Reading Early Modern Women’s Novellas Out of Context

Workshop organizers
Carrie F. Klaus, DePauw University, French
Jessie R. Labadie, University of Virginia, French
Emily E. Thompson, Webster University, French

This workshop will consider the fate of early modern women’s novellas across the boundaries of place and time through a close look at several English- and French-language adaptations and editions of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron des Nouvelles* (1559) and María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Although literary in approach, the workshop will strongly comparative in its transnational (French, Spanish, English, and Swiss) and diachronic (16th-18th c.) focus. The central question of the workshop will be the issue of context: What happens when stories are pulled loose from their authorial, national, cultural, linguistic, or temporal moorings? In reading and teaching these novellas, should we aim to restore original contexts or, rather, to identify universal themes that transcend place and time? What is the value of varied readings?

Readings and images

You will find below *nouvelle* 32 from Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron des nouvelles* (1559), followed by a modern English-language translation of this tale, and George Whetstone’s sixteenth-century English adaptation of the story (1582).

You will also find excerpts from prefaces to three editions of María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (French editions by Douville and by Scarron from 1656 and original Spanish edition from 1637), followed by English-language translations of these excerpts.

Finally, we include a few images from the richly illustrated *Heptaméron* published by the Nouvelle Société Typographique in Bern (1780-1781).
TRENTE DEUXIÈME NOUVELLE

Bernage, ayant connu en quelle patience et humilité une damoisele d’Allemagne recevait l’étrange attention qu’il lui faisaient faire pour son incontinence, gainant ce point sur lui, qu’oubliant le passé, eut pitié de sa femme, la reprit avec soin et en eut depuis de fort beaux enfants.

Le Roy Charles, huictiésme de ce nom, envoyait en Allemagne ung gentil homme, nommé Bernage, sieur de Sivray, près Amboise, lequel pour faire bonne diligence, n’épargnait jour ne nuyct, pour avancer son chemyn, en sorte que, ung soir, bien tard, arriva en un chateau d’un gentil homme, ou il demanda logis : ce que à grand peyne peut avoir. Toutefois, quant le gentil homme entendit qu’il estoit serviteur d’un tel Roy, s’en alla au devant de lui, et le pria de ne se mal contanter de la rudesse de ses gens, car, à cause de quelque parens de sa femme qui lui vouloit mal, il estoit contraint tenir ainsi la maison fermée. Aussi, le dict Bernage lui dit l’occasion de sa legation : en quoy le gentil homme s’offrit de faire tout service à lui possible au Roy son maistre, et le mena dedans sa maison, où il le logea et festoyaa honoramment.

Il estoit heure de soupper; le gentil homme le mena en une belle salle tendue de belle tapisserie. Et, ainsi que la viande fut apportée sur la table, veid sortyr de derriere la tapisserie une femme, la plus belle qu’il estoit possible de regarder, mais elle avoit sa teste toute tondue, le demeurant du corps habillé de noir à l’allemagne. Après que le dict seigneur eut lavé avec le seigneur de Bernage, l’on porta l’oeue à cette dame, qui lava et s’allà seoir au bout de la table, sans parler à nuluy, b, ny nul à elle. Le seigneur de Bernage la regarde bien fort, et luy semblant une des plus belles dames qu’il avoit jamais veues, sinon qu’elle avoit le visage bien passé et la contenance bien triste. Après qu’elle eut mangé ung peu, elle demanda à boire, ce qu’il y avoit ung serviteur de leanz dedans ung eservenille vaisseau, c, car c’est la teste d’un mort, dont les oeilz estoient bouchez d’argent : et ainsi beut deux ou trois foys.

a. les plats. — b. aucun, personne. — c. une étonnante coupe à boire.

TRENTE DEUXIÈME NOUVELLE

La damoiselle, après qu’elle eut souppé et fait lever les mains, fit une reverence au seigneur de la maison et s’en retourna derriere la tapisserie, sans parler à personne. Bernage fut tant esbahy de voir chose si estrange, qu’il en devint tout triste et pensif. Le gentil homme qui s’en apperçut, lui disit : « Je voy bien que vous vous estonnez de ce que vous avez vu en ceste table ; mais, veu l’honnestyté que je treuue en vous, je ne vous veux celer que c’est, afin que vous ne pensiez qu’il y ayt en moy telle cruelité sans grande occasion. Ceste dame que vous avez vu est ma femme, laquelle j’ay plus aymée que jamais homme pourroit aymer femme, tant que, pour l’espousser, je oubliais toute craincete, en sorte que je l’amenay icy dedans, maugré ses parens. Elle aussiz, me monstroit tant de signes d’amour, que j’eusse hazarde dix mille yves pour la mettre ceans à son ayse et à la myenne ; où nous avons vescu ung temps à tel repos et contentement, que je me tenois le plus heurieux gentil homme de la cheuessté. Mais, en ung voyage que je fis, où mon honneur me contraingnit d’aller, elle oublia tant son honneur, sa conscience et l’amour qu’elle avoit en moy, qu’elle fut amoureuse d’un jeune gentil homme que j’avois nouery ceans ; dont, à mon retour, je me cuyda apercevoir. Si est-ce que l’amour que je luy portois estoit si grand, que je ne me povois desier d’elle jusques à la fin que l’expérience me creva les oeilz, et veiz ce que je craignois plus que la mort. Parquoy, l’amour que je luy portois fut convertie en fureur et desespoir, en telle sorte que je la guettay de si près, que, ung jour, faignant aller dehors, me cachay en la chambre ou maintenant elle demeure, où, bientost après mon partement, elle se retira et y feit venir ce jeune gentil homme, lequel je veiz entrer avec la privauté qui n’appartenoyt que à moi avoir à elle. Mais, quant je veiz qu’il voulloit monter sur le lit auprès d’elle, je saillis dehors et le prins entre ses bras, où je le tuy. Et, pour ce que le crime de ma femme me sembla si grand que une telle mort n’estoit suffisante pour la punir, je luy ordonnay une peyne que je pense qu’elle a plus desageable que la mort : c’est de l’enfermer en la dicte chambre où elle se retiroit pour prandre ses plus grandes dolences et en la compagnie de celluy qu’elle aymoit trop mieulx que moy ;

a. je pensais à en avoir la preuve.
QUATRIÈMES JOURNÉE

auquel lieu je lui ay mis dans une armoirye tous les oz de son amy, tenduz comme chose preettieuse en ung cabinet. Et, affin qu'elle n'en oblige la memoire, en beuant et mangeant, luy faict servir a table, au lieu de coupe, la teste de ce meschant; et là, tout devant moy, affin qu'elle voie vivant celluy qu'elle a fait son mortel enemie par sa faute, et mort pour l'amour de celle celluy duquel elle a voir prefere l'amitye à la myenne. Et ainsi elle veoit à disnner et à soupper les deux choses qui plus luy doyvent desplaire : l'ennemi vivant et l'amy mort, et tout, par son peché. Au demorant, je la traict comme moy-memes synon qu'elle vat tondue, car l'arairement a 441 des cheveux n'apartient à l'adulteur, ny le voyloé à l'impudivicte. Parquoy s'en vat rasée, monstrent qu'elle a perdu l'honneur de la virginite et pudicite. S'il vous plaist de prendre la peyne de la voir, je vous y merenay.

Ce que fait volontiers Bernage : lesquelz descendirent à bas et trouvent qu'elle estoit en une tres belle chambre, assise toute seule devant ung feu. Le gentil homme tira ung rideau qui estoit devant une grande armoirye, où il veild penduz tous les oz d'un homme mort. Bernage avoit grande envie de parler à la dame, mais, de paouz du mary, il n'osa. Le gentil homme, qui s'en apparece, luy dit : « S'il vous plaist luy dire quelque chose, vous verrez quelle grace et parolle elle a. » Bernage luy dist à l'heure : « Madame, vostre patience est egale au torment. Je vous tiens la plus malheureuse 442 femme du monde. » La dame, ayant la larme à l'oeil, avec une grace tant humble qu'il n'estoit possibile de plus, luy dist : « Monsieur, je confesse ma faute estre si grande, que tous les maux, que le seigneur de ceans (lequel je ne suis digne de nommer mon mary) me scatoire faire, ne me sont riens au prix du regret que j'ay de l'avoir offensé. » En disant cela, se print fort à pleurer. Le gentil homme tira Bernage par le bras et l'emmena. Le lendemain au matin, s'en partit pour aller faire la charge que le Roy luy avoit donne. Toutefois, disant adieu au gentil homme, ne se peut tenir de luy dire : « Monsieur, l'amour que je vous porte et l'honneur et privault qu vous mavez fait en vostre maison, me contraignent à vous dire qu'il me semble, veu la grande

a. l'arrangement.

TRENTE DEUXIÈMES NOUVELLE

repentance de votre pauvre femme, que vous luy debvez user de misericorde; et aussiy, vous estes jeune, et n'avez nulz enfants; et seroit grand dommage de perdre une si belle maine que la vostre, et que ceuxz qui ne vous aymet peut-estre pointz, en fussent heritiers. » Le gentil homme, qui avoit delier de ne parler jamais à sa femme, pensa longement aux propos que luy tint le seigneur de Bernage; et enfin congneu qu'il disoit verité, et luy promit que, si elle perseveroit en ceste humilité, il en auroit quelquefois pité. Ainsi s'en alla Bernage faire sa charge. Et quant il fut retourné devant le Roi son maistre, luy feit tout au long le compte que le prince trouva tel comme il disoit; et, en autres choses, ayant parlé de la beaulté de la dame, envoya son painctre, nommé Jehan de Paris 443, pour luy rapporter ceste dame au vif. Ce qu'il fit après le consentement de son mary, lequel, après longue penitence, pour le desir qu'il avoit d'avoir enfans et pour la pitié qu'il eut de sa femme, qui en si grande humilité receuoit ceste penitence, il la reprint avec soy, et en eut depuis beaucoup de beaux enfans.

« Mes dames, si toutes celles à qui pareil cas est advenu beuveto en telz vaisseaux, j'aurois grand paour que beaucoup de coupes dorées seroient converties en testes de mortz. Dieu nous en veuelle garder, car, si sa bonté ne nous retient, il n'y a aucun d'entre nous qui ne puisse faire pis; mais, ayant confiance en luy, il gardera celles qui confessen ne se pouvoit par elles-memes garder; et celles qui se confient en leurs forces sont en grand danger d'estre tentées jusques à confesser leur infirmité. Et en est veu plusieurs qui ont tresbucue en tel cas, dont l'honneur saulvoir celles que l'ont estimoit les moins vertueuses; et dist le vieel proverbe : Ce que Dieu garde est bien garé. — Je trouve, dist Parlemente, ceste punition autant raisonnable qu'il est possible; car, tout ainsy que l'offense est pire que la mort, aussy est la pugnition pire que la mort. » Dist Ennasuite : « Je ne suis pas de vostre opinion, car j'aymeroies miels toute ma vie voier les oz de tous mes serviteurs en mon cabinet, que de mourir pour eux, veu qu'il n'y a mesfait qui ne se puisse amender; mais, après la mort, n'y a point d'amendement. — Comment scatoire vous amender la honte? dist Longarine, car vous scavez
que, quelque chose que puisse faire une femme après ung tel mesfaict, ne sçauroit reparer son honneur? — Je vous prye, dist Ennasuite, dictes-moy si la Magdelaine n’a pas plus d’honneur entre les hommes maintenant, que sa seur qui estoit vierge? — Je vous confesse, dist Longarine, qu’elle est louée entre nous de la grande amour qu’elle a portée à Jesus Christ, et de sa grand penitence; mais si luy demeure le nom de Pecheresse. — Je ne me soucie, dist Ennasuite, quel nom les hommes me donnent, mais que Dieu me pardonne et mon mary aussy. Il n’y a rien pourquoi je voulois morir. — Si ceste damaoise aymoit son mary comme elle debvoit, dist Dagoucin, je m’esbaies comme elle ne mouroit de deuil, en regardant les oz de celluy, à qui, par son peché, elle avoit donné la mort. — Cependant, Dagoucin, dist Simontault, estes-vous encore à sçavoir que les femmes n’ont amour ny regret? — Je suis encore à le sçavoir, dist Dagoucin, car je n’ay jamais osé tenter leur amour, de paour d’en trouver moins que j’en desire. — Vous vivez donc de foy et d’esperance, dist Nomerfide, comme le pluvier, du vent? Vous estes bien aise à nourrir! — Je me contente, dist-il, de l’amour que je sens en moy et de l’espoir qu’il y a au cœur des dames, mais, si je le sçavois, comme je l’espère, j’aurois si extreme contenance, que je ne le sçauoirs porter sans mourir. — Gardez-vous bien de la peste, dist Geburon, car, de ceste maladie là, je vous en assiere 544. Mais je vouldrois sçavoir à qui madame Osille donnera sa voix. — Je la donne, dist-elle, à Symontault, lequel je sçay bien qu’il n’espargera personne. — Autant vaunt, dist-il, que vous mectez à sus que je suis a ung peu meditant? Si ne lairey-je à vous montrer que ceulx que l’on disoit medisans ont dict verité. Je croy, mes dames, que vous n’estes pas si sottes que de croyer en toutes les Nouvelles que l’on vous vient compter, quelque apparence qu’elles puissent avoir de sainteté, si la preuve n’y est si grande qu’elle ne puisse estre remise en doute. Aussy, sous telles especes de miracles, y a souvent des abbus; et, pour ce, j’ay eu envie de vous racompter ung miracle, qui ne sera moins à la louange d’un prince fidele que au deshonneur d’un meschant ministre d’église. »

a. vous m’accusez d’être.

TRENTE TROISIEME NOUVELLE

L’implisyse et mechancté d’un curé, qui, sous le manteau de sainteté, avoit engroissé sa seur, fut descouverte par la sagesse du comte d’Angoulême, par le commandement duquel la justice en fit punition 545.

Le conte Charles d’Angoulême, pere du Roy François, prince fidèle et craignant Dieu, estoit à Coignac a, que l’on lui racompta que, en ung village près de là, nommé Cherves 546, y avoit une fille vierge vivant si austèrement, que ce estoit chose admirable, laquelle toutesfois estoit trouvée grosse. Ce que elle ne dissimuloit point 547, et assereoit tout le peuple que jamais elle n’avoit conçu homme et qu’elle ne sçavoit comme le cas il estoit advenu, sinon que ce fut œuvre du Saint Esprit; ce que le peuple croyoit facilement, et la tenoient et reputeoient entre eux comme pour une seconde Vierge Marie, car chascun connoistoit que dès son enfance elle estoit si saige, que jamais n’est en elle ung seul signe de mondanité. Elle jeusnoit non seulement les jeunes commandez de l’Eglise, mais plusieurs foys la sepmaine à sa devotion, et tant que l’on disoit quelque service en l’Eglise, elle n’en bougeoit; parquo sa vie estoit si estimée de tout le commun, que chacun par miracle la venoit veoir; et estoit bien heuroux, qui luy pouvoit toucher la robe. Le curé de la parroisse estoit son frere, homme d’age et de bien austere vie, aymé et estimé de ses parroissiens et tenu pour ung sainthomme, lequel tenoit de si rigoureux propos à sa dicte seur, qu’il la fit enfermener en une maison, dont tout le peuple estoit mal contant; et en fut le bruit si grand, que, comme je vous ay dic, les nouvelles en vinrent à l’oreille du Comte. Lequel, voyant l’abbus où tout le peuple estoit b, desirant les en oster, envoya ung maistre des resquestes et ung aulmosnier, deux fort gens de bien, pour en sçavoir la verité. Lesquelz allèrent sur le lieu et se informerent du casle plus dilligemment qu’ilz peurent, s’adressans au curé, qui estoit tant ennuuyé de cest affaire, qu’il les pri’a d’assister à la verification, laquelle il esperoit faire le lendemain.

a. Cognac. — b. la façon dont le peuple était trompé.
underclothes, and in a spot, too, where he had the upper hand.'

'He wasn't interested in tibits,' said Saffre. 'He was a glutton! He wanted to have his fill of her every single day, not just amuse himself with one little nibble!'

'That's not the point,' said Parlamente. 'In fact, a violent man is always a scared man. He was afraid of being discovered and that someone would take away his prey, so he had to carry off his little lamb like a wolf, in order to be able to devour her at his leisure.'

'All the same,' said Dagoucin, 'I cannot believe he [loved] her, or that in a heart as base as his the god of love [could] find a dwelling place.'

'Be it as it may,' said Oisille, 'he received his just deserts. I pray God that the outcome of all such deeds may be a similar punishment. But who do you choose to tell the next story?'

'You, Madame,' said Geburon. 'You will not fail to give us a good story.'

'As it is my turn,' she replied, 'I shall tell you a good one, and I shall tell it because it happened during my time and because it was told to me by the very man who witnessed it. I am sure you are all aware that at the end of all our woes is death, but that since death puts an end to all our woes, it can be called our joy and repose. Man's greatest woe, therefore, is to desire death and not to be able to have it. Consequently, the greatest punishment that can be meted out to an evil-doer is not death but continuous torture, torture severe enough to make him desire death, yet not so severe that it causes death. This is just what one husband did to his wife, as you shall now hear.'

STORY THIRTY-TWO

King Charles VIII sent to Germany a gentleman by the name of Bernage, Seigneur of Sivray, near Amboise. This Bernage, seeking to expedite his mission, rested neither night nor day, and late one evening he came to a castle, where he asked for a night's lodging, which with great difficulty he was able to obtain. However, when the master of the house learned that he was in the service of so great a king, he went straight to him and begged him not to be annoyed at the discourtesy of his servants. The reason was that his wife's parents bore a grudge against him, and he was obliged to keep his house closed up. So Bernage told him the purpose of his mission, and the gentleman, offering to do everything in his power for his master the King, took him into the house, where he lodged and entertained him with due honour.

It was suppertime, and the gentleman led him into a beautiful room draped with magnificent tapestries. When the food was brought onto the table, he saw emerge from behind the tapestry the most beautiful woman it was possible ever to behold, though her hair was cropped and the rest of her body clad in black in the German style. After Bernage and the gentleman had washed together, the water was taken to the lady, who washed in her turn and went to sit at the end of the table without speaking to anyone and without anyone speaking to her. The Seigneur de Bernage looked at her closely. She seemed to him to be one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen, except that her face was very pale and her expression very sad. When she had eaten a little, she asked for something to drink, and a servant of the house brought her a most remarkable drinking-cup made of a skull, the [apertures] of which were filled in with silver. From this she took two or three draughts. When she had finished the meal and washed her hands, she curtseyed to the master of the house, and went back behind the tapestry without speaking. Bernage was taken aback at such a strange spectacle,
and became quite melancholy and pensive. Seeing this, the gentleman said to him:

'I see you are surprised by what you've seen over this meal, but I perceive that you are an honourable man, and I do not want to hide the truth of the matter from you, lest you should think I am capable of such cruelty without good cause. The lady you saw is my wife, whom I have loved more than any man ever could, so much so that in order to marry her I left fear behind me and brought her here against her parents' wishes. She too showed me so many signs of affection that I would have risked ten thousand lives to bring her here and give her the happiness that was also my happiness. Indeed, for a long time we lived a quiet, contented life, and I considered myself the happiest gentleman in Christendom. But while I was away on a journey that for honour's sake I was obliged to undertake, she so forgot her conscience, her own honour and her love for me, that she became enamoured of a young gentleman whom I had brought up in this house. On my return I believed that I had detected their liaison, but I loved her so much that I could not bring myself to doubt her, until the moment when my eyes were opened and I saw for myself what I had feared more than death itself. So my love turned to fury and desperation. I kept a close watch on her, and one day, having told her I was going out, I hid in the room where she now lives. Not long after I had disappeared, she came into the room and sent word for the young man to join her there. I saw him come in with the kind of familiarity to which I alone have the right. But when I saw he was intending to climb on to the bed with her, I jumped out from my hiding-place, seized him while he was still in her arms and slew him. And since my wife's crime seemed to me to be so heinous that a similar death would hardly suffice, I imposed a punishment which I think she finds more painful than death. I decided to lock her up in the very room where she used to go to wallow in her pleasures, and keep her there in the company of the man she loved more than she had ever loved me. In a cupboard in the room I hung her lover's skeleton like some precious object in a private gallery. And so that she should never forget him even when eating and drinking, I made her sit [in front of me] at table and had her served from the man's skull instead of a cup, so that she would have before her both the living and the dead, both him whom through her sin she had transformed into a mortal enemy and [him whose love she had preferred to mine.] Thus when she takes dinner and supper she sees the two things that must distress her most, her living enemy and her dead lover, and all by her own sin. For the rest I treat her as myself, except that she has her hair shorn, for the crowning glory of woman no more becomes an adulteress than the veil becomes a harlot. So her head is shaved to show that she has lost her modesty and the honour of [chastity.] If you would care to see her, I'll take you to her.'

Bernage gladly accepted. They went downstairs and found her in a beautiful room, seated in front of a fire. The gentleman drew a curtain in front of an alcove to reveal hanging there the skeleton of a dead man. Bernage wanted very much to talk to the lady, but dared not do so because of the husband. Realizing this, the gentleman said: 'If you would like to say something to her, you'll see how graciously she speaks.'

So Bernage said to her: 'Madame, your resignation matches your suffering. I think you are the unhappiest woman in the world.'

Tears came to the lady's eyes, and she spoke with the greatest possible grace and humility: 'Monsieur, I confess that my sins are so great that all the suffering that is inflicted upon me by the lord of this house, whom I am not worthy to call my husband, is as nothing compared with the remorse I feel in having wronged him.'

As she spoke she began to weep bitterly. The gentleman took Bernage by the arm, and drew him away. The next morning he left in order to carry out the mission entrusted to him by the King. But as he bade farewell to the gentleman he could not resist adding:

'Monsieur, the affection I bear you and the honours and kindness which you have shown me in your own house oblige me to say to you that as your poor wife's remorse is so deep, it is my belief that you should show some compassion towards her. Moreover, you are young and you have no children. It would be a great shame to let so fine a house as yours slip from your
hands and permit it to be inherited by people who may be far from being your friends.'

The gentleman, who had resolved never again to speak to his wife, thought for a long time about the things Bernage had said to him. Finally he realized that Bernage was right, and promised that if his wife continued to live in such humility, he would one day have pity on her. So Bernage went off to complete his mission. On his return to court he recounted the whole story to his master the King, who found upon inquiry that it was even as it had been told him. And having heard [tell] also of the lady's great beauty, he sent his painter, Jean de Paris, to bring back her living likeness. This the painter did, with the approval of the husband, who, because of his desire to have children, and because of the compassion he felt for his wife in her humble submission to her penance, took her back, and subsequently had many fine children by her.

'嗳adies, if all the women who behaved like this one were to drink from cups like hers, I fear that many a golden goblet would be replaced by a skull! From such things may God preserve us, for if His goodness did not restrain us, there is not one of us here who is not capable of doing things worse by far. But if we place our trust in Him, He will guard those women who confess that they cannot guard themselves. And women who trust in their own strength and virtue are in great danger of being tempted to the point where they have to confess their weakness. [I can assure you that there have been many whose pride has led to] their downfall in circumstances where [humility] saved women thought to be less virtuous. As the old proverb says, "That which God guards is guarded well.'"

'I find the punishment extremely reasonable,' said Parlamente. 'For just as the crime was worse than death, so the punishment was worse than death.'

'I don't agree,' said Ennasuite. 'I would far rather be shut up in my room with the bones of all my lovers for the rest of my days than die for them, since there's no sin one can't make amends for while one is alive, but after death there is no making amends.'

'How could you make up for loss of honour?' said Longarine.

'You know that nothing a woman can do after such a crime can ever restore her honour.'

To which Ennasuite replied: 'Tell me, I beg you, whether the Magdalene does or does not have more honour amongst men than her sister, who was a virgin?'

'I admit,' said Longarine, 'that she is praised for her great love for Jesus Christ and for her great penitence, but even so she is still given the name of Sinner.'

'I don't care,' said Ennasuite, 'what names men call me, only that God pardons me and my husband. There is no reason why I should wish to die.'

'If the lady in the story had loved her husband as she should have done,' said Dagoucin, 'I am amazed she did not die of grief when she looked at the bones of the man whose death she had caused by her sin.'

'What, Dagoucin,' said Simontaut, 'do you still have to learn that women possess neither love nor regrets?'

'Indeed, I have still to learn,' said Dagoucin, 'for I have never dared try out their love, for fear of finding less than I desired.'

'So you live on faith and hope,' said Nomerdide, 'like a plow on the wind? You're easy to feed!'

'I am satisfied,' he replied, 'with the love I feel within me, and with the hope that in the hearts of ladies such love also resides. But if I knew for certain that it was even as I hoped, my joy would be too intense to bear, and I should die!'

'You should rather watch out for the plague,' said Geburem, 'because there's no need to worry about that sickness, I can assure you! But I'd like to see whom Madame Oisille will choose next.'

'I choose Simontaut,' she said, 'who will not, I know, spare anyone.'

'In other words, you accuse me of having a somewhat malicious tongue! Well, I shall nevertheless show you that those who have been called malicious have in fact spoken the truth. I don't think, Ladies, that you are foolish enough to believe all the stories people tell you, however pious they might appear, unless you have such firm proof that they are beyond all doubt. Similarly, behind what may appear as miracles there are often abuses. This is why I wanted to tell you a story about a supposed
m miracle which in the end is no less to the credit of a certain faithful prince than it is to the discredit of a certain corrupt minister of the Church.

STORY THIRTY-THREE

Count Charles of Angoulême, father of Francis I, a faithful, God-fearing prince, was in Cognac, when someone told him that in the nearby village of Cherves there was a girl who lived a life so austere that everyone marvelled at her; yet, although still a virgin, she had been found to be pregnant. She made no attempt to hide the fact, assuring everyone that she had never known a man and that she had no idea how it happened, if it was not the working of the Holy Spirit. The local people believed this without question and treated her as a second Virgin Mary, for it was known to all that she had from childhood been so wise and good that never once had she shown any sign of worldliness. Not only did she fast on the days prescribed by the Church, but in addition she fasted several times a week of her own accord, and she was never away from the church whenever there was a service. Her way of life was so much respected by local folk that they all came to visit her, thinking a miracle had been wrought on her, and anyone who came close enough to touch her dress would consider himself blessed indeed. The parish priest was her brother, an elderly man, who himself lived an austere life and was loved and respected by his parishioners, who regarded him as a very holy man. But he was so strict with his sister that he had her shut up in a house. This greatly displeased the villagers, who complained so loudly that the affair eventually reached the ears of the Count himself. When he saw how people were being deceived, his immediate desire was to disabuse them, so he sent a referendary and a chaplain, both honest men, to find out the truth of the matter. They went to the village, made the most careful inquiries they could and approached the priest himself. The man was so upset by the whole affair that he begged them to be present the next day at a special ceremony which he hoped would prove the matter once and for all.

Early the next morning, then, the priest sang mass. His sister was there, kneeling the whole time, and looking very pregnant.
This letter Sealed, and Subscribed, To the hands of the most faire Felice: Macrello was sent for, to whom Marino delivered, both the Jewell, and the letter, with out instructions to do his message: for Protheus could not change himself into noe shapes then Macrello: as well, to avoide suspition, as to compass his purpose: who behaved himselfe so cunningly, in Marinos errande, as (to be shorte, vertuous Dames) after many persuasions, Felice returned him with this Answer.

**FELICE'S Answer, to Marino Georgio.**

I am not cruell, although with difficulties, I consent too love: and for that your passions are so extremes, I keep yourPicture in my Bosome: But, with what thought, I blush to write, though Pity be my warrant: so that I leave the event of our Love, to your Consideration: and my yealding, to Macrelloes Reportes: who, in bewraying your passions, lette fall more tears, then I could drie up with a thousand sighes: So that overcome with rueth, to see your Affection so great, and your passion so daungerous, I can not but commyt my love, my honour, my selfe and all, to the Affection and wise government of Marino Georgio.

**FELICE.**

This Letter, was subscribed: **Lyfe, to MARINO GEORGIO:** and delivered to the faithfull Macrello: with charge, that he should make known, his great Importunities, before Felice woulde grant so hye a favour: which Protheus, might have ben spared: for Macrello, (partly for his glorie, but chiefly, for his owne benefite) upon deliverye of this Letter, wilde Marino, to receive it, as a Conquest as hardly gotten, as Hercules labours: and if (quoth he) I had not induerd your tormentes (by Imagination) it had not ben impossible to have mooved Felice to rueth: Marino, heard these circumstances, with no better remembrance, then if he had ben in an Extasis: The Subscriptton: **Lyfe to Marino:** overcame him with suche a sodayne passion of joye, who read, and a hundred times over read this Life letter: and for that it came from Felices sweete hand, he a thousand times kissed the Paper.

Which done, by the direction of Macrello, this Conquerour **Goude,** made suche a passage, into a reputed honest Cytyzens House, as, without suspition, Marino Georgio, and fayre Felice, theare (many times) mette, but to what purpose, I leave to your constructions: and yet, thus much I say: this Fortune followed: Marino, in shorte space, recovered his former Complication: and it was not long, before Felice was richer, then either Father or Husband.

But, O that Furie Jelousy, envyng this Accord, sent elle **Suspition,** to infect Malipieroes heart: who pryngle with Lynx his eyes, presented him a thousande causes of mistrust, which love straites supprest with as mania/ contrarie imagination of his Wives good behavioir: inso much, that with the sharp incounter of Love, and mistrust, poore man, he was continually afflicted. In conclusion, seeing his Wife to exceede in braverie, and knowing himselfe, to decline with A shredde suspition.
povertie, he resolved uppon this certenies: this
10 passage.

cost could not come from the empte Coffers of
Mallipiero, in his revenge like a Lyon
her undone Parents: and then proceeding from
hungerring after his pray: with his Rapier and
others, it was impossible to bee the favours of
these bitter wordses nayled Marino unto the Bed.
15 honest curtesie: so that armed with Furie, he
these better wordses nayled Marco unto the Bed.
10 Thou Couche (quoth he) sowyed with dishonour,
deferrer revenge, but to intrap the friends of his
was out thy staynes, with the adulterers
wives follyes, and the ennemie both of her honour,
15 blood.
and his delight.
15 But holding death too easy a scorge for his wives

In fine, as headesfull, as these Lovers were
trespas, hee condemned her to this torture, more
in their dealinges, Jelosy directed suspectes, to
extreme then death: Hee made an Anctomy of her
Marino Georgio: and moreover, made him an eye
welbeloved Marino, and set him in a faire Chamber,
witness of the injuries done unto Malipiere:
within which, he enclosed his wyfe, without
distributing a while

doing her any bodely injurie, save the cutting
of a torture, equal to this treacherie: for who
of her haires: and to say trueth, this beautifull
hath not hard the Neapolitan to bee the severest
ornament of haires, beseecheth not an Adultress
treaver of dishonor in the world. To be breve,
head. And to punish her the more, Malipiero
his bait was this: he fayned a journey far from
caused her everie dinner and supper to take her
home, and furnished him selfe, with such an
acustomed place, that at meales shee might be
apparance of trueth, as tooke a way all colour of
tormented with the sights of her lyvinge enemies,
suspicion: whiche done, with a dissembling kyss, and
15 all the days with the bones, of her martried
hee committed his wyfe to God, and the charge of
friends: neither could she quench her thirst,
his house, to her good government: and so set
but out of a Mazer, made of Marriners skul. But
forward towards Rome.

malipiero was no sooner a mile on his way,
neither could she quench her thirst,
then Macroello certified Marino of this wished
but of a mazer, made of Marriners skul. But
opportunitie: and Love made both him and Felice
herself patience
so boulede, as in his owne house they determyned
was suche, as shee was never hardes to complain.
the followings night, to exercise uppon Malipiero
this cruelie: and yet her penitent sorrow
their wounded injurie: but about myndight when
so great, as the plentie of her teares, somtimes
mi.trust was at repose, Malipiero entred
moved her injured Husbandes to pittie.
the house with such a sodaine violence, as these two

But least he should be overcome with
unfortunate freendes, were surpysed smds their
compassion, manie tymes from dinner, hee commanded
embracements, before they had warining to shift:
hers to her prison: who after an humble reverence,
I sorrow to tel the rest, but trueth wil have
went behind the Tapestrie hanglings, and so unto
A fit time,
1 5 The bounden
30 justice, must
not yeeld to
the teares of
not yeeld to
the teares of
her solitarie Chamber, barred from other company,
the teares of
then the gastly bones of unfortunate Marino:
Trespassers.
whiche penance shee patientlye incurred, untill
God, who saw that her repentance was unfayned, sent Seignior Cornaro to bee a peace maker betweene her Husbandes injurie, and her offence: who (when Supper was sette upon the Boorde) seeing from behindes the Tapistrie Hanginges, a fayre Gentlewoman to appeare, somewhat pale with sorrowe, her head bare, both of attyre and Hayre, apprarelled all in black, and in her hand, her drinking Bawle of Marinos soul, and saying never a word, with a sober reverence sitting down in the/cheapest place: was stroke with such a maze, as on the sundrayne he wist not what to say.

Dinner being ended, which was longer, then pleasant, either to husbands, wife, or friends:

Felice, as she entered so departed. Who, notwithstanding, left part of her sorowe behinde in Cornaro's heart, whose cheareles countenance, when Malipiero perceyved (quothe) let not the martyrdoe of this Woman afflyce you: for her fault deserueth this vengeaunce, and so recounted the reported adventure. And in advantage, showed his prison and the Anatomie of her dishonour, and withall licensed him to talke with Felice, to heare what plea shee had for her discharge.

Upon which warrant, (quothe Cornaro,) Madame, if your patience be equall with your torment, I holde you the most happie Woman of the worlde. Felice with a countenance abashed, and Cheakes dewd with teares tolde him in humble wordes, that her trepsetse was tenne times greater, then the torment whiche the Lorde of the House, whose shee was not worthy to call husbands, had appoynted her. And therewithall, the sorrow of her hart, took away h u r of her tongue. Whereupon Malipiero,

ledde the Gentleman awaye, who rendred him affected thnaknes, in that, besides his good intertainment, he wisied him the honoure to know so great a sacrifice: withall, moved with compassion, hee effectually intreated Malipiero, to accept Felices sorrow the true witnesses of grace and amendement, as satisfaction of her offence, which proceeded of fraylytie, and withall importuned him, with such earnest reasons as Malipiero was content to sende both for her and his owne friends. To bee partly ruled, and partly advised by them in her behalfe.

The parentes and friends of everie side seeing the humilitie, sorrowe, and patience, of poore Felice, were all earnest suitors for her remission.

The roote of auncient love not altogether dead in Malipiero, was comforted with their intercessions, and quicke-nesse with the hope of amendement: in so much, as upon solasame promise to be henceforth of good behaviour, he received her to grace: and to repayre her crased honour, with the favour of both their parentes, his newe married fayre Felice, in which holy estate, they lived, loved, and agreed manie happy yeares afterwaide together: And with the Bones of Marino Georgio buried the remembrance of former injuries.

Maister Doctor, (quothe Fabritio,) you have reported a vero necessarie Historie: for it containeth many headeful notes, both of monition, and advise. Besides the due punishment of rashnesses in Marriage. For therein wee may see howe hungersterwed want, compelleth the best natured man to deceive his friends, and yelde unto
his owne slander. Againe, how that monster, Golde, conquere's the honour of the sayest. Yea, (quoth Isabella,) and corrupteth the conscience of the wisest, so that this is no example of any honour to you men, because Golde intisid Felice, to be disloyall to her Husbende, for it draweth manie of you, both from the fears and love of God.

Well, (quoth Soranno,) let it passe, Felice in her repentance, hath made a large amends of her trespass, and I fears me, if every lyke offence were so sharpely punished, we should have nayes of mens Sculles, more ordarynse then Silver Boules, and powed Womyn sorre commoyn than haule men.

Not so, (quoth Queene Aurelia,) for a fewe of these examples woulde bridle the incontinent affections both of man and woman, if not for the love of vertue, for the feare of correction.

Feares of correction, bridelesth the affections of the evill.
Antoine Douville, *Les nouvelles amoureuses et exemplaires composees en espagnol par cette merveille de son sexe, Dona Maria de Zayas y Sottomaior, Et traduites en nostre langue par Antoine de Methel Escuier Sieur Douville, Ingenieur & Geographe du Roy* (Guillaume de Luynes : Paris, 1656), i-xi.

A MADMOISELLE DE MANCINI

MADEMOISELLE

Vous vous estonnerrez sans doute de voir qu’un homme qui vous doit estre inconnu, & qui ne vous connoist aussi, que par vostre reputation, qui s’estend par tout, vous ait choisi sur toutes les personnes Illustres de vostre sexe, pour vous dédier le dernier, & le plus agreable de tous ses ouvrages. J’ose vous dire, MADMOISELLE, que vostre estonnement ne seroit pas juste, quand vous ne me verriez porté à ce dessein, que par le seul bruit de vostre vertu, & par l’éclat de vos autres perfections, parce que vous devez scavor qu’elles remplissent toutes nos Provinces, qu’elles donnent de l’admiration à tous les esprits, & meritent certainement d’occuper les meilleures plumes. Je puis vous dire encore, qu’ayant demeuré quatorze ans à Rome, où avec les merveilles de vostre beauté naissante, j’ay connu la splendeur de vostre haute origine, & protection, que les gens de Lettres ont de tout temps receu de vostre illustre maison, vous ne devez pas estre fort surprise de voir que je vous demande la vostre, pour l’ouvrage d’une Dame belle & spirituelle comme vous, & pour la traduction que j’en ay faite. Mais, MADMOISELLE, quoy que ces considerations soient assez fortes pour faire, que vous ne condamnerez pas absolument cette liberté, j’en ay une plus particuliere & plus puissante, qui fous forcera sans doute, non seulement à me le pardonner, mais encore à me scavor quelque gré de mon entreprise, outre l’estime generale qui m’a donné le courage & la hardiesse de m’adresser à vous. Je scay, MADMOISELLE, l’estime particuliere que Monsieur l’Abbé de Chatillon mon frere, fait de vos excellents qualitez, je scay de plus que vous avez esté assez genereuses, Madame vostre mere, & vous pour le proteger dans sa derniere disgrace. Enfin, je scay qu’outre cette protection genereuse, à laquelle il doit le restablissement de son honneur, il a receu de vous dans son esloignement des
consolations qui luy ont esté plus douces, & plus glorieuses que toutes les visites des Grands, & que toutes les marques d’estime & de tendresse, dont les plus honnestes gens de la Cour, ont bien voulu l’honorer. Jugez donc, MADEMOISELLE, si je ne dois pas estre touché de tant de bonté que toute vostre maison, pratique à l’endroit d’un frère, qui m’est si cher, & qui m’estant estudié depuis quarante ans à la connoissance des Langues estrangeres, & particulierement à l’Espagnolle, qui m’est aussi naturelle que la Françoise, je n’ay pas deu chercher dans leurs plus celebres Autheurs quelque chose à vous consacrer, qui vous pust marquer avec luy ma reconnaissance. J’ay leu certes avec admiration les nouvelles de Maria de Zayas, & ravy de voir tant d’invention, & tant de brillans dans l’esprit d’une femme, qu’on peut comparear aux plus grands hommes: j’en ay choisi six pour les donner au public, sous l’autorité de vostre nom. Si elles ont quelque estime, MADEMOISELLE, nous vous devrons toute leur gloire, & toute leur bonne fortune, & vous me donnerez le courage & la force de traduire bien-tost les autres qui ne doivent rien à celles de Cervantes, & qui seront sans doute aussi favorablement receuës si le Traducteur est assez heureuse pour vous plaire, & pour estre creu dans le monde.

MADEMOISELLE,
Vostre tres-humble & tres obeissant serviteur, DOUVILLE

ADVIS AU LECTEUR

ENTRE plusieurs Nouvelles composées en Espagnol, par une Dame qui se peut égaler, non seulement pour l’invention, mais pour l’élocution encore aux plus celebres Escrivains du siecle ; je vous en ai choisy six qui m’on parû les plus agreable, & les plus dignes d’estre traduittes en nostre langue. Ne vous étonnez pas Lecteur, si je débute par une que vous aurez desja veuë, de la traduction de Monsieur Scaron, & que je vous donne encore le mesme titre qu’il luy a donné de la Precaution inutile, qui m’a parû plus naturel que si je l’eusse nommée aprés l’Espagnol Precautionado engagnado, Le Precautioné attrappé. Outre que Monsieur Scaron, qui certainement merite la reputation qu’il s’est acquise, affecte un stile comicque qui luy est tout particulier & auquel il a toujours
réussi, & que de mon costé, j’ay affecté de m’attacher au sens tout put, comme au stile tout serieux de la Dame que j’imite, ce qui par consequent rend la chose assez differente. Je vous ay encore fait connoistre cette Dame par son nom, ce que Monsieur Scaron n’a pas voulu faire : Je ne scay si c’est qu’il l’ait ignoré, ayant comme il l’a confessé luy mesme, receu ce present d’un amy, qui peut-estre l’ignorait encore. Ou si ce qui me paroist plus vray semblable ne vous ayant donné qu’une seule Nouvelle de cette excellent Femme, il vous ait voulu cacher son sexe, de crainte que vous ne jugeassiez moins favorablement de son travail. Pour moy qui connoist son merite & sa suffisance, qui scay que son stile ne doit rien à celuy des Autheurs les plus achevez de sa Nation, & qui scay d’ailleurs que le Ciel n’a pas esté plus avaré de ses faveurs & de ses lumieres à ce beau sexe qu’au nostre ; Je dy hardiment que c’est une Femme que je prends icy plaisir & de suivre, & d’imiter, & j’ose dire encore avec plus de hardiesse, que si je la scavois bien imiter, vous jugeriez par ce seul ouvrage qu’il n’y a gueres d’hommes qui la surpassent. Vous vous estonneriez sans doute, Lecteur, de ce que je luy donne si liberalement une de ces six nouvelles, que quelques autres attribuent à ce fameux Autheur Espagnol qui entre plusieurs autres beaux ouvrages a composé la Foiüine de Seville, laquelle j’espère vous donner traduitte dans peu de jours : Mais outre que la chose est incertaine, comme luy & nostre Maria de Gayas [sic] ont parû de merite égal, amis, & contemporains, Je suis bien asseré que je n’en scavoirs recevoir aucun reproche du costé d’Espagne. Si ce petit travail vous plaist, je pourray dans quelques temps vous donner un second volume des Nouvelles de la mesme Dame, & un autre en suite de ce fameux Autheur de la Foiüine, duquel je vous au déja parlé.

Paul Scarron, Les nouvelles tragi-comiques de Mr Scarron I : La Precaution Inutile ; II : Les Hypocrates (Antoine de Sommaville : Paris, 1656), iii-ix.

A QUI LIRA

J’estoit prest d’envoyer mon Livre à Monsieur Moreau, quand on m’est venu affliger des nouvelles de sa mort. J’au voulu conserver à la memoire d’un Amy qui me fut si cher, ce
que je luy avois destiné pendant sa vie. Je n'au point connu d'homme de son age, qui est plus de merite que luy, & je croy qu'il n'y a pas un de ses amis qui le regrette plus que moy. Il faut que j'adjouste icy ce que je crois estre obligé de répondre à l'Avant-propos qu'un Libraire, Imprimeur, ou quelque autre homme de cette force-là, s'est avisé de mettre au devant de la nouvelle pareille à ma Precaucionado Inutil, que l'on a depuis peu imprimée sous le nom de Monsieur Douville. Cet Avant-Propos est un grand menteur en beaucoup d'endroits de ce qui me touche ; est peu sincere en François & fort ignorant en Espagnol, puis qu'en ces deux mots de Precaucionado Engánado, il fait deux fautes, l'une d'avoir oublié l'article, l'autre d'avoir écrit Engánado avec un G, ce qui ne se fait jamais en Espagnol, mais toujours avec une N con tilde. Dans le temps je faisois imprimer la Precaucion Inutil, Monsieur de Boisrobert me fit l'ho[n]eur de me venir vois, & dans la conversation que eusmes ensemble, il me dit qu'il alloit faire imprimer les Nouvelles de Marie de Zayas, mises en François par son frere : je l'avertis qu'un de mes amis (c'estoit de moy que je parlois) avoit fait une Version du Prevenido Engánado, qui est le vray titre Espagnol, & non pas Precaucionado, comme l'a mis temerairement & faussement le gaillard Avant-propos à qui je parle. Je l'avertis aussi que cette Nouvelle s'imprimoit sous le nom de la Precaucion Inutil, & qu'elle feroit tort à celle de son frere, par ce qu'elle auroit l'avantage de la nouveauté, & que l'on l'avoit comme refait, parce qu'elle est deplorablement écrite en Espagnol, n'en déplaise à l'Avant-Propos, qui dit le contraire. L'heureux succès qu'a eu ma nouvelle à fait voir que je luy avois dit vray, & ce que je dis icy, fait voir que l'Avant-propos a déguisé la vérité, en tout ce qui me touche. Il a donné sujet de se plaindre de luy à plusieurs personnes à la fois ; a moy, de m'avoir imputé des choses fausses, & d'avoir pris mon titre ; à Marie de Zayas, d'avoir falsifié le sien ; à Monsieur de Bois-Robert d'avoir mis un titre à la Nouvelle de son frere, que mon Libraire luy a fait changer par Sentence du Bailly du Palais, & il fait tort aussi à toutes les personnes du sexe de Marie de Zayas, qui sçavent bien écrire, d'avoir mis cent picques su dessus d'elles, cette Espagnolle, qui écrit tout d'un style extravagant, & rien de bon sens. Je crois aussi que Monsieur l'Avant-propos m'a donné un autre sujet de plainte : mais ce peut avoir esté sans y penser, & je la luy pardonne de bon cœur, c'est d'avoir fait imprimer la Comedie des Coups de l'Amour & de la Fortune, sous le nom de Monsieur Quinaut. L'heureux succès de cette piece de Theatre est deu à Mademoiselle de Beau
Chasteau, qui en a dressé le sujet; à feu Monsieur Tristan, qui en a fait les quatre premiers Actes, & à moy qui en ay fait le dernier, à la priere des Comediens qui me le firent faire, parce que Monsieur Tristan se mouroit. Si Monsieur Quinaut avoit fait les quatre premiers Actes, qui l’empeschoit de faire le dernier que j’ay fait en deuix apres-soupé, de la façon qu’il se jouë sue le Theatre de l’Hostel de Bourgogne ? Je garde encore le brouillon de Mademoiselle de Beau-Chasteau & le mien.


Al que leyere

Quien duda, lector mio, que te causara admiracion que una mujer tenga despejo, no solo pare escribir un libro, sino pare darle a la estampa, que es el crisol donde se averigua la pureza de los ingenios; porque hasta que los escritos se rozan en las letras de plomo, no tienen valor cierto, por ser tan fáciles de engañar los sentidos, que a la fragilidad de la vista suele pasar por oro macizo, lo que a la luz del fuego es solamente un pedazo de bronce afeitado. Quien duda, digo otra vez, que habrá muchos que atribuyan a locura esta virtuosa osadía de sacar a luz mis borrones, siendo mujer, que en opinión de algunos necios, es lo mismo que una cosa incapaz. Pero cualquiera, como sea no más de buen Cortesano, ni lo tendrá por novedad, ni lo murmurará por desatino. Porque si esta materia de que nos componemos los hombres y las mujeres, ya sea una trabajón de fuego y barro, o ya una masa de espíritus y terrones, no tiene mas nobleza en ellos que en nosotras; si es una misma la sangre; los sentidos, las potencias y los órganos por donde se obran sus efectos, son unos mismos; la misma alma que ellos, porque las almas ni son hombres ni mujeres: ¿que razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y presuman que nosotras no podemos serlo?

Esto no tiene, a mi parecer, más respuesta que su impiedad o tiranía en encerrarnos y no darnos maestros. Y así, la verdadera causa de no ser las mujeres doctas no es defecto del caudal, sino falta de la aplicación. Porque si en nuestra crianza, como nos ponen el cambay en las almohadillas y los dibujos en el bastidor, nos dieran libros y
preceptores, fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y para las cátedras como los hombres, y quizás más agudas, por ser de natural mas frío, por consistir en humedad el entendimiento, como se ve en las respuestas de repente y en los engaños de pensado, que todo lo que se hace con maña, aunque no sea virtud, es ingenio. Y cuando no valga esta razón para nuestro crédito, valga la experiencia de las historias, y veremos lo que hicieron las mujeres que trataron de buenas letras.

De Argetaria, esposa del poeta Lucano, refiere él mismo que le ayudó en la corrección de los tres libros de *La Farsalia*, y le hizo muchos versos que pasaron por suyos. Temistoclea, hermana de Pitágoras, escribió un libro doctísimo de varias sentencias. Diotima fue venerada de Sócrates por eminente. Aspacio hizo muchas lecciones de opinión en las academias. Eudoxa dejó escrito un libro de consejos políticos; Cenobia, un epitome de la *Historia Oriental*. Y Cornelia mujer de Africano, unas epístolas familiares con suma elegancia, y otras infinitas de la antigüedad y de nuestros tiempos que paso en silencio, porque ya tendrás noticias de todo, aunque seas lego y no hayas estudiado. Y que después que hay *Poliantenas* en latín, y *Sumas morales* en romance, los seglares y las mujeres pueden ser letrados. Pues si esto es verdad, ¿qué razón hay para que no tengamos prontitud para los libros? Y más si todas tienen mi inclinación, que en viendo cualquiera nuevo, o antiguo, dejo la almohadilla y no sosiego hasta que le paso. De esta inclinación nació la noticia, de la noticia el buen gusto, y de todo hacer versos, hasta escribir estas *Novelas*, o por ser asunto más fácil, o más apetitoso, que muchos libros sin erudición suelen parecer bien en fe del sujeto; y otros llenos de sutilezas se venden pero no se compran porque la materia no es importante o es desabrida. No es menester prevenirte de la piedad que debes tener, porque si es bueno, no harás nada en alabarle; y si es malo, por la parte de la cortesía que se debe a cualquiera mujer, le tendrás respeto. Con mujeres no hay competencias; quien no las estima es necio, porque las ha menester: y quien las ultraja, ingrato, pues falta al reconocimiento del hospedaje que le hicieron en la primera jornada. Y así pues, no has de querer ser descortés, necio, villano ni desagrado decidio. Te ofrezco este libro, muy segura de tu bizarría, y en confianza, de que si te desagradares, podrás disculparme con que naci mujer, no con obligaciones de hacer buenas *Novelas*, sino con muchos deseos de acertar a servirte. Vale.

Translations
Antoine Douville, *The amorous and exemplary novellas composed in Spanish by this Wonder of her sex, Dona Maria de Zayas y Sottomaior, and translated into our language by Antoine de Methel Escuier Sieur Douville, Engineer & Geographer of the King* (Paris, 1656) (my translation).

To MADMOISELLE DE MANCINI

MADMOISELLE,
You will no doubt be surprised to see a man who you must not know, and who only knows you by your reputation, which is known by all, has chosen you out of all the Illustrious people of your sex to dedicate the last, and most agreeable of all his works to. I dare say, MADMOISELLE, that your surprise would not be justified, when you see that I have only been brought to this purpose by the fame of your virtue, and by the brightness of your other perfections because, you must know, they fill all our Provinces, they are admired by all minds, and they certainly deserve to occupy the best pens. I can tell you again, having spent fourteen years in Rome, where with the wonders of your nascent beauty I experienced the splendor of your high origin, and the protection that men of letters have always received of your illustrious house, you should not be very surprised to see that I ask for yours for the work of a great and spiritual Lady like you, and for the translation I made of her works. But MADMOISELLE, although these considerations are strong enough for you to not absolutely condemn this liberty, I have a particular & more powerful one which will no doubt convince you, not only to forgive me, but also to know that I take pleasure in this affair, in addition to the general esteem that gave me the courage and the boldness to speak to you. I know, MADMOISELLE, the particular esteem Monsieur l'Abbé de Chatillon, my brother, has for your excellent qualities, I also know that you have been quite generous, Madame your mother, and you in protecting him in his last disgrace. Finally, I know that in addition to this generous protection to which he owes the reestablishment of his honor, he received consolations from you in his exile, which were sweeter and more glorious than all the visits from Great men and all the gestures of esteem & tenderness from the most Honest courtiers who wanted to honor him. Judge, then, MADMOISELLE if I should not be touched by so much goodness that all of your house has for a brother who is so dear to me, & as I have dedicated forty years to the knowledge of foreign Languages, and particularly Spanish, which is as natural to me as French, I do not have to look in their most famous AUTHORS for something to dedicate to you, which would show you my gratitude. I certainly read with admiration the novellas by Maria de Zayas, &
was thrilled to see so much invention, and so much brilliance in the mind of a woman, which we can compare to the greatest men: I have chosen six to give to the public under the authority of your name. If they have some esteem, MADEMOISELLE, we will owe all their glory to you, and all their good fortune, & you will give me the courage and the strength to soon bring others which owe nothing to those of Cervantes, and which will no doubt be as favorably received if the translator is quite happy to please you, and to be believed in the world.

MADEMOISELLE
Your very humble and very obedient servant, DOUVILLE

NOTE TO READER

AMONG several Novellas composed in Spanish by a lady who is equal, not only in her invention, but also in her language, to the most famous Writers of the century; I have chosen six that seemed to me the most pleasant, and most worthy to be translated into our language. Do not be surprised Reader, if I begin with one that you will have already seen, from the translation by Mr Scaron, and that I give you the same title he gave of Useless Precaution, which seemed more to me natural that if I would have named it after the Spanish Precautionado engagnado, The Warned Fooled. In addition, Mr. Scaron, who certainly deserves the reputation he has acquired, uses a comic style that is very particular to him & with which he has always had, and on my side, I tried to latch on to the purest meaning, as in the serious style of the Lady I imitate, which as a consequence makes it very different. Plus I have acquainted you with this lady by name, something that Mr. Scaron did not want to do: I know not if he was unaware, being that he confessed himself, that he had received this present from a friend, who may have been unaware. Or what seems more likely to me being that he only gave you one sole Novella by this excellent Woman, he wanted to hide her sex from you, lest you judge his work less favorably. For my part, I know her merit and her sufficiency, I know her stile owes nothing to the most accomplished AUTHORS of her Nation, and I know incidentally that Heaven has not been more sparing of her favors & her lights to the fair sex than to ours; I say boldly that it is a Woman that I take pleasure here both to follow, and to imitate, and I dare say even more boldly, that if I knew how to imitate well, you would judge that there is hardly a man who would surpass her. You will no doubt be surprised Reader, that I so freely attribute one of the six novellas to her, which several others attribute to that famous Spanish Author who, among a number of other beautiful works composed the Weasel of Seville [La Garduña de Sevilla] which I hope to give you in translation soon: But
other than it being uncertain, since he and our Maria de Gayas [sic] have the same merit, friends & contemporaries, I am very certain that I will not receive any reproach from the Spanish side. If this small work pleases you, I could in time give you a second volume of the Novellas by the same lady, and then another one by the Author of The Weasel, of which I have already spoken.

Paul Scarron, Les nouvelles tragi-comiques de Mr Scarron I : La Precaution Inutile ; II : Les Hypocrites (Antoine de Sommaville : Paris, 1656), iii-ix (my translation)

I was ready to send my book to Mr Moreau, when the distressing news of his death came to me. I wanted to keep, in memory of my Friend who was so dear to me, what I had done for him during his life. I do not known a man at his age who has more merit than him, and I believe that none of his friends miss him more than I. I must add here that I believe I am obligated to respond to the Foreword that a Bookseller, Printer, or some other man of that ilk, decided to put at the front of the nouvelle that was the same as mine, Useless Precaution, which was recently printed under the name of Mr. Douville. This Foreword is a big liar in many places that affect me; it is not sincere in Francis & very ignorant in Spanish, because in these two words Precaucionado Engánado he made two mistakes, one in forgetting the article, the other for writing Engánado with a G, this is never done in Spanish, but always with a N with a tilde. At the time that I was having the Useless Precaution printed, Monsieur de Boisrobert did me the honor of coming to see me, and in the conversation that we had together, he told me he was going to print the Novellas by Marie de Zayas, put into French by his brother. I warned him that a friend of mine (I was talking about myself) had made a version of the Prevenido Engánado, which is the true Spanish title, and not Precaucionado, as the fellow I am talking about had recklessly and falsely put. I also warned him that this Novella was being printed under the name of Useless Precaution, and it would prove his brother’s to be wrong, because it would have the advantage of novelty, and that it has been redone because it is woefully written in Spanish, no offense to the Foreword, which says otherwise. The happy success that my Novella has had shows that I had told him the truth, and what I say here, shows that the Foreword disguised the truth in all that concerns me. It gave several people reason to complain about it at the same time; me, for having falsely accused me, and for taking my title; Marie de Zayas, for falsifying hers; Monsieur de Bois-Robert for putting a title on his brother’s Novella, which my Bookseller made him change by order of the Bailiff of the Palace, and it also wrongs all those of the sex of Marie de Zayas, who know how to write well, for having put a hundred grades above them this Spaniard, who writes everything in an
extravagant style, and nothing that makes sense. I also believe that Mr Foreword gave me another reason to complain; but it could have been without intending to, and I forgive him with all my heart, is for printing the Comedy The Stirkes of Love & Fortune, under the name of Mr. Quinault. The happy success of this piece de Theatre is due to Miss Beau Chasteau, who came up the subject; to the deceased Mr. Tristan, who made the first four Acts, and to myself who made the last one, at the behest of the Actors who made me do it, because Mr. Tristan was dying. If Mr. Quinault had made the first four Acts, what prevented him from making the last one that I did in two after-suppers, the way it is played at the Theatre de l'Hostel de Bourgogne? I still have Mademoiselle de Beau-Chasteau's draft & mine.


To the reader

Oh my reader, no doubt it will amaze you that a woman has the nerve, not only to write a book but actually to publish it, for publication is the crucible in which the purity of genius is tested; until writing is set in letters of lead, it has no real value. Our senses are so easily deceived that fragile sight often sees as pure gold what, by the light of the fire, is simply a piece of polished brass. Who can doubt, I repeat, that there will be many who will attribute to folly my audacity in publishing my scribbles because I'm a woman, and women, in the opinion of some fools, are unfit beings. If only out of common courtesy, however, people shouldn't take my book as an oddity or condemn it as foolish.

Furthermore, whether this matter that we men and women are made of is a bonding of clay and fire, or a dough of earth and spirit, whatever, it has no more nobility in men than in women, for our blood is the same; our senses, our powers, and the organs that perform their functions are all the same; our souls the same, for souls are neither male nor female. How, then, can men presume to be wise and presume that women are not? In my opinion, the only answer to this question is men's cruelty and tyranny in keeping us cloistered and not giving us teachers. The real reason why women are not learned is not a defect in intelligence but a lack of opportunity. When our parents bring us up if, instead of putting cambric on our sewing cushions and patterns in our embroidery frames, they gave us books and teachers, we would be as fit as men for any job or university professorship. We might even be sharper because we're of a colder humor, and intelligence partakes of the damp humor. This you can see in our spontaneous responses and in
our clever thinking, for everything we do with skill, whether or not with erudition, shows talent.

If this explanation doesn't restore our credibility, let history demonstrate it. Let's examine what's been done by women who, by some chance, became writers. While their work doesn't excuse my ignorance, let it serve as a model for my daring. The poet Lucan relates of his wife, Argentaria, that she helped him in the revision of the three books of the *Pharsalia* and wrote many poems that passed as his own. Pythagorus' sister, Themistoclea, wrote a very learned book of aphorisms. Socrates venerated Diotima for her eminence. Aspasia gave theoretical lessons in the academies. Eudoxa left a book of political theory; Zenobia, a compendium of oriental history; Cornelia, Africanus' wife, family epistles of exceptional elegance. There are infinite numbers of women from antiquity and from our own times whom I pass over in silence so as not to go on forever, and because you'll know about them even if you're an uneducated layman. After that, there were the *Polyantheas* in Latin and *Summas morales* in the vernacular so that women and lay people could become literate. Since these things are true, how can it be said that women aren't apt for book learning, particularly when women have my inclination? The moment I see a book, new or old, I drop my sewing and can't rest until I've read it. From this inclination came information, and from the information good taste, and from this the writing of poetry, and then the writing of these novellas, perhaps because they seemed easier or more interesting to write.

Books that aren't erudite can be good if they have a good subject, while many works filled with subtlety are offered for sale but never bought because the subject is unimportant or not pleasing. I don't need to caution you about the piety you should have because, if my book is good, you do nothing in praising it, and, if it's bad, you must respect it out of the courtesy you owe to any woman. Who can compete with women? The person who doesn't respect them is foolish because he needs them; the person who insults them is thankless, for he fails to appreciate his first home. Surely you don't wish to be rude, foolish, ignoble, or unappreciative. I offer this book to you, trusting your generosity and knowing that if it displeases you, you will excuse me because I was born a woman, with no obligation to write good novellas but a great desire to serve you well. Farewell.
IV. NOUVELLE.
Les aventures de Flaminien de Florent...
XXXI. NOUVELLE.

Horrible cruauté d'un Corélateur pour parvenir à la
Crainvilier fin. Position de cet enfant.
XXXII NOUVELLE
LXXI. NOUVELLE.

Une femme à l'extrémité se mit en si grosse colère, voyant son mari qui baisait sa servante, qu'elle reçouvrât la santé.