

LES FEMMES MILITAIRES

A STUDY OF LES FEMMES MILITAIRES BY

LOUIS RUSTAING DE SAINT-JORY

by

DONALD McCALLUM, B.A., (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)

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AUTHOR: Donald McCallum, B.A. (University of Toronto)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. P.M. Conlon

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis is a general study of Louis Rustaing de Saint-Jory's Les Femmes militaires (1735). It compares some aspects of Saint-Jory's work to a few earlier imaginary voyages and discusses contemporary literary tastes, in particular Orientalism and medievalism. It seeks possible sources for the author's ideas on the equality of the sexes and traces the development of feminism in France from the latter half of the seventeenth century to the time of publication of Saint-Jory's novel.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1735 S. Simon and P. de Bats published in Paris a novel by Louis Rustaing de Saint-Jory, Les Femmes militaires, relation historique d'une île nouvellement découverte. The work went through four editions between 1735 and 1750 and was therefore the object of lively interest. For all that, the author and his novel are little known and references to him and to Les Femmes militaires are uncommon, even in writings of the time. The place and date of his birth are unknown. He died in 1752. He used the title chevalier, which suggests he was the younger son of a noble house. We know that he was a member of the Académie of Caen, and a volunteer dragoon at the siege of Landau.¹ Apart from Les Femmes militaires (1735), his works include the following: Les Galanteries anglaises (1710), Aventures secrètes arrivées au siège de Constantinople (1711), Mémoires secrets de la cour de France (1733), Oeuvres mêlées (1735), and Vie du maréchal Fabert (1752), the last being published posthumously. He collaborated with Marivaux in writing the three-act play L'Amour et la vérité, which was performed unsuccessfully in 1720. According to Marcel Arland,² he was for an unspecified period a contributor to the Mercure de France.

Some French journals mention Les Femmes militaires at the time of its publication without, however, devoting more than a few lines to it. The Journal littéraire deals with it in these few lines: "C'est un roman. Il est sage, il est amusant, il y a du naturel et du merveilleux, il y a du vieux, du neuf; le mélange de gaulois et de français n'est pas sans agréments." The unnamed reviewer goes on to criticize the work for lacking unity: "Il semble que l'auteur ait manqué de forces pour donner à son récit une juste étendue; il se jette à quartier, et y mêle des histoires étrangères".³ Then he deals at length with the love intrigue without mentioning a word about feminism, the very basis of the novel. In his Observations sur les écrits modernes (1735-1743), Desfontaines deals with Les Femmes militaires in a few lines: "Le nouveau roman que M. le chevalier de Saint-Jory a publié sur la fin de l'année dernière, sous le titre des Femmes militaires, ne doit pas intéresser médiocrement le beau sexe. C'est la supposition d'une île nouvellement découverte, où les femmes vont à la guerre comme les hommes. Je ne vous en dis pas davantage".⁴ His brevity is all the more remarkable since he had, just four years earlier, published his Voyage du nouveau Gulliver, an imaginary voyage to an island ruled by women warriors who have reduced men to the status of European women. The short mention by Desfontaines of

Les Femmes militaires and its neglect by the Mercure de France are surprising since both devote lengthy reviews to Saint-Jory's Oeuvres mêlées (1735), a collection of Oriental anecdotes and tales, short plays and letters which, however, contain none of the social criticism and concern for women's rights that make Les Femmes militaires a work of much greater substance than his Oeuvres mêlées.

A number of bibliographies recognize the existence of the work, but nearly all writers on imaginary voyages of the eighteenth century neglect it. Nicolaas van Wijngaarden devotes ten pages to the analysis and criticism of Les Femmes militaires in his Les Odysées philosophiques en France entre 1616 et 1789,⁵ and Richard L. Frautschi analyses one of the three Oriental tales included near the end of the novel.⁶ It can be seen that Les Femmes militaires has not yet been the object of a general study.

This dissertation describes the structure of Les Femmes militaires, gives an outline of the plot and compares the novel with other voyages imaginaires of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It then discusses the social structure of the utopian society in Les Femmes militaires, its similarities with the governments of other works and its peculiarities. Feminism is dealt with at some length in the third chapter because it is the plea for women's rights that is the best-developed aspect of

the work and the one that shows the greatest originality. This chapter discusses the development of feminism in France and the feminist ideas being expressed at the time of publication of Saint-Jory's novel, while at the same time it compares the author's views on women with those of his predecessors. The final chapter deals with two literary vogues of the time, medievalism and Orientalism, the latter being especially important, since Oriental tales occupy a third of the novel. This chapter attempts to assess to what extent Saint-Jory was catering to contemporary literary fashion by using vogues that would seem to have little bearing on the presentation of a utopian society.

Except for a few passages in gaulois, a patois spoken by the islanders, the spelling and punctuation have been modernized. The edition used was published in Amsterdam in 1736 by J. Ryckhoff.

The following abbreviations appear in the text and footnotes:

- Abensour. Abensour, Léon. La Femme et le féminisme avant la révolution. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1923.
- Ascoli. Ascoli, Georges. "Essai sur l'histoire des idées féministes en France du XVII^e siècle à la révolution", Revue de synthèse historique, XIII (1906), 25-57; 161-184.
- Aventures secrètes. Rustaing de Saint-Jory, Louis, Aventures secrètes arrivées au siège de Constantinople, Paris, 1711.

- Avis d'une mère. Mme de Lambert. Avis d'une mère à sa fille, in Oeuvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert, avec un abrégé de sa vie. [Paris] Auguste, 1764.
- Cherel. Cherel, Albert. "La Pédagogie fénelonienne, son originalité, son influence au XVIII^e siècle", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, 1918, pp. 505-531.
- Chinard. Chinard, Gilbert. L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle. Paris: E. Droz, 1934.
- Cosquin. Cosquin, Emmanuel. Les Contes indiens et l'occident. Paris: Edouard Champion, 1922.
- Dufrenoy. Dufrenoy, Marie-Louise. L'Orient romanesque en France 1704-1789. Montréal: Beauchemin, 1946.
- Fénelon. Fénelon. De l'Education des filles, in De l'Education des filles, dialogues des morts et opuscules divers. Paris, 1848.
- FM. Rustaing de Saint-Jory, Louis. Les Femmes militaires. Relation historique d'une île nouvellement découverte. Amsterdam, 1736.
- Gilbert. Gilbert, Claude. Histoire de Caléjava ou l'île des hommes raisonnables, avec le parallèle de leur morale et du christianisme. N.p., 1700.
- Jacoubet. Jacoubet, Henri. Le Comte de Tressan et les origines du genre troubadour. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1923.
- Larochelle. Larochelle, Blanche Valerie. Fénelon as an Educator (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis for the University of Toronto), 1944.
- Martino. Martino, Pierre. L'Orient dans la littérature française au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle. Paris: Hachette, 1906.
- Montesquieu. Montesquieu. Lettres persanes. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964.
- Plato. Plato. The Republic. Translated by Francis MacDonal'd Cornford. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Poullain de la Barre. Poullain de la Barre, François. De l'Egalité des deux sexes, discours physique et morale . . ., Paris, 1673.

Réflexions. Mme de Lambert. Réflexions nouvelles sur les Femmes, in Oeuvres de Madame la marquise de Lambert, avec un abrégé de sa vie. [Paris] Auguste, 1764.

Tieje. Tieje, Ralph Earle. The Prose Imaginary Voyage before 1800: an Historical and Critical Study (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis for the University of Illinois), 1917.

Tyssot de Patot. Tyssot de Patot, Simon. Voyages et aventures de Jacques Massé. Bordeaux, 1710.

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ Mercure de France, XXVII (janvier-juin 1735),
p. 31.

² Théâtre complet de Marivaux, p. 1493.

³ Journal littéraire, XXIV (1737), p. 193.

⁴ Observations sur les écrits modernes, I, p. 290.

⁵ Les Odysées philosophiques en France entre 1616
et 1789, pp. 172-181.

⁶ "An Unnoticed Version of the Three Suitors at
the Graveyard Tale", Romance Notes, IV (1962), pp. 30-32.

CHAPTER I

STRUCTURE

Les Femmes militaires is an imaginary voyage - the story of a Frenchman's shipwreck, with two lovely companions, on an island called Manghalour some distance from Bermuda. The island is inhabited by people of French origin who speak an old patois, and a large part of FM deals with their society, one where women have equal rank with men. Besides being a feminist, and the only one of his time to envision the practical application of the idea of women's equality with men, Saint-Jory was very interested in the Orient. He recounts that Manghalour was conquered in 1098 by the French from Turks who had, forty-five years before, taken it from Parsees. By simply revealing the history of the island, Saint-Jory manages to include three Oriental-style tales which occupy the final third of his novel. Since the islanders are French but still medieval in manner, he can indulge in dialogues in gaulois, as the people's language is called, and thus follow a literary fashion of the time.

Providing the narrative suspense is the love intrigue: a Frenchman stranded with two English girls must choose one of them for a wife. The discovery of Manghalour is, however, an accident; the ship was headed to plunder

gold and emerald mines on Groenkaaf, an island near Bermuda known to the captain, peopled by blissfully happy natives. His story of Groenkaaf is presented early in the novel and it too is a utopia, but it is dealt with in only a few pages. It would thus appear that Saint-Jory has used one literary vehicle, the voyage imaginaire, to indulge in literary motifs in vogue in that period: the island peopled by bons sauvages, the taste for pseudo-medieval patois, love episodes and Oriental tales.

It is true that the last part of the novel, with its Oriental tales, is loosely joined to the rest, and the society of Manghalour is completely forgotten while the tales are told, despite the fact that they are presented as being part of the island's tradition, since they are legends of the Parsees who held the island till the Turks' arrival. Also, in his story of Groenkaaf and its wealth, Saint-Jory has capitalized on a characteristic feature of the Robinsonade tales, the quest for financial gain that provides the motive for the sea voyage, to include what must have been almost a cliché by 1735 - the happy society of bons sauvages of America. However, the love intrigue, although included to provide some lightly erotic interest and an opportunity for gallant précieus conversations and a basis of plot, do have another function important to feminism: how does a European woman deal with sudden equality with men?

The medieval ways of these French inhabitants are not only a fashion, the reviving interest, in the eighteenth century, in medieval culture, but are linked with the idea of the simple life. The islanders are peasants leading sober lives in a fertile land far removed from France.

Up to the beginning of the Oriental tales, FM has many structural features common to other voyages. Ralph Tiejé credits three writers of the late seventeenth century, Cyrano de Bergerac, Histoire des états du soleil (1662), Denis Vairasse d'Alais, Histoire des Sévérambes (1677-79), and Gabriel Foigny, La Terre australe connue or Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur (1676), with making the imaginary voyage more of a story and with introducing love intrigues having a "more or less vital connection with the main thread of the narrative" (Tiejé, p. 193). He notes their increased attention to the narrative of adventure, to character portrayal, and to forcing belief from the reader with such devices as the elaborate preface to Vairasse's work.

FM begins with a preface designed, like Vairasse's, to provide a detailed background to lend verisimilitude to the adventure. In addition, the preface depicts the rotten moral state of contemporary France: disloyal friends of Frédéric, the narrator, who offer no help at a time of financial need, and a religious hypocrite who is also of the monied class, but who, despite his generous reputation, swindles Frédéric, are contrasted with a generous member

of the lower class, a former servant who unreservedly offers all his help to the narrator.

Then follows the narrative of which the main steps in the development are: (a) Frédéric's misfortunes in France (pp. 1-22), (b) Captain Richard Sembrook's story of Groenkaaf (pp. 23-33), (c) The Robinsonade element - Frédéric's voyage and shipwreck, with two Englishwomen, on Manghalour (pp. 33-71), (d) the castaways' stay with the family of a native, Hugues Umbert (pp. 172-199), including the latter's story of the French settlement of the island (pp. 103-132), his coronation as ruler (pp. 147-158), Frédéric's choice of a wife and his marriage (pp. 162-183), and the defence of the island against a Moslem attack (pp. 184-195). The remainder is Oriental matter; Frédéric's honeymoon trip takes him inland to the Vallée des Zouhhad (pp. 200-211), the Vallée d'Iram (pp. 212-238), where he hears an Oriental tale of two lovers, Darim and Ismail (pp. 218-238), and to the Vallée des Songes (pp. 241-297), a chapter containing an account of the religion and history of the Parsees (pp. 246-296). The Parsee legend is an Oriental tale of a dervish who claims a princess' hand, and within the story is another, a type of three suitors' tale (pp. 281-295). Finally, Frédéric and his wife return to the capital, only to be expelled by the other female castaway who was elected ruler after Umbert's death.

This conclusion (pp. 296-312), contains the final Oriental tale, the story of a Parsee merchant swindled by a scheming woman (pp. 298-305).

The narrative begins in 1720 when Frédéric, having lost his fortune in a legal case, can get no help from his friends: 'Je ne trouvai dans le corps de nos riches et belles idoles, que des araignées et des insectes, c'est-à-dire, des inclinations basses, et des sentiments vicieux dans des personnes de distinction' (FM, p. 3). But he encounters a former servant, Robert, who had profited from Frédéric's generosity while in his employment and invested his savings in a business venture that netted him a fortune. He now lives very comfortably but unostentatiously with a devoted wife. Robert makes Frédéric a gift of 250 louis to show his gratitude, a gift Frédéric manages to repay in property upon the timely death of an aunt. He tries unsuccessfully to sell his possessions to his friends in order to invest in a trading venture in England, and must try to sell them to a presumed devoutly religious man of kindly reputation, the marquis de la Guêpe. The pious marquis pays Frédéric a fraction of his furniture's value, and the latter leaves, disgusted, for England.

Besides contrasting upper class hypocrisy with lower class generosity, this simple portrayal of corrupt

conditions in France will provide a clear contrast to the simple, honest island societies of Groenkaaf and Manghalour.

In London, Frédéric invests with other traders in a shipload of goods that will hopefully bring a return of one hundred to one. Sembrook will lead the expedition to Groenkaaf, an island he had discovered when shipwrecked. He and the three other survivors won the friendship of the natives and were quickly accepted into the society by proving their own industry. The others married native girls, but Sembrook refrained, not realizing his wife in England was dead. All four were naturalized and allowed free movement about the island and, thanks to a simple ceremony performed for each islander soon after birth, they were granted the rights of tillage, hunting and fishing. The words "Adore Dieu" were engraved on one arm and "Aime ton semblable" on the other (FM, p. 26). "Voilà toutes leurs lois. Cent mille volumes de morale contiennent plus de phrases, et pas plus de choses" (FM, p. 24). Saint-Jory describes the islanders' morality: "Ces peuples sauvages semblent avoir conservé la primitive innocence, ils ne connaissent ni vices ni vertus, ils se conduisent par un instinct droit et sage qui ne les abandonne jamais, et tout l'office de leur raison se réduit à se procurer par les voies les plus douces les choses nécessaires à la vie, à ne point amasser pour un avenir, dont on ne jouira

peut-être pas, à se conserver une bonne santé, sans laquelle on ne possède rien" (FM, pp. 23-24). The Englishmen abandoned the "inclinations dérégées qu'ils avaient apportées d'Europe" (FM, p. 24) in favour of these simple manners. However, when Sembrook discovered the gold and emerald mines, he could think of nothing but taking this wealth back to Europe and began looking for a passing ship. Surprised by the arrival of a Dutch vessel, and not wanting the crew to discover his wealth, he left his treasure and returned to England to organize another expedition for its recovery.

The portrayal of innocent, unclad savages enjoying a simple life on a lush, fertile island is certainly no innovation; the myth of the noble savage was well established by this time, and to the French all American natives were simple, happy people. It was not until after the publication of Rousseau's Discours sur l'égalité (1754) that the French public began to distinguish the tribes of America and to attribute some individuality to the natives (Chinard, pp. vii-viii). Chinard traces the passage of the noble savage myth from accounts of missionaries, especially Jesuits in North America, and other travellers to the Caribbean to writers such as the soldier Lahontan.¹ They were struck by the sensual charm of the tropics and had much praise for the humanity of natives who

lived in total ignorance of God yet shared the fruits of the earth in a spirit of fraternity that reminded priests such as Du Tertre of the early Christians (Chinard, pp. vi-vii). Saint-Jory briefly describes the island society without supplying any details about social organization or religion. Since it immediately follows a similarly brief sketch of European society, the main point of the description seems to be to make a sharp contrast with the corruption of France rather than to portray an ideal society.

Even the description of the island resembles that of an earlier imaginary voyage, Simon Tyssot de Patot's Voyages et aventures de Jacques Massé (1710). Groenkaaf, which means "Couronne blanche" (FM, p. 27) in the native language, is so named because it is difficult to enter; it is a fertile plain surrounded by high snow-covered mountains, further protected by a chain of boulders that reach far into the sea. In Tyssot de Patot's novel, the island has the same features and is very difficult of access, but these similarities are part of a tradition rather than marks of direct influence; utopias must be fairly inaccessible to prevent contamination by other civilisations. This is not the only point of comparison between the two novels. Others will be mentioned later.

Frédéric is sent with the ship as agent for the investors to receive a percentage of the profit. The

voyage is without incident until Groenkaaf appears, when a sudden storm drives the ship more than three hundred leagues from the island until finally it breaks up on the shore of Manghalour, hitherto unknown.

Robinson Crusoe, first published in 1719 but soon popular in France, made the shipwreck on an unknown island a standard motif of the voyage imaginaire. Tiejé writes that in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, "The Robinsonade element . . . now became yet more important than it had in the previous half-century, practically every voyage making use of this device" (Tiejé, p. 195). Robinson Crusoe had set off on a voyage to Guinea for commercial gain, and it was on a second voyage to Africa for slaves that he was shipwrecked. In FM, Frédéric has motives of a similarly dubious morality: he is hoping for a return of one hundred to one through the exploitation of a peaceful island, and he, too, is shipwrecked. Yet once on Manghalour he completely forgets Groenkaaf's treasure. We must consider the voyage solely as a means to put him on Manghalour and not as a mission for plunder; otherwise, we cannot reconcile his hopes for wealth with his disgust with commercial greed in France.

As in Robinson Crusoe and Jacques Massé, Frédéric spends much time rescuing a great quantity of provisions, including firearms, from the wreck. They are for himself and his two fellow survivors, relatives of crew-members,

Susanne Hide and Sapphire Stout. As in Robinsonade tales, the trio proceed inland to investigate the island. They come across a Gothic colonnade, bearing a long inscription in medieval French. Jacques Massé had discovered inscriptions around three strange monuments on his inland trip, but was unable to decipher them (Tysot de Patot, p. 77). The inscription tells of the shipwreck in 1098 of three warships and four merchant vessels from which sixty-nine knights, seventy-two girls, and about six hundred soldiers and sailors came ashore, rescuing great quantities of provisions and artillery. Counsels were held and five knights chosen to elect a duke or king, who swore on holy relics, happily saved from the disaster, to choose the man they thought most capable to rule. They chose Mathieu de Laval who ruled wisely for thirty years, an ideal monarch: "Il nous a fait jouir de la paix et du repos, de l'abondance, et d'une entière liberté . . . il a été attaché aux intérêts de son peuple, tendrement et de bonne foi" (FM, p. 49).

This inscription provides, early in the novel, some historical background for the society we meet later. It also offers the author a chance for eight pages of gaulois and translation (pp. 40-48), and is a device that creates some verisimilitude. When, later, Umberto tells the story of Manghalour's history, it will seem all the more real

because the reader can recall Frédéric's discovery of the inscription, which has already introduced the essential facts of the French settlement. Common to most imaginary voyages are devices that force belief: the elaborate preface, the supposed discovery of manuscripts or inscriptions, linguistic explanations, and quoting other authorities or explaining native customs in footnotes. Saint-Jory uses all these tricks, but in moderation. He limits linguistic explanations to the meanings of a few geographical names, in contrast to other voyages such as Gilbert's Histoire de Caléjava (1700), which abounds in such details. Many other voyages devote considerable space to details of the utopian language, giving not only translations of particular terms, but sometimes delving deeply into grammar. Of course, the linguistic interest is strong in FM, but fortunately the language is an easily understood pseudo-medieval French presented as a charming, old-fashioned tongue. Footnotes too are few; they are used only to explain the meaning of "Ghèbres" (FM, p. 110), to quote the authority of a Charles Patin about the size and activity of London (FM, p. 21), and to cite Hippocrates about warrior women of a Scythian tribe (FM, p. 95). Saint-Jory goes into great detail about saving provisions from the wreck and building a shelter, but with less elaboration than Defoe. Unlike both Robinson Crusoe and Jacques Massé, which force belief by lengthy and quite detailed descriptions

of natural phenomena, including unknown animals, Saint-Jory describes only enough of the island to give an idea of its general aspect although, like Tyssot de Patot, he devotes some space to the discovery of mineral springs and is quite enthusiastic about their good effects (FM, pp. 209-210). He is, however, quite interested in military science, and relies on details of artillery and strategy to provide the illusion of authenticity essential to imaginary voyages.

Another convention of the imaginary voyage is the meeting with an old native who introduces the newcomers into the utopian society and explains local customs, such as Gilbert's "Avaite" in Caléjava. Chinard discusses the use of this character in Foigny's La Terre australe connue: "Comme tous les missionnaires, et suivant la tradition immuable des voyageurs, Sadeur va rencontrer un bon vieillard avec qui il aura de longs entretiens et qui le mettra au courant de la vie des Australiens" (Chinard, p. 199). In FM, this rôle is filled by Hugue Umbert, a farmer the trio meet as they travel inland to explore. He lodges them with his family, explains local ways and recounts the history of the French settlers.

The love intrigue begins shortly before the three leave their shelter and meet Umbert. On the subject of love adventures in imaginary voyages, Tieje remarks: "These

digressions seek to shed light upon the practice of the nation under discussion or to add point to the satire" (Tieje, p. 253). There are actually two love intrigues, the Parsee legend of Darim and Ismail and the Frédéric-Sapphire-Suzanne triangle. The former is the tale of a Parsee boy converted to Islam and his forbidden and ultimately tragic love for a Parsee girl. It is a plea for religious tolerance as well as a love story. The three castaways' intrigue provides the plot. It also enables the author to examine the psychology of European women, and, in a feminist vein, to demonstrate their superior psychological insight. It provides considerable erotic interest and opportunities for gay flirtation. From the first, Frédéric behaves with the women like a perfect gentleman, but the question is how long will it be before their friendship ceases to be Platonic? Which one will he choose, or will he choose both? Frédéric hints at delights to come: "Si nous ne trouvons point cette île habitée, qu'aurons-nous de mieux à faire tous trois que de suivre l'exemple des premiers patriarches, à qui une seule femme ne suffisait pas, dans le dessein généreux qu'ils avaient de peupler le monde?" (FM, pp. 63-64). Suzanne wonders if the natives are brutes and raises the possibility of rape (FM, pp. 68-69).

To prove that he esteems both equally, Frédéric gives a portrait of each in turn, in a very gallant, flattering

style: "La nature a coloré votre teint de la manière la plus parfaite; c'est une rose qui n'a rien de trop vif, et dont le vermillon se noie imperceptiblement dans une blancheur douce et tendre, ce qui donne à votre peau un air de fraîcheur, dont la rose même, cueillie au matin, n'approche point" (FM, p. 58). Frédéric is careful to paint the particular virtues of each woman so that neither has cause to be jealous. He pretends to considerable understanding of feminine psychology: "Il faut savoir deviner avec les femmes, mais il ne faut pas toujours leur laisser voir qu'on devine; elles en deviendraient plus rusées, plus impénétrables" (FM, p. 65). His supposed understanding amounts to very little later, when, having chosen Sapphire for his wife, he maintains that Suzanne cannot be jealous, while Sapphire warns of her approaching revenge. As heroine of a feminist novel, Sapphire is, of course, right. This witty banter is to be contrasted shortly with the direct, unpretentious speech of Umberto and his family, and at first the islander can hardly understand the newcomers. Frédéric remarks: "Je compris que mon style lui paraissait affecté, qu'il trouvait ridicules et méprisables toutes ces impostures délicates et déliées que l'on appelle compliments, et qui entrent chez nous comme nécessaires dans l'usage du beau monde; enfin, que nos insulaires ne faisaient pas consister la politesse dans

le superficiel des manières, mais dans le fond des sentiments" (FM, pp. 74-75). Saint-Jory would appear to be attacking the superficiality of French manners and speech, yet at the same time he seems to indulge in a flair for this kind of gallantry, offering it for the reader's delectation. Frédéric's précieux language, his playful comments on Sapphire's well-developed bosom and similar light banter are too suggestive to be taken simply as an attack on French manners. Saint-Jory would like us to prefer Umberto's simplicity but at the same time, to be amused by Frédéric's manners and admire the author's facility in preciosity. Erotic interest is evident even after the three have met Umberto tilling a field and have accompanied him home. He and his family presume Sapphire and Suzanne to be boys since they are dressed in men's clothing, the only kind they could salvage from the wreck. When assigned to share a room with Frédéric, they protest that they are women and must reveal their breasts to prove it.

Some erotic interest, still within the limits of the bienséances, was standard fare in fiction of the time. Jacques Barchilon writes: "The licentious tale becomes a genre 'à la mode' in the thirties and forties; in fact, it almost acquired academic approval".² He notes that the licentious was often associated with the Orient and the Orient, especially the harem, often provided a voluptuous

décor for amorous adventures. The Oriental tales of FM do have love intrigues, but they are free of this type of suggestiveness.

All three are invited to do some useful work, "que l'on regarde là comme nécessaire pour mener une vie agréable et innocente" (FM, p. 97). On a hunting trip with Umberto's family, who were armed with sabres and bows, Frédéric fired a musket saved from the ship to bring down a boar. All were amazed at the weapon except Umberto, who ordered it destroyed, since "un petit nombre de scélérats ambitieux pourrait avec pareilles armes dépeupler l'île de ses plus braves habitants, et y établir la tyrannie" (FM, p. 100). The king in Jacques Massé had similarly condemned firearms when he heard of the carnage they created in Europe (Tyssot de Patot, p. 219).

Umberto tells the history of the island from the arrival of French settlers to explain how their social institutions were founded. Once elected Duke, Mathieu de Laval built fortifications on the shore in which to store arms and provisions, divided his men into regiments, and proceeded inland where he met a brave but poorly disciplined army of 30,000 islanders whom he defeated by clever strategy. Some of the islanders, who had been under Moslem domination for thirty years and who spoke a mixture of corrupt Persian and Latin (no explanation is given for

their speaking Latin) joined Laval and together they attacked the fort in the capital, driving out the Turks, who fled to a distant stand. They spared the harem women, abolished the veil and gave them legal equality, explaining that their customs committed both men and women to marital fidelity (FM, p. 118). Most of these newly-liberated women married their emancipators within six months. Saint-Jory goes into great detail about the strategy of the attack on Manghalour, the numbers of men involved and where positioned, as he always does where matters of war are concerned. Since he provides few details about the peacetime organization of the island, military science appears to be of special interest to him. This interest is to be expected of a former soldier. He notes that Laval divided the land equally among all and that peace lasted for years until the Turks returned to take back the island. At this point he gives more details about preparations for defence and an account of the battle itself (FM, pp. 120-127). When Laval discovers that he is short of men, the women volunteer to defend the fort. Disguised as men, they repel their former masters with such valour that after the battle, all the men agree to give women the honours of knighthood, "c'est-à-dire, le droit de porter la lance, l'épée et le pavois à toutes les femmes nées et à naître, à condition que désormais les filles recevraient dans les écoles publiques la même éducation que l'on y donnait aux

enfants mâles" (FM, p. 127). Saint-Jory simply states that the schools exist, without elaborating; surprisingly, no more information is given anywhere in FM about these public schools which would have been an extraordinary innovation for the thirteenth century. They would certainly be revolutionary in 1735, indeed at any time in the eighteenth century.

Plagued by the problem of succession after his death, Laval arrived at a three-point solution: the title of Duke would never be inherited, men and women would alternate in office, women alone would elect a Duke, and men, a Duchess (FM, p. 129). Laval, whose innovations have been handed down unchanged to the present islanders, appears as a strange mixture of medieval patriarch and eighteenth-century egalitarian. His successor, Mansuède Alberti, exemplary at the defence of the fort and an able ruler, kind and courageous, consolidated this equality "par de bons règlements, à recevoir dès l'enfance une éducation convenable au caractère de grandeur auquel l'avait élevée la république" (FM, p. 130).

Umbert's election as Duke demonstrates the electoral procedure; when Duke, he gives Frédéric a piece of land, naturalizes him, Sapphire and Susanne, and leaves Frédéric time to decide which of these two women he will marry. After he chooses Sapphire, there is a scene in which Susanne protests her indifference to his choice. Throughout the

remainder of the novel, Susanne never appears without a hint of hidden jealousy and the possibility of revenge.

Preparations for another battle with the Turks begin immediately after the marriage. Umbert has heard from spies that the Turks are preparing a massive invasion, and when Frédéric informs him of the cache of arms on the beach and the heavy guns in the sunken vessel which will assure them of victory (FM, p. 175), Umbert places Frédéric in charge of defences. The preparations are minutely described (FM, pp. 184-194), and even include a detailed account of loading and firing a cannon. A dispute arises over whether the men, or the women, who claim their right is traditional, will defend the fort, and Frédéric is surprised to find Susanne demanding more loudly than any the women's right to defend it. They reach a compromise: Susanne will, with Umbert, take charge of defences at the wall, Frédéric and Sapphire will handle two cannons, and two-thirds of the garrison will be made up of women. The Turks, of course, have no defence against all this artillery, and are massacred when they attack. The people praise the three Europeans for their achievements, and Frédéric leaves with Sapphire, an expert in the island's history and a painter, for a three-month tour of the mountains. Umbert appoints Frédéric Inspector-General; he is to see if there are ways to increase industry and commerce in the mountains,

but no further mention is made of his intended inspections.

Frédéric is a hero because of the superiority of his European technology. Jacques Massé and his companion, La Forestière, had become famous in a similar way: they received favours from the king and became enormously popular simply by making a clock. Frédéric's popularity is based on more than a simple society's fascination with strange inventions; his technology has not only amazed the people, but saved their country from destruction. The authors of both FM and Jacques Massé are obviously deeply interested in mechanical things, a trait of most philosophes of the period.

The next hundred pages deal with Oriental tales which are presented as anecdotes about local history as Frédéric and his party proceed to the three Parsee-inhabited valleys of the interior. The first, the Vallée des Zouhhad (meaning dervishes, FM, p. 200), contains a town and a retreat for a few hermits. The second, the Vallée d'Iram, called a "paradis terrestre" (FM, p. 212), is a delicious garden where is heard the first tale, the story of Darim and Ismail. The last, Douchdère, or the Vallée des Songes, contains an account of the Parsee religion and the "Histoire du peuple ghèbre" (FM, p. 251 ff). This history deals with Parsee legend of the founding of Manghalour and the origins of the Parsee religion on that island. The story tells of

the princess Bulbul's marriage to Zanguebur, Emperor of India and China, who is disguised as a dervish. Told within the legend is the tale of three suitors wooing a mountain girl. Heading back to the capital, Frédéric and Sapphire stop at a village where Sapphire resolves by trickery the problem of a Parsee merchant cheated on a loan by a conniving woman.

The visit to the Vallée des Zouhhad has some anecdotal value; the valley is strewn with precariously-perched boulders, one of which looms over the principal town, La Voûte. The priests conduct a yearly ceremony to save the town from disaster, proceeding around the boulder while bearing an image of the sun (FM, p. 209). As the party passes through the hermit's area, a soldier blows a horn to warn the monks of Sapphire, "un objet aimable, qui pourrait troubler le sommeil édifiant de leur concupiscence" (FM, pp. 202-203). The main purpose of the visit seems to be to criticize monasticism. The dervishes are confined to their rocky retreat by law because early in the island's history they had become, through donations, possessors of the finest domains and of great sums of money (FM, p. 205). The king Masoum remedied the situation by confining them forcibly to solitary retreats and by forbidding them any communication with the people so that their numbers were substantially reduced. Sorbin, the historian explains: "Les Ghèbres, au

fond plus politiques que religieux . . . ne veulent pas que le nombre des derviches augmente beaucoup, dans la crainte que le pays n'abonde en fainéantise plus qu'en piété" (FM, p. 204). This is not religious persecution, but rather obliging the monks to live according to their vows of poverty and contemplation. Of course, this episode is not merely an anecdote; the criticism applies equally to the worldly monks of contemporary France, those who were attracted to monasticism not for a life of devotion, but for one of comfort and acquisition. Saint-Jory is not attacking Christianity; on the contrary, Christianity plays a vital role in the structure of the government.

We learn more about island history and details of natural setting in the chapter about the Vallée d'Iram before learning the story of Darim and Ismail; the Turks, who landed in 1033, made peace with the Parsees and allowed them complete freedom and possession of these mountain valleys until, five years before the arrival of the French, they attacked the Vallée d'Iram. The French re-established the Parsees' right to the mountains and permitted them freedom of religion on payment of a small annual tribute and the guarantee of men for the army in case of need. This is the extent of the historical detail presented in this section; since the twenty-page story of the lovers is an Oriental tale, it will be better to deal with it in the final chapter.

The chapter "Douchdère, ou Vallée des Songes" (FM, pp. 241-296) also presents information about the religion, customs and history of the Parsees, but they too will form part of the discussion of Orientalism in the last chapter. Like Iram, the Vallée des Songes is a perpetual garden, rich in springs and in mineral deposits. Saint-Jory describes it briefly in a few pages and then devotes himself to the songes or Oriental tales.

No mention has been made of the events on Manghalour for the past hundred pages, and Saint-Jory hurriedly ends his Oriental story saying: "Nous vîmes encore des choses merveilleuses . . . mais je ne m'amuserai point à les décrire, et je reprends le récit de mes aventures" (FM, p. 296). He brings us back to the thread of the narrative with a report of Umbert's death and Susanne's election as Duchess. Then follows immediately a final tale that occupies half of the few concluding pages. Frédéric is eager to return to the capital to pay homage to the new sovereign, but Sapphire, as always, warns of "d'étranges révolutions dans notre fortune" (FM, p. 297). Detained at a Parsee village, Sapphire proves her superior perception in solving a dispute over money. A merchant had lent a thousand sequins to a woman who had given as security a sealed box of precious stones. These stones proved to be worthless. Frédéric could see no remedy for the merchant, but Sapphire devised a stratagem: she advised him to report

the theft of all his possessions. The woman appeared and demanded compensation for her stolen jewels. Her treachery was unmasked when the merchant appeared with the box. He generously refused to prosecute, trusting that the humiliation would be a sufficient lesson. Reports of Sapphire's perception spread so widely that the next day throngs of townspeople assembled "aussi empressés de la voir que si elle eût été la souveraine" (FM, p. 306). Sapphire warns that if Susanne were to become jealous at having to share public favour, things would go badly (FM, p. 306), as events were to prove. A few months later, Susanne calls on Frédéric to raise a sunken Dutch vessel, and when all the work is finished, she gives him a thousand gold pieces and orders him to leave with Sapphire and never again to set foot on the island. Saint-Jory concludes this hasty resolution of the plot with a modest disclaimer: "Le reste de mon histoire fournirait un volume très agréable, si un meilleur écrivain que moi daignait extraire mon journal" (FM, p. 312). Beneath is this inscription: "Falsi sub cortice verum".

The conclusion is awkwardly handled and abrupt; the inclusion of the tale of the Parsee merchant gives the impression that Saint-Jory used the last part of his work as a means of indulging his taste for Orientalism, and that he could only reluctantly bring himself back to conclude the

novel. This hurried ending has nevertheless relevance to feminism: Frédéric, presented as a typical male - he has no quirks of personality and remains a rather colourless individual throughout - has little psychological perception, whereas Sapphire is amply endowed. Her intelligent handling of the merchant's problem puts her on equal footing with Susanne, the newly-elected Duchess. Both are capable of leadership, and Susanne is capable of resolute, vindictive action as well. Saint-Jory implies that the workings of the female mind can be perceived only by another equally perceptive female.

There are a few inconsistencies in details; the rather bizarre geography and vague knowledge of the East are best left for the chapter on Orientalism. Saint-Jory gives two dates for Laval's landing, 1098 and 1198 (FM, pp. 40,103). Umbert's first name is variously Hugue and Rodolphe (FM, pp. 77,152). One matter is of greater importance. Susanne Hide and Sapphire Stout are definitely Englishwomen at the time of the shipwreck but they mysteriously become French during their stay with Umbert. The change takes place when Umbert asks, after looking at a drawing of a fashionable Frenchwoman, "pourquoi, étant du même pays, leur beauté n'avait rien que de simple" (FM, p. 92). Why is there a dispute between men and women over who has the right to defend the fortress, when Justine, one

of Umbert's daughters, had already explained that in case of war, "la garde de nos châteaux et forteresses, nous est mise ez mains, tandis que nos pères, maris, et garçons d'âge viril, vont en avant" (FM, p. 94)? The reason can only be that this is merely an occasion to show, through her vociferous defence of women's rights in the dispute, Susanne's rapid emancipation from European attitudes. Finally, it seems highly unusual that the merchant in the final episode should be a Parsee, for Saint-Jory had described the Parsees, in the visit to the Vallée des Songes, as a strictly agricultural people with practically no money: "Ils s'attachent à la culture de leurs terres, et n'ont ni goût ni industrie pour le commerce, qui ne se fait entre eux et les habitants du plat pays que par échange" (FM, p. 245).

These inconsistencies are, for the most part, minor ones that do not significantly affect the credibility of the story. A casual reader would not notice most of them, except for the ladies' abrupt change of nationality. Whether they are French or English is really of little importance; St.-Jory uses them to represent European women, for purposes of comparison with the women of the island. Nonetheless, this particular slip makes one wonder how much care the author put into editing his completed work.

The structure of the first two-thirds of FM

resembles that of many other voyages imaginaires; the European castaways find themselves on a beach and, exploring inland, meet a friendly native who introduces them into the ways of the island utopia. The final third of FM, however, deals entirely with Oriental tales having nothing to do with the utopian society. It is here that FM differs considerably from other voyages imaginaires which to be sure, have their exotic and adventurous aspects, but usually manage to incorporate them more effectively into the thread of the narrative. Saint-Jory, however, completely neglects the utopian society while he recounts, with great relish, a series of Oriental tales. The work thus seems divided into two parts having little connection. The effect of this rupture on the novel's impact is best discussed in the Conclusion.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Nouveaux voyages de M. le baron de Lahontan,
La Haye, 1703.

²"Uses of the Fairy Tale in the Eighteenth
Century", in Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century,
XXIV (1963), 116-117.

CHAPTER II

THE GOVERNMENT OF MANGHALOUR

The island government can be discussed in a few pages because the author, preferring to get on with the adventure or with the Oriental tales, reduces to the minimum his accounts of social structure. We learn little of the real functioning of the French settlers' society, and practically nothing of the Parsees', even though the last third of FM deals solely with the latter. We know that Laval granted the Parsees freedom of religion (FM, p. 117), but the extent of their obligations to the French settlers remains vague. They pay an annual tribute, and in case of war must supply troops who fight under their own Parsee commander. They recognize no laws but their own, yet since the Parsee merchant mentioned in the final pages wanted to obtain the Senate's permission for a house-to-house search, it would seem that the Senate does have some jurisdiction over the Parsees (FM, pp. 214, 299). Their government was a kingdom before the arrival of the French, but the author mentions nothing about their present ruler.

The most peculiar characteristic of the government of Manghalour is that it is medieval yet incorporates an eighteenth century egalitarian ideal. It is medieval yet

classless because the citizens are all of noble descent. Umberto insists on their lineage: "Ce n'était point une confuse et tumultueuse fourmilière de peuple légier, variable, séditieux et incompatible, mais une congrégation honorable de vertueux gentilshommes, tous de bon sang, sages, avisés, patients, et endurcis à toutes sortes de travaux et mésaises" (FM, p. 105). Umberto must swear at his coronation that he is "franc et libre de lignage" (FM, p. 150). In other utopias, the people's equality and subsequent happiness are usually the result of good laws and a fair system. On Manghalour, birth is of considerable importance. Saint-Jory implies that the social stability and absence of crime depend in some measure on this homogeneity. There are no "séditieux" on the island, and since, in Umberto's description just quoted, the "séditieux" are indirectly equated with those who are not "de bon sang", the absence of commoners would seem to have much to do with the society's stability. There is no mention of doctors, merchants, artisans or tradesmen; the society, except for religious and political leaders, is composed of farmers, as is La Bétique, Fénelon's ideal society described in Les Aventures de Télémaque (1699).

The poor nobility who must work their own land seem to be the author's ideal; when the three castaways first come upon Umberto tilling a field, Frédéric remarks:

"Voilà, dis-je en moi-même, un gentilhomme malaisé qui cultive son petit héritage, pour jouir, comme on fait dans nos provinces, des tristes prérogatives de la noblesse indigente" (FM, p. 70). As much as he may dislike the acquisitive nobility represented by the marquis de la Guêpe, Frédéric is highly aware of social station. He had been loath to accept the gift of money from Robert, his family's former servant, and when the death of an aunt provided him with land, unwilling to feel obliged to a servant, he quickly passed it on to Robert, an act "qui me constituait avec Robert dans mon ancienne dignité de bienfaiteur" (FM, p. 12).

Because all citizens are of noble descent, Manghalour can have only very restricted appeal as an ideal society. It is ideal solely for the landed gentry of modest means. Since the islanders are all descendants of knights, Manghalour hardly represents an ideal society to be contrasted with contemporary France, as it omits the bulk of the French people. Thus its value as a utopia is severely limited.

The farmers of Manghalour, apparently unchanged since their ancestors' arrival, are simple, sober and hard-working. Sapphire, Susanne and Frédéric soon find that even though they are foreigners, they too are expected to do some work: "La qualité d'étrangers ne nous dispensa

pas d'un travail honnête, et que l'on regarde là comme nécessaire pour mener une vie agréable et innocente" (FM, p. 97). There is no doubting Saint-Jory's attitude to luxury or the production of excess, a much-debated question in the first half of the eighteenth century. The question was first raised in England by Mandeville in his Fable of the Bees (published in 1705 under the title The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turned Honest) and in France by Melon in the Essai politique sur le commerce (1734). According to André Morize,¹ a turning point in this discussion was marked by the publication of Le Mondain (probably 1736), in which Voltaire condemned frugality and associated the development of luxury with the progress of civilisation. After its publication, luxury became more and more associated with progress. Mandeville and Melon had introduced the idea, and Montesquieu, in "Lettre CVI" of the Lettres persanes (pp. 170-172) had earlier defended the production of superfluties as being essential to the well-being of a state. Saint-Jory is definitely a partisan of "le bon vieux temps" that Voltaire had attacked in Le Mondain.² Luxury does not exist on Manghalour. There is no mention of manufacturing, and the farmers seem to provide everything for themselves. Manghalour belongs to the older tradition of Plato's Republic, Gilbert's Histoire de Caléjava (1700), and Fénelon's Télémaque (1699), in which simplicity and frugality are presented as

virtues essential to happiness.

The people are staunchly conservative; no changes have been made in the government institutions since the time of Laval, the first and last innovator in island history, whose three-point plan for succession has already been discussed in the first chapter. Laval established a republic for the simple reason that "on aurait plus souvent besoin de délibérer que d'agir, à quoi la puissance parlementaire, unie à la souveraine, était plus propre que la volonté d'un seul" (FM, pp. 104-105). The parliament does not exist to protect the people from a monarch's arbitrary measures; rather, Laval created it as a body for discussion, and it has some ill-defined advisory function. The parliament seems dispensable, as it matters little whether one man rules, or a group. Fortunately the rulers have all been good; the republic produces only virtuous people. At the time of its creation, all that mattered was expediency; if the situation had called for action, and recuperation from a shipwreck would certainly call more for action than discussion, then Laval would have been sole ruler.

The parliament is called the Senate (FM, p. 120); we know nothing of its size, how it is elected, whether women are members or not, and what we do know comes only from scattered references. Laval acted occasionally by

decree, granting freedom of religion to the Parsees and liberating the women of the Turkish harems, but convoked the parliament to grant them full rights to knighthood (FM, p. 127), which were accorded unanimously, and to make an exact division of all land among the settlers (FM, p. 119). He spent some days "à faire les règlements les plus nécessaires pour la police et la discipline . . ." (FM, p. 105), apparently without the Senate's assistance. When faced with the problem of the proportion of men and women in the garrison as he prepared for the Turks' attack, Umberto arrived at a decision: "Le Duc fut très satisfait d'un expédient qui remédiait à tout; le Sénat l'approuva" (FM, p. 190). Here it is implied that the Senate has the power to reject the Duke's decision. Later, when the Parsee merchant considers asking the Senate's permission to search homes (FM, p. 299), it appears that the Senate has a measure of administrative power. However, at the novel's end, the Senate is merely a vehicle for carrying out Susanne's orders; three Senators present Frédéric and Saphire with her order to leave (FM, p. 311). They expel two national heroes on the sovereign's whim, with no discussion and no protest. The half-dozen or so passing references to the Senate and the contradictions in its function are evidence of the little importance Saint-Jory attached to political structure. All we can say with

certainty is that there is a parliament of some sort.

Umbert's coronation provides an opportunity, in a charmingly simple ceremony rich in gaulois, to explain more about the Duke's relation to the people. A girl representing the nation stands in the midst of the assembled islanders, dressed in a shepherdess' costume, and engages with the assembly in a ritual of question and answer (FM, p. 149). She asks: "Est-il bien exercit  aux Loix, . . . fera-t-il droitement justice, pourchassera-t-il bien notre salut et tuition; est-il franc et libre de lignage, est-il vaillant et digne d'honneur et r v rence, est-il Chr tien, est-il brave d fenseur de la foi de notre Seignor?" (FM, pp. 149-150)? Umbert proclaims that all his agricultural tools now belong to the girl and he witnesses the fury of a wild horse placed in a stockade "que toute l'industrie humaine n'a pu apprivoiser, et dont la fureur est donn e en spectacle au nouveau Prince, comme une figure de l'amour extr me que les insulaires ont pour la libert " (FM, p. 151). He swears to take counsel with the Senate on all serious matters, "en ce qui regarde paix, guerre, nouvelle police, ou privil ge des chefs et des communes" (FM, p. 153), to prevent moral dissolution as best he can, and to give his life, if need be, for the republic. Umbert's family takes no part in the festivities. The only distinguishing marks allowed them are a gold-

plated sword and a purple hat-plume. The Duke and his wife may reside together in the palace and in the manors, their children are raised at the republic's expense and are given tools, animals and other provisions. If they need it, the republic grants them land as well. Umbert's wife Solange, being rich, refused everything but the right to wear the distinctive plume and sword (FM, p. 157). A skeptical reader might wonder how Solange became rich in such an uncommercial society.

The coronation passage shows that the government is based on a social contract. Umbert's oath presents the terms of the contract: the ruler must swear to serve his people and not to abuse the liberty his people have reluctantly ceded to him. The Senate has prepared a booklet criticizing the previous monarch's reign, and Umbert must learn from her mistakes and her good actions alike. His whole life must be devoted to service to the state. In this respect, as well as many others, FM resembles Plato's Republic, a source for a great many other utopias. In the Republic, the Guardians, like Umbert, give up all personal property to remove any temptation to serve themselves instead of the republic (Plato, p. 102 ff). In the great importance accorded to the military, and in the concern for women's equality FM seems close to Plato's ideal. In his Republic, Plato accords considerable

importance to the state religion's function in government, asserting that it is not to be tampered with: "These are matters we do not understand ourselves, and in founding our commonwealth we shall be wise to consult no other religious authority than our national divinity" (Plato, p. 118). It will be recalled that being a Christian is a pre-requisite of holding office, and in the ceremony, Umberto swears to the "révérend père évêque" that he will uphold "privilège canonique, loix et justice dûs à chacun des vénérables prêtres, diacres et clerics de notre mere Sainte Eglise, qui dûment labourent, et ensemencent le champ de l'Evangile" (FM, p. 152). He also promises to keep the monks in their secluded mountain retreats. This is a strange promise unless these are not the same monks Frédéric visits later, who are Parsees, not Christians. But since this is the only reference to monks other than those of the Vallée des Zouhhad, the author must mean them to be Christian and has overlooked a discrepancy in detail.

Since, in the ceremony, it is to the "révérend père évêque" that Umberto swears his oath of office, of which about half deals with religious institutions, and since it is he who crowns Umberto with an olive wreath, it is obvious that the clergy has an intimate place in government. Of course, if the islanders are to be convincing as medieval French, they will have to be devoutly Christian. Religion

occupies a very important place in most other imaginary voyages but Christianity is usually presented in order to be attacked. In the Histoire de Caléjava, Gilbert attacks Catholicism, and in the Aventures de Jacques Massé Tyssot de Patot attacks the foundations of Christianity. The utopia portrayed in FM, however, is devoutly Christian and criticism is limited to an attack on worldly monks. There is no discussion of articles of faith, as in the works by Gilbert and Tyssot de Patot cited above, even though Christianity is of great importance in Manghalour society. For Saint-Jory, Christianity simply needs no defence.

Laval, it is reported, organized the policing of the society and took measures necessary for discipline (FM, p. 105), but we hear nothing more about the police or the nature of the discipline. In FM justice and crime are hardly discussed at all, presumably because there is little need for lawcourts in a society founded upon the people's virtue. Umbert explains crime and justice in one paragraph: "Il n'y a lieu sur la terre habitable . . . où moins on oye parler de voleries, assassinats, et autres délits, même de fautes menues et légères, car avons plutôt l'oeil à obvier que les méchants ne vivent méchamment, qu'à punir les vicieux et délinquants pour leurs forfaits et déportements, puisque c'est chose véritable que

tortures, gibets et supplices ne sont si propres à détourner les pervers du crime que bonne et sage prévoyance à leur ôter les moyens et occasions de méfaire" (FM, pp. 131-132). It is better to prevent crime through education than to punish it. The story of the Parsee merchant demonstrates the proper punishment for crimes. There is no need for vindictiveness; instead of demanding the swindling woman's prosecution, the merchant let her humiliation be sufficient punishment.

There is no mention of finance, taxation or trade in FM, and we have seen that Saint-Jory is vague about the judiciary. Since education is of great importance in creating virtuous citizens, Saint-Jory deals with it in greater detail than he does with other institutions, although he is still far from complete. Because education is most important for maintaining the equality of the sexes, it will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The account of Manghalour's social system is undoubtedly the weakest aspect of FM. We learn a good deal about the government at Umbert's coronation, but it is only indirectly that we gain further information about it. Saint-Jory supplies details in such a haphazard manner that many blank spots remain in our overall view of the social structure. One problem the writer of a utopia faced was to present information while trying to keep the adventure alive

in order to retain the reader's interest. Earlier writers such as Gilbert had given, in a very didactic manner, much more complete accounts of their utopia's organization while virtually forgetting the intrigue. Saint-Jory, on the other hand, takes such pains to incorporate explanations into the thread of the narrative that they pass almost unnoticed. As a result, the picture is far from complete.

The only aspect of the island's organization that is not medieval is education, which is state-controlled; the military nature of the island society, its religion, its agricultural economy, are all feudal. Even the feminist argument, so apparently eighteenth-century in its rationality and egalitarianism, has bearing on the Middle Ages which were a time of feminism with a mystical, not a rational, basis. It was medieval France that created a cult of women and saw the appearance of women who were warriors and leaders. Saint-Jory's feminist ideas are a product of his century's rationalism, but they fit with little difficulty into the medieval social organization outlined in the novel.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

¹L'Apologie du luxe au XVIII^e siècle et "Le Mondain" de Voltaire, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 133.

CHAPTER III

FEMINISM

INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's right to equality with men is the main theme of FM and is the aspect of the work that shows the best organization and the greatest originality. Saint-Jory deals with equality of the sexes in a much more comprehensive way than he does with other aspects of his utopia's social structure. The very foundation of the islanders' happiness is the sharing of government office and everyday duties by both sexes. The Frédéric-Saphire-Susanne relationship bears directly on women's rights; we have seen, in the author's portrayal of the characters of Susanne and Saphire, that he feels women have superior psychological insight. He shows, in Saphire's handling of the merchant's complaint, that they are capable of astute judgement, and in Susanne's brave defence of the battlements and her expulsion of her former companions at the novel's end, that they are capable of decisive action and forthright leadership.

In the eighteenth century, feminism was mostly the domain of lesser writers, in spite of its appeal to the rationalist philosophes whose egalitarianism would have led them, one would think, to assume equality of the sexes.

Important figures such as Diderot, D'Alembert, Voltaire, Helvétius, Rousseau and Montesquieu made their judgments on the matter, and most were either favourable to women's rights or paid lip service to them. The exception was Rousseau who managed to assert that the women were equal to men, but that their place was to provide the emotional focus for husband and children.¹ Montesquieu took a very different view in "Lettre XXXVIII" of the Lettres persanes (1721) and blamed education alone for women's condition in two strongly feminist pages in which Rica relates what he heard from "un philosophe très galant" (Montesquieu, p. 74), who spoke of French women: "L'empire que nous avons sur elles est une véritable tyrannie; elles ne nous l'ont laissé prendre que parce qu'elles ont plus de douceur que nous, et par conséquent, plus d'humanité et de raison. Ces avantages qui devaient sans doute leur donner la supériorité, si nous avions été raisonnables, la leur ont fait perdre, parce que nous ne le sommes point Nous employons toutes sortes de moyens pour leur abattre le courage; les forces seraient égales si l'éducation l'était aussi. Eprouvons-les dans les talents que l'éducation n'a point affaiblis, et nous verrons si nous sommes si forts" (Montesquieu, pp. 74-75). In the next paragraph he cites the examples of the Egyptians and Babylonians "les peuples les plus polis", among whom women had authority

over their husbands, and the Sauro mates, who, however, were excessively servile to their wives. Montesquieu affirms that woman achieves, through beauty, a natural, irresistible and universal domination, unlike male supremists who considered man's domination a universal phenomenon.

Léon Abensour thinks it possible that the passages in the Esprit des lois (1748) in which Montesquieu justifies governments led by women were inspired by the seventeenth-century feminist Poullain de la Barre, whose De l'Egalité des deux sexes (1673) defended such governments in almost the same terms (Abensour, p. xvi). Bernard Magné credits the same work with inspiring the feminist "Lettre XXXVIII", so that Rica's "philosophe très galant" would be none other than Poullain de la Barre.²

In the seventeenth century, feminism was not a social issue, but a philosophical and religious one, a matter of speculation, not of social concern,³ since Louis XIV's paternalistic reign was little favourable to the development of the idea of equality of the sexes (Abensour, p. xx). Writers who sought to establish women's equality were not numerous, but those who did so based their defence on classical authors or the Bible. Marie de Jars de Gournay sought justification for her sex's equality through classical authors in De l'Egalité des

hommes et des femmes (1612).⁴ She was one of the first to associate faulty upbringing with women's subordination.

As these seventeenth-century works appeared, anti-feminism arose and a number of writers launched vitriolic, trifling attacks on women. The Sieur de Ferville's Cacogynie ou méchanceté des femmes appeared in 1617, and the same year appeared Olivier's Alphabet de l'imperfection et malice des femmes, which found a fault in women for each letter of the alphabet. It was very popular at the time of publication and regained its popularity more than a century later when it was reprinted in 1729 and 1732 under the title La Malice des femmes, dédiée à la plus méchante du monde (Ascoli, p. 45).

Despite the popularity in the 1730's of such frivolous publications, feminism had changed significantly after the appearance of Poullain de la Barre's De l'Egalité des deux sexes (1673), the work that established that the brains of men and women were the same and equally susceptible to the truth. No writer in the eighteenth century seriously questioned that women were not by nature inferior to men. Women might be different, and in Rousseau's case their difference might amount to inferiority in practice, but all writers took pains to avoid saying that they were naturally inferior.

By Saint-Jory's time, women's rights had become a

social issue. The moderate reformers of the late seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century, of whom Fleury, Fénelon and Mme de Lambert are the most notable, pleaded for women's right to an education while refusing to consider them suited for rôles other than the traditional ones of wife and mother. The years 1725 to 1760 were the richest in the production of feminist literature (Ascoli, p. 172), and by the time FM appeared, feminists were much more radical than those who had advocated better education for women. The new critics even envisioned new rôles for women. Yet none was ever to surpass the radical proposals or rational argument of Poullain de la Barre. In the 1730's Mlle Archambault and Desbalières were advocating, in the Mercure de France, women's employment in all professions, including the government and the military. A number of plays and novels of the 1720's and 1730's dealt with situations in which women were in control of the government, such as Le Grand's Les Amazones modernes (1727), Marivaux' La Nouvelle colonie (1729), and Desfontaines' Voyage du nouveau Gulliver (1730). While these works considered the possibility of woman's prominence in public life, they were not always favourable to this attitude. A number of plays contained a scene against men, such as Nivelles de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode (1733) and Destouches' Les Philosophes amoureux (1730) (Ascoli, p. 180). The number of such

productions attests to people's interest in feminist questions, but feminism never entered the mainstream of the rationalist movement, for after 1760 the question almost disappeared from literature and very little real change had taken place in women's status or education. Illiteracy among women remained almost as high at the end of the century as it had been at the beginning, and it was especially high outside Paris. In the Dauphiné, nine women in 100 were literate in 1700, sixteen were in 1800, (Abensour, p. 57).

Nevertheless, at this time women enjoyed considerable importance at court and in the social life of the nobility. They were instrumental in forming the literary taste of the nation. The salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were nearly all conducted by women, and Mme de Lambert's influence in the creation of academicians is well known. Yet these women of power and influence remained a privileged few who enjoyed their exceptional positions and prestige but, except for Mme de Lambert to a limited extent, they were little concerned with feminism as a cause. Whatever emancipation did take place affected only the women of the nobility and haute bourgeoisie, whose marriages of convenience gave practical sexual freedom to women, making fidelity the exception, not the rule.⁵ Such marriages enabled them to

lead independent lives, free from most marital obligations, and to participate more and more in nearly all domains of social activity (Abensour, p. 355). Yet this emancipation touched only a tiny percentage of all women; the near-totality were still inferior to men in the eyes of the law and the Church.

To all eighteenth-century feminists, education was of the greatest importance since all, like Poullain de la Barre, agreed that women were the intellectual equals of men. Fénelon, Fleury and Mme de Lambert sought to educate women to be better at performing their duties. Other feminists believed that since women had learned rôles imposed by men, their status was merely a matter of habit. Education alone could change their status and prepare them for new rôles. Since Saint-Jory belongs to the second group, education is heavily stressed in FM, particularly in so far as it improves women's physical well-being.

CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM AND FEMINISM IN LES FEMMES MILITAIRES

Proof that Saint-Jory was not simply profiting from an issue in vogue by making feminism the theme of FM is to be found in another of his works, one written twenty-four years earlier, Aventures secrètes arrivées au siège de Constantinople (1711), and contained, in shortened form, in his Oeuvres mêlees (1735) under the title of Anecdotes turques. This adventure novel has the same elements as FM: Orientalism (here in the form of a harem intrigue), militarism, love episodes and some implicit feminism. A Genovese, Catane, and a Greek soldier, Thamar, are captured after an heroic resistance by the Turks beseiging Constantinople. The Turks discover that the Greek is a woman and that she is in love with Catane. The rest of the novel tells of their protection by a benevolent officer, their separation and eventual escape and return to Italy. Although the work contains no systematic defence of women's rights, Thamar is the prototype of Saint-Jory's female warriors in FM who gain equality by proving their military prowess.

On Manghalour, the basis of equality is physical. We have already seen in the first chapter that women were granted equality and the right to knighthood because of their valour in the island's defence, and on condition that

they receive the same education as men. Their equality retains its physical basis, for they not only continue to be guardians of the castles and fortresses, but go hunting and work with men on public projects (FM, p. 94). While she is in Umbert's home, Susanne has a conversation with Justine, his daughter, about French women who do no physical labour: "Notre emploi est de plaire, voilà tout, il n'y a même parmi nous que les femmes du commun qui soient assujetties aux soins roturiers du ménage" (FM, p. 93). Justine replies that women in France are hardly better than household pets, "oiselets en cage, pour donner plaisir aux regardants" (FM, p. 93), whereas the women of Manghalour are much better off: "Or, ne sommes nous autres, réduites à si chétif état, n'avons à obéir qu'à vertu et raison, les hommes ne nous regardent nullement comme d'espèce autre que la leur" (FM, p. 94). Saint-Jory deals with costume at some length (FM, pp. 86-94) as he contrasts the simple, practical, old-fashioned dress of the island women with the frivolity of French fashion that obliges women to hide their natural beauty "sous artifices fantastiques" (FM, p. 93). When she witnesses a dance performed by Frédéric, Susanne and Sapphire for the amusement of the family, Solange is shocked by the licentious movements which she calls "toutes façons vénériennes dont use la jeunesse trop alléchée et friandé

de plaisirs désordonnés" (FM, p. 139). Since later she confesses to Saphire that what shocked her most were "les grands mouvements de la danse [qui] balottent un peu votre embonpoint" (FM, p. 141), this criticism of loose French manners seems to be intended as much for the reader's amusement as to point out the islanders' modesty.

Before they are allowed to marry, the women of Manghalour must prove their marital skill in an archery contest conducted every Sunday after vespers. Saint-Jory compares the competition to the more brutal practice of the Sauromates, a people referred to also in Montesquieu's "Lettre XXXVIII" (Montesquieu, p. 75) who, according to Hippocrates (FM, p. 95), remained virgins until they had killed three men of the enemy. On Manghalour, all women above eleven years must be able to shoot a moving target three times to earn a certificate allowing them to bear arms for the island, "ce qui vaut autant que dire nubiles ou dignes de commander à des enfants courageux" (FM, p. 97). And in the choice of a husband, the state and the girl's parents must give their approval (FM, p. 97). Women use their skill in hunting with the men; the entire Umbert family accompanies Frédéric on the boar hunt, the women using the same weapons as the men, except that they are not quite as heavy. Such is the importance given to skill with weapons that the three Europeans soon find themselves

doing an hour of archery practice every day.

In spite of equality, men and women retain their traditional rôles within the family. Umbert is not oppressively authoritarian, but he is definitely the family leader. Since Umbert's family are the only islanders portrayed with any depth, they are taken to be typical of all islanders, just as Frédéric, Susanne and Sapphire are taken to be typical Europeans, and we assume Umbert's attitudes to be common ones.

There are recognized limits to women's physical prowess. They are still the weaker sex, for in the military, the women are defenders, whereas the men form assault troops or do the heavy work involved in defence. Plato had given a similar task to the wives of the Guardians of his Republic. They were warriors, though weaker than men: "They will be like watch-dogs which take their part either in guarding the fold or in hunting and share every task so far as their strength allows" (Plato, p. 168). He concludes that every occupation is open to both sexes since natural gifts are distributed equally between them (Plato, p. 153). Education, therefore, must be indential for both sexes: "If we are to set women to the same tasks as men, we much teach them the same things. They must have the same two branches of training for mind and body and be taught the art of war, and they must

receive the same treatment" (Plato, p. 149).

The same division of education into physical and intellectual branches is found in FM although Saint-Jory emphasizes physical training and attaches considerably less importance to academic learning than did Plato. The author does not inform us how the schools are set up, nor whether boys and girls are educated together. He mentions not a word of the subjects taught, although there must be some academic education, for he describes in some detail a system of rewards for good students that greatly reduces competitiveness and vanity. The best students crown their parents with a wreath, and the parents receive the praise. A concession is made to their self-esteem so that they will continue to work with ardour: their school-friends, parents and neighbours congratulate them at a day-long celebration in their parents' home (FM, pp. 134-135).

Saint-Jory deals with physical education in considerably more detail. He criticized the European habit of developing one half of the body at the expense of the other. On Manghalour the children learn to be ambidextrous and to use both their feet with equal skill. As a result they are much more agile than Europeans and, when Frédéric attempts to fence with a mere youth, he is easily beaten. Education even manages to reduce, though not eliminate, differences of physique and manner so that

sexual distinction is blurred: "Les deux sexes vêtus à peu près l'un comme l'autre me paraissaient être le même, moins par la ressemblance des habits, que par une fierté noble qui brillait sur le visage des filles, et une modestie charmante qui décorait celui des hommes, de sorte que la nature, corrigée par l'éducation, laissait à l'instinct plutôt qu'aux yeux à démêler la différence" (FM, p. 135). Thus Saint-Jory seeks to correct through education that which for many feminists was the only concession to masculine superiority: their greater physical strength. Plato accepted women's physical weakness as unchangeable, but Saint-Jory obviously considered all aspects of their status to have been learned. In this matter he shows the influence of Fleury and Fénelon, reformers of education of the late seventeenth century, whose greatest legacy was an unshakeable faith in the power of education.

The idea, if not the practice, of compulsory education for both sexes dates from only 1724, when a royal decree declared that there should be school-teachers where no convent schools existed (Abensour, p. 52). Elementary education for girls was provided by convent schools run mainly by Ursuline, but also by Visitandine and Bernardine, nuns. They paralleled the Jesuit schools for boys and provided rudimentary instruction in sewing

and embroidery (Abensour, p. 63). Other church-run institutions provided free elementary education for both sexes. The écoles de charité, located in convents, were free for the poor and accepted bourgeois children for a fee, while the petites écoles which rivalled them had some female lay teachers. By 1736, there were almost as many of these petites écoles for girls (170) as for boys (190) (Abensour, p. 64).

Though it was endorsed by the central government, elementary education was left mostly to local officials or clerics, so that it varied greatly in quality from region to region. Popular feeling was against primary education, especially for girls (Abensour, p. 65). The idea of education for all soon fell into disfavour for various reasons. Among these were the low levels of education of the nuns and lay teachers, the shortage of school buildings and financial difficulties.

The reformers Fleury, Fénelon and Mme de Lambert were specific about the education girls should receive, but they always thought of individual instruction. The daughters of the bourgeoisie usually spent one year in a convent to prepare for first communion, but were taught mostly at home. The mother's elementary religious instruction was supplemented by numerous tutors, one for each subject, who taught a few academic subjects, such as

writing and geography, perhaps some French or Latin, but emphasized the social talents of dancing and music. Consequently, the girls had to educate themselves through their own reading if they wished to learn other subjects (Abensour, p. 49). They received no physical training and no education in household duties. It is precisely this lack of preparation for their everyday rôles that Fleury and Fénelon criticize, and of course, when they advocate educational reform, they have in mind bourgeois or noble girls, not the daughters of artisans and peasants.

Given the condition of women's education at the time, Fleury certainly appears progressive when he advocates that women be enlightened and reasonable (Cherel, p. 509). Although it had been written in 1675, his Traité du choix et de la méthode des études appeared in 1686, or one year before Fénelon's Traité de l'éducation des filles. It remained popular in the following century (Larochelle, p. 44). The work had considerable influence on Fénelon, who was précepteur to the Duc de Bourgogne when Fleury was sous-précepteur. He used most of the main ideas of the Traité du choix in his Traité de l'éducation des filles (Larochelle, p. 45). Both thought a somewhat Spartan physical education to be important. Both had a very utilitarian attitude to education; Fleury thought that education was not for amusement or mental discipline,

but was to form men to fulfill duties for the state, and women to become better in their rôles in the home (Larochelle, p. 47). Both attacked luxury and extolled the virtues of the frugal, laborious ancients, Fleury in another work, Moeurs des Israélites et des chrétiens, and Fénelon in Télémaque (Larochelle, p. 44), and both had a great distrust of women and feared exposing them completely to all aspects of education.

Fleury held the equal-but-different point of view that accorded women equality in theory, but he refused to consider any change in their status. He reasoned that women had certain differences, usually deficiencies, that made them incapable of the same pursuits as men. Fleury grants them this sort of equality in his Traité du choix, "comme si leurs âmes étaient d'une autre espèce que celle des hommes, comme si elles n'avaient pas, aussi bien que nous, une raison à conduire, une volonté à régler, des passions à combattre, une santé à conserver, des biens à gouverner, ou s'il leur était plus facile qu'à nous de satisfaire à tous ces devoirs sans rien apprendre".⁶ He criticizes the frivolity of contemporary education for women in the same work: "Ce sera sans doute un grand paradoxe de soutenir que les filles doivent apprendre autre chose que leur catéchisme, la couture et divers petits ouvrages: chanter, danser et s'habiller à la mode, faire

bien la révérence et parler civilement; car voilà en quoi consiste, pour l'ordinaire, toute leur éducation".⁷ Yet the main purpose of study seems to be to prevent women from lapsing into a natural laziness that brings about moral corruption. Women have certain characteristics that exclude them from most areas of study, "moins d'application, moins de patience pour raisonner de suite [et] moins de courage et de fermeté que les hommes".⁸ Fleury approves only a few subjects as suitable for girls, and allows them only as much as they need to know, lest too much learning make them vain: reading, writing, grammar, simple arithmetic and the fundamentals of religion, domestic economy and some law to help them better manage their estates (Cherel, p. 509).

The same utilitarianism and distrust of women are shown in Fénelon's Traité de l'éducation des filles (1687), a work influential in the following century, judging from its eleven editions between 1688 and 1740. He, too, grants women equality in theory; it is the faculty of reason that makes them men's equals, yet they have virtues and faults, peculiar to their own sex, that make them unfit for men's occupations.⁹ Fénelon is adamant on this point and may be answering Poullain de la Barre's De l'égalité des deux sexes (1673), published only two years before the composition of the Traité de l'éducation des filles (published in 1687),

but written in 1675), when he writes: "Elles peuvent se passer de certaines connaissances étendues qui appartiennent à la politique, à l'art militaire, à la jurisprudence, à la philosophie et à la théologie" (Fénelon, p. 2). He associates their physical weakness with moral laxity when he claims that they are suited for only moderate exercise since their bodies and souls are not as robust as those of men (Fénelon, p. 2).

Women have numerous faults which Fénelon considers to be inherent and not learned, although they can be corrected through education or by women themselves, using their own reason. The most noteworthy of these defects are: timorousness, talkativeness, flattery, duplicity, jealousy, false modesty and, worst of all, vanity (Fénelon, pp. 57-60). Since men's paths to fame are closed to them, they make up for their loss through cultivating beauty and conversation (Fénelon, p. 61). Not until Mme de Lambert will women's frivolity and accompanying faults, attacked so strongly by Fleury and Fénelon, be regarded as products of their upbringing, and not as natural defects.¹⁰ Fénelon goes so far as to blame national calamities on women's faults. They are responsible for the evil men do, since it is women who are responsible for their sons' early instruction, and it is women who inspire passions in them when they are older. The dissoluteness of women has

caused wars, revolutions, and innovations in religion (Fénelon, p. 3). They are even responsible for the evils of luxury, provoked by the interest in fashion of vain women "[qui] ont fait passer pour Gaulois ridicules tous ceux qui ont voulu conserver la gravité et la simplicité des mœurs anciennes" (Fénelon, pp. 61-62). If women are not kept busy their imagination wanders, they begin to read romances and plays that feed their vanity until, finally, they become dissatisfied with simply keeping a household (Fénelon, p. 5).

The message repeated over and over in De l'éducation is that nothing must interfere with a woman's duties in the home. Since well-run households make the prosperity of a nation, a woman's task is of the utmost importance and Fénelon continually exalts her responsibilities. A household is like a little republic with a woman in charge (Fénelon, p. 67). She is in charge of the education of boys to a certain age, of girls till they marry or enter a convent, she supervises servants, keeps accounts, and must see that the household runs honorably and economically (Fénelon, p. 65). Fénelon could not imagine a woman who was neither a nun nor a wife. Choosing a third path would seem to be an unnatural act, since women's qualities incline them naturally to domestic tasks: "La nature leur a donné en partage l'industrie, la propreté

et l'économie pour les occuper tranquillement dans leurs maisons" (Fénelon, p. 2). The whole point of education, as Fénelon saw it, was to prepare women for the tasks they will have to do all their lives, and not to burden them with any knowledge that cannot be put to use. Consequently, all his recommendations are extremely cautious. A woman should know a little of the grammar of her native language, enough arithmetic to keep accounts, and some law, so that she can better manage her estate. She may read history, provided that she avoids vanity and affection, and she may learn Latin if she is careful to conceal her knowledge. Spanish and Italian, music and poetry are dangerous because they inflame the passions (Fénelon, pp. 72-75).

Fénelon gives no specific programme for physical education, but, as in all things, he counsels moderation. He fears intense pleasures "accoutument à une agitation de corps immodeste pour une fille" (Fénelon, p. 22).

Fénelon's writings were far from being merely speculative. He had had some first-hand experience in girls' instruction and had some direct influence on education. Education in the countryside began during his episcopacy, and in 1701 he approved the establishment in his diocese of the teaching congregation of Saint François de Sales for girls (Larochelle, p. 116). From 1678 he had been in

charge of the school for girls recently converted to Catholicism, the Nouvelles-Catholiques, but as superior to the nuns, he had little contact with the girls themselves (Cherel, p. 507). His work had an immediate effect on Mme de Maintenon, who managed Saint-Cyr according to his principles from 1686 when it was founded by royal decree as a free boarding school. Its purpose was to prepare 250 daughters of the bourgeoisie and poor nobility for an advantageous marriage, or, failing that, for entry into a convent. Fénelon and Mme de Maintenon aimed at training girls of the same social classes for domestic administration, but whereas Fénelon placed education at home, at Saint-Cyr girls were isolated from their families for nearly all their youth. They remained at the school from age seven to twenty and could receive visits from their family only four times a year, and then only in the presence of a surveillante (Larochelle, p. 135). The programme was more strictly practical than Fenelon's and stressed the feminine manual skills of sewing, embroidery and cooking. Mme de Maintenon was so much more fearful than Fénelon of any knowledge unrelated to the home that she considered seven or eight books sufficient to give girls all the knowledge they needed. She condemned all profane literature, since she thought girls' curiosity dangerous and insatiable. Far from advocating a greater rôle for women, she proclaimed

the superiority of men in a remarkable passage from a letter "A la classe jaune" (1700): "Nous sommes pour obéir toute la vie . . . Dieu, de tout temps, a voulu que nous obéissions; il créa la première femme sujette à l'homme" (Larochelle, p. 170).

Though he was in total sympathy with all Mme de Maintenon's efforts at Saint-Cyr, Fénelon was not nearly as narrow-minded about women as was his disciple. He wanted to develop in women, as mistresses of households, a sense of responsibility and the ability to command (Larochelle, p. 106). Fleury and Fénelon had apprehensions about creating the sort of proud, pedantic women Molière had a little earlier ridiculed in Les Femmes savantes (1672), but they firmly established women's right to an education, no matter how restricted. Because of their influence no one in the following century would think of denying women that right (Ascoli, pp. 56-57). By the time Mme de Lambert began writing, the ideas of Fleury and Fénelon on women's education were well known (Ascoli, p. 56). She admitted that she got her ideas for the education of her son from Télémaque, and for her daughter, from De l'éducation,¹¹ although her precepts have none of the restrictive utilitarianism of Fénelon's.

In Avis d'une mère à sa fille, written about 1702 but not published until 1726, Mme de Lambert blames

women's frivolity on men's exclusive control of the professions in almost the same words as Fénelon: "Les filles naissent avec un désir violent de plaire. Comme elles trouvent fermés les chemins qui conduisent à la gloire et à l'autorité, elles prennent une autre route pour y arriver, et se dédommager par les agréments"

(Avis d'une mère, pp. 69-70). Whereas Fénelon accepted their exclusion as natural and seemed to blame women for even seeking another outlet for ambition, Mme de Lambert put the blame for their frivolity squarely on men: "Comme on ne les occupe à rien de solide, et qu'elles ne sont dans la suite de leur vie chargés, ni du soin de leur fortune, ni de la conduite de leurs affaires, elles ne sont livrées qu'à leurs plaisirs" (Avis d'une mère, p. 86). Although in Réflexions nouvelles sur les femmes, which was written towards 1700 and published in 1727, she declared that men had gained authority over women by force, and not by natural law (Réflexions, p. 177), she was, like Fleury and Fénelon, afraid of any change in women's status that would upset the social order. Throughout her advice to her daughter, she insists on staying within the bounds of social convention. Her greatest concern is for reputation and her highest goal is respectability.

She had none of Fénelon's fear of women's lively imagination and recommended a much broader education for

her daughter. Her aim was to raise a cultivated woman, familiar with almost all branches of learning. She wrote in Réflexions: "Les femmes ne peuvent-elles pas dire aux hommes: 'Quel droit avez-vous de nous défendre l'étude des sciences et des beaux-arts'? Celles qui s'y sont attachées, n'y ont-elles pas réussi et dans le sublime et dans l'agréable?" (p. 182) She accused Molière of forever poisoning attitudes to learned women with his Femmes savantes, so that women turned from innocent intellectual pursuits to corrupting pleasures when they saw that no more shame was attached to them than to learning (Réflexions, p. 176). She would allow her daughter to read novels and poetry, to study history, ancient and French, philosophy, and Latin, as it is the language of the Church, but she shares Fénelon's fear of learning Italian, the language of love (Avis d'une mère, p. 81).

In spite of her protest, in Réflexions, that there is no reason why women should not study the sciences, she echoes, in Avis d'une mère, Fénelon's warning that girls should have as much modesty concerning the sciences as they do concerning vice (Avis d'une mère, p. 83). She complains that women do not know when they have reached their limit in knowledge: "Nous avons les lumières propres et nécessaires à notre bien-être; mais nous ne voulons pas nous en tenir là: nous courons après des vérités qui ne

sont pas faites pour nous. Avant que de nous engager à des recherches qui sont au-dessus de nos connaissances, il faudrait savoir quelle étendue peuvent avoir nos lumières" (Avis d'une mère, p. 83).

Mme de Lambert believed that women understand better and more spontaneously than men. This was because of their finer feelings rather than greater intelligence: "Un seul mouvement du coeur a plus de crédit sur l'âme, que toutes les sentences des philosophes" (Réflexions, p. 187). Women best find happiness exploiting the talents nature has provided them and which men have conceded to be their exclusive domain: imagination, sensitivity and taste. She believed men and women to be inherently different, and she cherished those differences. Each sex has a certain domain; woman's greatest virtue is modesty, and man's is valour, and a woman gets the greatest satisfaction from the Platonic sort of love that springs from the intensity of these differences. Nowhere in Avis d'une mère does Mme de Lambert deal with the practical domestic training or physical education that Fénelon found so important; she is more concerned that her daughter be able to adapt a broad, academic education to life so that she may enjoy to the full her station in society.

The advocates of women's education, Fleury, Fénelon and Mme de Lambert were so politically conservative, so

afraid of altering women's rôles, that they could hardly be called feminists, even though their principles no doubt did bring about real changes in a number of families.

Feminists of the following two decades, the 1720's and 1730's, took a much more radical approach when they advocated the upset of the status quo to allow women access to all professions. Their common inspiration was the work of Poullain de la Barre, an ardent disciple of Descartes, whose De l'égalité des deux sexes (1673) laid the foundations for their type of feminism by applying the Cartesian method to the question of women's status. It was followed by two other works, De l'éducation des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dans les moeurs (1674) and De l'excellence des hommes, contre l'égalité des sexes (1675). The latter was a purported refutation of his own work, but it was really a defence written because the attack he expected never came.

After he establishes, in De l'égalité des deux sexes, that the brains of both sexes are identical and therefore equally susceptible to reason (Poullain de la Barre, p. 112), he concludes that women can study science because it is founded on truths accessible to all. Since all sciences, understood in the broadest sense, are of the same nature, women can study law, politics, geography, history, theology, grammar and eloquence. To apply this

learning, they should be able to enter all professions and become teachers, lawyers, judges, ecclesiastics, diplomats, queens and army generals. In short, he claimed: "Il faut reconnaître que les femmes sont propres à tout" (Poullain de la Barre, p. 171). He laments that even though young girls are better than boys in wit, skill and diligence, only young men are educated, "pendant qu'on laisse languir les femmes dans l'oisiveté, dans la mollesse et dans l'ignorance" (Poullain de la Barre, p. 36). As for the objection against educated women, in De l'éducation des dames, Poullain finds that true savantes are modest and pleasant, since knowledge engenders humility.¹²

Women have certain qualities that make them especially suited for men's professions: a natural gift for eloquence suits them for the ministry and the law, their interest in intrigues suits them for history, and their gift for curing, for medicine (Poullain de la Barre, pp. 49-56).

A number of supposed faults are really attributes; for Poullain, women's fear is modesty, avarice is economy, and chatter is aptitude for conversation.¹³ All women's faults

are due to their upbringing and can be easily corrected because they are taught to fear, to be vain, and to gossip.¹⁴

Present attitudes to women, he finds, are not founded on reason, but on habit, and it is habit alone that leaves us shocked at the idea of women in the professions.¹⁵ He

finds the origin of women's inferior status to be in primitive society which placed a premium on physical strength and gave men the idea that physical superiority implied superiority in other areas (Poullain de la Barre, p. 17). Since women were occupied with raising children, they were excluded from decision-making and intellectual activity. By complimenting women on their toilette, and then showing more consideration for them, men forced women into frivolity (Ascoli, p. 164).

Except for his possible influence on Montesquieu, mentioned in the third chapter, and on the few radical feminists of a half-century later including Saint-Jory, Poullain de la Barre had a negligible effect on the mainstream of rational thinking, a surprising fact considering his originality in applying the Cartesian method to social questions. His greatest contribution to the feminist argument of later writers such as Saint-Jory was his recognition of society's influence in forming individuals. Thus it was clear to later writers, less conservative than the educators we have discussed, that there was nothing to stand in the way of a change in women's rôles in society. Saint-Jory takes up Poullain de la Barre's idea that man's domination is at root physical, not moral or intellectual, when he explains how sexual differences are reduced as much as possible through physical education (FM, p. 135).

The idea that women should occupy positions in the Church, government or the military was Poullain's most scandalous suggestion. The idea was taken up by a number of writers, among them Mlle Archambault, whose dispute with a male supremacist, M. Simonnet, appeared in the Mercure de France of January 1735 and January 1737. Men and women have the same capacities in everything, she writes, except that men are somewhat stronger and more apt at the sciences.¹⁶ In reply to Simonnet's claim that the military has always been exclusively masculine, she valiantly defends their role when she writes, with exaggeration: "Elles ont porté l'héroïsme ou plus haut degré et . . .elles ont atteint au point ou ceux-ci n'ont fait qu'aspirer".¹⁷ Yet for all her radical proclamations, Mlle Archambault is remarkably modest about applying her thesis to reality.¹⁸ All she seems to seek is approval of the idea that women could, theoretically, be warriors; women, "pour la beauté et l'harmonie du monde", should be only advisors, not occupy important positions, since "le bon ordre" has allotted each sex certain occupations that should not be disturbed.¹⁹

Mlle Archambault found a supporter in Desbalières, a clerk in the Bureau de la guerre who wrote in the Mercure de France that women would make fine warriors. Upbringing alone is responsible for their absence from the military; all that is needed to bring out their qualities is a change

in customs, for we are what habit has made us.²⁰

The idea of women as warriors was far from being considered a ridiculous fantasy in the 1720's and 1730's. Perhaps because advocating that women should occupy positions of power in government or the military was the most radical proposal a feminist could make, several writers imagined such situations in their work. One was Marivaux in La Nouvelle colonie, ou la ligue des femmes, a play which was performed in 1729 and published in a new version only in 1750 with the title of La Colonie. Marivaux portrayed men and women stranded on an island where they divided into two groups because of the women's demands for equality. The play has a number of forcefully presented feminist arguments. One woman complains that a woman is considered by men to be "la première de toutes les bagatelles".²¹ Another demands admittance to all professions, including the military: "Sachez que jusqu'ici nous n'avons été poltronnes que par éducation".²² Yet the two most forceful women are made to seem ridiculous when one of the men falsely reports an impending invasion; the women quickly return to their mates when faced with the necessity of actually bearing arms.

For Marivaux, the military was simply beyond women's capabilities, but Le Grand thought differently. He imagined, in Les Amazones modernes which was performed in 1727, an island where women are in

very capable control of all institutions, including the military, and use captured men as slaves. They agree to re-enter men's society, but only after men accept these demands: "Primo, point de subordination entre le mari et la femme . . . Secundo: Les femmes pourront étudier, avoir leurs collèges et leurs universités, parler grec et latin . . . Tertio: Elles pourront commander les armées et aspirer aux charges les plus importantes de la justice et de la finance . . . Ultimo: Nous voulons qu'il soit aussi honteux pour les hommes de trahir la foi conjugale qu'il a été jusqu'ici pour les femmes, et que ces messieurs ne se fassent pas une gloire d'une action dont ils nous font un crime".²³

Desfontaines' Voyage du nouveau Gulliver (1731) takes the inversion of roles a step farther than Le Grand had done and depicts men as concubines in the harem of the Queen of the island of Babilary. The novel has erotic interest of a somewhat homosexual nature in its complete reversal of sexual roles; the males of the harem are as envious and gossipy as women are supposed to be, and the women occupy all administrative positions. Education is held responsible for all behaviour; their physical training in youth makes the women robust and furious warriors. In other countries, women are ignorant because men, fearing their vanity, forbid them to study.²⁴ On the one hand, Desfontaines

warns women that their aversion to study guarantees men's domination for at least another century in France and, on the other hand, warns men that if they persist in their ignorance and effeminacy, as did the Babilarian men, the same revolution will take place in France. Doubtful though his point might be, Desfontaines, while he does not openly advocate women's employment in positions of power, points out the arbitrary nature of feminine and masculine behaviour and the importance of education in forming it.

When Saint-Jory, in FM, depicted women as rulers and warriors, he was dealing with a question of sufficient importance to concern a number of contemporary playwrights and novelists. The ideas of these writers, including Saint-Jory, were not merely utopian fantasies. They could recall real female leaders of the previous century who fought with La Fronde: Mme de Longueville, the Princesse de Condé, la Grande Mademoiselle (la Duchesse de Montpensier) and the Maréchale de Guébriant (Abensour, p. ix). They knew of the queens of England, of the Germanic tribes, and, in France, could think back to medieval noblewomen who enjoyed not only a cult of their sex, but more actual legal responsibility than women of their own time.

When Saint-Jory advocated that women receive an education, he was breaking no new ground. The reformers discussed, Fleury, Fénelon and Mme de Lambert, had done all

that work before, and no writer of Saint-Jory's time would dare to deny them, in principle at least, that right. When he advocated women's employment in all professions, he departed from the reformers and was drawing on ideas presented earlier by Poullain de la Barre, ideas that a number of writers of his time had taken up, so that by 1735 the idea of women in masculine rôles was much in vogue. Yet when he depicted, in all seriousness, women in a fictional society fully sharing duties and responsibilities with men, though his views were still no more radical than those of Poullain de la Barre, he parted company with other playwrights and novelists of the time who dealt with such situations with considerable irony. In no sense can his feminism be seen merely as a means of catering to contemporary literary taste.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

¹ Rousselot, Histoire de l'éducation des femmes en France, II, 194.

² Magné, "Une Source de la lettre persane XXVIII? L'Egalité des deux sexes de Poullain de la Barre", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France (janvier-février 1968), pp. 407-414.

³ Grappin, "Notes sur un féministe oublié: le Cartésien Poullain de la Barre", Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France (1913), p. 859.

⁴ Piéron, "De l'influence sociale des principes cartésiens: un précurseur inconnu du féminisme et de la Révolution: Poullain de la Barre", Revue de synthèse historique, V (juillet-décembre 1902), pp. 154-155.

⁵ Cf. Nivelles de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode (1735).

⁶ Fleury, p. 339. Quoted by Larochelle, p. 56.

⁷ Fleury, p. 14. Quoted by Gréard, L'Education des femmes par les femmes, p. 16.

⁸ Fleury, pp. 264-265. Quoted by Ascoli, pp. 55-56.

⁹ Gréard, op.cit., p. 21.

¹⁰ Snyders, La Pédagogie en France aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, p. 165.

¹¹ Gréard, op.cit., p. 200.

¹² Stock, Poullain de la Barre: a Seventeenth-Century Feminist, p. 147.

¹³ Piéron, op.cit., p. 183.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁵ Stock, op.cit., p. 140.

¹⁶ "Réflexions de Mlle Archambault sur la réponse de M. Simonnet à la question: 'Qui de l'homme ou de la femme est plus capable de constance?' Mercure de France (janvier 1735), p. 16.

¹⁷ "Réponse de Mlle Archambault à la réplique de M. Simonnet", Mercure de France (janvier 1737), p. 27.

¹⁸ Abensour, p. 421. He discusses the feeble practical demands of Mlle Archambault and later feminists, Mme de Puisieulx and Mme de Coicy.

¹⁹ "Réponse de Mlle Archambault . . .", p. 31.

²⁰ "Extrait d'une lettre de M. Desbalières, commis au Bureau de la guerre, sur la question de l'égalité des sexes, etc.", Mercure de France (avril 1737), p. 187.

²¹ Théâtre complet, p. 655.

²² Ibid., p. 662.

²³ Oeuvres de théâtre, IV, p. 375.

²⁴ Desfontaines, The Travels of Mr. John Gulliver, Son to Captain Lemuel Gulliver, I, p. 66.

CHAPTER IV
CONTEMPORARY LITERARY VOGUES
MEDIEVALISM

The medieval background of FM unites the themes of militarism and feminism. The militaristic Middle Ages provide an apt basis for the society of Manghalour. It is pointless to speculate whether Saint-Jory's interest in military matters, shown in his lovingly detailed descriptions of strategy and artillery, led him to an interest in medieval society, or whether the reverse took place; the two fields of interest fit perfectly together. Female soldiers and governors seem less out of place in a medieval than an eighteenth-century setting, partly because of the cult of women that existed at that time, and partly because in practical life women of the Middle Ages benefited from greater legal and political rights than the women of 1735. Léon Abensour writes of their status: "La femme soldat, législateur, juge, administrateur, ne fut pas, au XII^e et XIII^e siècles, une exception, mieux, que la France fut faite presque autant par la femme noble que par le baron" (Abensour, p. iv). He discusses their special rights in certain French provinces, notably in the North-East and parts of the Midi, where women had the right to sit on the town or village assembly if they were widows

or girls owning a house or business. He concludes: "De ces faits, et de bien d'autres, on peut conclure que le sexe n'était nullement un obstacle à l'exercice des droits politiques et que la roturière, comme la femme noble, les possédait toujours virtuellement, quitte à ne les exercer effectivement que lorsqu'ils ne l'étaient pas en son nom par son mari (Abensour, p. iv). Part of Saint-Jory's interest in the Middle Ages is in no doubt linked to medieval attitudes to women, but there is no way of knowing the extent of his knowledge of women's political status at that time since investigation into medieval society had just started towards the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Lack of knowledge of medieval France did not prevent Old French from coming into vogue as a taste for the simple rustic manner of medieval speech grew in literary circles starting towards 1710. The scarcity of knowledge about medieval language and society did not hamper the enthusiasm of a number of minor poets and contributors to the Mercure galant and the Mercure de France, who wrote about 1710 in the style marotique (an approximation of medieval speech), which depended for its charm upon reviving old expressions. By 1719 the style was in sufficient vogue to be called a genre (Jacoubet, p. 105). One contributor to these journals, Senecé, who had published a story,

Lunettes, in the Mercure de France (July 1719), was still popular in 1733, when he was mentioned again in the same journal: "Il a fait en quelque sorte la fortune de beaucoup d'anciens mots qu'on emprunte volontiers de lui et qu'on emploie même à titre d'ornements. Jamais il ne fut plus à la mode qu'à présent; il est du bel esprit de les copier et on y est presque sûr d'être applaudi de certains gens avec une pièce marotique" (Jacoubet, p. 105).

The subject matter of Voltaire's play, Adélaïde du Guesclin (first performed in 1734), is entirely medieval, although there are no dialogues in marotique style. The play, set at the siege of Lille, is at root a love intrigue. It is the story of Adelaïde, a woman betrothed to an officer, Vendôme, despite her love for his brother Nemours, an enemy officer. Voltaire evokes the heroic bon vieux temps when honour meant more than sentiment, and he appeals to nationalist feeling by having Adélaïde reject Vendôme for his collaboration with the English. The purely French subject matter aroused little interest when the play was first performed, unsuccessfully, in 1734, but it had come into vogue by 1765 when Adélaïde was well received (Jacoubet, p. 135).

Saint-Jory's own passages in pseudo-medieval style are numerous and are evidence of his adherence to a literary vogue. Umberto is usually the speaker when passages in

gaulois are reported. However, his wife Solange is quoted in this passage in which she talks with Saphire and Susanne: "'Certe, voyant vos douces faces si gentilles et délicates, ne pouvais tantôt faire entrer dans mon esprit que fussiez des garçons bien complets, et je suis d'heure présente grandement joyeuse que ne me sois trompée'" (FM, p. 83). In a conversation with Frédéric, Umberto talks in gaulois and points out the difference in the islanders' way of speaking: "'Etranger mon, me répondit-il, tu parles si dru, et un certain langage façonné, si discordant d'avec le nôtre, que n'ai pu bonnement entendre ton discours, pourquoi besoin est, que tu répètes ton nairé d'une manière plus grave, comme convient à sage et prudhom, qui vient raconter des faits et affaires'" (FM, p. 72). Saint-Jory does contrast the affected speech of the eighteenth century with Umberto's straightforward rusticity, but his own taste for précieux language belies the sincerity of his criticism. His interest in medievalism goes much deeper than literary manner; his utopian society is medieval at its very roots. Although the government is infused with some eighteenth-century ideas of equality, the islanders' egalitarian attitudes are the result of no effort on their part; all adult citizens are knights and since all are de bon sang, they are automatically equal.

Just as writers of his century contrasted happy

natives, such as those on Groenkaaf in FM, to debased Europeans, Saint-Jory opposes the happy Middle Ages to modern corruption. Fénelon was one of the first to do so in his sermon Sur l'Epiphanie (1714), in which he noted his preference for " la simplicité, la modestie, la frugalité, la probité exacte de nos pères, leur ingénuité, leur pudeur "¹, and these are precisely the qualities of Umbert and his family.

ORIENTALISM

The Oriental matter that occupies the final third of FM is offered as part of the history and legend of the Parsees of Manghalour, but it is so loosely connected to the main part of the narrative that Saint-Jory appears to be exploiting a contemporary vogue for Oriental-style tales. However, he showed his interest in Oriental matters long before 1735; the greater part of his earlier work deals with Oriental intrigue, as in the harem adventure of Aventures secrètes (1711), or the anecdotes about Eastern life and customs in his Oeuvres mêlées (1735), bearing such titles as "La Bien-aimée du prophète, ou la pieuse musulmane, histoire arabe", "Etrange ruse d'un roi maure", "Zineh célébré à Alep", and "Lettre sur la ceinture d'une momie". Saint-Jory attributes his knowledge of the Moslem countries to two instructors, a "Mehemet Bahary, envoyé près du Roi par Sa Hautesse en 1709",² and to Pétis de la Croix, the translator/adaptor of the very popular Mille et un jour (1710-1712) which rode the wave of the success of Galland's translation of the Mille et une nuit (1704-1717). According to Saint-Jory, Pétis de la Croix was a close friend; he has acquired, as he remarks, "un peu de théorie dans les liaisons intimes que j'ai eues avec feu M. Pétis de la Croix, le plus savant homme de son siècle dans la

sublime pratique des langues orientales".³

There is some Oriental material early in FM in the account of Laval's liberation of the harem women from the oppression of their masters. He obviously has little sympathy with Moslem views of women; the Sultan stabbed his favorite rather than see her fall into another man's hands, and he refers to the Turks as "les barbares" (FM, pp. 115,125).

The tales of the final segment are nearly all based on real folk-tales, European or Oriental. Frédéric's accounts of the Vallée des Zouhhad and Vallée d'Iram (FM, pp. 200-217) have already been discussed, but the "Histoire de Darim et d'Ismail" (FM, pp. 218-232), recounted at the end of the Vallée d'Iram segment, has not. It is the story of a young Parsee, Ismail, converted to Islam by a dervish. His father attempts to correct his solemn meditation by sending the country's most intelligent, beautiful girl, Darim, to dissuade him, but it is Ismail who converts Darim to Islam. They fall in love and plot to marry while keeping their conversions secret, but the King also wants her, for he too has fallen in love. Darim tells Diazou, her former governess, of her predicament, but the ambitious Diazou reveals all to the King, who imprisons Ismail immediately. Darim, very distressed, agrees to marry the King on condition that he kill Diazou, but

since she secretly occupies Diazou's bed, it is she and not the governess who is murdered. The King's grief is so great that he kills Diazou and dies shortly afterwards. The story appears to be a plea for religious tolerance; at its end the Parsee author writes: "Exemple memorable . . . de la sévérité des Dieux contre les impies" (FM, p. 238), a judgment we must, of course, take ironically. The tale resembles one in the "Lettre LXVII" of the Lettres persanes that deals with a love affair between Aphéridon and his sister Astarté, who adopted the Moslem religion when sold into the service of a Moslem sultana (Montesquieu, pp. 114-122). Montesquieu defends the Parsee custom of incestuous marriage, calling such unions, "ces alliances saintes, que notre religion ordonne plutôt qu'elle ne permet, et qui sont des images si naïves de l'union déjà formée par la Nature" (Montesquieu, pp. 115-116). He defends them against charges of idolatry and honours Zoroastrianism as the oldest religion on earth (Montesquieu, pp. 118-119). In "Lettre LXXXV", he attacks the conquerors of the Parsees, the Moslems, who reduced fertile Iran to a desert (Montesquieu, p. 143). Saint-Jory has turned the story around; the male, not the female, has embraced Islam, and both become Moslem instead of returning to Zoroastrianism. Saint-Jory makes no judgment about the comparative merits of these religions, unlike Montesquieu, who is favourable

to the Parsees. Although there is no hint of incest in his version, the basic elements are the same in both stories: the lovers are kept from union by the religious prejudice of their society.

The theme of lovers kept apart by baffling circumstances and their efforts to unite was a favourite one with writers of Oriental histoires galantes of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century (Dufrenoy, p. 69). Saint-Jory was not relying on one particular author in his treatment of this theme, but was making use of a common motif.

Elsewhere in FM, Saint-Jory presents the Parsees in a more favourable light than he does the Moslems, not only because of his dislike for Moslem treatment of women, but because the Parsees were first a non-commercial, agrarian people, like his islanders, who have "point d'argent, mais en récompense, aucun des vices que produit la soif des richesses" (FM, pp. 245-246). The Parsees are "grands et robustes, fiers et courageux si on les méprise, mais doux et affables si on leur fait amitié: les femmes sont belles et s'habillent proprement" (FM, p. 244). Frédéric prefaces an account of his visit to a Parsee temple with the warning that these people are excessively superstitious, shockingly credulous, and have a ridiculous theology (FM, p. 246). He calls their ideas "des sentiments si déraisonnables en

matière de religion" (FM, p. 249). These criticisms must be taken ironically, for the religion appears most attractive. The temple is a pleasant place smelling of perfume, beautifully decorated with murals of handsome youths reposing on flowerbeds and dreaming pleasant dreams, or of sinners punished according to their crimes. The hymn of the High Priest praises divine sleep and stoically describes the present moment as but a fleeting instant in time (FM, p. 249). These ideas are hardly evidence of a ridiculous theology, and Saint-Jory does not present them as such. It is interesting to note that for the authors of the article "Guèbres" in the Encyclopédie, Parsee theology was ridiculous; like all other Asian religions, "la morale en est toujours bonne, mais l'historique, ou pour mieux dire le roman, n'en vaut jamais rien".⁴

Frédéric makes the same judgment about their religion's moral value: "Après m'être familiarisé avec les principaux de la nation, je reconnus qu'il y en a peu en Europe où l'on trouvât une probité et une sagesse plus universelle" (FM, p. 250).

The long section in the FM entitled "Histoire du peuple ghèbre" (FM, pp. 251-296) incorporates two other tales into the story of the legendary origin of the Parsees on Manghalour. The account is supposedly based on Parsee annals in which, Frédéric warns, abound "toute l'emphase et

le fabuleux des plumes orientales" (FM, p. 250), a phrase that frees the author from any concern for consistency and excuses him for the fantastic ramblings that continue until almost the end of the novel. This is precisely what the reader of the time expected from an Oriental tale: fabulous adventures combined with some documentary information on Eastern customs, told in a style rich in metaphor, fanciful comparisons and strange names (Dufrenoy, p. 53). All that is missing in Saint-Jory's tales is the usual erotic suggestiveness, but that is found in other passages in FM.

The "Histoire du peuple ghèbre" tells how the holy prophet and patriarch Aminadab sent his general Azzedin to conquer Manghalour, and as a reward married him to Zumruth, who had a knowledge of cabalistic and supernatural things. Four months later was born, in accordance with Aminadab's prophecy, a beautiful, exceptional daughter, Bulbul, who quickly learned religion, philosophy, astronomy, history, mathematics, and half a dozen languages (FM, p. 257). She meets a man playing a flute, a simple dervish whose appearance belies great intelligence and a noble birth (FM, p. 258). Bulbul, like an eighteenth-century salon hostess, receives once a week all the artists and scientists to discuss interesting questions or to help them financially (FM, p. 259). Saint-Jory's feminism appears not only in Bulbul's great intelligence, but also in Zumruth's

superior psychological insight. She realizes that the dervish's ridiculous request to marry Bulbul is a divine inspiration (FM, p. 265), whereas her husband requires considerable convincing before he will even seriously consider the request. The proof comes in a dream, "Le Songe du Roi Azzedin" (FM, pp. 269-273), in which the king receives an ambassador from Zanguebur, " fils du soleil, l'invincible Empereur des Indes", who asks for Bulbul's hand (FM, p. 272). There follows a magnificent meal, a dance by the women of the harem, and a procession of priests bearing an image of the sun and singing hymns to it. When the ambassador reveals himself to be the Emperor of India, "d'abord sous les habits d'un simple derviche, et maintenant sous le personnage d'un ambassadeur" (FM, p. 273), the king awakes and promptly gives Bulbul's hand to the dervish, who initiates all into the cabalistic mysteries of which he is a master. Zanguebur's followers, who have somehow come to Manghalour, laud Bulbul's beauty and a rich wedding celebration follows.

The king disguised as a dervish is a motif of many Eastern folk-tales. In the svayamvara Indian tales, in which a princess chooses her husband by throwing an object at him, often the man chosen appears poor and vulgar but is actually a disguised prince (Cosquin, p. 319). Cosquin notes that there are many other tales of the same type,

Cambodian, Indian, or Moslem, and cites a Southern Arabian tale in which "Mohammed le Vaillant" disguises himself as a dervish to woo one of a sultan's three daughters (Cosquin, p. 322). This theme appears later in European tales in which a victor crowned by a princess reveals unsuspected gallantry, or handsomeness concealed by a humble appearance (Cosquin, p. 329).

Cosquin mentions another theme joined to stories of this type, the humiliation of the brothers-in-law who had mocked the hero (Cosquin, p. 322), but he unfortunately gives no examples for further explanation. In Saint-Jory's tale (FM, pp. 281-295), Zanguebur seeks good-natured amusement in the humiliation of three young men in love with Bulbul, who were jealous of the dervish and had fled upon his transformation. The Emperor has the three fall in love with a mountain girl, Mirza, who wishes to make fools of them, then watches them on a magic mirror that allows him to see anyone at any distance. Fantastic inventions such as this one were often used in Oriental-style tales, and nearly always with the purpose of making amusing intrigues a bit more sophisticated (Martino, p. 267). Mirza agrees to meet each suitor separately that evening in a nearby wood. The first is to prove his courage by lying in an empty tomb; the second she asks to go to the same spot dressed as an angel in order to frighten off

anyone who attempts to disturb the fresh grave of a relative; the third is to dress as a demon and remove from her family's grave a body insolent neighbours have placed there. The three arrive at the grave shortly apart, terrify each other, and flee. Bulbul decides to compound their shame by inviting all four separately to see a play that reproduces the events that occurred in the graveyard. Recognizing themselves in the play, the three suitors flee in shame.

The first part of the tale is well-known, but the idea of the elaborate epilogue that makes a play of the graveyard events seems to be Saint-Jory's own. One writer notes a parallel, in the suitor's recognition that they have been duped, between this version and another, the Farce nouvelle de trois amoureux de la Croix, à quatre personnages.⁵ This version contains no playlet, but the suitors unmask after their fright and recognize the woman's trick. The tale occurs in almost exactly the same form in older European versions, in Les Trois galants au cimetière (c. 1535) of Nicolas de Troyes,⁶ in John Lydgate's Minor Poems (c. 1430), in Boccaccio's Decameron and others.⁷ Saint-Jory's tale thus forms a link between old and modern versions of the same tale.⁸

In his conclusion to the "Histoire du peuple ghèbre", supposedly an excerpt from Parsee annals, Frédéric remarks that the Emperor seems to have founded the Parsee religion:

"Zanguebur derviche apostat . . . qui adorait le soleil . . . pour régner sur ces peuples, leur inspira des idées singulières, douces, voluptueuses, qui lui gagnèrent leur amitié, et leur fit embrasser ce culte commode, la croyance paisible qui subsiste chez eux depuis plusieurs siècles" (FM, p. 296). It is unclear whether Zanguebur was already a Parsee, or whether his ideas came to form the Parsee religion on Manghalour. Saint-Jory neatly avoided responsibility for such confusion when he warned in his introduction to these tales that these were native accounts "où domine toute l'emphase et le fabuleux des plumes orientales" (FM, p. 250). Most of the vagueness of this section could thus be attributed to the legend itself; Zanguebur is variously the "Empereur des Indes" (FM, p. 272) and "Empereur de la Chine" (FM, p. 275), and Aminadab is a holy prophet and patriarch, but of some unknown religion. Why does one of the three suitors, on his way to the graveyard, think his act "doit lui ouvrir le paradis de Mahomet" (FM, p. 287), since he lives in a Parsee society and the Moslems do not arrive on the island till centuries later? It seems strange that so much classical mythology should figure in a Parsee history. In the "Histoire de Darim et d'Ismail", the Parsee historian refers to Mount Olympus and "Jupiter en fureur" (FM, p. 225). Darim explains to Ismail that Saturn, Jupiter, Juno,

Venus, Neptune and Ceres are not considered gods by the Parsees, but merely represent the elements (FM, p. 223), and finally, Jupiter is included in the hymn of the Parsee High Priest (FM, p. 249).

The bizarre geography of FM deserves consideration; Manghalour is located some distance from Bermuda, and one might wonder how Persians, then Turks, got so far afield. Geographical accuracy was of little concern to writers of utopias at the time and any knowledge of the East, its geography, history, or religion, was vague. Certain eastern nations attracted popular interest at different times; Turkey was in vogue in Orientalist literature earliest, especially from about 1660 to 1700, partly because of the remarkable popularity of Turkish ambassadors and the close diplomatic ties between France and Turkey throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Martino, pp. 90, 97ff). The "Lettre de Constantinople", a regular article in the Mercure de France, attests to the continued public interest in Turkey well into the eighteenth century, even after Persia replaced it for a period ending near 1720 when the Lettres persanes appeared. China then came into vogue till the middle of the century (Martino, pp. 177-179). There was, nonetheless, considerable confusion, especially regarding differences between Moslem nations. There was little distinction made between Persians and Turks

(Martino, p. 177) or between Persians and Arabs.⁹ Not much information about the more distant East was available to eighteenth-century writers on Oriental themes; for knowledge of customs they depended mostly on accounts of a few travellers of the preceding century, such as Tavernier and Chardin, or on Galland's translation of the Mille et une nuit (1704-1717), which thrust the Orient into popular attention.

Saint-Jory's notions about Zoroastrianism were rudimentary because in 1735 very little was known about the Parsees. Montesquieu had devoted a few pages to them in the Lettres persanes ("Lettres XLVII, LXXXV"), but it was not until later in the century, when Anquetil-Duperron founded Iranology with the publication of his Zend-Avesta (1771), that a systematic study of that group began. Although the Lettres persanes are a more likely source for Saint-Jory, a work that dealt with the religion of the ancient Persians, written in Latin by Thomas Hyde, had been published at the turn of the century: Historia religionis veterum Persarum, Oxonii (1700). It is thus perhaps from lack of information that Saint-Jory, aware of Roman and Greek contacts with Persia, associated classical mythology with the Parsees.

Saint-Jory was no doubt aware of the probable commercial success of a novel that catered to those with a

taste for medieval and Oriental themes. His dialogues in style marotique imitate, in a very obvious way, a literary style of little substance, one which was just coming into vogue at the time of publication of FM and which never attained the favour that Orientalism did. Nonetheless, the medieval setting is perfectly integrated with his utopian ideal of a simple, agrarian, warrior society. Orientalism was fashionable among writers at the time. However, Saint-Jory should not be accused of exploiting a fashionable manner of writing. His long-standing fascination with the Orient, proven simply by referring to his previous work, starting with Aventures secrètes (1711), preserves him from this charge. His lengthy, disconnected treatment of Oriental themes in the final third of the novel is unfortunate because it does much damage to unity and diverts attention from the feminist theme that gives FM its force.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

¹ Quoted by Jacoubet, Le Genre troubadour et les origines françaises du romantisme, p. 30.

² Oeuvres mêlées, II, p. 116.

³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴ Encyclopédie, VII, p. 979.

⁵ Frautschi, op.cit., p. 32.

⁶ Le Grand parangon des nouvelles nouvelles, pp. 33-40.

⁷ Lee, The Decameron; Its Sources and Analogues, p. 271.

⁸ Frautschi, op.cit., p. 32.

⁹ Martino, "Les Arabes dans la comédie et le roman du XVIII^e siècle", Revue africaine (2^e trimestre 1906), p. 150.

CONCLUSION

FM is a voyage imaginaire that has many characteristics of previous works in the same genre. A popular theme of other travel and utopian literature, the island of bons sauvages, is represented in the description of Groenkaaf's happy natives early in the novel. We have seen that the opening of the novel has elements borrowed from Robinson Crusoe and used by many other writers: the pursuit of commercial gain that leads to shipwreck, and the adventurous effort to survive on an island beach. Saint-Jory uses the Frédéric-Saphire-Suzanne relationship to provide the erotic interest present in many other voyages. The plot development, too, resembles that of other voyages, at least near the beginning: the European castaways explore inland and encounter a friendly native who instructs them in island customs.

The actual organization of the utopian society does not seem to have interested Saint-Jory greatly; his information about the structure of the government is completely subordinated to plot development and is incomplete. The peculiarity of this utopia is that it is both egalitarian, giving equal status to both sexes, and at the same time medieval in nearly all its institutions. The plea for complete equality of the sexes is sincere,

forceful, and original. We have seen that feminism was an issue of some interest in the 1730's, but that only a very few writers wished any change in the traditional sexual rôles. Plato, and later, Poullain de la Barre, had already expressed these ideas, but more recent reformers such as Fénelon, Fleury and Mme de Lambert wished no change in the status quo. A classless, agrarian utopian society instilled with the simple virtues of labour and honesty has antecedents, to be sure, but that these classless farmers should be medieval knights is highly unusual. Saint-Jory was probably alone, among writers of voyages imaginaires, in seeing medieval France as a utopian age.

We have seen that Saint-Jory followed current literary trends in his use of pseudo-medieval patois and in his inclusion of a number of Oriental tales. His interest in medieval society, however, went beyond mere literary fashion, for the utopian society of Manghalour is medieval in nearly all aspects. His deep interest in the Orient began with his earliest writings. The Oriental tales occupy the final part of the novel, but are only loosely joined to the events of the narrative. They have little to do with equality of women or with any aspect of utopian government. One might object that the charming tales appear as a mere distraction simply because so much importance has

been given to the utopian element. Nonetheless, they deflect the reader's attention from what appears to be Saint-Jory's particular concern, the equality of women. The feminist argument loses much of its impact when the unity of the novel is broken by such digressions. This is particularly regrettable since feminist ideas give FM its force and greatest originality. Saint-Jory remains the only writer of the time to go so far as to put arguments for women's equality into a fictional situation and to then found a utopian society upon them.

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