Sébastien Brémond's Paratexts: Authorship, Genre, and Masculinity

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Abstract

In this article, I argue that Sébastien Brémond (1646?–1705?) used his dedicatory paratexts to create a homosocial bond between the author and libertine members of the French faction at Charles II's court. Coupled with Brémond's use of the secret history genre and his North African settings that catered to the "Ottomanphilia" of the court during the 1670s, these paratexts situated Brémond as a court insider close to the king, ascribing him with some of the celebrity inherent in that court, and appealing to a wider audience eager to read about the antics of the libertine circle and the king. Looking at these paratexts as a group shows the translatability of the secret history genre across readerships, across political factions, and through time, while the case of Brémond reveals the ways that changing readerships impacted an author's control over the meanings of their texts and their own authorial persona.

Of all early modern paratexts, dedicatory epistles are perhaps the most denigrated genre. Nathanial Lee's complaint in his dedication to *The Rival Queens* (1677) that "of all undertakings, there is none more dreadful to me than a Dedication" lends credence to Gérard Genette's claim that, by this point in literary history, dedications had become "a somewhat degrading expedient that an author hastens to forget about once he has attained the height of glory or is assured of other resources."[1] The association with a monetary reward renders suspect the flattery that so often accompanies this style of paratext, a flattery that can reach

1 Nathaniel Lee, *The Rival Queens, or The Death of Alexander the Great* (London: James Magnes and Richard Bentley, 1677), A2, Early English Books Online (EEBO). Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Richard Macksey (1987; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 120. Much of the archival work that I relied on for this article was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

Eighteenth-Century Fiction 36, no. 3 (July 2024)
ECF ISSN 0840-6286 | E-ISSN 1911-0243 | doi: 10.3138/ecf.36.3.439

admittedly laughable proportions, when almost every dedicatee is "set out by nature for eternal esteem."[2] In addition to flattery, seventeenth-century dedicatory epistles often include the authorial pose that Gerd Bayer describes, in relation to the dedication to the anonymous novel *Peppa* (1689), as "a rather shameless gesture of mock modesty," adding to their disingenuous nature.[3]

While dedicatory epistles are admittedly excessive at times and are used by many authors as dressed-up pleas for payment, some writers did see them as capable of something more. Randall Anderson explores the ways that dedicatory epistles, like those written to the more general reader, attempted to shape how readers encountered their texts because these direct appeals were always also public performances. As Bayer reminds us, even those paratexts explicitly directed to one person "were in fact written for the general audience."[4] Anderson further points out that the law clearly saw these paratexts as important parts of the publication, as the English Star Chamber decree that governs the laws around printing expressly includes "also all and euery the Titles, Epistles, Prefaces, Proems, Preambles, Introductions, Tables, Dedications, and other matters and things whatsoeuer thereunto annexed."[5] This section is included almost verbatim in the Licensing Act of 1662.[6] Dedicatory epistles for politically sensitive texts like secret histories had to negotiate a fine balance between signalling the scandalous content, which was so often a draw for the reader, and thus shaping the reader's expectations and simultaneously disavowing the potentially defamatory nature of the text.[7]

2 Aphra Behn, *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and His Sister*, ed. Janet Todd (1684–87; New York: Penguin, 1996), 118.

3 Gerd Bayer, *Novel Horizons: The Genre Making of Restoration Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 109.

4 Bayer, 109.

5 Randall Anderson, "The Rhetoric of Paratext in Early Printed Books," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. D.F. McKenzie, John Barnard, and Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 638.

6 "Titles Epistles Prefaces Proems Preambles Introductions Tables Dedications and other matters and things thereunto annexed." Charles II, 1662: An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious Treasonable and Unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses, in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628–80*, ed. John Raithby (London: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 428–35, British History Online, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp428-435.

7 For more on how secret history paratexts rhetorically shape audience expectations in relation to their potentially libelous content, see Eve Tannor Bannet, "Secret History and Censorship," in *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820*, ed. Rebecca Bullard

I will argue in this article that for Restoration author Sébastien Brémond the dedicatory epistle served an integral function in the performance of his authorial persona. Initially looking at Brémond's dedicatory epistles as a group, I demonstrate how his paratexts reveal the ways that Restoration authors could use dedications to take advantage of the still available patronage networks for literary production and simultaneously appeal to a wider readership by shaping a commercially attractive authorial persona—in Brémond's case, as a libertine court insider. I conclude by narrowing my focus to Brémond's secret histories to demonstrate the ways in which translation from French to English could disrupt this authorial persona, particularly on the level of political affiliation, and radically alter how both contemporary and future readers could understand his secret histories. Brémond's affiliation with the royal court (and Charles II in particular), his outsider status as a Frenchman, and his brief but intense moment of proto-celebrity in the London book market (as shaped by his use of the dedicatory epistle) makes him an ideal figure for illuminating the imbrication of these seemingly disparate realms in the emergence of professional, public authorship in England.[8] Because Brémond is a little-known figure, I will begin with a brief discussion of his life and work in England.

A French Author Writing for the English Market

Brémond defies easy placement into traditional categories of authorship. He was a Frenchman, who, as far as we can tell, could not speak English well enough to use it to defend himself in court, yet who wrote most of his novels directly for a London audience, having them printed in Amsterdam to be sold in Richard Bentley and James Magnes's Russell

and Rachel Carnell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 160–73; and Rebecca Bullard, *The Politics of Disclosure, 1674–1725* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 8–20.

8 I am not claiming a modern celebrity status for Brémond, as I agree with much of the recent work on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century celebrity that includes a high level of mediation as a necessary element within the definition of modern celebrity. See, for instance, Leslie Ritchie, *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Stuart Sherman, "The Periodical and the Prism: Two Ways of Working at Celebrity in the Careers of Catherine Clive, Eliza Haywood, and Charlotte Charke," in *Making Stars: Biography and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Nora Nachumi and Kristina Straub (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2022), 17–42; and Greg Jenner, *Dead Famous: An Unexpected History of Celebrity from Bronze Age to Silver Screen* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020).

Street bookshop in London.[9] Between the years 1672 and 1678, Brémond lived in London (with an absence from 1674 until the spring of 1676), where he wrote at least eight novels and secret histories of which we know; he wrote three more works for the London market from Flanders. After deciding to make his move from London permanent in 1680, Brémond also left behind his literary career, writing almost nothing else for the rest of his life, with the exception of one translation; instead, he pursued a diplomatic career for Louis XIV.[10]

Brémond's rising stature in the Restoration fiction market during his brief career is apparent in the sheer number of novels he published and in Bentley's advertising the author on the English title page of *Le Triomfe de l'amour sur le destin* (1677, trans. 1678 as *The Triumph of Love over Fortune*) as "that Great wit of France. *M*. S^{t}. Bremond."[11] Taking advantage of what Alice Eardley argues was an appetite for French translations "for those with social and cultural aspirations,"[12] most of Brémond's novels were quickly translated into English, some in the same year that the French text was published, demonstrating his fiction's appeal to both English and French readers in England. Many of those English translations, including *Hattigé* (1676, trans. 1680), *The Double Cuckold* (1678), and *The Happy Slave* (1677), were included in collections of novels throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were given new editions, sometimes under altered titles, throughout the eighteenth century.[13]

9 Edwin P. Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond: His Life and Works" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1954), 31.

10 Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," 38.

11 [Sébastien Brémond], *The Triumph of Love over Fortune* (London: James Magnes and Richard Bentley, 1678), title page, EEBO.

12 Alice Eardley's work focuses on French romance publisher Humphrey Moseley, but her insights on the ways that members of the book trade throughout the seventeenth century were publishing translations that could be marketed as elite texts (through prefaces and folio format in Moseley's case) demonstrate that Richard Bentley's use of Brémond's nationality and claims to elite status within his dedicatory epistles were part of a growing commercial strategy for targeting a wide readership. Eardley, "Marketing Aspiration: Fact, Fiction, and the Publication of French Romance in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England," in *Seventeenth-Century Fiction: Text and Transmission*, ed. Jaqueline Glomski and Isabelle Moreau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 131.

13 Bentley's twelve-volume series Modern Novels (1692) contains a number of Brémond's novels, including *Hattigé* (under its original subtitle *The King of Tamaran*), *Homaïs*, *Triumphs of Love*, *Princess of Montserrat*, *The Happy Slave*, and *Gallant Memoires*. *The Happy Slave* and *The Double Cuckold* were included in *A Collection of Novels* printed for R Wellington and E Rumball in 1699, and *Hattigé* was published as *La belle Turc* or *Hattigé, ou La Belle Turque* as early as 1680 and well into the eighteenth century. See Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," chapter 2.

Despite his popularity in his own time, Brémond is only beginning to gain the critical attention that his output, popularity, and influence deserve.[14] Critics like Rachel Carnell and Michael McKeon, who have written on early secret histories, briefly mention the influence of one or two of Brémond's works on their path toward later realist novels. However, their interest in the progress of these genres leads them to group Brémond's texts with early Whig secret histories in a way that, I will argue, obscures the complexities of his political and authorial positions and the position of his writings in relation to Charles II's court.[15] Srinivas Aravamudan has challenged this teleology by connecting Brémond's *Hattigé* (and Ottoman-inspired secret histories more broadly) with the emerging genre of novels that he groups under Enlightenment Orientalism, a "nebulous form of transcultural fiction that interrogated settled assumptions" in ways that, unlike nineteenth-century Orientalism, "did not tend principally toward domination of the East in any single register."[16] In both narratives, Brémond is granted an influential position in the early development of an English genre, but he is not considered on his own merits. Brémond's influence was not limited to the sphere of English prose fiction—the most recent edition of Aphra Behn's *The Younger Brother* (1696; written ca. 1680) provides convincing evidence that Behn drew from Brémond's *Hattigé* in the writing of the play.[17] Despite the scholarly acknowledgement of the influence of Brémond's secret histories, there remains much about Brémond's authorship and writings to be explored.[18]

14 Grobe dedicated his dissertation to Brémond's life and works in the 1950s, yet little from that project made it into scholarly journals, and the parts that did, one of which corrected a longstanding (and in some cases still persistent) authorial confusion that saw Sébastien Brémond's novels attributed to Gabriel de Brémond, have yet to make a significant impact on discussions of Restoration prose fiction. Grobe, "Gabriel and Sébastien Brémond," *Romance Notes* 4, no. 2 (1963): 132–35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43800148.

15 See Rachel Carnell, "Slipping from Secret History to Novel," *ECF* 28, no. 1 (2015): 1–24, https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.28.1.1; and Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). Janet Todd speculates that Aphra Behn was influenced by her reading of *Hattigé* for her own foray into the secret history genre. Todd, *Aphra Behn: A Secret Life*, rev. ed. (London: Fentum Press, 2017), 311.

16 Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 4.

17 Margarete Rubik, introduction to *The Younger Brother*, by Aphra Behn, in *Aphra Behn: The Plays 1682–1696*, ed. Rachel Adcock et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 724.

18 See Bayer, 117; Kate Loveman, *Reading Fictions, 1660–1740: Deception in English*

My initial focus in this article is on the ways that Brémond's paratexts demonstrate the potential of prose fiction during the Restoration to elevate an author in London society, both in the elite circles surrounding the king and in the eyes of a public readership that Kate Loveman has demonstrated were eager to consume stories about those circles.[19] Though critics often focus on the role of the court wits and the writing of poetry, satire, and drama for winning literary accolades at Charles II's court, Brémond's flurry of literary activity when he was in London indicates that there was also a place for fiction writing as a useful pursuit for an outsider seeking an entrée into London's elite circles. While Brémond's dedicatory paratexts reveal an author at pains to create a particular set of relationships among himself, the English court, and the king, both the wider audience allowed by the print medium and the texts' translations into English destabilize what I argue are the Royalist political moorings of Brémond's texts by moving them beyond the language and the curatorial control of the author. By juxtaposing Brémond's dedicatory practices with the reception and afterlife of two of his secret histories, *Hattigé* and *Homaïs*, it is possible to see how prose authorship could play differently in court circles than amidst a wider London readership, as well as the difficulties that could arise from the slippage of meaning when a text became separated from the authority of its original author, regardless of how carefully that author cultivated his persona and his court connections. And yet, I will argue, this slippage is an essential part of the popularity of Brémond's novels, within his time in London and afterwards, and, as Rebecca Bullard argues, of the secret history genre itself.[20]

When Brémond arrived in London in the early 1670s, he had already published his first novel, *L'Amoureaux Africain* (1671), which drew from his experiences in Tunis. When that novel appeared in English as *The Fair One of Tunis* three years later (1674), it was published without dedication

Literary and Political Culture (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008); Sonia Villegas-López, "Performativity and Spectacle in the Oriental Novel: The Harem as Dramatic Space in Sébastien Brémond's *The Happy Slave*," *Restoration* 46, no. 2 and 47, no. 1 (2022/23): 103–20, https://doi.org/10.1353/rst.2022.0013; and Erin Keating, "In the Bedroom of the King: Affective Politics in the Restoration Secret History," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 58–82, https://doi.org/10.1353/jem.2015.0013.

19 Loveman, 109–22.

20 Rebecca Bullard, "Eighteenth-Century Secret History in Translation: The Case of *The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians* and *Histoire Secrette De La Reine Zarah, et Des Zaraziens*," *ECF* 30, no. 3 (2018): 422, https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.30.3.419.

(as had the earlier French version)—one of only two novels by Brémond that had no dedicatory paratexts in either the French or English (the other being *Homaïs*). Although Brémond claimed to be from an aristocratic French family, he spent most of his life seeking his fortune, as a mercenary in Spain, North Africa, and the Netherlands; as a novelist in England; and as a consul for the French government in Jerusalem. Even his marriage to Marie-Angélique de Loménie was mercenary: she had fled her family, and Brémond likely married her in hopes of financial reward for rescuing and recuperating her public reputation. Though it is possible he was briefly employed by the Duchess of Cleveland as a French secretary when he first came to London, most of his connections to court seem to have come through literary patronage.[21]

It is unclear what exactly Brémond's connections at court were; however, according to Edwin P. Grobe, Charles II asked Brémond to supply the libretto for a ballet written in celebration of the marriage of James, Duke of York and Mary of Modena, which was performed for the royal brothers in 1674.[22] This ballet occasioned the clearest indication of Brémond's relationship with Charles II in that it indirectly led to Brémond's conviction for manslaughter and subsequent pardoning by the king for that crime.[23] This incident bears some material relation to Brémond's view of authorship and demonstrates how he used his writing to advance his social position in London. While the ballet libretto does not include a dedicatory epistle, Brémond did have multiple copies bound to present to the royal family on the evening of the performance. When a court musician forcibly took one of these copies, the insult was particularly galling for an author who viewed his works as written directly for their dedicatees, whether they included a dedicatory epistle, as many of his printed works did, or were presented as gifts. The connection that he was trying to create between himself and the members of the royal family through the presentation copies was blocked by the musician's ignorant usurpation of the book. Brémond held his temper at court; however, the next day, he met the musician in the street, a fracas ensued, and the musician was killed. Though Brémond was found guilty of the musician's death and imprisoned, Charles intervened on his behalf.[24]

21 Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," chapter 1.

22 Grobe, "S. Bre., French Librettist at the Court of Charles II," *Theatre Notebook*, no. 9 (1954): 20–21.

23 Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," 32n70.

24 Grobe, "S. Bre., French Librettist," 21.

With the evidence available, it is impossible to say whether the king was directly motivated by his relationship with Brémond to grant the pardon or whether one of the influential dedicatees of Brémond's novels, such as the Duchess of Portsmouth, intervened on his behalf. Nevertheless, the pardon provides good, if tantalizingly incomplete, evidence of Brémond's connections to the highest members of the Restoration Court. These connections, as I will show, were fostered through Brémond's strategic use of his paratexts and his choice of subject matter and genre in his fiction.

Libertinism and Homosocial Dedications

Brémond used the dedicatory paratexts to his works throughout the 1670s to align himself with a particular circle of libertine wits and their supporters, most often associated with the French faction at court. Both the genres and the subject matter of his works were tailored to popular literary trends at Charles's court and the sceptical readership habits that characterized much of the reading of fiction at this time. His novels drew from court gossip and rumours, as well as his own exploits, to create entertaining stories straddling the modes of secret history, court satire, and amatory fiction, thereby taking advantage of the popularity of allusive literature during this period, which, as Loveman argues, was dominated by the vogue for sceptical reading.[25] By setting many of his novels in Northern Africa and Turkey, Brémond took part in the seventeenth-century fictional trend for "side-by-side comparisons of French and English monarchs with Eastern bashaws and potentates," described by Aravamudan "as straightforward political recognition of European desires for luxury commodities and hedonistic practices."[26] Brémond also took advantage of what Laura J. Rosenthal identifies as "the enthusiasm for everything Ottoman" of the early years of Charles II's reign, when "the Ottoman empire was not just a power to be feared but a model to be emulated."[27] The fact that Brémond had spent time in many of the places in which he set his novels lent credence to his depictions.

Bullard writes in her introduction to *The Secret History in Literature* that the secret history genre is marked by its fluid relationship with other forms (history, amatory fiction, scandal chronicles, gossip, anecdote), while consistently demonstrating "sustained and serious political

25 Loveman, 19–46.

26 Aravamudan, 205.

27 Laura J. Rosenthal, *Ways of the World: Theatre and Cosmopolitanism in the Restoration and Beyond* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 20, 21.

engagement and a sophisticated awareness of its own rhetorical and literary characteristics."[28] Despite its capaciousness as a genre of writing, scholars of secret history would agree that, in the late seventeenth century, one of its defining characteristics is the claim to reveal the secrets, often sexual, of a society's most powerful or prominent individuals. For Brémond, writing amatory secret histories that cast the king as an Ottoman-style leader and that detail his erotic struggles with his pre-eminent mistresses—Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland and Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth—enabled him to craft his authorial persona as a court insider who offered glimpses for readers into the activities of the court and even into the bedroom of their monarch, where he "commonly lay aside that Majesty which dazles [*sic*] the Eyes, and affects the Hearts of Mankind."[29] As I have argued elsewhere, building on Joseph Roach's description of Charles II as an early figure of modern celebrity, Brémond's secret histories "created an affective intimacy between reading subject and royal hero," intensifying and feeding into readers' parasocial desire to connect with their monarch.[30] Given their dual appeal to the taste for all things Ottoman and the desire for gossip about the court, it is no surprise that Brémond's writings were popular in both court and city.

Although Brémond certainly wrote in the hopes of financial reward, he did not pursue that goal solely through the market, a difficult road to financial stability during this time, and his claims to care little for his more ordinary readers, while a common gentlemanly pose, ring more than usually true in the context of his whole body of paratexts. In the *Avis* to the French-language edition of *Le Cercle* (1674), which is dedicated to the Duchess of Portsmouth, Brémond says of his readers, "Tout le mal & tout le bien, qu'il sçauroit dire de mon ouvrage, m'est presque indifferent. J'ay eu dessein de donner deux ou trois heures de divertissement à la personne à qui je le dédie; & je puis dire, que j'auray eu de mon travail tout ce que j'en veux, & tout ce que j'en puis raisonnablement esperer, s'il est capable de la diverter."[31] Brémond sets

28 Rebecca Bullard, introduction to *The Secret History in Literature, 1660–1820,* 2. For a comprehensive list of the attributes of secret history, see Bullard, introduction to *The Secret History*, 6–7.

29 [Sébastien Brémond], *Hattigé: or The Amours of the King of Tamaran, a Novel* ([London: Richard Bentley], 1680), 29, EEBO. References are to this edition.

30 Keating, 63.

31 Sébastien Brémond, *Le Cercle, ou Conversations Galantes* (Paris, 1673), n.p., British Library. References are to this edition. In instances where there is no English

himself up as an author who belongs to the upper circles of Restoration society. The structure of *Le Cercle* lends itself to this pose as its narrative structure resembles earlier works like Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* in being a set of tales connected by a frame of friends gathered in a storytelling circle. The first tale in the collection, which features an account of a French traveller in London and likely draws heavily on Brémond's own experiences, emphasizes the interchangeability of author and narrator and highlights the orality implied by this genre of writing. In a society that was strongly ruled by hierarchies of rank and speech, Brémond claims the right to speak with the duchess on an equal footing, thus implying his own elevated status. Elspeth Jajdelska argues that "even gentleman authors needed to apologise for uninvited speech if they addressed those of gentle rank and above,"[32] yet the words with which Brémond opens his dedication, while respectful and flattering, are not apologetic and, like the Avis, show little concern for the opinions of the wider public: "Quelque grande que soit la Liberté que je prens de Vous dedier ce petit Ouvrage, je ne suis pas en peine, de Répondre a ce qu'en dir a le Public" (*Le Cercle*). In many of Brémond's French dedications, he positions himself as, if not quite equal, at the very least a person who belongs in the company of his dedicatees.

Similarly, in the midst of Brémond's most productive couple of years (1677–78), he writes in a dedication to John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave of his "Impatience ... to make [him] an Offering out of my poor Stock," stressing that he aims only to provide Mulgrave with "a little Divertisement."[33] In the same dedication, he excuses his inability to represent events exactly as they happened with the following statement: "I have said this rather to excuse my self to Your Lordship, than to Justifie my self to the Publick" (A4r–A4v). The courtly stances of both of these paratexts, reminiscent of the gentlemanly pose of the aristocratic author, reveal much about Brémond's view of his authorial persona, and they echo libertine poet the Earl of Rochester's lines in "An Allusion to Horace" (written in 1675 or 1676):

translation of the paratext, the original French is quoted. When there is an extant English translation, the translation is quoted.

32 Elspeth Jajdelska, *Speech, Print and Decorum in Britain, 1600–1750: Studies in Social Rank and Communication* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 75.

33 Sébastien Brémond, *The Cheating Gallant: or, The False Count Brion* (London: James Magnes and Richard Bentley, 1677), A2v, A3r–A3v, EEBO. References are to this edition.

I loathe the Rabble, 'tis enough for me,
If Sidley, Shadwell, Shepherd, Witcherley,
Godolphin, Buttler, Buckhurst, Buckingham,
And some few more, whom I omit to name
Approve my Sense, I count their Censure Fame.[34]

While the role of poetic wit in this type of court sociability has long been recognized by critics, it is not something generally associated with early fiction. However, looking at the dedicatees to Brémond's novels as a group reveals the ways that he was using paratexts and his knowledge of London literary trends to assert his place in, and foster the literary patronage of, Restoration high society. Through his paratexts, he builds a public persona as one of the literary libertines who performed their excessive and witty antics for and around the monarch, making his experiences, his court connections, and himself into "texts to be analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated," a key element of libertine performance according to Jeremy Webster.[35]

While many of the dedicatees for Brémond's novels are linked politically to the French interest at court, that is not necessarily their most relevant connection for understanding Brémond's self-fashioning. To create his authorial persona as a libertine court insider, Brémond strategically selected his dedicatees, cultivating a circle of homosocial relations that were based in elite male privilege and libertine behaviour. Like the author himself, who was forced to flee Spain after killing a man in a duel and who required the king's intervention after the aforementioned entanglement with the court musician, most of the male dedicatees have violence or duels in their past.[36] *Le Triomfe de l'amour sur le destin* (1677) was dedicated to Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex, who had "to plead the King's pardon" after killing an alleged highwayman and was well known for his irreverent and riotous behaviour;[37] *L'hereux esclave* (1677) was dedicated to Thomas Butler, Earl of Ossory who was briefly imprisoned in the Tower for challenging the Duke of Buckingham

34 John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, "An Allusion to Horace. The 10th Satyr of the 1st. Book," in *The Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Keith Walter (Oxford: Shakespeare Head Press, 1984), lines 120–24.

35 Jeremy W. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II's Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

36 Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," 14–15.

37 Harold Love, "Sackville, Charles, Sixth Earl of Dorset and First Earl of Middlesex (1643–1706), Poet and Politician," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24442.

to a duel in 1666; John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave (future Duke of Buckingham and Normandy), the dedicatee of *Le galand escroc, ou, Le faux comte de Brion* (1677), challenged Rochester to a duel over a satire he believed the earl had written about him in 1669. One of Brémond's two female dedicatees, Elizabeth Cavendish, Duchess of Albermarle acts as a connection to her husband, Christopher Monck, who had to be pardoned for his role in the death of a beadle during a brawl in a brothel. Brémond spends many words in the dedication to the duchess explicitly referencing her husband and her father, making clear that at least one of the functions of the dedication is to connect him to them through his praise of her.

With his choice of dedicatees, Brémond defines a circle of men, of which he is a member, connected through their brushes with violence, death, and the law. This emphasis on the violent aspects of masculinity associated with libertinism is intertwined with Brémond's claims to status, since, as Erin Mackie reminds us, "the rake's masculinity asserts criminality as a status privilege."[38] This positioning allows the author to present himself in a pose of libertine elitism for a wider readership who may even be familiar with the gossip surrounding his arrest for manslaughter and his royal pardon, and so might be willing to buy into and spread this authorial persona carefully constructed through the dedications. The dedications act as libertine performances for those with the court knowledge to understand the import and implications of Brémond's choices; as Webster points out with respect to libertine performance, the "contempt for authority, entertainingly represented, ironically brought them [the libertine wits] status within the court and further access to the king."[39]

Building on this authorial libertine performance of violence, Brémond's dedicatees also play central roles in the sexual gossip that swirled around the court, cementing the link between the paratexts and the secret history genre in which Brémond so often wrote. Portsmouth, the dedicatee of *Le Cercle*, was one of the king's leading mistresses during the 1670s, and it was rumoured that the Earl of St. Albans, the dedicatee of *Hattigé*, had secretly married Queen Henrietta Maria or, at the very least, was romantically involved with her.[40] St. Albans's nephew, Henry

38 Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman in the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 43.

39 Webster, 16.

40 On 21 December 1660, Samuel Pepys records dining with Lady Sandwich, who relates the latest court gossip including "that [Henrietta Maria] hath married herself to young Jermin." *The Diary of Samuel Pepys: Volume 1: 1660*, ed. Robert Latham

Jermyn, was the Duchess of Cleveland's lover during the years that *Hattigé* covers, and it is possible (albeit unlikely) that the aforementioned Elizabeth Cavendish is the Cavendish listed as the king's new mistress in the keys that accompanied some of the pirated French editions of that same book.[41] The dedication of *Le double-cocu* to the Earl of Pembrooke justifies the dedication as to the man who is best able to make them, while the dedication to Middlesex offers the book as a "Mistress" fit for a man with "unparalel'd Gallantry," Sackville being Nell Gwyn's second "Charles" in her trifecta of lovers named Charles—Charles Hart, Charles Sackville, and Charles II.[42]

While, as Bayer points out, it was typical for Restoration paratexts to try to "seduce [their] readers with the sexual content of the work to follow,"[43] Brémond's evocation of scandal in his dedications and choices of dedicatee were more specific, as most of the individuals whom he chose were not merely sexually scandalous but also explicitly linked to the king. When the connection to the king may not be as obvious as through a mistress or a paramour of his mother's, Brémond slips in flattering language about Charles. Thus, while writing about the Duke of Albermarle in the dedication to the duchess, he highlights the ways that Albermarle "has acquired the esteem and affection of his King ... who can discern Persons."[44] In his dedication to Ossory, he justifies Butler's worthiness through "the particular esteem alwayes had for [him] by the greatest and most discerning Monarque in the World."[45] In these two paratexts, Brémond manages both to flatter his dedicatee and praise

and William Matthews (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 320.

41 Several French pirated editions of *Hattigé* feature print or manuscript keys. For example, the manuscript key found in the edition at the Bibliothèque nationale de France lists Moharen and his wife, Roukia, as "Milord Canduche" and "femme du Milord," while the printed key accompanying the edition at the UCLA special collections lists them as "Milord Candiche" and "Femme du Milord." I have yet to discover a satisfying theory on this attribution.

42 "Et d'ailleurs a qui pouvois-je offrir plus a propos l'histoire d'un Cocu qu'a l'homme du monde qui s'entend le mieux a les faire." Sébastien Brémond, *Le double-cocu: Histoire du tems* (Paris: Mrs Jaques Magnus & Richard Bentley, 1678), A4v, Queen's College Library, Oxford. See also, Brémond, *The Triumph of Love over Fortune: A Pleasant Novel*, in *Modern Novels, vol. 4* (London, 1692), A4r, A5r, British Library.

43 Bayer, 132.

44 Sébastien Brémond, *Gallant Memoirs: or, The Amorous Adventures of a Person of Quality*, trans. Peter Belon (London: R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1681), A5r–v, EEBO.

45 Sébastien Brémond, *The Happy Slave, A Novel* (London: J. Magnes and R. Bentley, 1677), A3r, EEBO.

the king. By specifically praising the king's discernment, Brémond also praises himself, as he was able to win enough favour with the monarch that he was pardoned, and he highlights his "proximity to the king" in an attempt to build his own celebrity as an author.[46] By looking at the paratexts and the choice of dedicatees as a group, we can see how Brémond evokes libertine sexuality and violence to insert himself and his works into an exclusive circle closely connected to Charles II. Brémond relies on the sceptical reading habits associated with allusive fiction and the secret history genre to generate this public authorial persona and to attract interest to his texts.

The masculine homosocial network created through Brémond's paratexts links his fiction to the court satires studied by Harold Love as texts originally written within the court for an elite circle of court readers. Yet, as Love has noted of court lampoons that "having escaped into wider circulation, were read as state satires," readers often interpreted things in ways that the authors may not have intended or foreseen.[47] These unintended interpretations could be particularly problematic if the person at the centre of the text was the monarch and was highlighted as such for the purposes of self-promotion, as I am arguing was the case with Brémond, who, unlike some other more financially secure court satirists, was trying to monetize his work through both his wealthy dedicatees and the print market. The potential for wider print distribution to create problems for authors of sociable court fiction during the Restoration is well exemplified through the problems that arose when Brémond's bookseller sought to license an English translation of the secret history *Hattigé*.

Translating Secret History: Language and Politics

Drawing on Mary Helen McMurran's concept of "translatio," which broadens the idea of translation beyond language to include culture, politics, and other elements of a text's reception, Bullard argues "that secret history is a genre defined by the acts of translation that it requires of its readers."[48] According to Bullard, these acts of translation are integral to

46 Webster, 11.

47 Harold Love, *English Clandestine Satire: 1660–1702* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 248.

48 Bullard, "Eighteenth-Century Secret History in Translation," 431. Mary Helen McMurran, *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

both the content of the secret history, as a genre heavily influenced by the seventeenth-century literary interchanges between France and England, and the "transverse" reading practices required of secret history readers that "require readers to move between old and new, the familiar and the strange, the domestic and the exotic."[49]

While the transfer from French to English was certainly an element of the shift in Brémond's authorial persona, the translations of Brémond's two secret histories entailed far more than a mere movement between languages. Repositioning the fictions from the early years of the succession crises to the height of the Exclusion Crisis (from 1679 through 1681), from court intrigue to more widely read secret history about the king, these translations provide a strong case for understanding how secret histories could shift their political moorings to adjust to their political context and, in doing so, escape the control of the author. In this section, I demonstrate that both *Hattigé* and *Homaïs*, when translated, actually damaged the reputation Brémond had worked so assiduously to create through his paratexts and, possibly, contributed to his choice to leave authorship and England behind.

In 1676, the Secretary of State's office interviewed Richard Bentley about the supposedly scandalous book he was selling in his shop, Brémond's *Hattigé, ou Les Amours du Roy de Tamaran*. Brémond's secret history tells the story of Charles II's struggle to mediate between his foremost mistress, Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, and his friend and advisor (in the late 1660s, the time of the events depicted), George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. Charles is depicted as often at the mercy of his love for his mistress, such that he disbelieves reports of her infidelity and exiles his closest advisor when he speaks against her. Yet the king comes out on top at the end of this comic tale, which concludes with a partner swap wherein the character represented by Cleveland is replaced by another mistress, perhaps one of Charles's actress mistresses (given the heavy theatrical language used by the novel) or the mysterious "Mrs. Candiche" mentioned in the French keys.[50] In the interview, Bentley provides details about the origins of the novel and claims that when he

49 Bullard, "Eighteenth-Century Secret History in Translation," 422.

50 In my review of numerous surviving copies of *Hattigé* in libraries across North America, England, and France, I have yet to find a key (print or manuscript) in any of the English translations. I have seen three French keys (one in print and two in manuscript form), all of which seem to be bound with pirated editions of the French text (of which there were many). The implication seems to be that English readers did not need keys to decode Brémond's work.

confronted the author about reports it was a "dangerous book. Bremont replied, they very much mistook his book ... and asked if he thought him such a fool as to put his name to it and dedicate it to a person of quality, if he could not justify it."[51] As mentioned earlier, Brémond dedicated *Hattigé* to Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, a key figure in Queen Henrietta Maria's household, whose relationship with the queen mother was the subject of much speculative gossip and who was part of the faction at court that wanted to bring England into closer relations with France.

Another report written to Secretary of State Joseph Williamson from one of his agents "wonder[ed]" that "St. Albans ha[d] not quarrelled with the author, who ... [was] known at Court" and further relays that "Bremont is so confident of the harmlessness of his book, that he said, he would ... present one to the King himself."[52] Unfortunately, we have no idea whether Brémond actually followed through on this assertion, but it is clear that the author viewed the secret history as inoffensive toward and possibly even complimentary to the king. However, Williamson's office disagreed, and, in the end, *Hattigé* was not licensed and therefore was not translated into English until 1680 (after the Licensing Act lapsed in 1679). *Homaïs*, Brémond's sequel to *Hattigé,* which continues the narrative of Charles's romantic entanglements with the Duchess of Cleveland while introducing the Duchess of Portsmouth as the new mistress, was not published in French or English until 1681, despite Bentley's assertion that Brémond was writing it in 1676 ("The Examination of Richard Bentley"). What seems evident is that Brémond was either naive about how the wider public would interpret his secret histories, or he was fully embracing the disingenuous tone of the typical secret history paratexts, as Delarivier Manley would do decades later after her arrest for seditious libel in relation to *The New Atalantis* (1709).[53]

51 "The Examination of Richard Bentley," 23 April 1676, in *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Charles II, 1676–1677 Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, vol. 18: March 1676–February 1677, ed. F.H. Blackburne Daniell (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1909), Gale State Papers Online. References are to this edition.

52 "April 18, 1676, H. Oldenburg to Williamson," in *Calendar of State Papers*, vol. 18: March 1676–February 1677, Gale State Papers Online.

53 Catherine Gallagher, "Political Crimes and Fictional Alibis: The Case of Delarivier Manley," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, no. 4 (1990): 503, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2739182.

The discontinuity between how the figures in Williamson's office were reading the text and how the author presented it is further evidenced in Brémond's use of presentation copies. We know from Bentley's testimony that Brémond had two copies of *Hattigé* bound "in Turkey leather" to present to St. Albans, bringing together the dual meanings of *dédicace* pointed out by Genette: the material presentation copy, which served the function of dedication, and the textual, symbolic dedication of the written dedicatory epistle.[54] Brémond himself wittily notes the dual material/symbolic nature in his dedication when he writes that he is presenting St. Albans with "une Comedie de Gens habillez à la Turque" (*Hattigé*), referring to both the leather he chose for the presentation copies and the allegorical cover under which he disguises his secret history. Hinting broadly that the text is a secret history yet referring to it as "une petite galanterie," Brémond positions *Hattigé* as a libertine text about the king but also implies its harmlessness in the proper hands.

Brémond's confidence in the acceptability of his text, to both St. Albans and the king, is in tension with how it could be read outside the court (or at least how Williamson feared it would be read). Given its initial publication in The Hague, Carnell argues that the 1680 English translation was meant by its publisher "as opposition propaganda in support of the Exclusion bills" and calls it "typical of secret histories mocking Charles II."[55] Certainly, Brémond's novel in 1680 could be and was read by many as anti-court satire, yet the liberal borrowings that the author of *Queen Zarah and the Zarazians*, an anti-Whig satire that takes as its target Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, makes of Brémond's text suggest that a few decades later there were still some who saw *Hattigé* as more aligned with Tory sentiment.[56] As Brémond's text was translated across languages, through increasingly sensitive political times, and from a more exclusive to a wider readership, its criticisms of the king came to overshadow the libertine homosociality that Brémond tried to assert through his text.

The idea that readers during the 1670s and 80s were reading Brémond's secret histories as anti-court satire also explains why the English translation of *Hattigé* drops the dedication entirely, replacing it

54 Genette, 117.

55 Carnell, 8.

56 Ruth Herman, "Similarities between Delarivier Manley's *Secret History of Queen Zarah* and the English Translation of *Hattigé*." *Notes and Queries* 47, no. 2 (2000): 193–96, https://doi.org/10.1093/nq/47-2-193.

with a translators' preface. The new preface, signed only with the initials B.B., seemingly disavows the narrative's political nature, while shaping the readers' expectations for a secret history with its emphasis on translation and distance from the English context, enacted by the translator's journey into Holland. Yet it still hints at the book's scandalous reputation by noting the many pirated editions of the original French that the translator has met with along the way. The emphasis on the potentially seditious nature of Brémond's *Hattigé* also explains why, when its sequel *Homaïs* appeared in 1681, neither the French nor the English version included paratexts, and both the author and the bookseller are screened under pseudonyms—Sebastien Grenadine for Brémond and Simon the Afrikan for Bentley. In the wake of the Exclusion Crisis, it was just too dangerous to be associated with novels that could be read as critical of the king.

Reading Brémond's paratexts and choice of dedicatees as a group pushes against any stable political categorization of his secret histories and opens up other ways to understand this early prose genre, ways that are revealing of the political shifts occurring in late seventeenth-century England. Using his paratexts to associate himself with the libertine circle of wits who favoured France and who favoured the Royalist factions during the succession crises of the late 1670s, Brémond pushes against a reading of his secret histories as critical of the king. Kevin Sharpe persuasively argues that Charles II self-consciously positioned himself as a lover to the nation in opposition to the image of the father-king represented by his forbears, spinning sexual desire and potency into a form of political power.[57] I propose that Brémond fashioned his authorial persona as part of the circle of authors who were contributing to this picture of the monarch. The Ottoman settings of these secret histories support this positioning, since, as Rosenthal argues, "at court and in the emerging public sphere, the Ottoman Empire was ... a model to be emulated."[58] In making Charles an Ottoman-style ruler, Brémond was continuing the tendency in his dedicatory paratexts to flatter the king. Finally, in both of Brémond's secret histories, the Charles figure always ends up coming out on top, with a new mistress in hand. Brémond was quite successful at playing the role of libertine courtier; however, he ran into trouble when his texts came to be translated. Outside of the circle of

57 Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660–1714* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

58 Rosenthal, 21.

those allowed to laugh at/with the king, Brémond's books were too easily misconstrued as critical. This essential ambiguity of meaning at the centre of secret history as a genre, and these texts in particular, pushes against Brémond's attempts to shape the meanings of the texts and allows the active reader to transfer their own preconceptions of the king, their own knowledge of his affairs, and their own political opinions onto the events of the narrative.

The flexibility of attribution available in both *Hattigé* and *Homaïs* played an important role in the works' continuing popularity and their influence over the secret history genre as it entered its height of popularity in the 1690s and the early eighteenth century. Keeping the central characters legible but using amatory fiction to make the details of the affairs and amorous quarrels more general, these texts empowered readers to use the knowledge they happened to have about the king and his court to people the minor characters in a satisfying manner. With *Hattigé*, a reader such as myself, steeped in Restoration theatre and the knowledge of Charles's mistresses that has survived to the present day, might confidently place Nell Gwyn and Charles Hart as Moharen and his wife, Roukia; whereas a reader or bookseller in the late 1670s who wanted to read the text as more critical of the king and his advisors had a number of Royalist Cavendishes whom they could read as the couple engaged in partner swapping with the king.[59] Those inclined to interpret the text as critical of the Country Party and celebratory of the king could read the man on the losing end of the wife swap as William Cavendish, first Duke of Devonshire, whose associations with the Country Party during the 1670s and affair with the actress Mrs Heneage make him an attractive attribution. Similarly, the figure of Cleveland's affections could easily be read as John Churchill, as his affair with the duchess was long-lived, or as Henry Jermyn (nephew of *Hattigé*'s dedicatee), who was also a known lover of the duchess at this point. The same can be said for *Homaïs*, which Grobe reads as a secret history of "the proposed revolt against Tripoli" during the late 1660s that is centered on the Dey of Tunis when Brémond was in that country, El

59 Potential Royalist attributions include William Cavendish, first Duke of Newcastle and his famous wife Margaret Cavendish (née Lucas) (who might have appealed to French readers, given the couple's time spent in France with the court in exile); William Cavendish, third Earl of Devonshire and his wife Elizabeth Cavendish (née Cecil); and Henry Cavendish, second Duke of Newcastle and his wife Frances Cavendish (née Pierrepont). Unfortunately, I have not found any rumours of a liaison between Charles II and any Cavendish, so these attributions are pure speculation.

Hadj Mustapha Karakouz, and the rebel Sidi Ackmet-Benoc.[60] Given its publication in 1681 and Bentley's aforementioned assertion that Brémond was working on a sequel to *Hattigé* in 1676, I read *Homaïs* as beginning with the signing of the Treaty of Dover, which was also the setting for Charles's first meeting with his future mistress, the Duchess of Portsmouth. The fictional elements of the amatory-style secret history allow more interpretive flexibility and provide more agency to the readers than earlier and later secret histories that either used the real names of their targets or adhered closely to public events. Despite my argument that Brémond relied on the knowledge of his affection for the king among the circle of elite readers to which he directed the text to fix its interpretation, once his secret histories gained a wider readership, they moved beyond his control, and the openness of the fictional cover invited and encouraged multiple interpretations.

The examples of *Hattigé* and *Homaïs* demonstrate how a performance of royalist sociability in 1676 can be transformed in four short years, through translation, changes in the political landscape, and a disconnection of the text from authorial speech, into a proto-Whig secret history. Brémond's textual performance of an upper-class homosocial camaraderie, which allowed for a certain degree of criticism within a circle that clearly had the king at its centre, was extended through the wider readership afforded by English to individuals who, under the social hierarchies of the time, had no right to that form of gentlemanly sociability. When Brémond's works left their original context, the genre of his texts shifted along with the language and readership: what had been affectionate burlesque could easily become sedition in the hands of a readership more critical of the monarch. What acted as a passport to inclusion for the French author shifted to threaten that place when those texts became too English. Thus it should come as no surprise that by the time both *Hattigé* and *Homaïs* arrived in English versions, Brémond was no longer in England.

60 While I agree that this is an available reading of Brémond's text, Grobe's dating of *Homaïs* is erroneous as a result of his lack of access to dated French editions of the text (Grobe, "Sébastien Brémond," 73).