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DISSIMULATION AND DECEPTION IN MADELEINE DE SCUDÉRY'S *PROMENADE DE VERSAILLES*

LA *PROMENADE DE VERSAILLES* (1669), published ten years after the last volume of *Clélie*, shows Scudéry continuing to experiment with the form of the *nouvelle* and distancing herself from the *roman fleuve* for which she was famous. Like her two earlier *nouvelles*, *Celinte* (1661) and *Mathilde* (1667), it is not set in a historical past, but rather in a disguised present, with Versailles and the king always in the background. The setting of Versailles functions as a frame for the romanesque narrative that takes place in the fictional court of an anonymous prince. Although *La Promenade de Versailles* is often cited and best remembered as a description of the early Versailles, the actual 'promenade' only occupies a small part of the work (106 pages out of 678), the remainder being concerned with the narrative of the *Histoire de Celanire*. *L'Histoire de Celanire* recounts the love affair of Celanire (known throughout the 'promenade' only as 'la belle étrangère'; her true identity remains a mystery), and her *amant* Cleandre, whose relationship must be kept secret because of Cleandre's obligations to the prince, and Celanire's to her deceased father. The secrecy surrounding their affair highlights the tension and contradictions inherent in the very public life of the court, where true feelings must be hidden.

In this paper I argue that Scudéry, using the optic of another court, furnishes a warning to Louis XIV about his own; a warning about the dangers of a world where public affairs should always take precedence over private concerns; where words and deeds may hide an individual's true intentions, and where dissimulation necessarily leads to deception, and deception, when discovered, can lead to violence. I base my argument on two key conversations, which I then link to the narrative action. The first conversation I shall examine concerns secrecy and shows that it is considered a fundamental quality of the good courtier. The second conversation under consideration, which begins as a discussion on hereditary monarchy, becomes an exposition on how a courtier should feel about his prince. These two themes intertwine when it becomes clear that Cleandre, the ideal courtier, who loves his prince, none the less deceives him by keeping a love affair secret. When discovered by a rival Cleandre will kill him in a duel and be forced to flee to France to escape the prince's punishment. Thus the narrative action shows that an ideal courtier such as Cleandre contradicts his words with his deeds, dissimulates his feelings, deceives the public eye, allows private concerns to triumph over public duty and even acts violently to save face with the Prince.

Described by Alain Niderst as Scudéry's 'effort courtisan', the work has divided critics as to Scudéry's intentions.¹ Some read it as a manifestation of her sincere and loyal admiration for the king, others as a subversive attempt to criticise him.² These differences of interpretation revolve around the relationship between the fictional court of the anonymous prince and Versailles. The former can be interpreted as reflecting Louis XIV's court, depicting its faults and weaknesses, or providing a dim and somewhat tawdry comparison when measured against the real brilliance of the Sun King's Versailles.³ Niderst proposes an alternative solution. Recognising that the text is dedicated to Louis XIV, and celebrates his military prowess, as well as the beauties of Versailles and the achievements of his reign, Niderst none the less points out that the fictional court bears a similarity to that of Louis XIV:

Avec ce prince galant, cette princesse qu'il chérit, cette jeune beauté que les hommes courtisent et les femmes jalouent, avec ces intrigues et même ce ton assez brillant parfois primeseautier, c'est bien la cour de 1670, qui est ici dépeint.⁴

While hesitating to assign real identities to the protagonists (apart from Cleandre, whom he suggests may be François de Beauvilliers, duc de Saint-Aignan), he raises the possibility that this court is indeed a reflection of that of Louis XIV. Yet this court has flaws, where even good courtiers devoted to their prince can fall prey to intrigue and deceit and lose their position: '[ce] séjour exquis est empoisonné.'⁵ Celanire flees to France and Niderst argues that her promenade and subsequent reunion with Cleandre in Versailles could demonstrate that in Louis XIV's France a strong, glorious king rules over beauty and order, while Cleandre's prince seems incapable of controlling foment even within his own court. Thus the secrets and deception rife under the anonymous prince would serve to valorise the unity and peace at Louis XIV's court, and by extension, his country.

Niderst thus raises the possibility that the fictional prince's court both is and is not a reflection of that of Louis XIV, obliquely referring to it,

¹ *Madeleine Scudéry, Paul Pellisson et leur monde*. (Paris: PUF, 1976), p. 483.

² For the first interpretation see Nicole Aronson, *Madeleine de Scudéry* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 109, and Margaret-Ann Trotszke, 'Framing the Police: Scudéry's Secret Critique of Louis XIV', *Cahiers du dix-septième*, 5 (1991), 169-82.

³ See Trotszke for the interpretation of the fictional court as a mirror of Louis XIV's court, and Nicole Boursier, 'La Promenade de Versailles: un texte réversible?' in *Voyages: Récits et imaginaire. Actes de Montréal*, ed. by Bernard Beugnot (Paris, Seattle & Tubingen: PFSC/LBiblio 17, 1984), pp.100-14, for the court as a mediocre copy in order to valorise that of Louis XIV.

⁴ *Madeleine Scudéry, Paul Pellisson et leur monde*, p. 488.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 490

yet making clear that this is not a *roman-à-clé*. I would argue that this is a deft sleight of hand on Scudéry's part 'pour brouiller les pistes', suggesting that Scudéry herself seems to have understood the need for dissimulation.⁶ This would mean that the Prince's court does indeed function as a mirror, acting not just as a simple reflection of Versailles, but also as an occasion to reflect *upon* the court as a social institution in general. Larry F. Norman argues that the classical mind revels in the power of the mirror, appreciating its ability to reproduce reality, while at the same time never forgetting that the image in the mirror is a representation and therefore different from the original. The mirror provides a valuable tool for self-knowledge, which can never be direct but is necessarily mediated and indirect.⁷ It could be argued that Scudéry's depiction of the Prince's court is just such a reflection, designed to provoke some thought and self-awareness in its parallel institution in France. René Godenne has said of Scudéry's works: 'il y a, chez Mlle de Scudéry, une volonté de jeter, par le truchement d'aventures imaginaires, un regard critique sur la société du XVIIe siècle.'⁸ In this instance Scudéry's critical gaze falls upon a court similar, but not identical to that of the king, thereby avoiding the dangerous charge of overtly criticising Louis XIV, while at the same time alerting him to the risks of courtly life, where secrets and lies may proliferate in reaction against a too strict control.

Louis XIV hated secrecy and intrigue in all aspects of political life and especially at the court, wishing for a transparent, clear universe where nothing was hidden and everyone had defined roles. But he did not hesitate to use secrecy for his own ends, so that the court had its own system of surveillance in place to listen to conversations and read correspondence.⁹ Once the system was in place, the court itself, based on ruthless competition among the courtiers for the king's favours, maintained the machinery, so that each watched the other and kept him/herself under strict surveillance. Scudéry's work shows some clear-sightedness as to the court's inner workings, revealing the vulnerability of a system, where on the surface all was visible and transparent, yet where dissimulation and intrigue lay beneath the polished exterior of

⁶ Niderst points out that Scudéry's *Mathilde d'Aguilar* (1667), which condemns in veiled terms Louis XIV's despotism, was rapidly withdrawn almost as soon as it was published (*op. cit.*, p. 470).

⁷ *The Public Mirror: Molière and the Social Commerce of Depiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 3.

⁸ *Les Romans de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (Genève: Droz, 1983), pp. 287-88.

⁹ Jacques Revel, *Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1992). This edition: *Realms of Memory*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 101.

even such a courtier as Cleandre. Scudéry anticipates La Bruyère's critique of courtly life:

il y a un pays où les joies sont visibles, mais fausses, et les chagrins cachés, mais réels. Qui croirait que l'empressement pour les spectacles, que les éclats et les applaudissements aux theatres de Molière et d'Arlequin couvrissent tant d'inquiétudes, de soins et de divers intérêts, tant de craintes et d'espérances, des passions vives et des affaires sérieuses.¹⁰

Her work explores the hidden side of this life through the love affair of Celanire and Cleandre, which takes place in secret against the backdrop of a court rife with rumours and deceit. She also stages public courtly conversations, depicting a world where every word is measured and evaluated, where silence can be as significant as what is said and where every participant knows that the Prince will ultimately hear his words. Thus in *La Promenade de Versailles*, the tension and contrast between public life and private feelings reveals itself through what the characters say publicly and how they act in private.

The importance of conversation in Scudéry's work has long been attested. In his monumental work on *politesse* Maurice Magendie demonstrated the overlap between polite society and the literary world, and credited Scudéry with a large role in the formation of new ideals, those of the *honnête homme*, as people read her novels as manuals of how to act in the world.¹¹ Conversation became the very essence of polite society, where lasting impressions were made from the ease and facility with which one conversed.¹² Shining in the art of conversation was an integral part of social learning: 'on décide du mérite d'un homme sur la manière dont il se tire d'une conversation: on ne prend pas toujours la peine d'approfondir ses bonnes ou mauvaises qualitez.'¹³ Conversation made or broke reputations and its influence on the culture of late seventeenth century society cannot be underestimated.

In *La Promenade de Versailles*, there is no anonymous, omniscient narrator, recounting the action. The reader instead 'listens' to conversations between the characters, so that the discursive mode becomes the dominant feature of the narrative. The conversations are public performances of a *savoir-faire*. The ability to persuade, to win

¹⁰ La Bruyère, *Les Caractères ou les mœurs de ce siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1935), p. 60.

¹¹ *La Politesse Mondaine et les theories de l'honnêteté en France de 1600-1660*, 2 vols (Paris: PUF, 1925), pp. 629-700.

¹² See Jean-Pierre Dens, 'L'Art de la Conversation au dix-septième siècle', *Lettres Romanes*, XXVII, no. 3 (août 1973), 215-24

¹³ Morvan de Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations pour les personnes polies* (Paris: J. Guignard, 1697), p. 11.

'hearts and minds' in an informal conversation decided a courtier's success or failure: 'les rapports sociaux, envisagés à la Cour comme lieux de conflits, luttes pour le pouvoir et l'influence, exigent à l'honnête homme une parfaite maîtrise de la langue'.¹⁴ The courtier was essentially a rhetorician. In the two conversations under consideration in this essay we shall examine in particular the role played by Cleandre, the exemplary *honnête homme* and courtier.

As is common in many of Scudéry's romanesque conversations, both take place in ideal locations, with a limited number of participants, whom chance has gathered in this special place. Thus interaction begins after a separation from the outside world in a 'protected, enclosed space'.¹⁵ The discussion on secrecy takes place, when, on the occasion of a *fête* organised by Cleandre: 'il ne demeurera dans le cabinet de silence que Celanire, trois femmes de la Cour, Cleandre, Iphicrate et moi'.¹⁶ The second conversation under consideration occurs around Philocrite's sick bed, with an identical cast of characters, save for the addition of Alcé. This relative isolation creates the illusion of a moment of privacy, 'from the inclemencies of the outside world'.¹⁷ None of the participants are fooled however, as it is clear that the prince and his courtiers are never far away, either figuratively or in real terms. Even in these settings of relative intimacy no one can fail to be aware that all will be reported to the prince.

The conversation on secrecy, occurring early in the narrative, actually precipitates the action as it results in Cleandre declaring his love to Celanire. Glicere, the narrator of the *Histoire de Celanire* has already informed the listener (who was the narrator of the visit to Versailles), that the heroine Celanire (or la Belle Etrangère of the *Promenade*), has a predilection for secrecy. Discretion defines her character: 'elle est née avec une discrétion merveilleuse, et [...] dès sa plus grande jeunesse elle a été capable de secret, et de savoir discerner ce qui était à propos de dire et ne dire pas' (p. 106). This instinctive quality of secrecy is considered a great asset. The ensuing conversation on secrecy will not only make her feelings on secrecy known, but also those of her secret admirer,

¹⁴ Delphine Denis, *La Muse Galante: Poétique de la conversation dans l'œuvre de Madeleine de Scudéry* (Paris: Champion, 1997), p. 37.

¹⁵ Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, 'Exclusive Conversations': *The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1988), p. 49.

¹⁶ Madeleine de Scudéry, *La Promenade de Versailles* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1669; facsimile repr. Genève: Slatkine, 1979), p. 113. Further references to this edition will be given as page numbers after quotations in the text. It was re-published in 1671 under the titled *Histoire de Celanire*.

¹⁷ Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations*, p. 48.

Cleandre; they will find themselves to be in perfect agreement, ultimately allowing him to make his declaration to her.

Two main threads emerge from this conversation: Celanire wishes for secrecy in affairs of the heart, and Cleandre, while agreeing with her, also advocates secrecy and absolute discretion in public and political matters. The discussion mixes the personal and the political in much the same way that the private and public blend at the court. Following this conversation, Cleandre admits to Celanire that he has spent six months attempting to conquer his feelings for her as he does not consider them in keeping with his public role as a courtier and the prince's trusted servant. Thus for Cleandre private feelings cannot be reconciled with curial service.

Structurally this conversation can be described as 'agônal', in so far as the participants express differing opinions. Delphine Denis, in her fundamental work on conversation in Scudéry, defines agonal type conversations as those which oppose 'des thèses contradictoires dans un ceremonial très codifié'.¹⁸ In this particular conversation on secrecy, Alcinoir and Philocrite present opposing views to Celanire, on one hand, while on the other Iphicrate disagrees with Cleandre. The conversation does not have a satisfactory outcome, as no one wins the debate; nobody changes his or her original position. The conversation fixes the importance of secrecy in the reader's mind and listens to the various interlocutors' opinions and from these can better gauge the characters. For example, Alcinoir and Philocrite both argue that secrecy in love is impossible, unnecessary and to an extent undesirable. Alcinoir states:

Je croi que le secret dont on parle tant, excepté à la guerre et en affaires d'Etat, n'est pas aussi nécessaire qu'on se le figure: mais pour l'amour, comme je l'ai déjà dit, je l'y tiens pour presque inutile; quand on aime il faut le dire, quand on est mal traité il se faut plaindre, et quand on est heureux, il s'en faut louer. (p. 116)

In reply Cleandre isolates one part of Alcinoir's statement, that on the necessity of secrecy in affairs of war and responds with the argument that secrecy is not only necessary in affairs of political importance, but in all forms of social interaction:

Car je dis que nulle qualité n'est plus nécessaire dans la société que celle d'estre secret, et quand on ne l'est pas, on n'est bon à rien sans exception, soit qu'on soit de la Cour ou de la ville, qu'on ait un maistre ou une maistresse; et j'ajoute mesme hardiment, que quand on n'a pas celle-là on devient suspect à tout le monde et inutile à autrui et à soi-mesme. (p. 118)

¹⁸ *La Muse galante: poétique de la conversation dans l'œuvre de Madeleine de Scudéry* (Paris: Champion, 1997), p. 65.

Nothing determines one's place and even one's utility in society more than the ability to keep secrets.

Given Cleandre's position as an excellent courtier (established in his portrait, where he is described as 'le plus honnête homme de la cour ... le plus considéré du prince' (p. 109)), this emphasis on secrecy is not in any way surprising. Court etiquette literature from Castiglione to Graçian and Faret all counselled control of gesture and word; a courtier should always behave as if he or she were being watched. This encapsulates the world of the court, which functioned as an Argus. Every courtier, surrounded by eyes and ears, was always on the defensive. La Bruyère, although not proffering advice, reveals the court as a place of constant self-surveillance: 'un homme qui sait la cour est maître de son geste, de ses yeux et de son visage.'¹⁹ A good courtier, therefore, maintains a strict control over his gestures, facial expressions and actions, letting nothing slip and concealing all emotions and feelings. Thus not only is the courtier a rhetorician, skilled in persuasive words, he is also a dissimulator, playing a role. He uses words to hide and disguise what he feels, mastering what could be called a dissimulative rhetoric.

Furthermore Cleandre specifically criticises those like Iphicrate, who desire to know their prince's secrets as a mark of confidence. For Cleandre this shows a lack of respect toward the king and a desire to transgress into the prince's private life. Cleandre's opinion in this instance is noteworthy, given that he ostensibly occupies the position of the Prince's confidant and has access to his ruler's secrets. Cleandre seems to feel the weight of this privileged place as it comes with great responsibility: 'Si on considérait bien, à combien on s'oblige en recevant un secret, on ne s'empresseroit pas tant pour en savoir' (p. 121).²⁰ This close, personal relationship between Cleandre and the Prince becomes essential to the novel's intrigue as the Prince forbids Cleandre to have any love affair in the interest of remaining completely at his service. Cleandre himself gives a detailed analysis of the relationship between a good courtier and his ruler, focusing on how a subject should feel about his Prince.

These comments occur in the second conversation under consideration in this essay, in what appears to be a later insertion in the text.²¹ The initial topic of the conversation is the benefits of hereditary

¹⁹ *Les Caractères*, p. 57.

²⁰ Graçian Balthasar in *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* (1647), warns that the prince's confidence is a source of danger for the courtier. This edition *L'Homme de cour*, trans. Amelot de la Houssaie (1684) (Paris: Champ Libre, 1972), p. 144.

²¹ This conversation is non-paginated, which has led to the supposition that it was a later insertion in the text. Nicole Boursier sees it as a late addition by Scudéry, 'par un retour de scrupules' in which she insists on the superiority of hereditary monarchy in

monarchy as a system of government, but this evolves into a discussion, led by Cleandre, on how a subject should love his or her Prince. According to Denis's classification the model that the conversation follows is cooperative instead of agonal, in so far as it is not a debate in which interlocutors argue their opposing viewpoints, but is a collective attempt to define a notion, or elaborate a set of rules. This kind of conversation allows for a degree of self-recognition in the community:

Par elles la communauté, en énonçant son univers de croyance peut se souder et se reconnaître. La constitution commune de ces règles et de ces notions aboutit en clair à constituer un ensemble de valeurs ou, pour mieux dire, une idéologie.²²

In the case of this particular conversation the values revealed are intended to show the proper love and devotion of a courtier for his Prince as expounded by Cleandre, the perfect courtier.

The conversation begins innocently with an invitation for all present to define their greatest passion. Each participant responds for him or herself: Celanire says 'l'amitié et la sincérité ensemble'; Philocrite: 'la joie sans crime' to give but two examples. The first person narrator, however, claims to know that of Cleandre, namely his love for the Prince. His passion is something public and not hidden, but is clear and for all to see:

En effet, luy dis-je je n'ai pû encore démêler si vous avez l'ambition parce que vous aimez le Prince, ou si vous aimez le Prince par ambition, et après vous avoir observé soigneusement, j'ai conclu que vous avez une espece de passion sans nom qui vous occupe, et vous attache plus que toutes celles qui en ont un en pourroient faire. (n.p.)

Cleandre's passion for his prince passes as something of a mystery to his fellow courtiers. Although they can see it clearly, they cannot understand it and presume that it hides something.

Cleandre feels forced to defend this passion, which will lead to an exposition on the virtues of a hereditary monarchy as well as the beauty of a friendship between a courtier and his Prince. He argues that this passion 'est ou doit être dans tous les esprits raisonnables' (n.p.). Rather than being unusual, it should be natural, inevitable, in 'un cœur bienfait' (n.p.). One's all-consuming passion for the Prince becomes a mark of *honnêteté*, the value universal to Scudéry's community of readers.

general and that of Louis XIV and his dynasty in particular. See '*La Promenade de Versailles: un texte réversible?*' (p. 106). Margaret Anne Trotzke proposes a more subversive reading, calling the description of Versailles and the court romance a 'cloaking device for the political debate in the text, which raises daring questions about the concept of the hereditary monarchy'. See '*Framing the Police: Scudéry's Secret Critique of Louis XIV*' (p. 169).

²² Denis, *La Muse galante*, p. 93.

Cleandre's nameless passion does not appear to be shared by his interlocutors and he feels compelled to justify himself further, arguing that this passion effectively resumes all other passions, from filial gratitude to friendship, from conjugal unity to romantic love. I shall focus specifically on this last claim, that the love of a subject for his prince must resemble 'le plus parfait amour'. Love is associated with:

l'ardeur, l'inquiétude, le soupçon, la soumission, la jalousie, l'injustice, le dépit, les mécontentemens, les reconciliations, les changemens d'avis en un instant, et quelquefois divers changemens en une heure. (n.p.)

A subject also experiences all the pain and suffering associated with romantic love in his love for the Prince: 'tout ce qu'il y a de bizarre dans l'amour ne se peut trouver, ce me semble en aucune autre passion qu'en celle des Courtisans pour leur Prince' (n.p.). Cleandre now deals specifically with courtiers, comparing the relationship between a Prince and his courtiers to that of a mistress and her lover:

Leur inquiétude est extreme, leur defiance eternelle, ils appréhendent incessamment de perdre les bonnes graces du maistre, quand ils en sont les plus assûrez. Ils se regardent tous comme rivaux, ils ne sont possédez que de cette passion. (n.p.)

This relation between king and subject would seem to be still an essentially feudal and passionate relation: 'loin d'être une relation froide et convenue, ce rapport de vassalité est vécu sur un mode affectif intense.'²³ The subject feels the same passion for his Prince as a lover for the beloved and the same jealousy of his rivals.

It is precisely Cleandre's passion for his Prince that links this conversation to the narrative action, as this has been his distinguishing feature from the very beginning. From Cleandre's portrait we learned that 'Cleandre paraissait alors n'avoir l'esprit occupé que de la gloire et de l'envie de conserver les bonnes grâces de son Maître, et passait pour être fort indifférent à l'amour' (n.p.). This implies that one cannot serve two masters; one can either be subject to the Prince or to one's heart. Indeed in Cleandre's case his Prince makes this explicit by constantly questioning him as to his love affairs, ordering him to vanquish any passion in order to be exclusively his, just like any lover. But Cleandre loves Celanire and so risks 'betraying' his Prince.

This tension between Cleandre's feelings for Celanire and those for the Prince places him in a difficult position. How should the seemingly perfect courtier react? He keeps his love for Celanire secret. Once again this should come as no surprise given Cleandre's position as the perfect

²³ Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Roi-Machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), p. 46.

courtier and his earlier words on secrecy. Balthazar Gracián's *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* (1647) also makes clear that secrecy is a necessary component of social behaviour, advising; 'on doit éviter de parler trop clairement; '[I]a science du plus grand usage est l'art de dissimuler', '[n]e point mentir, mais ne pas dire toutes les vérités'.²⁴ Secrecy, even in affairs of the heart, will become a matter of survival at the court. Cleandre dissimulates his attachment for Celanire, evading the question whenever the Prince puts it to him and using a range of ways of secretly communicating his feelings to Celanire.

But this leads us to a troubling problem, where there are secrets, may there not also be lies? Something that is not the whole truth is a half-truth and a half-truth is a lie. When the Prince denies him access to Celanire and tells him to conquer his passion, Cleandre quite simply and uncharacteristically disobeys. Pretending to follow the Prince's orders he lies to him, moving from passive dissimulation (hiding or not telling the truth), to active dissimulative rhetoric (lying): 'Pour vous témoigner Seigneur, luy dit-it, que je veux tout tenter afin de vous satisfaire, souffrez que sous quelque prétexte de vos affaires, ou des miennes, je m'éloigne pour quinze jours ou trois semaines afin de faire les derniers efforts sur mon cœur' (p. 437). While everyone, including the Prince, thinks him to be abroad, Cleandre uses the opportunity to visit Celanire. He even pretends to want to vanquish his passion for the sake of his Prince. Thus the Prince's insistence on complete obedience and self-control forces even Cleandre into defiance. This ruse is discovered, Cleandre's secret revealed and his downfall and banishment complete. Cleandre pushes his dissimulation too far, erring into overt deception, and he is punished for it.²⁵

The question remains as to why such a narrative should send a warning to Louis XIV? Does it not simply follow the long tradition of anti-curial literature that finds the court to be the site of hypocrisy, intrigue and danger? In my view this is not the case for Scudéry's work. Rather the answer lies both in the text and the context. In the narrative, when Alcinoir finds Cleandre at Celanire's retreat and discovers his lie to the Prince and the court, the argument that arises between them ends in a duel, as a result of which Alcinoir dies. Alcinoir is Cleandre's rival in two ways: for Celanire's affections and also for the Prince's favour. Although they should be fighting over Celanire, what Cleandre fears is that Alcinoir will reveal his falsehood to the Prince:

²⁴ *L'Homme de cour*, pp. 2, 57 and 109, respectively.

²⁵ In spite of Scudéry's conversation condemning *le mensonge* (published in *Conversation nouvelles sur divers sujets* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1684), nowhere does the narrator find fault with Cleandre, who is presented as a victim of circumstance.

Cleandre sentoit bien qu'il parloit trop durement à Alcinor: mais il chercher à le quereller dans l'embaras où il estoit, ne pouvant le prier de ne dire point de l'avoir rencontré, et sachant bien qu'il le diroit encore plutôt: Si bien qu'Alcinor, chagrin et brave, comme je l'ai dit, répondit en mettant l'épée à la main. (p. 516)

Scudéry stresses how quickly their argument descends into violence. Momentarily freed from the constraints of the court, where 'naked violence [is] hidden beneath a composed exterior', the two rivals engage in bloody physical combat.²⁶ This shows that while the violence inherent in the intensely competitive curial society may be controlled through the norms of courtly behaviour, it is never eliminated and can erupt at any time.

La Promenade de Versailles, published in 1669, comes at a time when Louis XIV seems to have consolidated his power on all fronts, both at home and abroad. Versailles, with its gardens and palaces, its *fêtes* and most of all its elegant courtiers, was an actual manifestation of his control. As Revel argues Louis XIV's courtly protocol should not simply be seen as one aspect of 'an authoritarian subjugation of the kingdom ... but as a representation of it'.²⁷ Through the organisation of the court, Louis XIV shows the extent of his power. Using Versailles as the backdrop and Cleandre as the representative of the ideal courtier, Scudéry appears to warn that the consequences of such control may be dissimulation, deception and ultimately, violence.

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²⁶ Revel, *Realms of Memory*, p. 107

²⁷ Revel, p. 85.

