux* we find, for example, "Le jeu de beauté" (The game of beauty), in which players describe a woman with lines "drawn from the Sonnets of Petrarch."<sup>8</sup> In addition to this poetry game, *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte* contains numerous references to the interests and entertainments of women in sixteenth-century court circles, many aspects of which persisted well into the seventeenth century.

In *Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532–1615*, I explore the ludic characteristics of the Franco-Italian circles of the sixteenth century that segued into the salons of the seventeenth century. In the process I confront the long-standing assertion that the social institutions in the later period, particularly those involving the taste-making women of the salons of the so-called *précieuses*, were *sui generis*. Along the way, we

5 Beaulieu, *L'Histoire*, 79r–79v. In order of Beaulieu's lines, see Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, p. 430, Sonnet 310, line 14; p. 430, Sonnet 311, lines 13–14; p. 466, Canzone 332, line 75; p. 230, Sonnet 141, line 11 and line 14. The French translates: "I am a desert, and a beast wild and savage, living and weeping, I understand, that no felicity lasts here below, I pray that my death will end my complaint, My virtue can do nothing against my pain: And my blind soul consents to its death."

6 See McClure, *Parlour Games*, 1–28. See also Wood, "Performing Pictures," 9–28.

7 Marguerite de Bourbon (1516–1559) was married to François I de Clèves, *duc de Nevers*. Her children included François II de Clèves, *duc de Nevers*; Henriette de Clèves, *duchesse de Nevers*; Catherine de Clèves, *comtesse d'Eu*; Jacques de Clèves, *duc de Nevers*; and Marie de Clèves, *princesse de Condé*. Henriette de Clèves, especially, would become an influential proponent of literary taste at the Valois court, and she would be mentioned by name as a character in *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte*.

8 De Villiers, *Cinquante jeux divers*, 132. He writes that "le Seigneur, qui dispensera toutes ces parties d'une belle Dame entre tous les Ioüeurs, avec ces vers a icelle convenables, tirés des Sonnets Petrarque" (the Lord [of the game], ... will pass out these descriptions of parts of a beautiful woman among all the players as is suitable, with these verses drawn from the Sonnets of Petrarch). A list of lines from Petrarch's poems to use in the game is provided.



see the earlier circles playing literary and conversation games and shaping literary taste by promoting the production of poetry, drama, and romance especially influenced by Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto in ways that would retain powerful holds on literary traditions. Moreover, the poets who paid tribute to such sixteenth-century women, and the authors of books of games dedicated to them, referred to these women's power to regulate and influence the manners and mores of those around them.<sup>9</sup> I would argue that such evidence of influence suggests that the power women wielded in ludic situations transcended the immediate loci of play and was continually re-established in similar ludic situations in the ensuing period. Of course, this pattern did not reappear magically: it was passed down through traditions that were popular enough to endure. Johan Huizinga argues in his chapter "Play and Contest as Civilizing Functions" that "culture arises in the form of play" (see the fourth epigraph) and that "it is through this playing that society expresses its interpretation of life and the world."<sup>10</sup> He emphasizes that there is a "twin union between play and culture" in which play is primary and that "culture is only the term which our historical judgement attaches to a particular instance," as the "original play element is ... almost completely hidden behind cultural phenomena."<sup>11</sup> Especially to the point for this study, he observes that the "connection between culture and play is particularly evident in the higher forms of social play where the latter consists in the orderly activity of a group or two opposed groups."<sup>12</sup> Huizinga's thought is particularly applicable to the rise and proliferation of proto-salons and salons as we observe that literary culture became progressively accepting of and indebted to the patronage and leadership of key women in prominent ludic literary and intellectual groups—who clearly engaged in the "higher forms

9 See, for example, Eustorg Beaulieu's comments on Marie de Pierrevive as a teacher and guide in "À dame Marie de Pierre vive Dame du Peron," n.p., lines 14, 34–35. See also De Villiers's dedicatory letter, "Aus Dames" (To the ladies), in which he asserts that men should count themselves most fortunate to participate in the "divine & pudique" (divine and modest) conversation of the ladies present who participate with them in the games of the *Cinquante jeux divers*, 1. Another key depiction is Castiglione's of Elisabetta Gonzaga and Emilia Pia in his *Courtier*, 45, where he describes the evening entertainments and the rules governing them, designed and enforced by the duchess and Pia. Other fictional depictions of women directing conversations and games and critiquing manners and mores may be seen in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (completed 1353), which would inspire Marguerite de Valois's *Heptaméron* (1588), and in Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* (1505).

10 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 46. He carefully avoids the simplistic notion that "play turns into culture" in favor of the more nuanced idea that "in its earliest phases culture has the play-character, that it proceeds in the shape and the mood of play."

11 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 46–47.

12 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 47.



of social play”—throughout the two centuries in question. Based on such notions, I would argue that the development of the cultural phenomenon of the seventeenth-century salon was literally *in play* during the preceding century.

Italian ludic literary culture, as is well known, permeated France in the sixteenth century, and the phenomenon endured well into the seventeenth century. What has been less considered, however, is how the persistence of that phenomenon influenced both sixteenth- and seventeenth-century proto-salon and salon society.<sup>13</sup> When collecting books connected with seventeenth-century salon society, Thomas F. Crane observed that it “was impossible to understand French society of that period without a knowledge of Italian society of the previous century.”<sup>14</sup> Even so, anti-Italian sentiment in France during the sixteenth century sometimes obscured Italian cultural contributions. As Henry Heller puts it, “Italian cultural, ecclesiastical, political, and economic power provoked an increasingly strong reaction” from the French during the sixteenth century, but Henry IV’s marriage to Marie de’ Medici (1573–1642) allowed him to “write off” his debt to “the grand duke of Tuscany,” and, subsequently, Italian influence at court and in the church gradually began to diminish during the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> The impacts of Italian literary culture, however, remained strong. For example, the introduction of Italian games into France through literary channels in the seventeenth century was facilitated by Charles Sorel’s works *La Maison des Jeux* (1642) and its continuation, *Les Récréations galantes* (1671), with the latter particularly referencing the sixteenth-century game books of Girolamo and Scipion Bargagli, as well as that of Ringhieri.<sup>16</sup> This continuum of parlor games from Renaissance Italy, however, did not enter seventeenth-century French salon society without passing through the rich sixteenth-century Franco-Italian *société mondaine* of Lyon, Poitiers, Paris, and other French cities where courts and commerce drew together circles of learned men and women, in spite of anti-Italian protests.<sup>17</sup> (I use the term *société mondaine* here and throughout in reference to the ludic, cosmopolitan intellectual and literary sociability of coteries and sodalities

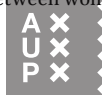
13 I use the term proto-salon to discuss early salon-style, ludic literary society. Please see note 18 below for a full discussion of terminology.

14 Crane, *Italian Social Customs*, vii.

15 Heller, *Anti-Italianism*, 3, 11.

16 Crane, *Italian Social Customs*, 291, 482–83.

17 See Broomhall’s recent research on Catherine de’ Medici’s practice of organizing games to “actively structure interactions between women and men” in “The Game of Politics,” 108.



already evident in the sixteenth century.<sup>18</sup>) Regarding the works of the Bargagli and Ringhieri, the transmission of such games is only one of the many ludic traits of sixteenth-century Franco-Italian *société mondaine* that helped to shape that of the seventeenth century. Addressing questions for debate and conversation, especially those on morals and the nature of love, making use of pseudonyms, and participating in group authorship and literary competitions are just a few of the others.<sup>19</sup>

The French salons of the seventeenth century, however, are typically characterized as something new in women's history and literary history: a clean break with the harsh manners of the French court made by such women as Catherine de Vivonne, the *marquise* de Rambouillet (1588–1665), and Louise Marguerite de Lorraine, the *princesse* de Conti (1588–1631); the birthplace of the modern novel designed according to women's tastes; and the bastions of the so-called *précieuses* who directed cultivated conversation, engaged in games of wit and literary critique, and referred to their members by coterie pseudonyms.<sup>20</sup> While some scholars of seventeenth-century salon

18 In addition to "société mondaine," I also use the terms "proto-salon" and "salon" with variations on them (*proto-salonnaire*, *salonnaire*) to refer to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ludic literary gatherings and participants, cognizant of the fact that the Franco-Italian architectural term *salon*, derived from *salone* and *sala*, appeared ca. 1664 and that the term "salon" in reference to seventeenth-century French ludic literary society has been carefully addressed by many scholars regarding its use and import in literary and social history. For discussions of terminology, see Bray, "Les Salons," 925–28. Also, Harth explains that the term "salon" was not "applied to social gatherings until the nineteenth century" and thus was essentially an architectural term during the seventeenth century that later scholars have continued to use anachronistically; see *Cartesian Women*, 15. Regarding the sixteenth century, in 1704 Menestrier called the various gatherings of the *société mondaine* of Lyon *académies*, *assemblées*, and *conferences*; see *Bibliothèque curieuse*, 2.115–28. Thickett points out that the Dames des Roches' salon in Poitiers was "designated as a 'bureau d'esprit'—a literary salon" in sixteenth-century France; see *Estienne Pasquier*, 28. In Italy such gatherings are referred to as *ridotti*, *veglie*, or *cenacoli*; one also finds the latter in its French version, *cénacles*. All essentially mean gatherings of coteries for conversation of various kinds: formal debate and discourses, informal conversation or debate, sometimes prescribed by games, and other kinds of entertainment that might include music and literary or dramatic performance. In the introduction to their recent edition of the *Album de poésies des Villeroys*, Winn, Murphy, and Rouget, with the collaboration of Balsamo, simply put the word *salon* in quotation marks when they use it in context with the sixteenth-century salons; see p. 18.

19 Questions about the nature of love may be seen in the literary line of debate and game-playing extending from the classical period (for example, Plato's *Symposium*, fifth century BCE), to the so-called medieval courts of love. See Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 125, 148.

20 "Précieuse" is a heavily loaded term, one that spread in popularity following Molière's usage in *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659). Here I use it sparingly and in context with specific characteristics attributed to it—carefully cultivated manners, genteel conversation, the taste for romances and novels, and the use of pseudonyms, for example—without engaging in the debate over the validity of the term or the debate over true or false *précieuses*. Regarding the

culture have occasionally gestured to similarities in sixteenth-century social practices, few if any have ever detailed those similarities and most have generally asserted that, as L. Clark Keating put it in 1941, “the *salon* of Mme de Rambouillet was not an outgrowth of, but a protest against, the sixteenth-century society which she saw round about her.”<sup>21</sup> There they draw their line in the historical sand. While that may be the case if we look only at the immediate political context of this group and others like it, the historical record suggests something quite different: that while such seventeenth-century groups may have broken with the Bourbon court, there was no perfectly clean break with social practices of the sixteenth-century *société mondaine*. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that such groups—of both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—had rich Italian roots.<sup>22</sup>

While it is possible to make broad, sweeping generalizations about powerful women and their circles as a through-line regarding the *longue durée* of women’s engagement in and patronage of literary society,<sup>23</sup> here I take a more granular approach by focusing specifically on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, hence the dates indicated in the title. Those dates span from 1532, when gatherings in the home of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive (ca. 1498–1570), wife of Antonio de Gondi, began to be documented in Lyon, to 1615, the year that saw the deaths of both Marguerite de Valois and Estienne Pasquier (1529–1615). The texts that I examine are the products of ludic interaction in specific sixteenth-century circles. Bruno Latour has argued that “objects have agency” and that in addition to “‘determining’ and serving as a ‘backdrop for human action’, things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on.”<sup>24</sup> The manuscript miscellanies and published verse collections attached to specific sixteenth-century groups bear witness to the ludic exchanges among group members, thus serving as artifacts that document elements

ongoing interrogation of the term, see Dufour-Maître, “La critique des femmes,” 157–68; “Les précieuses, de la guerre des sexes,” 59; and the whole of her book *Les Précieuses*. See also Stanton, *Dynamics of Gender*, 96–97, where she articulates the differences between *les précieuses* and *les femmes savantes*, commenting on the *querelle des femmes savantes* that arose in the 1670s and 1680s.

21 Keating, *Studies on the Literary Salon*, 144.

22 Randall suggests that the salons of sixteenth-century Italy were “the more direct forebears” of the seventeenth-century salons in France than any other social organizations, but he chooses not to explore in depth sixteenth-century Franco-Italian *société mondaine* in France; see *Concept of Conversation*, 143.

23 See, for example, Crane’s discussion of “polite society,” *Italian Social Customs*, 1–8.

24 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 63, 72.

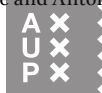


of play and taste. Their existence renders possible consideration of those ludic impulses and allows us to reconstruct something of those group interactions. For example, manuscript albums and printed texts associated with these sixteenth-century (often women-led) circles exhibit vogues for poetry competitions and for specific styles of poetry, including playful anagrammatic and acrostic poetry, enigmas in verse, and French Petrarchan and Tassian pastoral poems, as well as a powerful affinity for Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516).<sup>25</sup> Additionally, Beaulieu's proto-novel *L'Histoire de La Chiaramonte* was produced in such a late sixteenth-century milieu and is full of references to entertainments popular with the circle of Marguerite de Valois, to whom it is dedicated. Honoré d'Urfé's pastoral *L'Astrée* (1607–1627), arguably the most influential novel of the seventeenth century, was inspired by the sixteenth-century taste of that same milieu, the circle of Marguerite de Valois, which doted on the Italian pastoral tradition (see the second epigraph).<sup>26</sup> The taste for such works endured. In the late seventeenth century, Antoine Gombaud, "chevalier" de Méré (1607–1684) and *habitué* of the Rambouillet salon, would note in a letter to "Madame la duchesse de Lesdiguières" that when visiting a well-educated woman of his acquaintance, he found her reading *L'Astrée* and Tasso's *Jerusalem*, which he considered the marks of a woman of "bon-goût" (good taste).<sup>27</sup> He would also participate in the compilation of the *Guirlande de Julie* (MS 1641), a miscellany created by members of the Rambouillet salon for the *marquise's* daughter.

25 Sample works include *Catherine de Clermont Retz (Maréchale de)*, *Album de poésies*; *Marguerite de Valois: Album de poésies*; and the *Album de poésies des Villeroy*. Examples published during the period include Romieu's *Les premières œuvres poétiques* and *La Puce de Madame des Roches* compiled by Pasquier.

26 The three d'Urfé brothers, Antoine, Honoré, and Anne, were habitués of Valois's circle at Usson and wrote works inspired by it, including Honoré's influential sentimental novel *L'Astrée*, in which Marguerite de Valois is generally considered to be Galathée. See Wine, *Forgotten Virgo*, 271. See also Viennot, *Marguerite de Valois*, 198, 252–53.

27 Gombaud, "À Madame la duchesse de Lesdiguières," 52. He writes, "Elle tenoit un livre d'Astrée entre ses mains, & sur ses genoux la Jerusalem du Tasse, car elle savoit parfaitement la langue Italienne, & faisoit cas de ces deux livres comme une personne de bon-goût; De sorte qu'elle aimoit à s'en entretenir, & même à les oïir lire d'un ton agreeable." (She held a book of *Astrée* in her hands, and on her knees the *Jerusalem du Tasse*, because she knew the Italian language perfectly, and valued these two books as a person of good taste; thus she liked to discuss them and even to hear them read in an agreeable tone.) Lesdiguières is Paule-Marguerite François de Gondi (1655–1716), *duchesse de Retz*, the great-granddaughter of Albert de Gondi and Claude-Catherine de Clermont, *duc and duchesse de Retz*, and the great-great-granddaughter of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive and Antonio de Gondi.



So, the question arises: What aspects of play in sixteenth-century *société mondaine* provided the impetus—the taste-making power—for such continuation of literary taste and ludic social interactions centered on conversation, literary production, philosophical debate, and game-playing? I address that question in two ways: through exploration of the social career of the barrister, historian, and poet Estienne Pasquier, who acted as a key “node,” to borrow a term from network theory,<sup>28</sup> as he made his way through much of the *société mondaine* of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; and through consideration of sixteenth-century women’s engagement in ludic, literary contexts and the texts inspired by those women. I utilize the philosophy of play, as articulated here by Huizinga and Eugen Fink and in later chapters by these scholars and others, such as Roger Caillois and Bernard Suits, to illustrate the social significance of the ways that the modes of play illustrated in Pasquier’s experiences and these women’s circles, with their literary production, persisted across the centuries..

Huizinga notes that there is a “hazy borderline between play and seriousness” that allows elements of culture to arise “in the form of play,” suggesting that play emits formational power that is not limited to play itself but that emerges from play to shape social norms.<sup>29</sup> Fink observes that play “is not a marginal manifestation in the landscape of human life, nor a contingent phenomenon only surfacing from time to time. Play belongs essentially to the ontological constitution of human existence ... [and it] is an existential, fundamental phenomenon [that] thoroughly determines the human being.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, play aids in the development of the human in society, as well as the development of society itself, and, in the case at hand, provides contexts in which men’s and women’s ludic engagement together in sixteenth-century literary society makes way for their continued participation in that of the seventeenth century, when such play became more codified.

From the mid-sixteenth through the early seventeenth century, we find Estienne Pasquier, like Gombaud, enjoying the company of women of “good taste.” His copious letters and other writings<sup>31</sup> document his activities in the ludic society of his time, from his early engagement with the Parisian circle of Jean de Morel *sieur* de Grigny (1511–1581) and his wife Antoinette de Loynes (1505–1567); his entertainment in the proto-salon or “bureau d’esprit”<sup>32</sup> of

28 Please see the Appendix for a diagram of Pasquier’s relationships with figures in this study.

29 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 52, 46.

30 Fink, *Play as a Symbol*, 18.

31 See Pasquier’s *Lettres*, 1556–94; *Recherches*, 1554–96; and poetry, available in his *Œuvres complètes*, 1723.

32 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 28.

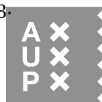


the Dames des Roches, Madeleine (ca. 1520–1587) and Catherine (1542–1587), during the Grands Jours of Poitiers (1579); and his witty badinage at a *soirée* hosted by the *duchesse* de Retz, Claude-Catherine de Clermont (1543–1603); to his presence at the debates that served as dinnertime entertainment in the circle of Marguerite de Valois. Pasquier, moreover, was sought out by d'Urfé for his opinion on the newly published *L'Astrée* in 1607, and Dorothy Thickett observes that d'Urfé's novel owes much to the dialogue in Pasquier's *Monophile* (1554).<sup>33</sup> Pasquier's social life, documented almost as rigorously as his professional life, provides numerous glimpses into the ludic, often woman-led gatherings of the sixteenth century, and his participation in this society serves as something of a *ficelle* for this study. He was there—an eye-witness guide to developments in early salon-style entertaining that would blossom fully in the seventeenth century.

As Pasquier's writings suggest, the sixteenth-century groups were clearly playing literary and conversation games. Some, such as the Morel circle and that of the Dames des Roches, were marked by Neo-Latin learning, although they also featured dramatic entertainment and vernacular literary games. Others, such as those of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive and her daughter-in-law Claude-Catherine de Clermont, were more focused on the cultivation of the vernacular-language poets who sought their patronage, although there were Neo-Latinists in their midst. And although scholars of the seventeenth-century salons have sometimes endeavored to dismiss the potential influence of these sixteenth-century groups by asserting that they were too humanist in nature to have had anything to offer the vernacular-focused, conversation-driven groups of the seventeenth century, the basic ludic elements of their gatherings and taste were a mixture of what Verdun-Louis Saulnier (1917–1980) called “la sève italienne” (Italian sappiness)—his term for the Italian literature and conversation games—and humanist/Neo-Latinist endeavors, the composition in classical languages and discussion of classical texts, which he held in higher esteem.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, it is clear that members of these circles were participating in group authorship and competitive composition in vernacular and classical languages, as the albums and various published works illustrate. In some instances, they were referring to members of their circles by coterie pseudonyms, as we find in the case of Clermont and her close friend Henriette de Clèves, *duchesse* de Nevers (1542–1601), who were called Dycinne and Pistère,

33 See Pasquier, “Response de Pasquier au Seigneur Comte de Chasteau-Neuf” and “A Messire Honoré d'Urfé, Comte de Chasteauneuf,” 53–57. Thickett, “Introduction,” *Choix de lettres*, xix.

34 Saulnier, *Maurice Scève*, 1:113.



respectively. Later, the *marquise* de Rambouillet, a cousin of Clermont in the next generation, would be known as Arthénice, illustrating the persistence of such pseudonyms. In the case of Beaulieu's proto-novel, figures popular in Marguerite de Valois's circle are mentioned by name, including Madame de Nevers and Mademoiselle de Guise, who would later be the *princesse* de Conti, or shadowed by characters, who would be recognizable by group members. On the one hand, these characteristics foreshadow seventeenth-century salon practices, including the penchant for composing *romans à clef* or creating group-authored albums, such as the novels of Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) or the *Guirlande de Julie*, created by members of the Rambouillet salon for the *marquise's* daughter. On the other, it is obvious that these sixteenth-century groups were adopting and adapting Italian social practices and literary tastes that permeated France via the route from Italy through Lyon to Paris. The sixteenth-century circles were, moreover, meeting away from court and endeavoring to escape the harsh political realities around them resulting from the wars of religion, waged from 1562 to 1598. If, in the seventeenth century, Madame de Rambouillet was seeking escape from an uncongenial court by entertaining select guests in her home, the circles of sixteenth-century proto-*salonnières* were psychologically barricading themselves in their spaces of play against the encroaching horrors of war. Huizinga reminds us that a “play-community” thrives on the feeling of “being ‘apart together’ in an exceptional situation ... of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world,” and he also observes that a “play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Fink comments on how the space of play allows for “a release from the burdens of existence” and “from the confinement in a pressing and oppressing situation.”<sup>36</sup> These theories hold true for proto-salon and salon society across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Huizinga's assertions about the place apart created by participants in ludic contexts clearly resonate with sixteenth-century figures' retreats into the entertainments of their social circles and more formal academies. The Palace Academy of Henri III provides a case in point. Henri was criticized for withdrawing into his chamber with poets and philosophers, as well as some noblemen and noblewomen, including Madame de Retz, amid the crises of the wars of religion.<sup>37</sup> Writing of this period, Huizinga notes that if “ever an élite, fully conscious of its own merits, sought to segregate itself

35 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 12.

36 Fink, *Play as a Symbol*, 26.

37 Yates, *French Academies*, 32–33.





from the vulgar herd and live life as a game of artistic perfection, that élite was the circle of choice Renaissance spirits.”<sup>38</sup> He goes on to observe that for them, the “game of living in imitation of Antiquity was pursued in holy earnest” and that even “the school of Humanist jurists, in their endeavours to make the law stylish and aesthetic, evince the almighty play-spirit of the times.”<sup>39</sup> His focus here is clearly on the Renaissance cultural fascination with the classical academy, as the case of Henri III suggests, and his note on humanist jurists may be illustrated by the works and thought of Pasquier, but there is more to consider beyond Huizinga’s traditional views of the period elite.

If we take the concept of play as a larger, governing principle, one that Huizinga views as “a distinct and highly important factor in the world’s life and doings” (indeed, he asserts that “civilization arises and unfolds in and as play”), we can consider the evolutionary impulse that arises from the power games of court culture that expand into ludic society outside the center of court. In the situations addressed in this study, there is a fascinating tension between the exigencies of court and the “escape” from it—the escape from all the serious conflicts it generates and participates in—that the figures in question seek in the literary society of the time, rather than Henri III sought escape in his Palace Academy gatherings.<sup>40</sup> In particular, the problem of war keeps arising, and war is both court-generated by the crown and governed or negotiated in terms of play, of winning and losing. Huizinga writes, “Ever since words existed for fighting and playing, men have been wont to call war a game.”<sup>41</sup> They also approach games as war. We will thus see Pasquier appropriating terms of war in his interactions in literary society in his descriptions of conversation games with the Dames des Roches in Chapter 2 and Madame de Retz in Chapter 4, even though those ludic spaces are meant to be places apart.

Moreover, the influence of noble and royal women, whose power at court is strictly subsumed by that of the king, increases in literary society where they become sought-after powerbrokers in terms of patronage and their social interactions. Their setting of the rules of engagement is informed by play, as its regulatory power emerges in these different settings. We see an example of this phenomenon in the books of games, such as those of Ringhieri and De Villiers, that target women as leaders and patrons. The

38 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 180.

39 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 180, 182.

40 Huizinga, “Foreword,” *Homo Ludens*, n.p.

41 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 89.



literary illustration that immediately comes to mind is in Castiglione's *Courtier*, in which the warrior duke, Guidobaldo, retires to his room in the evenings because of his ill health. As is customary, everyone of note then goes to the chamber of the duchess, Elisabetta, and her companion, Emilia Pia, where the women are in charge and games ensue. Through games, the power dynamic shifts when the king or duke exits.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, consideration of the continuities regarding the activities and emergence of networks and circles of intellectual and literary figures in the sixteenth century provides a sense of the rich complexity of the historical precursors of the rise of the seventeenth-century groups.<sup>43</sup> It also teaches us that historians of literature and intellectual society have occasionally oversimplified with false dichotomies or attempted to erase the sixteenth-century roots of the seventeenth-century salon world.

Scholars have had much to say over the past five decades about the periodization of literary history and its discontents.<sup>44</sup> In 1977, when considering continuities between humanism and classicism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, Franco Simone bluntly stated to an audience of scholars of seventeenth-century literature that there was no rupture between the centuries (see the third epigraph).<sup>45</sup> As Donata Meneghelli and many others have noted, periodization is one of the most vexing issues in literary studies,<sup>46</sup> and we may extend that notion to include the study of literary society, particularly in the early modern period as it developed in numerous sodalities and encompassed various social groups.<sup>47</sup> Regarding literary history, Robert Rehder argues that “[p]roblems of dynamics and development can only be seen if much longer durations are considered than are included in any period—and probably it is necessary to look at the

42 Castiglione, *Courtier*, 41–44.

43 This is a path of general inquiry that others have taken regarding a variety of aspects of seventeenth-century salons. See La Vopa's chapter, “The Social Aesthetic of Play in Seventeenth-Century France,” in *Labor of the Mind*, in which he considers the *goût moderne* with its precursors in the “French old-regime aristocracy,” 20. See also Fumaroli, “De l'âge d'éloquence,” 25–45.

44 See Freundlieb, “Foucault and the Study of Literature,” 301–44; Hume, “Construction and Legitimation,” 632–61; Mattix, “Periodization and Difference,” 685–97; and the whole of Underwood's *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, especially 121–31, on the academic history of comparative literature.

45 Simone, “La critique littéraire,” 21–22.

46 Meneghelli, “Periodization,” 1–10.

47 Hume colorfully comments, “No one rang a bell in 1485 (or whatever other date) to announce that the medieval period was being shut down and would be replaced by (oh joy) the Renaissance—or, as we now say, the early modern period, an even vaguer and more useless label. Almost all sequential literary history is heavily coloured with the terms and assumptions of period characterizations.” In “Construction and Legitimation,” 637.

whole history of a culture.<sup>48</sup> While a study such as this one cannot take in the “whole history of a culture,” it can extend the traditional boundaries of periodization to consider continuities, and it can do so following, in part, the notions of Robert Hume, as he articulates the idea that “the picture of *longue durée*” should “almost always be constructed from close-focus studies of particulars dealt with in short duration.”<sup>49</sup> He goes on to suggest that we can perhaps “learn from [Michel] Foucault’s insistence on the possibility of multiple parallel histories, depending on how one identifies one’s subject and defines one’s discipline” and that one may “fruitfully explore the possibilities of overlapping ‘little histories,’” referring to the term *petit récit* articulated by Jean François Lyotard.<sup>50</sup> He posits that there is “considerable virtue to overlapping/competing ‘little histories’ within a single realm,” but that “they would combine satisfactorily only if we could accept much untidier and more pluralistic master narratives.”<sup>51</sup> Like Rehder, Hume is contemplating literary history in a way that may be “fruitfully” extended to address notions of literary society. Consideration of the “untidier and more pluralistic” narrative of sixteenth-century *société mondaine* reveals numerous precursors to elements of seventeenth-century salon society. First, however, we should observe some of the ways in which the borders of that salon world have been “tidied up.”

### Circumscribing the Seventeenth-Century Salons

In almost every study of seventeenth-century salon society, there is a metanarrative in which the author asserts that the *chambre bleue* of Catherine de Vivonne, the *marquise* de Rambouillet, is the salon that marks the true beginning of the remarkable rise of women’s influence and engagement in literary society.<sup>52</sup> The author will state that this is the case because Rambouillet broke with the Bourbon court over its violence and rough manners, withdrawing into her own private retreat and inventing polite society within it. There, she cultivated an atmosphere in which refined linguistic endeavor and pure *honêteté* could flourish, paving the way for women’s

48 Rehder, “Periodization and the Theory of Literary History,” 121.

49 Hume, “Construction and Legitimation,” 657.

50 Hume, “Construction and Legitimation,” 657.

51 Hume, “Construction and Legitimation,” 658.

52 For a few examples, see Keating, *Studies on the Literary Salon*, 145; Upham, *French Influence*, 308–14; Backer, *Precious Women*, 289, 291; DeJean, *Tender Geographies*, 7–8, 20–21; Beasley, *Salons, History, and the Creation of 17th-Century France*, 22; Stanton, *Dynamics of Gender*, 7, 96.



engagement in the so-called rise of the novel. If that author is somewhat concerned about historical accuracy when making such absolute claims, he or she will note that the Valois court was probably something of a harbinger of such polite society. There is, however, little need to look further back in history to investigate the seeds of these accomplishments because they are essentially seventeenth-century accomplishments. There is, in effect, a carefully constructed historical wall between the seventeenth-century *précieuses* and all that came before them, composed of the Bourbon court, the increasing disregard for humanistic learning for women, and the rapid increase in women's involvement in producing novels.<sup>53</sup>

Scholars, however, are not the only architects of that wall. Madame de Rambouillet and contemporaries, including Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux and Jean Regnault de Segrais, helped to construct it by focusing on Rambouillet's personal aversion to court assemblies and preference for hosting gatherings in her home.<sup>54</sup> Tallemant des Réaux notes that in her twenties she "no longer wished to attend the assemblies of the Louvre," and that she said that she found nothing pleasant about those events.<sup>55</sup> Segrais underscores the institutionalization in her home of the notion of *politesse*, which would become a key point of division between periods for critics. He writes that "it is she who corrected the bad manners that existed before her: she had formed her mind in reading the good books of Italy and Spain, and she taught *la politesse* to all those of her time who visited her."<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the practice of circles gathering well away from court can be seen in the actions of Louise-Marguerite de Lorraine (Mademoiselle de Guise), the *princesse de Conti*, who, loyal to the regent Marie de' Medici, left court when the regent's power began to wane with the majority of Louis XIII (1614) and gathered her circle at her *château* at Eu. There, she and her friends, in some combination of group authorship it would seem, began generating novels.<sup>57</sup> These examples

53 See Harth, *Cartesian Women*, 17, on the increasing intellectual distance between the academies of men and the salons of women and the negative connotations of the notion of the female "savante," the woman who was trained in humanistic learning as opposed to mainly refined conversation.

54 See Craveri's discussion of Jean Regnault de Segrais's and Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux's descriptions of Rambouillet in *Age of Conversation*, 2–3.

55 Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux, "La Marquise de Rambouillet," 215. He writes, "...dès vingt ans elle ne voulut plus aller aux assemblées du Louvre."

56 Jean Regault de Segrais, *Segraisana ou mélange d'histoire et de littérature*, 26. He writes, "...c'est elle qui a corrigé les méchantes coûtures qu'il y avoit avant elle: elle s'étoit formé l'esprit dans la lecture des bons Livres Italiens & Espagnols; & elle a enseigné la politesse à tous ceux de son tems qui l'ont fréquentée." He may have been thinking specifically of the court of Henri IV.

57 Dejean, *Tender Geographies*, 22–23. The novels included *Romant royal* (1621), *Adventures de la cour de Perse* (1629), and *Histoire des amours du grand Alcandre* (1651).

of “foundational” elements of seventeenth-century salon society have been used as building blocks to construct the historical wall between periods by scholars who hew to traditional notions of periodization.<sup>58</sup>

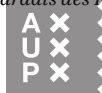
A few scholars have more carefully considered their delineations. In *Le Paradis des femmes*, Carolyn Lougee couches the notion of a break with the sixteenth century specifically as a locus of class tension, stating, “In a sense the salons were merely an extension” of the sixteenth-century court, “which since the early sixteenth century, had accorded royal women positions of leadership in matters of taste and pleasure.” Yet “precisely in this extension lay the seeds of discord” because “the extension of the culture of polite society to ever-larger groups of persons, persons outside the traditional nobility, groups brought to prominence by the growth of the monarchy and especially by the venal officeholding system, provoked varying responses from those who welcomed an expanded definition of the social elite and those who rejected it.”<sup>59</sup> “In sum,” she concludes, “the question of the proliferation of salons involved all the aspects of the great issue confronting the French in the seventeenth century: the proper stratification of society.”<sup>60</sup> Lougee’s explanation of seventeenth-century concerns about the stratification of society helpfully addresses the social concerns of the historical moment, but it does not look back to consider what elements of sixteenth-century courtly society may have been adopted and adapted by those institutions.

Writing in the 1920s of “La Cour de la Reine Marguerite,” Simonne Ratel comments on the “spiritual cynicism” of such women of the court as Marie de Balzac d’Entragues (1588–1664) and her sister Catherine de Balzac d’Entragues (1579–1633), *marquise* de Verneuil, who were mistresses of Henri IV, asserting that the more “delicate ones” fled such amusements. Thus, “Catherine de Vivonne, *marquise* de Rambouillet, cloistered herself in her

58 Other key elements that scholars emphasize to suggest the break between the seventeenth century and the earlier period include the notion that the poet François de Malherbe’s modernism broke with styles of the past, in particular that of the Pléiade, and the popular *Querelle des Anciens et de Modernes*. See Craveri, *Age of Conversation*, 3, 21. However, Malherbe, like d’Urfé was befriended by Pasquier and possibly influenced by him. See Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 142; 159, n. 102. Thickett argues that Pasquier’s preference for the “simple language of ordinary people” and his condemnation of Ronsard, Baïf, and Jodelle “for re-introducing mediaeval words which had become obsolete ... foreshadows the great change Malherbe was soon to introduce into French poetry,” 243–44. Similarly, in his *Courtier*, Castiglione has characters argue for and against the use of “old Tuscan words,” and Lodovico say that he would “shun the use of these antique words [in Latin]” in favor of contemporary Italian, 72, 74–77.

59 Lougee, “Introduction,” *Le Paradis des Femmes*, 5.

60 Lougee, “Introduction,” *Le Paradis des Femmes*, 5.



hôtel with decent and polite society.”<sup>61</sup> Ratel recounts that to find cultivated people during this period one had to seek outside the court of Henri IV and, in particular, in the circle of Marguerite de Valois, where there were “fine and literate women, some of whom have known the court of the Valois and transmit to society a new taste for things of the mind.”<sup>62</sup> Ratel, then, credits the circle of Marguerite de Valois with the transference of taste for polite, literary and philosophical gatherings, but few if any scholars since the 1920s have followed her lead to detail those connections.

In *The Age of Conversation*, Benedetta Craveri touches on elements of the continuum between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century salon society, pointing out that it was “in the splendor of her small courts that sixteenth-century Italy had developed a culture of fine manners and thereby earned the admiration of all Europe,” noting that the “transalpine success of the great Italian pedagogic texts—Giovanni della Casa’s *Galateo* of 1560, Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* of 1528, and Stefano Guazzo’s *Civil Conversation* of 1574” bore witness to “France’s desire to take the lesson to heart.”<sup>63</sup> However she, like Ratel, asserts that such lessons were absent from the Louvre of Henri IV and that France thus had to look “back to the Valois, as it frequently would in the course of the seventeenth century” to find “a prestigious example of court society to serve as its national model.”<sup>64</sup> In the same vein, she argues that the *marquise* de Rambouillet attempted to establish in her house “a happy utopia” and a “blessed island, an innocent Arcadia in which the trials of everyday life might be forgotten and illusory moral and aesthetic perfection cultivated,” as Honoré d’Urfé illustrated in *L’Astrée*. But she does not consider that d’Urfé began writing the novel during the period of his contact with the salon-like court of Marguerite

61 Ratel, “La Cour de la reine Marguerite,” Première Partie, 8. She writes, “Si les femmes comme Marie de Balzac d’Entraques ou sa sœur, la marquise de Verneuil peuvent se complaire au milieu de cette cour débraillée et l’amuser de leur cynisme spirituel, les délicates la fuient, et Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet, se cloître dans son hôtel d’une société décente et polie.” (If the women like Marie de Balzac d’Entraques or her sister, la *marquise* de Verneuil can take pleasure in the midst of this disordered court and amuse it with their spiritual cynicism, the delicate ones flee it, and Catherine de Vivonne, *marquise* de Rambouillet, cloisters herself in her *hôtel* with decent and polite society.)

62 Ratel, “La Cour de la reine Marguerite,” Première Partie, 10. She writes, “Femmes fines et lettrées, dont quelques-unes ont connu la cour des Valois et transmettent à la société nouvelle le goût des choses de l’esprit.”

63 Craveri, *Age of Conversation*, 7.

64 Craveri, *Age of Conversation*, 7. Here, Craveri details the influence of the Cardinal de Richelieu, who sought to re-establish the “old codes of courtesy” in order to “bridle” the rough, dissolute manners of his contemporary nobles.

de Valois or that Estienne Pasquier, *habitué* of sixteenth-century proto-salon society whose skill in dialogue was thought to have influenced the work, was the novel's first critic; he was invited to read it by d'Urfé himself. Pasquier complimented it as being "richement beau" (richly beautiful) upon first reading it in 1607, and he sent d'Urfé verses on the work in 1610, at d'Urfé's request.<sup>65</sup> While it seems that Craveri is on track to explore the rich connections to which she gestures, she instead insists that a *société mondaine* did not begin until the first decades of the seventeenth century. She writes that at *that time* "the significance of women in French society changed. They were no longer obliged to fight gradually for a questionable sphere of influence beyond the confines of domesticity, but took upon themselves the leadership of society." Moreover, from that period break forward, "women would decide matters of manners, language, taste, and *loisirs*—the array of noble pastimes that included reading, conversation, theater and the arts, games, and dancing. In short, they would define the outstanding characteristics of aristocratic style." She concludes that it "was a spectacular revolution, rich in consequences and destined to characterize French society until the end of the *ancien régime*."<sup>66</sup> Here Craveri clearly describes the burgeoning social empowerment for women in the seventeenth century but evades discussing in depth what came before it. Where might the socio-historical roots for such empowerment lie?

As Linda Timmermans, Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, Aurore Evain, and numerous others have illustrated, French noble and royal women of the sixteenth century influenced political and religious spheres and "decided" matters of taste long before the first decades of the 1600s. The "revolution" in question started much earlier. It was, in fact, not so much a revolution as the evolution of women's participation in the philosophical, literary, religious, and political interests that engaged the poets and intellectuals of the sixteenth century. The resulting gatherings of men and women formed a *société mondaine* that began in court circles and in Franco-Italian homes in Lyon and circulated concurrently through the homes of noble and royal hostesses in Paris and elsewhere.<sup>67</sup> This continuum of *société mondaine* that moved in great part from Italy into sixteenth-century France and on

65 Craveri, *Age of Conversation*, xi. Pasquier, "Response de Pasquier au Seigneur Comte de Chasteau-Neuf" and "A Messire Honoré d'Urfé, Comte de Chasteauneuf," 53–57.

66 Craveri, *Age of Conversation*, 10.

67 Randall briefly addresses the "mixed-sex gatherings" of proto-salon society in Lyon and Poitiers, as well as the Italian *accademias* of the sixteenth-century, suggesting that these institutions are "the more direct forebears" of seventeenth-century salons. In *Concept of Conversation*, 143.





Fig. 1. Estienne Pasquier (1529–1615). By Léonard Gaultier (1617). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

through literary and social history deserves greater attention than it has received from scholars of the seventeenth-century salon, as it provides a more nuanced view of social developments than the traditional assertion that vulgar manners at the Bourbon court created a definitive turning point in salon history. The social career of Pasquier provides a salient glimpse into this transnational social world as it became rooted in France, particularly regarding women's ludic participation.

### Estienne Pasquier, 1529–1615

Pasquier himself demonstrates acute awareness of women's writing and participation in literary and intellectual society, which he details in his letters. Writing to Claude Mangot, *seigneur de Villarceau*, of three "Marguerites," in the manner of the work of Ausonius (ca. 310–ca. 395) on the three Graces, he discusses Marguerite de Navarre's *Marguerite des Marguerites* (1547)



and her *Heptameron* (1558), noting that they are “compositions honored by the majority of the *beaux esprits* of our time.”<sup>68</sup> He also comments on the *Hecatodistichon* (1550) of “three young English sisters”—the Seymour sisters, Anne, Margaret, and Jane—who memorialized the death of Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) with their distichs, which were then translated into Greek, Italian, and French for Nicolas Denisot’s *Tombeau de Marguerite de Valois, Royne de Navarre* (1551) by such literary luminaries as Denisot (who was their tutor), Jean Dorat, Antoine de Baïf, Joachim Du Bellay, Jacques Peletier du Mans, and Antoinette de Loynes (hostess of the Morel group).<sup>69</sup> He next pays tribute to Marguerite de France (1523–1574), *duchesse de Savoie*, sister of Henri II, who was the “protectress of all of our poets,” noting that she was “highly praised by all the beautiful pens of our times, and singularly by a Ronsard, Bellay, Jodelle and Belleau.”<sup>70</sup> Finally, he turns his attention to Marguerite de Valois, daughter of Henri II and Catherine de’ Medici, who is still alive and entertaining her circle in her new residence on the Left Bank in Paris, where Pasquier is a regular guest.<sup>71</sup> He reminisces about her stay in what he euphemistically calls her “sage retraicte” (wise retreat) to Usson during the wars of religion, where she was actually under house arrest.<sup>72</sup> He praises her for her manner of life there, describing her faith practices, including having three masses every day, but also her elegant “disners et soupers” (dinners and suppers) enlivened by philosophical debates by learned men, for whom she set questions and whom she did not hesitate to contradict, because, as Pasquier puts it, she is “pleine d’entendement” (full of understanding). These festive meals and debates were then followed by musical entertainment.<sup>73</sup> Elsewhere, in a letter to Pierre Airault in 1591, he will again use the phrase “pleine d’entendement” to describe the *duchesse de Retz* when she engages in conversation games, starting a verbal “war” with him over the *questionne d’amore*: Which is the better lover? An old

68 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Mangot,” 393. He writes that her works are “compositions honorées par la plus grande partie des beaux esprits de nostre temps.” The letter seems to have been written between 1592 and 1606 (p. 398).

69 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Mangot,” 393. He writes of the “trois jeunes damoiselles Anglesches soeurs” who have honored Marguerite with “plusieurs distiques latins.” See also Hosington, “England’s First Female-Authored Encomium,” 117–63, and Campbell, “Crossing International Borders,” 218. The poets mentioned here were all members of the Morel circle.

70 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Mangot,” 394. He writes Marguerite was “protectrice de tous nos poetes” and that she “fut haut-louée de toutes les belles plumes de son temps, et singulierement par un Ronsard, Bellay, Jodelle et Belleau.”

71 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 49–50, 148. Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses*, 314.

72 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Mangot,” 396.

73 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Mangot,” 397.



man or a young one?<sup>74</sup> Inspired by this evening at her home, he continues to comment on the “war” in a letter to her,<sup>75</sup> and he writes his *Pastorale du vieillard amoureux*, a dialogue between an ancient shepherd and his servant.<sup>76</sup> Pasquier was also acquainted with Jean de Vivonne, the *marquis* de Pisany, the cousin of the *duchesse* de Retz and the father of the future *marquise* de Rambouillet.<sup>77</sup> Pasquier’s familiarity with this family in which the tradition of women hosting proto-salon and salon gatherings is worth noting, as in the ensuing chapters we will see that practice passing from the home of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive to that of her daughter-in-law, the *duchesse* de Retz, and reappearing in that of the *marquise* de Rambouillet.

When describing a visit to the *bureau d’esprit* of the Dames des Roches in 1579 to his friend Pierre Pithou, Pasquier details how profoundly learned and quick-witted both mother and daughter are. Again, Pasquier will use the language of arms to describe the verbal play in which he engages, noting that there with these ladies, he began to “fence” to the best of his ability, or as he faux-modestly puts it, “the least poorly [he] could manage,” noting “to a beautiful game, a beautiful return.”<sup>78</sup> This is a phrase he will also use to describe witty rejoinders in conversation play with the *duchesse* de Retz.<sup>79</sup> When the discourse with the Des Roches on humanistic topics had gone on for more than hour, Pasquier tells Pithou that he was absolutely delighted to see a flea on the bosom of Catherine. This anecdote is perhaps the most famous of all regarding his proto-salon experiences that he relates in his letters, as this letter was excerpted to preface the published collection of poetry that grew out of this encounter, *La Puce* (1582), which is essentially a polished, published version of the manuscript albums popular among such circles.<sup>80</sup> The incident of the flea inspired Pasquier to change the nature of the discourse to a lighter vein, in the “forme de coq à l’asne” (form of the cock to the ass), a reference to changing topics, as well as a style of satirical poetry popular in the sixteenth century in which great absurdities were

74 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Airault,” 222. He writes, “commence-t-elle de me guerroyer.”

75 Pasquier, “A Madame la duchesse de Retz,” 224–26.

76 Pasquier, *Pastorale du vieillard amoureux*, 2: cols. 903–8. See also Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender*, 73–74.

77 In a letter to “Monsieur Servin,” 2: cols. 405–8, Pasquier praises Vivonne, recalling a conversation with him in which Vivonne related an anecdote about the pope, to whom he was ambassador from France.

78 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Pithou,” 14. He writes, “Estant doncques là avecques elles, je commençay à m’en escrimer au moins mal qu’il me fut possible; & croyez qu’à beau jeu, beau retour.”

79 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Airault,” 222. He writes, “Et croyez que ce fut à beau jeu, beau retour.”

80 See *Catherine de Clermont Retz (Maréchale de)*, *Album*; *Album de poésies des Villeroy*; and *Marguerite de Valois: Album de poésies*.



couched in high style.<sup>81</sup> Thus, this interlude of playful conversation segues from serious topics to a silly one—a pattern we will see repeated in various groups in the following chapters. Everyone involved understands the game, which continues in print long after the initial salon gathering. “Ces deux petits jeux” (these two little games), Pasquier tells Pithou, referring to the initial poems he and Catherine wrote, were quickly passed in manuscript among others in their circle, who also wanted to play the game of praising the flea.<sup>82</sup> The extension of play into writing beyond the social gathering in question was a regular occurrence in such society.

We find another instance of this pattern following the evening *chez* the *duchesse* de Retz, as noted above, when he continued the game in a letter and a dialogue. Moreover, there is another example quite late in Pasquier's life. In 1614, in a letter to “Mademoiselle Du Lys,” Catherine de Cailly, the wife of his close friend Charles Du Lys, Pasquier notes that two evenings earlier, she did him the honor of visiting him after dinner, and he, having a couple of hours to himself the next night, wrote a sonnet for her, which he encloses. In it he calls himself a Parisian hermit and comments ruefully on his “longue vieillesse,” his old age. In her response sonnet the following day, which is included in the *Lettres familières*, she counters his lament, referring to him as a “sage Nestor” who enjoys an age such as everyone would like to attain, marveling that he is like an “oracle” in his wisdom.<sup>83</sup> Pasquier gallantly responds that he is her “Appollon” and she is his “Mnemosine,” and he praises her beauty, calling her “une dame divine” (a divine lady).<sup>84</sup> Visits with groups of male and female friends for meals or after meals that give way to debate and conversation games, musical entertainment, and literary production—often resulting from the debate and conversation games—became a standard pattern of entertainment in private gatherings in people's homes from the sixteenth into the seventeenth century.

81 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Pithou,” 14. He writes, “Ayant doncq ce nouvel objet devant moy, je dis à Madame des Roches, par forme de coq à l'asne, que j'estimois ceste Pulce, la plus prudente & hardie que l'on eust sceu desirer.” (Having thus this new object before me, I told Madame des Roches, in the form of the cock to the ass, that I considered this Flea, the most prudent and bold that one could have known to desire.) See Thickett, *Choix de Lettres*, 18, n. 5.

82 Pasquier, “A Monsieur Pithou,” 15. He writes, “Ces deux petits jeux ont commencé à courir par les mains de plusieurs, & se sont trouvez si agreables, qu'à l'exemple de ceux-cy, quelques autres personnages se sont voulu mettre de la partie.” (These two little games began to run through the hands many, and were found so agreeable that, following the example of these, some others wanted to take part.)

83 Pasquier, “A Mademoiselle Du Lys,” 400–401. This series of missives dates from September 19 to 21, 1614.

84 Pasquier, “A Mademoiselle Du Lys,” 401.



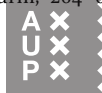
References to the presence of women in such ludic culture arise throughout Pasquier's letters, in which we find such anecdotes and descriptions of women mentioned by name as those above, but we also find general references to women participating in conversation games in his letters and other work. In a letter to "Monsieur de Beaurin," Pasquier describes an evening (perhaps apocryphal, because he tells Beaurin that the beginning and middle of the letter are only buffoonery) during which he says that he found himself in a gathering of several gentlemen and ladies whose conversation turned to a quirky version of the ever-popular *Querelle des femmes*, a literary debate in which he will often engage. In this particular instance, some young men were discussing flattering "singularities" of body and mind (*esprit*) that women possess, until they gave way to a gentleman of the group who laughingly volunteered to contradict their positive views. He launches into an argument, based, he alleges, on his reading of an old Talmudist who asserted that woman was created after man, but before monkeys; so instead of discussing woman's "singularities," they should be discussing her "*singeries*," her monkey-like antics.<sup>85</sup> Pasquier claims that the evening did not end there, however. Next, "une sage demoiselle" (a wise young lady) rose to the challenge and contradicted the gentleman with her own reading of "another Rabbi, translated into old French," who tells the story of a covetous man in a primal garden, who so angered the gods with his destruction of a tree that produced monkeys that they confined him in that tree for his punishment.<sup>86</sup> She concludes with a rousing condemnation of man's vanities and how they are linked to *his* monkey-like nature.<sup>87</sup> At this juncture in his letter, Pasquier tells Beaurin that he wants to be a part of the proceedings, so he will now tell his friend what he thinks of the argument regarding men's vanities. He takes the young lady's side, building on her argument about the vanity of man and the ways in which men make judgments about their lives based on where they are in the social hierarchy, but he leaves aside talk of monkeys to plunge his argument into a more serious philosophical vein, from which he concludes that man's only hope to escape his vanity is to pay attention to "l'ancien oracle d'Apollon," the ancient oracle of Apollo, and to give himself "le loisir d'entrer en la cognoissance de soy," the leisure to enter into self-knowledge.<sup>88</sup> The pattern of discourse described in this letter flows opposite to those typically reported, in which

85 Pasquier, "A Monsieur de Beaurin," 260.

86 Pasquier, "A Monsieur de Beaurin," 262.

87 Pasquier, "A Monsieur de Beaurin," 262–63.

88 Pasquier, "A Monsieur de Beaurin," 264–66.



the interlocutors move from serious to silly subjects. Here, Pasquier sets up an entertaining anecdote about a rollicking debate he claims to have witnessed when in mixed company one evening to amuse his friend and to give himself scope for airing his own opinions on the vanity of men in context with the wisdom of the ancients. In her biography of Pasquier, Thickett notes that after he retired from the bar at age seventy-five, he often had friends in for meals, after which “lengthy discussions would continue on a diversity of topics,” and she suggests that this letter illustrates such discussions.<sup>89</sup> Real or apocryphal, Pasquier’s debate in his letter to Beaurin illustrates topics of interest and conversation games popular in company with men and women in his social milieu.

Pasquier’s literary engagement with depicting witty women and men who take part in conversation games may be seen in an early work that brought him popular acclaim, his *Monophile* (1554), a dialogue which scholars suggest was influenced by Pietro Bembo’s *Gli Asolani* (1505) and was clearly an effort to capitalize on the popularity of the *Querelle des femmes* in the 1540s and 1550s.<sup>90</sup> I would also argue, based on consideration of Pasquier’s descriptions of ludic society in his letters—gatherings in friends’ homes, accompanied by debates, conversation games, music, and poetry-writing—as well as consideration of Guillaume Bouchet’s *Serées* (1585) discussed in Chapter 2, that Pasquier’s work was equally influenced by the actual *société mondaine* of sixteenth-century France, in which he was an avid participant. Thickett writes that Pasquier, “who was capable of long hours of study intermingled with social visits[,] must have decided at the beginning of his career that he wished his greatest success to be in the world of literature and history,” noting as evidence his work on his masterpiece, *Les Recherches de la France* (published in ten volumes between 1560 and 1621), and his “lighter diversion,” *Le Monophile*.<sup>91</sup> Pasquier would publish numerous works on history, classics, religion, and legal issues during his long career, but early on, in *Le Monophile*, he showcases both his love of classics and his engagement with proto-salon society. Lyndan Warner has analyzed this piece at length in *The Ideas of Man and Woman in Renaissance France*, asserting that it is especially of interest

89 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 49.

90 See Dahlinger, *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History*, 25; Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 135–39; and Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 22. On the mid-sixteenth-century popularity of the *Querelle des femmes*, see Campbell, “*Querelle des femmes*,” 369–70.

91 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 21–22. Thickett adds that the 1554 edition was reprinted many times, with later editions including some French sonnets and odes. Moreover, a year later “a collection of love sonnets addressed to an imaginary lady, an ode ‘Contre l’amour’ addressed to Pierre de Ronsard, and some *Lettres amoureuses* were published under the initials E. P.” (p. 22).



for the ways that it “displays some of Pasquier’s early training in rhetoric as well as his preparation as a lawyer” and comparing the discourse on love to that in Louise Labé’s *Débat de Folie et d’Amour* (1555).<sup>92</sup> Here we look briefly at the setting and elements of the conversation.

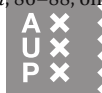
Dedicated to an anonymous friend, to whom he confesses his great passion for a lady who has inspired him to write this dialogue, as well as to “the ladies” in general, Pasquier sets his dialogue at a gathering of gentlemen recently returned from military action at the Siege of Metz (1552–1553). The gathering includes both gentlemen and ladies, including four young people, who have grown tired of the serious humanist discourse over dinner among the older gentlemen discussing the exploits of great, classical generals. They excuse themselves and make their way out to a nearby meadow to debate topics of love and marriage, which inevitably engage them in the *Querelle des femmes* and resonate with Platonic thought. Glaphire, a model courtier,<sup>93</sup> Philopole, a flirt and a bit of a scoundrel regarding women, and Monophile, who is desperately in love with one woman, discourse with the wise young Charilée, who forthrightly contends with them about such topics as the double standard for men versus women regarding loyalty in love and marriage, concubines, Mahomet’s approval of multiple wives, civil law versus natural law, men marrying for love or money, women’s remarkable capacity for fidelity (as evidenced by Penelope’s example with Odysseus), and many variations on these themes, most buttressed by classical exempla.<sup>94</sup> References to the classical world are frequent. Philopole, repeatedly the provocateur in this dialogue, expounds on Platonic views on love from the *Symposium*, noting at one point that love of women violates and breaks “the law of true friendship, which was between men.” He opines that “carnal copulation [is] the sole goal of our love” and brings up the myth of the “Androgine” as an example of “one soul, only in two bodies.”<sup>95</sup> When Philopole asserts that

92 Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 136.

93 The character of Glaphire illustrates, at least in part, Pasquier’s engagement with Castiglione’s *Courtier* because Glaphire, as Castiglione’s courtier is encouraged to do, always seeks the moderate way, the golden mean, in his engagement in the discourse. Castiglione’s courtier is to be in the middle or moderate way of all things he says or does, but he is allowed to speak of “amusing things, such as games and jests and jokes, according to the occasion” (p. 77).

94 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: cols. 704–8, 713, 722.

95 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: cols. 732–34. He writes of “cest amour feminine, avoir esté violée & rompuë la loy de vraye amitié, qui estoit de l’homme à homme” (this feminine love, having been violated and broken the law of true friendship, that was between men), of “ceste copulation charnelle, seule fin de nostre amour” (this carnal copulation, sole end of our love), as well as “nostre Androgine ... un esprit seulement en deux corps” (our Androgine ... one soul, only in two bodies). See Plato, *Symposium*, 86–88, on the androgynous.



“men are permitted many things that women aren’t,” such as tending to “the administration of Republics, handling of weapons, [and] participating in state politics,” suggesting that this is because women are “so fragile and lustful.”<sup>96</sup> Charilée promptly responds with a catalogue of women from ancient through contemporary times capable of ruling, including Semiramis, Tomiris, Penthasilée, Sapho, and Marguerite de Valois (Navarre), and she especially notes Cornelia and Hortensia for eloquence; she adds that in Italy there is “an infinity of others.”<sup>97</sup> Monophile, as Glaphire observes, insists that love should be between one man and one woman, and Philopole wants to love many, but Glaphire himself, as Warner notes, takes the lawyer’s stance and attempts to dissect the complications attendant in both of these more extreme views.<sup>98</sup> He asserts, apparently with a straight face, that his heart can remain true to his lady, while his body might find dalliance elsewhere, concluding that in his opinion, “the loving friendship eternally reposing in the heart does not seem to be violated by such an instinct caused by nature.”<sup>99</sup> The characters thus rehearse numerous commonplaces of the *Querelle* and Platonic notions, each responding according to the description of his or her personality.

Pasquier writes that he happened by chance upon their debates and listened for a while, concealed in the shrubbery; he then surprised them with his presence and volunteered to serve as a “combatant.”<sup>100</sup> The descriptive language of this game-playing is that of arms. When Pasquier explains to the surprised Charilée that he is not sure “which good wind” has blown him there, she accuses him of setting up “an ambush.”<sup>101</sup> When it is Pasquier’s turn to speak, he, rather like Glaphire, takes the middle course, expounding on the “variety of passions,” unlike the extremes of Philopole’s and Monophile’s arguments.<sup>102</sup> He will also assert that he became more learned for loving a lady than he could have been taught by “all the precepts of the *Courtier*.”<sup>103</sup>

96 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 737. Philopole asserts that “estre permis aux hommes beaucoup de choses, que non aux femmes” such as “l’administration de Republicques, maniement d’armes, exercitation d’estats politics” and that women are “si fragile & lubrique” that they are not fit to rule.

97 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 738. Charilée says, “En Italie, une infinité d’autres.”

98 Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 137.

99 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 719. Glaphire argues that “l’amitié gisant au cœur (& non à ces petites intemperances naturelles) ne me semble estre violée, par une nécessité, force d’un instinct cause de nature.” See Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 137.

100 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 730.

101 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 730. He says, “je ne sçay par quel bon vent j’ay esté ici poussé.” Charilée says, “Vous nous dressiez doncq’ ceste embusche.”

102 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 731. He speaks of “la variété des passions” found in love.

103 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 732. He asserts to Philopole, “je me puis bien vanter pour avoir honoré, & encore honorer une Dame, d’un idiot estre devenu mieux appris, que je n’eusse

Later in the debate, Pasquier will, as Warner notes, weigh in on “whether to marry for love and without the consent of parents,” which was still legally possible in the early 1550s.<sup>104</sup> The debates take place over two days, and the language of war-play continues: at the end of the first day, they decide to make a “good retreat” instead of a “dangerous sortie,” and they finally come to an end on the second day, when the sun has gone down.<sup>105</sup> Philopole praises their brave discourses, and, as is common in this style of Renaissance dialogue, the ending is left open, with yet another question to debate later, “the state of a good Captain.”<sup>106</sup> While the debate in *Monophile* no doubt owes its literary format to the popularity of Neoplatonic dialogues such as *The Courtier* and frame stories such as the *Asolani*, Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, and Marguerite de Valois’s *Heptaméron*, Pasquier’s frame setting of gentlemen home from war, gathering in mixed-gender society at someone’s country home, resonates with the sorts of social experiences that he reports in his correspondence.

Pasquier was a member of the elite literary society of his day. He was close friends with the Pléiade poets Jean Dorat, Pierre de Ronsard, Rémi Belleau, and Pontus de Tyard and acquainted with Étienne de Jodelle, Joachim Du Bellay, and Jean-Antoine de Baif. It is likely that through these poets, his friend Michel de l’Hôpital, or his close relationship with his uncle, Adrien Turnèbe, a professor of classics at the Collège de France, Pasquier made the acquaintance of the Morel circle, because all of these figures were regulars in the Morel home in the Rue Pavée of the St. Michel district.<sup>107</sup> Regarding Pasquier’s reputation among these luminaries, Keating asserts, “No sour note was sounded in the chorus of praise and esteem” that Pasquier received during his own lifetime.<sup>108</sup> He further states, “All the evidence points to the fact that the poets took real delight in Pasquier’s witty and learned company, and we know that in the salons he vied with some of the best in impromptu

sçeu faire par tous les preceptes du Courtisan.” (I can well boast for having honored and still honoring a Lady, from [having been] an idiot I became better learned, than I could have been taught by all the precepts of the *Courtier*.)

104 Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 136–37.

105 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 754. He writes that it is better, “pour le present, faire une bonne retraite, qu’une dangereuse saillie” (for the present, to make a good retreat, than a dangerous sortie).

106 Pasquier, *Le Monophile*, 2: col. 786. They will later debate “l’estat d’un bon Capitaine.”

107 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 22.

108 Keating, *Etienne Pasquier*, 36–37. Keating draws his conclusions after surveying Pasquier’s reception in letters with Petrus Ramus and Turnèbe, his being a fictive character, along with Ronsard, in Louis de Caron’s *Dialogues* (1556), and remarks on his work by Henri d’Angoulême and d’Urfé.





rhyming.<sup>109</sup> Keating also comments on Pasquier's penchant for engaging the *Querelle des femmes*, inevitably as a defender of women. "Pasquier was no out-and-out feminist," he writes, yet "he seems never to have liked the posture of misogynist which was assumed by so many writers, including Rabelais.... The systematic downgrading of women and their role in society was not for him, even as a parlor pastime. On the contrary, he interlards the *Recherches* with a number of famous and heroic women."<sup>110</sup> Pasquier's engagement with the upper echelons of literary society—its proto-salon gatherings, as well as his literary output—is permeated with references to women's presence in it.

Pasquier's interest in *Querelle*-style argument in his literary work was also reflected in his legal work. Warner notes that in one of his most famous cases, he did indeed make recourse to the most negative arguments in the *Querelle* regarding women, but he did so to win his case. He knew his audience well, one that routinely accepted arguments about the imbecility of women versus the superior mental acuity of men. He defended Catherine Viault, second wife of François Chabot (d. 1574), against charges that she had unfairly received gifts from her husband that should rightfully go only to the children of his first marriage. Warner writes that Pasquier "argued the incapacity of her sex, while salvaging her role as a 'good mother,'" and the judge, Christophe De Thou, finally concluded that if her husband "was deceived or cheated it was because he wanted to be."<sup>111</sup> In his legal work for women, Pasquier also once argued for "the right of a daughter to keep the inheritance bequeathed to her by her widowed mother in accordance with the custom of the region," Warner documents; she notes Pasquier's statement in a letter to René Choppin, "I pleaded for her and I assure you that I forgot nothing that I thought [could] serve to favour my cause."<sup>112</sup> Pasquier's own marriage to Françoise Belin, a young widow, was apparently the result of her admiration for and gratitude to him when he assisted her in a lawsuit.<sup>113</sup> Warner notes that "the examples used by lawyers to move, to charm and persuade an audience of judges might be quite familiar to a reader of *Querelle des femmes* texts or dialogues on human nature."<sup>114</sup>

109 Keating, *Etienne Pasquier*, 94.

110 Keating, *Etienne Pasquier*, 107.

111 Warner, "Widows, Widowers," 101–6.

112 Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 139. Pasquier, "A Monsieur Chopin," 74. Of his defense of the *Damoiselle de Longueil*, he writes, "je plaidois pour elle, et vous assure que je n'y oubliais rien de ce que je pensois servir à la faveur de ma cause" (translated by Warner).

113 Thickett, *Estienne Pasquier*, 24; Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 136.

114 Warner, *Ideas of Man and Woman*, 139.



Pasquier could manipulate such rhetoric at will, in both the court room and the proto-salon setting. Moreover, his vast experience in the *société mondaine* of his day—in company at court and in private homes, with groups of men and in mixed company—makes him a significant witness to the developments in ludic literary society in which women were involved.

## Sixteenth-Century Literary Circles and the Permeability of Periodization

To be clear, there is no question that the salons of the seventeenth century were institutions shaped by the vicissitudes of their own era (the unrest of Henri IV's court early in the period and the *Fronde* later) and led by such charismatic, politically active women as the *marquise* de Rambouillet, Catherine de Vivonne; the *princesse* de Conti, Louise Marguerite de Lorraine; Mademoiselle Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701); and *La Grande Mademoiselle*, Anne Marie Louise d'Orleans, the *duchesse* de Montpensier (1627–1693). Moreover, as generations of scholars of French seventeenth-century salon culture have argued, the salons of the *précieuses* were loci of social, linguistic, and literary developments whose impacts upon literary culture and women's literary engagement are incalculable.<sup>115</sup> However, we must remember that they did in fact have sixteenth-century ancestries whose tastes and practices may have left the sorts of lasting impressions on cultural history that made such seventeenth-century entities conceivable.

In *French Salons* Steven Kale asserts that the salons of the seventeenth century were “a historically specific expression of the aristocracy's determination to regulate and control the transition from a hereditary to an open elite,” and he points out that they “emerged at a time when the justification of noble privilege ... was under attack ... when an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie ... aspired to ‘live nobly’”; to do so, they participated in “what Arno Mayer calls ‘the persistence of the Old Regime.’”<sup>116</sup> The question to consider, then, is, to what noble elements of sixteenth-century *société mondaine* did seventeenth-century *salonnières* look for inspiration?

Regarding permeability of periodization in France, Timmermans and Patricia Cholakian have acknowledged the continuity from sixteenth- to

115 See Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes*, 113–70, especially regarding the social stratification of the seventeenth-century salons. See Krajewska, *Mythes et découvertes*, 13–34, on letters and language.

116 Kale, *French Salons*, 8–9.



seventeenth-century salon society. Timmermans points out that with the deaths of the *duchesse* de Retz in 1603 and Marguerite de Valois in 1615, the humanist culture for women cultivated in their proto-salons began to disappear, but she adds that this disappearance occurred progressively, not all at once. Moreover, she argues that salon society in general in France began during the 1570s and 1580s, writing that it “seems that most of the circles of women born at the end of the sixteenth century are nostalgic for ‘the humanism of the Court’, and try to maintain it, not at the Court itself, but in the *hôtels particuliers*; this tradition was equally illustrated in the years 1570–1580, [in] the salons closer to Court [such as] those of the *maréchale* de Retz et de *mme* de Villeroy.”<sup>117</sup> She adds that this “nostalgia, evident in the court of the queen Marguerite, established first at Usson, during the exile of the queen, then from 1605, in Paris, in her *hôtel de la rue de Seine*, seems equally to explain the existence of such a *société mondaine*.”<sup>118</sup> Timmermans also acknowledges Gustave Reynier’s description of this society and the women who participated in it.<sup>119</sup> He identifies approximately thirty noblewomen of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries involved in such society, including the *duchesse* de Retz, the *duchesse* de Nevers, Madame de Villeroy, Madame de Guise, the *princesse* de Conti, the *vicomtesse* d’Auchy.<sup>120</sup>

Cholokian, too, takes the long view of the development of a *société mondaine*. She asserts that while Rambouillet’s *chambre bleue* “is often credited with being the first and most famous of the *ruelles*,” it is more correct to say that “this seventeenth-century institution was a descendent of the predilection for refined social intercourse that had been introduced by the first Marguerite de Navarre under François I and had become the hallmark of the Valois dynasty.”<sup>121</sup> She notes that its “practice, which Marguerite de Navarre described in the framework of her *Heptaméron*, had been handed down through the women of the line; and her grand-niece, Marguerite de

117 Timmermans, *L’Accès des femmes*, 64. She writes, “Il semble bien que la plupart des cercles féminins nés à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle soient nostalgiques de ‘l’humanisme de Cour’, et essaient de maintenir, non à la Cour même, mais dans les hôtels particuliers, cette tradition qu’avaient également illustrée, dans les années 1570–1580, les salons, plus proches de la Cour, de la maréchale de Retz et de Mme de Villeroy.”

118 Timmermans, *L’Accès des femmes*, 64. She writes, “Cette nostalgie, évidente à la cour de la reine Marguerite, établie d’abord à Usson, pendant l’exil de la reine, puis, à partir de 1605, à Paris, dans son hôtel de la rue de Seine, semble également expliquer l’existence de toute une société mondaine.”

119 Timmermans, *L’Accès des femmes*, 64–65. See also Reynier, *Le Roman Sentimental*, 170–74.

120 Reynier, *Le Roman Sentimental*, 171–73.

121 Cholokian, *Women and the Politics*, 31–32.



Valois, had managed even in desolate Usson to surround herself with poets, musicians, and philosophers” and that “[a]fter Valois’s return to Paris in 1605, she invited artists and writers to elegant gatherings that were tacit reminders of what court life would have been had she, and not her ex-husband, acceded to the throne. At these assemblies, Valois was called ‘Vénus Uranie’ and presided over the discussions on subjects proposed by her, practices later adopted by the *précieuses*.<sup>122</sup> Here, Cholakian identifies the passing down of certain traditions of proto-salon society from Marguerite de Navarre to Marguerite de Valois and gestures to the continuity that would occur in the salons of the seventeenth century. The missing piece, however, is consideration of Italian influence; therefore, it is necessary to look to the Valois courts and the Italian ludic literary sociability that invaded them.

The Franco-Italian literary and intellectual circles associated with the sixteenth-century French court, and led predominantly by noble and royal women, were the precursors of seventeenth-century salon society in numerous ways that have been little considered, including the prominence of female leadership and patronage, the ludic nature of the milieu, and the early but identifiable mix of *précieuse* characteristics that include coterie pseudonyms, *roman à clef* writing, and a passion for romances that would bloom into the obsession with novels in the seventeenth century. Jacqueline Boucher points out that at the court of Henri III, there developed a penchant for modes of expression “so affected that one may see in them the beginnings of the *préciosité* that would expand into the following century,” and regarding the sources of this trend, she notes that “Italian influence was certain in this domain.”<sup>123</sup> Citing the *Lettres amoureuses* (*Lettere Amoroze*, 1545) of Girolamo Parabosco translated by Philippe de Villiers (1556) and dedicated to the secretary of the *duchesse* de Nevers and Etienne du Tronchet’s volume of “lettres galantes” (*Lettres amoureuses*, 1575) dedicated to the *maréchale* de Retz, Boucher argues that such women as Claude-Catherine de Clermont, the *duchesse* de Retz, and Henriette de Clèves, the *duchesse* de Nevers, made this style of communication popular in their gatherings.<sup>124</sup> Considering these characteristics of sixteenth-century *société mondaine* and their Italian influences, it becomes clear that numerous literary critics of the seventeenth century have pointed out the refinement of locations,

122 Cholakian, *Women and the Politics*, 31–32.

123 Boucher, *Société et mentalités*, 3: 943. She writes that there developed a “penchant pour des modes d’expression si affectées qu’on peut voir en eux des prémices de la préciosité qui devait s’épanouir au siècle suivant,” and “L’influence italien fut certaine dans ce domaine.”

124 Boucher, *Société et mentalités*, 3: 943.



traditions, manners, mores, conversation, and literary tastes associated with that period's *salonnières*, as well as dissected the changing notions of social equity and attitudes of such groups, as may be seen in the debate of the “ancients against moderns,” the rise of sentimentalism, and such groups’ political interventions. But these critics have neglected, for the most part, to consider in depth what came before them—and how it might have mattered.<sup>125</sup>

This book thus fills a gap in the scholarship on the evolution of sixteenth-century ludic literary culture that would segue into the salon society of the seventeenth century. In addition to works on the theory of play, several studies have laid the groundwork for this project. Keating's *Studies on the Literary Salon in France, 1550–1615* (1941) is still considered an important text on the subject. More recently, Berriot-Salvadore, first in “Les femmes dans les cercles intellectuels de la Renaissance” (1989) and then in *Les Femmes dans la société Française de la Renaissance* (1990), provides an invaluable, comprehensive overview of women's participation in literary and intellectual society during this period, as does Timmermans in *L'Accès des femmes à la culture sous l'Ancien Régime* (1993). Studies that focus on specific sixteenth-century proto-*salonnières* include Christie Ellen St-John's dissertation, “The *Salon Vert* of the Maréchale de Retz” (1999); Anne R. Larsen's body of work on the Mesdames des Roches, including most recently *From Mother and Daughter* (2006), as well as her study of seventeenth-century intellectual circles in *Anna Maria van Schurman: “The Star of Utrecht,”* (2016); Kendall Tarte's study of the gatherings of the Dames Des Roches, *Writing Places* (2007); and Anna Klosowska's *Selected Poems and Translations* (2007) of the poetry of Madeleine de l'Aubespine. Diana Robin's *Publishing Women: Salons, The Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (2006) provides an excellent starting point for considering Italian precedents in salon society. Sarah G. Ross's *The Birth of Feminism* (2009) outlines the early education of humanist women in Italy. George McClure's *Parlour Games and the Public Life of Women in Renaissance Italy* (2013) and Konrad Eisenbichler's *The Sword and the Pen* (2012) illustrate the developments of Sieneese women's participation in salon and academic society. Allison Levy's volume *Playthings in Early Modernity* (2017) further contextualizes the

125 Helpful studies on the specific historical *raisons d'être* and characteristics of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century salons include Goodman's “Public Sphere and Private Life,” 1–19, and “Enlightenment Salons,” 329–50. See also the whole of DeJean's *Ancients against Moderns*. In *Woman Triumphant*, 141, Maclean suggests that salons or “assemblies” like the French salons “must ... have been common in Italy in the early sixteenth century” because of the Italy-Lyon connections, but he does not explore the Italian circles in depth.

materiality of sixteenth-century salon activities in Italy. In *The Prodigious Muse* (2011), Virginia Cox underscores the close cultural ties between France and Italy, including the fame of Italian women writers in France. Jacqueline Boucher's *Présence italienne à Lyon à la Renaissance* (1994) illustrates the birth of those ties in great detail. Finally, scholars of these subjects owe much to the work of Colette Winn, François Rouget, and others on editions of manuscript albums associated with the groups discussed here.

*Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532–1615* also builds on my previous work in *Literary Circles and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (2006), in which I examine the inscription of the literary quarrel known as the *Querelle des femmes* in the works of men and women who took part in literary circles in Italy, France, and England. Especially in research for the chapters on literary circle activity in France, it became clear that a vibrant world of sixteenth-century sodalities existed both within and on the fringes of court culture, one that stood at an interesting intersection in Franco-Italian literary history but has received little consideration in contemporary English scholarship beyond stating its existence and women's participation in it. Increasingly intrigued by the representations (and sometimes misrepresentations) of the *longue durée* of salon culture, in "Salons, Salonnières, and Women Writers" (2007), I began the inquiry that has brought me to this larger study of the history of salon society in France. In "Marie de Beaulieu and Isabella Andreini: Cross-Cultural Patronage at the French Court" (2014), I examined the case of an Italian poet's and French *fille d'honneur*'s engagement with the literary taste and patronage of specific court circles. In the process of studying Andreini's (1562–1604) *rime*, I realized that her dedications to Catherine de Vivonne, the future *marquise* de Rambouillet; her mother Giulia Savelli, *marquise* de Pisany; and other important figures in the world of seventeenth-century salons (such as Mademoiselle de Guise, the future *princesse* de Conti, and the poet Giambattista Marino) were evidence that further research should be done regarding influence and connections between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century milieux.<sup>126</sup> In a similar vein, in *Women, Entertainment, and Precursors of the French Salon, 1532–1615*, I also draw upon studies that have focused on women's roles as patrons and arbiters (and creators) of taste because the subjects are in many cases inseparable. An important work that identifies historical trends regarding the figure of the princess or noblewoman as *mécène* and arbiter of taste—and as leader of a group of

126 See Campbell, "Marie de Beaulieu and Isabella Andreini," 871. See also Cox, *Prodigious Muse*, xvii; and Andreini, *Rime, Parte seconda*, 30, 41–42, 50–51.

like-minded artists and intellectuals—is Claudie Martin-Ulrich’s *La persona de la princesse au XVIIe siècle: personnage littéraire et personnage politique* (2004), and one of the key examples of that figure in Martin-Ulrich’s study is Marguerite de Valois, whose works have been edited and contextualized by Eliane Viennot. Especially helpful are Viennot’s biography, *Marguerite de Valois* (1993), her editions of the *Correspondence, 1569–1614* (1998), and the *Mémoires et discours* (2004). Finally, the work of scholars in Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier and Eugénie Pascal’s volume *Patronnes et mécènes en France à la Renaissance* (2007) sheds light on the myriad ways that such women became the makers of taste during this period.<sup>127</sup>

As rich as these lines of inquiry are, we nonetheless still wrestle with a problematic historicized delineation of seventeenth-century salon society. Many scholars categorically state that due to political exigencies, the advent of classicism, and the change in taste from humanist interests to those of sentimentalism or sensibility, a clean cultural break occurred. Articulating that break in traditional terms of periodization, Keating, as noted above, ridicules the “giddy and trivial old age” of the seventeenth-century circle of Marguerite de Valois.<sup>128</sup> Recently, in *Salons, History, and the Creation of 17th-Century France*, Faith E. Beasley more carefully considers the beginning of seventeenth-century salons as she notes that the “origin of what has become almost the mythical milieu of the salons, is usually associated with the famed *chambre bleue* of the marquise de Rambouillet,” but she adds that Timmermans’s research

has shown ... that the marquise’s gatherings were not an isolated social phenomenon. Two other salonnières, the vicomtesse d’Auchy and Mme des Loges, opened their doors and exercised power in the empire of letters before the famous marquise. Perhaps because the salons of d’Auchy and des Loges were openly academic, especially with respect to literary matters, Rambouillet’s *chambre bleue* is usually highlighted as the first to unite writers and worldly figures in the art of genteel conversation.<sup>129</sup>

In Beasley’s description of pivotal salons—those of the Catholic d’Auchy and the Huguenot des Loges—that look back to the humanist ones of the sixteenth century but appear only shortly before that of Rambouillet, we

127 See Campbell, *Literary Circles and Gender*; “Salons, Salonnières, and Women Writers,” 202–5; “Marie de Beaulieu and Isabella Andreini,” 851–74.

128 Keating, *Studies on the Literary Salon*, 19.

129 Beasley, *Salons, History*, 22.



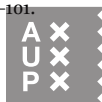
catch a glimpse of the historical reality that scholars who adhere to strict notions of periodization efface. Beasley neatly expresses why Rambouillet's salon is usually considered the "first to unite writers and worldly figures in the art of genteel conversation" by suggesting that the salons of d'Auchy and des Loges are more like the sixteenth-century ones and thus somehow do not count in the seventeenth century because they were "openly academic." She highlights the often-asserted assumption that the earlier salons, or proto-salons, engaged mainly in rigidly academic-style debate on topics of humanist interests, presumably such as philosophy and religion, which were among the topics popular in the d'Auchy and des Loges salons. From the brief considerations of the entertainments of Pierrevive's circle above, as well as that of her daughter-in-law the *duchesse* de Retz, one can see that not all sixteenth-century groups were entirely academic in the humanist sense; rather, they were also heavily engaged with play in vernacular poetry and games.

That both sixteenth- and seventeenth-century groups were categorizable by clean divisions between their engagement with less or more heavily intellectual or scholarly concerns remains something of a fallacy. Anne Larsen observes that "as early as 1615," the Rambouillet salon's weekly meetings "were known to introduce practices that the Académie Française would later formalize,"<sup>130</sup> thus bringing an intriguing convolution into the argument that the intellectualism of the *chambre bleue* was removed from academic practices, albeit contemporary ones. Moreover, regarding the des Loges salon, which predates that of Rambouillet, Larsen points out that, although labeled "academic" like the earlier groups of the sixteenth century, it featured a mixture of humanist discourse, conversation games, and literary engagement. In it Marie Bruneau, Dame des Loges, brought together figures active in politics, religion, and literary production. It was attended by such "[f]uture academicians as Conrart and *salonnières* as Madame de Sablé" and likely also included Madeleine de Chemeraud, a cousin of the Mesdames des Roches, whose gatherings Chemeraud had attended in Poitiers.<sup>131</sup> Clearly, more continuity existed between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century groups than has been previously considered.

As we will see in the following chapters, most sixteenth-century assemblies were, in fact, blends of the academic and the ludic, with discourse typically moving from serious moral, intellectual, and political questions to game-playing of various kinds, including playful debate and badinage about

<sup>130</sup> Larsen, *Anna Maria van Schurman*, 130–31.

<sup>131</sup> Larsen, "Marie Bruneau," 100–101.





the nature of love and lovers' behaviors.<sup>132</sup> Conversation and entertainments clearly exhibited practices that would later appear in seventeenth-century salon *sociabilité*, such as use of coterie pseudonyms, literary competitions, group authorship, escapism from political turmoil, and engagement with key styles of poetry, drama, romances, and novels. Ultimately, there were few distinct breaks with the elements of proto-salon society in the sixteenth century, other than those that traditional approaches have defined.

In Chapter 1, "At Play in Italy and France: Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Social Continuities," the groundwork is laid for illustrating the continuities between characteristics of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *société mondaine*, especially regarding Italian precedents. Here Bernard Suits's notion that the games people play are harbingers of things to come and Roger Caillois's observation that the principles of games are often ultimately accepted and then reflected in the larger culture prove intriguingly true in the development of these ludic sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary and social contexts. Working in reverse chronological order, we first consider the poet Giambattista Marino (1569–1625) as a go-between in the Italian and French salon society of the seventeenth century. Marino was invited to Paris by Marie de' Medici, and he stayed from 1615–1623, becoming a much-celebrated figure in salon society. Moving back into the sixteenth century, we then examine how connections between Italian and French women and their intellectual circles were fostered through the transnational movement of high-ranking women between centers of power through marriage, as was the case with Marie de' Medici. In particular, we consider the experiences of Catherine de' Medici, Renée de France, her daughter Anna d'Este, and d'Este's granddaughter Louise Marguerite de Lorraine, the future *princesse* de Conti. We also consider Giulia Savelli and her daughter Catherine de Vivonne, the future *marquise* de Rambouillet, who on her father's side of the family was related to the *duchesse* de Retz, the daughter-in-law of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive. All these women, with Italian or French roots and/or Italian or French marital connections, held critically important positions as conduits of power, patronage, and taste. Finally, a brief survey of the *longue durée* of salon society in Italy as it segues into France provides a backdrop for the discussions in the ensuing chapters.

In Chapter 2, "Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive and the Dames des Roches: Proto-Salon Entertainment in Lyon and Poitiers," I first establish why

132 The notion of "ludic" as it applies to play and games in general must be carefully considered, because games and competitive play, as we will see, were intrinsic parts of the so-called "humanist" circles.



sixteenth-century Lyon is a key place for cultural encounters between Italy and Paris and what that meant for entertainment in its *société mondaine*. In that context, women's participation in ludic literary society demonstrates that they were engaged in interactive intellectual play with their male contemporaries, in particular taking part in poetry writing as a "game of skill," as Caillois would put it, with enough ability to be deemed "pleasing" among their contemporaries.<sup>133</sup> Next, we look at how the famed gatherings in the homes of printers and the Académie de Fourvière, as well as the proto-salon hospitality of Marie-Catherine de Pierrevive, Dame du Perron (Gondi), serve as examples of ways that twentieth-century scholarship (particularly that of Saulnier, whose prolific work on the literary history of Lyons has heavily influenced scholarly attitudes toward the literary milieu of that city) divided Lyonnais sodalities into distinct categories of brilliant humanist circles and intellectually suspect groups of fans of vernacular Italian literature and games, a seldom completely supportable dichotomy. Then, we turn to Poitiers and the *bureau d'esprit* of the Dames des Roches to show how the interactions of Estienne Pasquier and others with that group clearly illustrate the fault lines in the artificial bifurcation of ludic literary society into strictly serious, humanist interests and ludic, game-loving activities enacted in both classical and vernacular languages. Moreover, the context for Pasquier's interactions with that group, his legal work in the courts of the *Grands Jours*, which were engaged in condemning "to death many nobles and others who had committed violent acts during the religious troubles," illustrates how Pasquier and his fellow magistrates sought Huizinga's "place apart" in the society of the Dames des Roches.<sup>134</sup>

In the third chapter, "Antoinette de Loynes and Madeleine de l'Aubespine: Entertainment among the Parisian *Noblesse de robe*," we see how the characteristics of sixteenth-century Parisian proto-salon society are illustrated as they foreshadow those of the seventeenth century by taking into consideration what is known of the entertainment practices of prominent circles hosted by members of the *noblesse de robe*, the class of nobles who held state offices, usually concerned with legal affairs. The ludic activities of these groups, like those in Lyon and Poitiers, support Huizinga's observation that poetry, beyond serving an aesthetic function, can also be "ritual, entertainment, artistry, riddle-making ... [and] competition."<sup>135</sup> In the Parisian circles of Antoinette de Loynes and her husband Jean de Morel, *sieur* de Grigny, and Madeleine

133 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 7.

134 Bernstein, *Between Crown and Community*, 162; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 12.

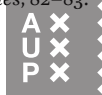
135 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 120.



de l'Aubespine and her husband, Nicolas de Neufville, *seigneur* de Villeroy, we examine humanist and Italianate literary interests, poetry competitions, dialogic poetry, play with anagrams and riddles, dramatic performances, and patronage. Evidence of Pasquier's interactions with these groups surfaces in his publications as well as in the Villeroy album. Ultimately, the artifacts of these groups, both in print and in manuscript, attest to how each developed its own signature style of entertainments and modes of play.

Moving up the social ranks, in the fourth chapter, "Claude-Catherine de Clermont: Amusement and Escapism among the *Noblesse d'épée* and Royal Milieu," I address circles of higher-ranking nobles and royals, particularly the famed ludic hospitality of Claude Catherine de Clermont, *maréchale*, then *duchesse* de Retz, and her husband, Albert de Gondi, whose circle included Marguerite de Valois, numerous women of the court, and a constellation of the most popular poets and thinkers of the period. I argue that the *duchesse* de Retz, who was famous for her hospitality and entertainments, and who was the daughter-in-law of Marie Catherine de Pierrevive and the cousin of Jean de Vivonne, the father of the *marquise* de Rambouillet, stands in an important place in the history of the development of salon-style sociability and should be considered a key *proto-salonnaire*. Consideration of poetry by Marie de Romieu (1569?–1585?), poetry in the Retz album, and letters and other writings by Pasquier allows us to position Retz's style of entertaining within the larger Franco-Italian context, in particular with practices in Poitiers as well as Lyon, where Pierrevive held her assemblies. Caillois's notion that there is "a truly reciprocal relationship between society and the games it likes to play" and that the "popular acceptance" of the "tendencies, tastes, and ways of thought" that emerge in ludic society spills over into society at large, considered in context with the economic power and elite social position of Madame de Retz (illustrated by the sway she held over important figures in her milieu, evident in the myriad dedications she received), helps us to understand how the "tendencies, tastes, and ways of thought" popularized by her circle, and the others similar to it, endure into the next century when they will be further refined and codified to suit the ensuing generations of salon society.<sup>136</sup> In references to Retz's hospitality and engagement in literary society, we find such precursors to seventeenth-century French salon practices as leadership and patronage by women; adherence to specific genres and styles of literature; use of coterie pseudonyms as part of group identities; and the phenomenon of creating spaces away from court in which to propagate *sociabilité* and escape the realities of the war-torn environs.

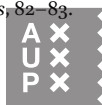
136 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 82–83.



In Chapter 5, “Marguerite de Valois and Proto-*Précieuse* Taste,” entertainment practices and tastes propagated in Marguerite’s gatherings illustrate why her groups have been generally associated with influencing seventeenth-century salon society, even though she herself has been dismissed as a relic of the sixteenth century and therefore irrelevant. To do so, we examine her direction of debates held at her dinners, descriptions of which both Brantôme and Pasquier have recorded, as well as examples of her influence upon literary taste, as exhibited by the literary activities of the d’Urfé brothers, Honoré, Antoine, and Anne. In particular, we look at how Honoré’s novel *L’Astrée*, inspired by the interests of Marguerite’s circle, finds lasting fame in seventeenth-century salon society. Similarly, we begin to discuss how her *fille d’honneur* Marie de Beaulieu’s proto-novel *L’Histoire de La Chiaramonte*, dedicated to Marguerite, illustrates the tastes in literature and entertainment of women in Marguerite’s circle. In the examples of taste in subject matter and ludic activities of Marguerite’s friends, we see an illustration of Caillois’s theory that games in fact educate and train participants in the “very virtues or eccentricities” valued in the games.<sup>137</sup> Some of those “virtues and eccentricities,” such as Marguerite’s fascination with Neoplatonic moralism, her delight in pastoral entertainment, and her love of Italianate literature and theater, would endure in ludic literary society. We also see how Beaulieu’s friendship with the Italian actress and poet Isabella Andreini, who dedicates poems to Beaulieu and other noble women, including Catherine de Vivonne, the future *marquise* de Rambouillet, sheds light on the taste-making power of the high-ranking women at play in Marguerite’s world.

In the sixth chapter, “*L’Histoire de La Chiaramonte: A Divertissement* for the Circle of Marguerite de Valois,” I provide a detailed overview of *L’Histoire de La Chiaramonte*, which has not yet been edited or translated in a modern edition. This proto-novel is a repository of the entertainments, subjects, and literary genres embraced by Marguerite de Valois, her close friends such as Madame de Retz and Madame de Nevers, and other members of her court circles. Building on the introduction to this work in Chapter 5, I discuss Beaulieu’s characters, who include key members of Marguerite de Valois’s circle, some of whom are mentioned by name and others in veiled references, a practice that will gain wide popularity in *roman à clef* novels of the seventeenth century. I also examine several artifacts of this work, including the prefatory matter for the work as a whole, the poetry of compliment that accompanies the text, as well as the games, conversations, actions of the characters, and literary references within it, to argue that

137 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 82–83.



they illustrate the myriad ways that this proto-novel is meant to please the influential proto-*salonnières* of the sixteenth century. Ultimately, we see that many elements of *L'Histoire* foreshadow seventeenth-century salon taste, demonstrating Huizinga's and Caillois's notions of the interdependence of games and culture and the continuing development of that culture.

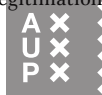
In the conclusion, "Sixteenth-Century *Société Mondaine* and the Persistence of Entertainment Practices," we review what is revealed by undertaking this study of "particulars dealt with in short duration," as Hume recommends, in order to have a better understanding of the *longue durée* of ludic literary society as it segues from the sixteenth into the seventeenth century.<sup>138</sup> We consider the optics employed in this study, including the historical information we have about these groups, the documents associated with them, the contemporary activities and reminiscences of Estienne Pasquier as he interacted with most of them, and the literary activities of women writers of lower or outsider status, such as Marie de Romieu, Isabella Andreini, and Marie de Beaulieu, who crafted works to entertain the important noble and royal women taste-makers of the sixteenth century. We also see that enduring elements of the sixteenth-century *société mondaine* that arise in the seventeenth century illustrate the ways that theorists of play such as Huizinga, Fink, Caillois, and Suits have argued that play and culture are productively intertwined; that is to say, the rituals and principles of play produce effects beyond the perimeters of play spaces. Ultimately, I contend that what we know of the social gatherings and entertainments of sixteenth-century French noble and royal women reveals women's cultural leadership and influence on ludic literary society long before the famous *salonnières* of the seventeenth century were circumscribed as a unique phenomenon.

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138 Hume, "Construction and Legitimation," 657.



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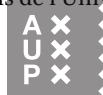
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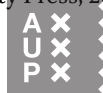


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