

Response Page

The following responses were posted on the H-France discussion list in response to Jonathan Spangler review of *Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier (La Grande Mademoiselle)*, translated by P. J. Yarrow with the collaboration of William Brooks.

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The original review may be found on the H-France web page at:

<http://www.h-france.net/vol11reviews/vol11no197Spangler.pdf>

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I would like to comment on Dr Spangler's informative and sympathetic review of the translation of selections from the memoirs of the Grande Mademoiselle undertaken by Philip Yarrow and prepared for publication by myself.(1) Let me say at once that any errors in that volume are mine; I took Yarrow's translation, checked and amended it, annotated it, indexed it, added the suggestions for Further Reading, and am responsible for any shortcomings. Perhaps a couple of examples of mea culpa may be recorded here along with some remarks that, I hope, serve to explain the decisions that were made, not all of which pleased Dr Spangler.

The word marchioness occurs in English in the introduction (as do duchess and viscountess) and does so in a French context, as Dr Spangler points out. It may sound quaint, but what other English word, I would like to know, denotes the wife of a marquess? (Or even of a marquis?) The point is that, right at the start of our introduction, we have not yet explained our treatment of French titles in the translation itself. In the end, it was a judgement call; but I accept the rap over the knuckles for Clermont of Amboise, instead of Clermont d'Amboise, which I should have spotted; and he is right, of course, that our duchesse de Laval was only a marquise, also my fault for mixing up conflicting original sources and/or getting my notes in a tangle. I am grateful to Dr Spangler for his gentleness in pointing out these errors. On the other hand, our observation about the court's having gone, or not gone, to 'Germany', made with the modern reader in mind, was another judgement call about how much information to put in a footnote. Dr Spangler applauds our decision not to footnote heavily; omissions such as the one he deplors represent the unavoidable downside of that decision.

I can well understand that Dr Spangler feels miffed that we did not expatiate on the Treaty of Montmartre, especially as he has published such an excellent article about it,(2) but here again, we mentioned it only in explaining our reasons for treating the titles of the house of Lorraine differently from those of other foreign houses. We were not trying to wade into historians' disagreements over the efficacy of the treaty - the late David Sturdy, for example, took quite

another view from that expressed by Dr Spangler(3) - and while we are inclined to favour Dr Spangler's position, we did not wish to burden our readers with material that Mademoiselle herself does not discuss. Yes, the treaty failed in a number of respects; but that does not mean we were wrong to say that its formal effect was the annexation of Lorraine. It is a truism to state, as Dr Spangler does, that for advanced research on the French court in the seventeenth century one should stick to the Chérueil edition: we could not agree more, subject to two provisos. First, that it is high time for the Chérueil edition itself to be replaced by a more accurate text; and second, that, in the interim, we hope in our own small way to have supplied some useful corrections and amplifications to Chérueil's exegeses - which is one reason why Dr Spangler's additional corrections are, in their turn, both valuable and welcome. On the other hand, we happily plead guilty to the accusation that our approach is franco-centric.

After these comments and corrections, much of the remainder of Dr Spangler's review moves, via a résumé of what Mademoiselle does say in the parts translated in our volume, to an extensive account of her relationship with the Guise family and her Guise grandmother in particular, which we largely omitted. With due respect to Dr Spangler's preferences as a leading historian of the Guise family, to do justice to the passages in the memoirs that concern this relationship would have overwhelmed the rest of the translation and, besides, we had only a fixed amount of space at our disposal so that to have included a sufficient amount of this material would inevitably have resulted in the omission of rather a lot of other things. Should we have excluded her early life at the court of Louis XIII and her comments on her childhood playmates? Her relationship with Anne of Austria, Charles II both before and after his succession, and Christina of Sweden? Her visit to Port-Royal? Her various periods of exile, her travels through France in the late 1650s and the amusing accounts of her behaviour in her principality of Dombes or her visit to Avignon? We were tempted to cover more of her amusing relationship with Monsieur, but there, too, we had to draw the line. We concede, in our introduction, that the choice of what to translate is, in the end, subjective (p. xxviii), and we felt, and still feel, that we chose wisely; yes, as Dr Spangler points out, we included more about her relationship with her father than about her relationship with her maternal family. That was not intended to endorse a patrilineal approach, but arose simply from our opinion that, when all is said and done, Gaston d'Orléans would be the more colourful character even if he did not loom so large in the episodes relating to the Fronde that formed one of the main sections of our translation. If our volume, aided and abetted by Dr Spangler's wise comments, provokes readers of French into investigating the parts of Mademoiselle that we failed to reach, so much the better. Who knows? Perhaps numerous publishers are even now preparing to offer us contracts to translate some more of her text. (And unless I am getting mixed up again, Mlle de Guise was not Mademoiselle's aunt but her first cousin once removed.)

I am particularly grateful to Dr Spangler for his kind words about the flavour of Philip Yarrow's translation despite his exercising his reviewer's right to pick the occasional nit (is it really Yarrow who sounds like Enid Blyton at one point, or Mademoiselle herself?), and both Dr Spangler and H-France are to be congratulated and thanked for such stimulating and warm-hearted observations.

Notes

(1) *Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier (La Grande Mademoiselle)*. Translated by P.J. Yarrow with the collaboration of William Brooks. *MHRA New Translations*, vol. I. London: MHRA, 2010. Reviewed by Jonathan Spangler, *H-France* Vol. 11 (August 2011), no. 197.

(2) Dr Spangler's footnote 7 gives the reference.

(3) David Sturdy, *Louis XIV* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 131.
