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ESSAY

'If things of sight such heavens be/What heavens are those we cannot see': Marvell and Protestant Saumur in the 1650s

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Andrew Marvell spent the year 1656 and most of 1657 in Saumur, a town in France on the river Loire, where he accompanied, as tutor, young William Dutton. This essay describes the conditions, material and social, in which the young British gentlemen found themselves during their stay in Saumur. It considers the impact that their stay in the town may have had on their religious practices and attitudes, drawing attention to the debates about religious aspects of the English Revolution which took place within the local reformed church. Further, the essay notes the role played by Marvell in drawing John Milton's attention to the disputations against Socinianism held under Josué de la Place, a leading theologian from the Protestant *académie* of Saumur. Finally, it suggests that Marvell's 'A Dialogue Between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure' may be a reflection on the experience of British students and their tutors during their stay in the town.

Keywords: Saumur; Académie; Socinianism; Amyrault; La Place; Milton; Marvell

Andrew Marvell spent the year 1656 and most of 1657 in Saumur, a town in France on the river Loire, where he accompanied young William Dutton as his tutor. Since Pierre Legouis's biography of Marvell, *Poet, Puritan, Patriot*¹ and more recently John Stoye's study of the role played by travelling abroad in the education of young Englishmen during the first half of the seventeenth century, little attention has been

¹ Pierre Legouis, *Andrew Marvell: Poet, Puritan, Patriot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), still indispensable, though the first French edition dates from 1928.

paid to Marvell's stay in Saumur.² Recent work by Timothy Raylor and Stephanie Coster offers a better understanding of how Marvell approached his role as tutor, but we may still ask, why did Marvell and his charge go to Saumur and what did they do there?³ More generally, what made sojourning in Saumur attractive to the parents of the young gentlemen who were sent there with their tutors? From manuscript and printed sources of the period, I shall try to construct a picture of the social and cultural milieu in which young British gentlemen found themselves immersed during their stay in Saumur in the mid-1650s. I shall also place Marvell's stay in the context of the politics of religion as they were being played out locally and consider what lessons, if any, Marvell might have learnt from his Saumur experience.

The role that Saumur played as a suitable stopping place during the continental tour that young British gentlemen undertook to or through France dated back to the first decades of the century.⁴ In the first instance, it was largely due to the prestige that the Governor of Saumur, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, enjoyed in English Court circles and to the reputation that the *académie* that he had founded had achieved, particularly in Scotland.⁵

Mornay's prestige among English grandees dated from his embassy to England in 1577. He made friends with Sir Philip Sidney, who later translated his *De la Verité de la religion chrestienne*.⁶ His *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort*, translated

² John W. Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad, 1604–1667*, rev. ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989). This can be complemented, for the earlier period, by the third chapter of Anna Vladimira Danusheskaya, 'Ideal and Practice: Aspects of Noble Life in Late Elizabethan and Jacobean England' (Ph.D. Diss., University of Hull, 2001). For the later period, see David J. Sturdy, 'English Travellers in France 1660–1715' (Ph.D. diss., Trinity College Dublin, 1970).

³ Timothy Raylor, 'Andrew Marvell: Traveling Tutor', *Marvell Studies* 2:1 (2017); Stephanie Coster, "'Sending them beyond the Sea": Andrew Marvell, the Earl of Clare, and Tutoring in the Restoration', *Marvell Studies* 2:1 (2017): <https://marvell.openlibhums.org/2/volume/2/issue/1/> (last accessed 20 October 2017).

⁴ For a more complete study of British travelers to Saumur in the period, see Jean-Paul Pittion, 'Saumur et les voyageurs britanniques au XVIIe siècle', in *Heurs et Malheurs des Voyages*, ed. Didier Boisson, *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest* 121:3 (2014): 97–117.

⁵ For a history of the *académie*, see Jean-Paul Pittion, *Histoire de l'académie*, in Archives municipales de Saumur, MS on line: *Fonds de l'académie protestante*: <http://archives.ville-saumur.fr/a/752/> (last accessed 20 October 2017).

⁶ Philip Sidney, *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion* (London, 1587). There were four editions of the work, the latest dated 1617.

by Mary Sidney, went through six editions in the sixteenth century.⁷ In the eyes of those in the English clergy and at Court who were committed to a radical reformation of the Anglican Church, Mornay was a towering figure, an uncompromising controversialist and defender of the true reformed faith. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, the sons of English grandees who passed through Saumur always made a point of visiting him and paying their respects.⁸

In Scotland, as in Protestant German lands and in the Low Countries, it was for its *académie* that Saumur was known. The *académie* was a divinity school for the training of future *pasteurs* of the French reformed churches. It was attached to a college of humanities also founded by Mornay. In 1628, Ninian Campbell, a Scottish regent who taught in Saumur, published a piece entitled *Apologia critica[e] in qua breviter hujus facultatis utilitates ostenduntur*, praising the *académie* for 'the richness of its library', and for the 'piety and virtue' of students and staff.⁹ Saumur offered a safe place to stay to reformed students from abroad and to young aristocrats who stopped there on their way to Geneva.¹⁰ Members of the French reformed churches were only a minority among the mostly Catholic population, but they could rely on the protection of Duplessis-Mornay.

However, the resistance of the Huguenot Party to the Crown's encroachments on their liberties turned into an open rebellion. In 1622, despite his attempts at conciliation, Mornay was forced to resign his governorship. The wars of the Huguenot Party put a severe strain on the reformed churches. As a consequence of Mornay's

⁷ See Elizabeth Pentland, 'Philippe Mornay, Mary Sidney, and the Politics of Translation', *Early Modern Studies Journal* 6 (2014): 66–99.

⁸ In 1611, at the age of eighteen, Thomas Wentworth, future Earl of Strafford, went to pay his respects to Mornay whom he found 'aged and melancholy'. See his letter dated 10 December 1611, in *The Papers of Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, 1593–1641, from Sheffield City Libraries: A Listing and Guide to the Microfilm Collection* (Marlborough: Adam Matthew, 1994).

⁹ Ninian Campbell, *Apologia criticae [sic] in qua breviter hujus facultatis utilitates ostenduntur, quaeque contra eam objici solent diluuntur* (Saumur, 1628). A unique copy of the work is in Aberdeen University Library.

¹⁰ Among these early visitors were the Cavendishes and the Boyles. On the young Boyles' journeys, see vols. 2 and 3 of *The Lismore Papers [First and Second Series], Viz. Autobiographical Notes, Remembrances, and Diaries of Sir Richard Boyle, First and 'Great' Earl of Cork*, 10 vols. (London: Chiswick Press, 1886–88). On the Cavendishes, see *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Noel Malcolm, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

disgrace and of the suspension of their subsidy by the national synods, the *académie* found itself in serious difficulties. The number of foreign students attending it fell rapidly. And by 1630, at the end of the Huguenot armed struggle, a British person traveling across France seldom spent time in Saumur. The country was not safe. When the young Richard Boyle, second earl of Cork, set out on a journey that would take him through France, Sir Henry Wotton warned his father of the need to find him a French Protestant for tutor in order to guide him safely through 'that delicate piece of the world'.¹¹

By the late fifties, however, a sojourn in France had become fashionable again among the British elite. When Marvell and Dutton traveled to Saumur, the country appeared to have recovered from the Fronde, the last of old-style revolts against the Crown. With the return of political and religious peace, the kingdom of France could even appear to some as more stable than England was, with its undercurrents of dissent, under the Protectorate. As a group, the French *réformés* had avoided getting involved in the Fronde. Saumur benefited from the return of internal peace and soon regained its reputation as a town with a tradition of genteel hospitality and as a peaceful place of residence for young Protestant gentlemen. After his stay there in 1656, Sir John Cope, the fifth baronet of Hanwell, thought that Saumur was 'among the most agreeable towns in France, remarkable for the politeness of its inhabitants'.¹²

In the minds of British grandees, Saumur had never quite lost the aristocratic image it had acquired during Mornay's time. Those who visited the town again after the Fronde tended to stop over longer and to use the town both as a resort and as a touring center. Following the pioneering visit of John Evelyn in 1644, the Val de Loire region was fast becoming a tourist region offering a mix of legendary history and fashionable leisure. The country that spread east of Saumur was historic Plantagenet land: two leagues away in the Fontevraud abbey were the tombs of

¹¹ *The Lismore Papers*, 3:219.

¹² Sir John Cope, 'Briefe description of what I have seen most remarkable in France', MS Osborn b 413, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

King Henry II of England, of his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine and of their son King Richard I the Lionheart. Four leagues further east stood the Fortress of Chinon. Five leagues west, the town of Thouars was the seat of Henri De la Tremouille the Third, Prince of Tarente, whose daughter Charlotte was married to James Stanley, seventh earl of Derby. The privileged few, among them Robert Montagu, Lord Mandeville, were invited to hunt in the Prince's warren.¹³ As late as 1671, William, son of Robert Paston, first earl of Yarmouth, wrote to his mother: 'Saumur swarms with English: My lady Holland with Adam Loftus and my lord Sir Robert Atkins and his Lady, a coach and six horses, a pack of hounds and half a dozen stable horses and divers other private gentlemen.'¹⁴

Saumur had much to offer to foreign tourists, so much so that in his guide-book *Dialogi Gallico-Anglico-Latini*, which ran to a third edition in 1660, Gabriel Dugrès, a French tutor from Saumur residing in Oxford, devoted a whole chapter to the town.¹⁵ Whether they belonged to the Catholic majority or to the Protestant minority, innkeepers, traders and artisans benefited from the presence of wealthy tourists. The aristocrats who traveled with their equipage stayed in the best inns or as guests of 'chattelains' (to use Cotgrave's 1611 term). Their behavior during their stay in town, however, was not always exemplary: in 1665, a young traveler passing through Saumur, Sir John Lauder, baronet, noted in his journal that the *pasteur* of the town was critical of the many foreigners who showed no interest in the town except overindulging in good wine and good food.¹⁶

The return of high aristocrats made Saumur a fashionable place again. In their wake came a new style of visitors, for whom Saumur was a place of residence where they tended to spend at least the best part of a year, combining study and leisure.

¹³ Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS D 76: 'He [La Tremouille] permitted me to hunt in his warren which is five leagues long, the which permission he gives to very few.'

¹⁴ *Historical Manuscript Commission*, Sixth Report, 1877–78, p. 368.

¹⁵ James Howell, *Instructions and Directions for Forreine Travell* (London, 1642), quoted in Richard Faber, *French and English* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 76–7. A second edition of Howell's book appeared in 1650.

¹⁶ *Memoirs of Sir John Resesby: The Complete Text and a Selection from His Letters*, ed. Andrew Browning, Mary K. Geiter, and W. A. Speck, 2nd ed. (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1991), 6–10.

The period witnessed what John Stoye described as 'the triumph of a convention', according to which a stay in France was a necessary complement to the education of a young gentleman. For two decades between 1655 and 1675 a stay in Saumur in the company of a tutor became a regular feature in the life of the young sons of the English and Scottish gentry. While Marvell only came once, other tutors made several visits in charge of different pupils. The future Secretary of State, Joseph Williamson (1633–1701), made three successive stays in Saumur, from 1655 to 1656 with Richard Lowther and Thomas Leigh, from 1656 to 1657 with Edward Norris, and in 1658 with Richard Butler, first earl of Arran.

For the sons of the gentry, mixing with young noble men of various descents, and on occasion socializing in an openly mixed French milieu, was a form of social apprenticeship to adulthood that took them away from the patriarchal restraints of the family country house. There is no doubt that the belief held by the writer James Howell in his *Instructions and directions for forreine travel* that 'the gentry in France have a kind of loose becoming boldness and forward diversity in their carriage' was shared by many.¹⁷ From the French nobility they occasionally frequented, it was hoped that the young gentlemen would acquire the fashionable manners – *la politesse* – considered as essential if they wanted to be confident in society, in particular in the presence of women.

The personal accounts that some of these young gentlemen left of their stay give us a sense of their personal experience of the Saumur 'social scene' – to coin a phrase. Sir John Resesby, a baronet and a royalist, later published his own memoirs, a few pages of which are devoted to his stay in Saumur in 1654 and again in 1656. Sir John writes of his mixing with 'the ladies of the town', whom he liked to take for walks in 'the meadows beyond the bridge, the *rendez-vous* of persons of quality in sommer evenings.'¹⁸ He was quite open about the pleasure he took in the company of one of them, Madame du Terra, wife of a local nobleman, Seigneur de Bouillé

¹⁷ *Le Mariage de l'esprit et de la beauté Ballet ... dansé à Saumur aux resjouissances du Carnaval, l'an 1661 de la composition de Monsieur Du Rideau* (Saumur, 1661). A unique copy of the work is in Marsh's Library, Dublin.

¹⁸ See the edition of M. J. Young's letters and accounts in Pittion, *Histoire de l'académie* (4th part).

Saint Paul. He met her during one of the Saumur fairs, one would like to think the autumn fair, at the time of the grape harvest. Together they made music: he played the lute, she played the guitar, and they both sang.

The young Britons who came to Saumur for what was conceived as an educational stay did not attend the *collège d'humanités* attached to the *académie*. They got tuition from their tutors, and they also had private lessons from local masters in French, in mathematics as well as in drawing and handwriting. This left time for riding on 'the great horse', practicing weaponry (fencing and the pike), playing tennis and for learning the essential aristocratic arts of playing musical instruments and dancing. Since Mornay's times, the town boasted a number of specialized artisans catering for an aristocratic clientele, such as sword-makers, hatters, shoemakers and glove makers. Names of fencing and riding masters, of singing masters and of lute and guitar teachers appear in the town church records. Dance masters were in demand among the local nobility. One of these, a Monsieur du Rideau, wrote a mask *Le Mariage de l'esprit et de la beauté* which was performed during 'les réjouissances du Carnaval' of 1661.¹⁹

Tutors were meant to report regularly to parents and were obliged to keep detailed records of moneys spent. Unfortunately, no archival material has been found so far that would enable us to get a concrete picture of William Dutton's activities in Saumur under Marvell's supervision. On the other hand, we have details of the expenses incurred by two Scottish brothers, Robert and William Kerr, during their stay in 1654, two years before William Dutton. The letters of their tutor, M. J. Young, and the accounts he kept, show that the young men socialized a good deal. They went on trips in the region, enjoyed fairground shows, and indulged in the purchases of luxury articles. Nearly a tenth of the total budget of their stay concerned what we may term 'leisure activities'.²⁰

¹⁹ Gabriel Dugrès, *Dialogi Gallico-Anglico-Latini* (Oxford, 1652), 'Dialogue 6' (1st ed. 1636, 3rd ed. 1660).

²⁰ *Journals of Sir John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall, 1665–1676*, ed. Donald Crawford (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1900).

The tutors and their charges stayed in lodgings kept by members of the reformed community and so did the *proposants* (theology students preparing for the ministry) as well as the pupils of its college who were not originally from Saumur. Lodgers whose terms and rates were set by the *académie* were meant to ensure that their boarders behaved decently during their free time in town. In the case of the young British boarders, their tutors were also there to keep a watchful eye on them during their leisure time. Nevertheless, one cannot but feel that the over-indulgence and the profligacy of some of their aristocratic seniors had some influence on the behavior of the young Britons. In turn the freedoms that they enjoyed could not but have created a sense of frustration among the young French students. It cannot be coincidental that when the presence of foreign, largely British, tourists and sojourners made itself felt in Saumur, the *Conseil académique*, the ruling body of the *académie*, became concerned about the unruly behavior of some of the *collégiens* and *proposants*.²¹

That there was jealousy, and occasionally rivalry, between the French and British youths is shown by a serious incident between a young English gentleman named Cotton and a final-year collegian named Malet, which nearly ended in an armed confrontation in July 1656.²² The occasion for the brawl was a tennis match played in the town 'Jeu de Paume'. There were a number of other locations, including inns, where the young British gentlemen were bound to come across French youths.²³ However, except when they shared lodgings, the two groups of young men seem to have kept apart. They had little in common and there was the additional language barrier. It is not surprising, therefore, that the young British gentlemen sought the company of other British aristocrats. The Kerr brothers socialized with Resesby, and

²¹ See Jean-Paul Pittion, 'Discipliner, édifier: le rôle du Recteur à l'Académie protestante de Saumur (1603–1684)', in Max Engammare and Alexandre Vanautgaerden, eds., *L'Intime du Droit à la Renaissance. Colloque du 50^e Anniversaire de la F.I.S.I.E.R.* (Geneva: Droz, 2013), 185–205.

²² Archives municipales de Saumur, MS online: *Fonds de l'académie protestante*, 'Papier et registre des affaires de l'académie royale établie à Saumur. Depuis le mois d'octobre 1613–1673', f°164, v°: <http://archives.ville-saumur.fr/a/752/>.

²³ On the life of Saumur students during the period, see, Jean-Paul Pittion, 'Être collégien à Saumur sous l'Édit de Nantes', in Yves Krumenacker and Boris Noguès eds., *Protestantisme et Éducation dans la France Moderne* (Lyon: LIARHA, 2015), 8–16.

seem to have been friendly with two older visitors, Charles Gerard, first Count of Macclesfield, and Robert Lord Spencer, second Count of Sunderland. All three were royalists and Episcopalians, while the Kerrs were Presbyterians. But a community of language, shared aristocratic values, and a sense of 'them and us' helped to bring the young British sojourners together, despite the differing political and religious allegiances of their families.

The familiarity thus created, of course, had its disadvantages. In such a small transient society, there must have been a good deal of gossip and of backbiting. Thus, on 15 August 1656, James Scudamore, the wayward son of the royalist Viscount Scudamore, was visiting Saumur. He reported that he saw virtually 'no Englishmen of note but Mr Dutton, called by the French Le Genre (*i.e.* 'gendre', son-in-law) du Protecteur whose Governour is one Mervill a notable English Italo-Machiavillian'.²⁴ William Dutton's father, we know, had hoped that he would marry Cromwell's youngest daughter. Ironically in this case, Dutton eventually married James Scudamore's daughter Mary.

All told, despite its unavoidable occasional disappointments or small disagreements, life must have been rather pleasant for the young British gentlemen residing in Saumur in the 1650s, particularly for those of high rank and in receipt of a generous allowance. The Protestant milieu around them was not as puritanical or inward-looking as other such milieus could be in England at the time. The town had its small Catholic and Protestant 'intellectual elite' that crossed denominational boundaries. Representative of the first was the Cartesian physician Louis de La Forge and of the second the college regent Tanneguy Le Fèvre. Le Fèvre added a touch of libertinage to the academic milieu. He was at the center of a small coterie of young students to whom he imparted a love of the Greek classics, some of which he edited or translated.²⁵ He was a *bon viveur*, spending 'pleasant days, composing, educating and loving', according to one of his earlier biographers.²⁶ He disliked those he called

²⁴ British Library, Add. MS 15858, f^o 135.

²⁵ Le Fèvre edited or translated a number of Greek and Latin classics. See Dinah Ribard, 'Le "petit maître de Saumur": Tanneguy Le Fèvre et la socialisation de l'érudition protestante', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme français* 154(2008): 41–59.

²⁶ D. F. Camusat, *Histoire critique des journaux*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1734), 1: 314.

'des marchands de choses saintes'.²⁷ According to Henri Desbordes, the first son of the leading Saumur printer/publisher of the time who knew Le Fèvre well, when the time came to celebrate the Eucharist, while the faithful waited in church for the service to begin and prepared themselves by reading *Le Voyage de Bethel*, Le Fèvre was seen reading in his own editions of Terence and of Anacreon.²⁸ His free-living attitude was a source of scandal to the more pious members of the *réformé* church but one of amusements to his younger colleagues and an inspiration to his young student friends.

The atmosphere of relative tolerance that existed in Saumur both within the Protestant community and between the *réformés* and their Catholic neighbors was a new experience for many of the young Britons in whom upbringing and religious education had sometimes instilled a sense of righteous exclusiveness. The new atmosphere in which they found themselves must have been all the more challenging as, in Saumur, their own religious practice was, of necessity, fairly limited. Most tutors regularly read from the Scriptures to their pupils, as William Young did with the Kerr brothers, and they all shared in the saying of grace before meals and in evening prayers with the families that hosted them. We know from William Young's account that Moysse Amyraut, the leading theologian and one of the three local *pasteurs*, asked visitors, on their arrival, to contribute to church funds. Yet there is no evidence, in Young's correspondence or in other memoirs, that any of the young gentlemen attended the local *réformé* church regularly or even for the more solemn celebrations of the Eucharist (*la Cène*) which took place four times a year. The name of only one Briton can be found in the records that have survived of the Saumur reformed church. Between 1670 and 1675 Charles Fitzcharles, Earl of Plymouth, is known to have attended a service twice, once for a christening and another time for the funeral service of the young Lord Dorset, Thomas Sackville.²⁹ But a christening and a funeral were social as well as religious occasions and participating in them does not imply any committed churchgoing.

²⁷ The quotation comes from a letter to Gilles Ménage published in *Menagiana, ou les Bons mots... de Monsieur Ménage*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1729), 3: 122–3.

²⁸ The anecdote is told in Camusat, *Histoire critique des journaux*, 2: 147–48.

²⁹ The Sackville archives hosted by the Kent History and Library Center contain documents relating to the death of Thomas Sackville. See Philippe Chareyre, 'Les Protestants de Saumur au XVIIe siècle,

While Marvell and Williamson were in Saumur, the local church was embroiled in a dispute which opposed Moÿse Amyrault to another of the Saumur *pasteurs*, Isaac D'Huisseau. The dispute created deep divisions within the consistory and among church members, and dragged on until the national synod of 1659–60. Though local and personal rivalries played a part in it, the dispute had to do with the fundamental issue of what form of ecclesiastical government the French reformed churches should have. In 1653, Amyrault had published a treatise entitled *Du gouvernement de l'Eglise contre ceux qui veulent abolir l'usage et l'autorité des synodes*. In the treatise, he vigorously defended the presbytero-synodal system of the French reformed Churches. In 1656 he returned to the issue in his *Appendice, au livre du gouvernement de l'Eglise où il est traité de la puissance des Consistoires* where he discussed and criticized congregationalism, against Isaac D'Huisseau and other *pasteurs* who favored it.³⁰ During the same period Amyrault also refuted millenarian views about the future of the French reformed churches in a controversy with another *pasteur*, Pierre de Launay.³¹

That controversy and the dispute between Amyrault and D'Huisseau testify to the influence exerted upon a number of the *réformé* leading figures by the radical political and religious movements coming to prominence in England at the time. That influence revived within the French churches trends of dissent that had been kept in check by the synods. By the mid-1660s, Amyrault was recognized as the most authoritative voice that spoke for the majority of the pastoral leadership. He saw the credit given by some to English radical ideas as both misguided and destabilizing. The ideas threatened the peace of the churches and might jeopardize the hard-won recognition of their legitimate place within the French state.

religion et société', in *Saumur capitale européenne du Protestantisme au XVIIe siècle* (Centre Culturel de l'Ouest: 3ème Cahier de Fontevraud, 1991), 56.

³⁰ Moÿse Amyrault, *Du gouvernement de l'Eglise contre ceux qui veulent abolir l'usage & l'autorité des synods* (Saumur, 1653); *Appendice au livre du gouvernement de l'Eglise où il est traité de la puissance des Consistoires* (Saumur, 1656).

³¹ Moÿse Amyrault, *Du regne de mille ans ou de la prospérité de l'eglise* (Saumur, 1654); Pierre de Launay, *Response au livre de Mr. Amiraud du regne de mil ans* (Saumur, 1655); Moÿse Amyrault, *Replique au livre de Monsieur de Launay sur le regne de mille ans* (Saumur, 1656).

Statements made publicly during the dispute as well as first-hand accounts of exchanges that took place on different occasions during consistory meetings were assembled and printed together in a volume published in Saumur in 1659.³² One of the exchanges that took place during the dispute and is reported *verbatim* in the volume is particularly interesting as regards the way English radical trends were known and perceived within the Saumur *réformé* milieu. According to the account, during a meeting of the consistory, Amyrault made fun of 'the English Independents', calling them 'the people of the Saints of the Lord [...] to which le sieur D'Huisseau replied that they were as much the Saints of the Lord, as any church or person. [Then] M. Amyrault having referred to the words of Milton at the beginning of his book entitled "A defense of the people of England", M. D'Huisseau replied that synods were not necessary for the government of the church.'³³

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, while in Saumur 'Marvell seems to have been promoting republican writings'.³⁴ However, as regards the reference to Milton's tract in the exchange quoted above, it is far from certain that Marvell was actually instrumental in publicizing the work. Milton's *Pro Propulo Anglicano Defensio* had a wide audience and was very popular abroad as well as in England. Amyrault, whose *Discours de la souveraineté des Roys*, published in 1650, defended the doctrine of the divine right of kings, most probably knew it.³⁵ Furthermore, in 1656, the quarrel between Milton and Alexander Morus about the former's attribution in his *Defensio Secunda* of *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* to the latter, must have become topical again in Saumur, as the two antagonists had just published their own defenses.³⁶ Morus was known to be a supporter of Amyrault. Undoubtedly

³² Anon., *Pièces authentiques et décisives de la question, à qui doivent estre imputés les troubles de l'Eglise Réformée de Saumur* (Saumur, 1659); see also *Lettre d'un provincial à un de ses amis de Paris. Avec une instruction de l'état présent des affaires de l'église réformée de Saumur* (Saumur, 1658). Copies of both texts are in the Bibliothèque nationale, in Paris.

³³ *Pièces authentiques*, p.

³⁴ See Hilton Kelliher, 'Marvell, Andrew (1621–1678), poet and politician', in the *ODNB*.

³⁵ Amyrault, *Discours de la souveraineté des Roys* (Saumur, 1650).

³⁶ *Joannis Miltoni Angli Pro se defensio contra Alexandrum Morum ecclesiastem, libelli famosi, cui titulus, Regii sanguinis clamor ad colum adversus parricidas Anglicanos, authorem rectè dictum* (London, 1655); *Alexandri Mori, ... Fides publica contra calumnias Joannis Miltoni. Supplementum fidei publicae contra calumnias Joannis Miltoni* (The Hague, 1654–5).

the presence of Marvell and of other direct witnesses of the English Revolution helped to sustain an interest in its developments among many of the local *réformé* elite. Pamphlets from England were available in Saumur thanks to the trade relations that existed between the leading *réformé* bookseller Daniel Delerpinière and the London bookseller Humphrey Robinson, as is shown by Joseph Williamson's letters.³⁷

Most of the tutors who came to Saumur must have been aware of the reputation of the *académie* as a school of theology. They would likely have had some knowledge of its doctrine, known as 'hypothetical universalism', which featured in debates on the dogma of predestination that were particularly lively among English divines in the 1650s. In the inventory of Richard Baxter's library, for instance, one can identify at least nineteen theological works related to the Saumur doctrine, most of them recent publications dating from the 1650s.³⁸ Still, there is no evidence that the tutors who sojourned in Saumur, however learned they might have been, showed an interest in the doctrinal debates that took place in the *académie* during the same period.

Marvell, however, was an exception. No doubt because of his association with Milton, he took a close interest in the theological disputations that another colleague of Amyrault's, Josué de la Place, held with first-year *proposants* on the divine nature of Christ.³⁹ At that time, Milton was writing a section of his theology treatise, *De Doctrina Christiana*, where he discusses the divinity of Christ. La Place's approach to these disputations was both exegetical and polemical. The disputations were intended as refutations of anti-trinitarian positions, particularly of the Christology of Crellius and of the Socinians. There is little doubt that Marvell, who was aware of Milton's interest in the issue, acquired the printed edition of these disputations and had it sent to him. In the treatise, Milton specifically refutes one of La Place's crucial exegetical interpretations.⁴⁰

³⁷ See *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series [Commonwealth]*, 1649–1660, vol. 9: Nov. 1655–June 1656; vol. 10: July 1656–May 1657.

³⁸ Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'A Transcript of Richard Baxter's Library Catalogue', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2 (1951): 207–21; 3 (1952): 74–100.

³⁹ *Disputationes pro divina Dom. nostri Jesu Christi essentiali auctore Josué Placaeo* (Saumur, 1657).

⁴⁰ On this and related issues, see Jean-Paul Pittion, 'Milton, La Place and Socinianism', *Review of English Studies*, n. s. 23 (1972): 138–46. The crucial passage is Malachi 3:1.

It has been said that Marvell's poetry is characterized by a sense of place and identity. It was during his tutorship of William Dutton that Marvell is supposed to have written his poem 'A Dialogue Between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure'. In the poem, Marvell asks:

If things of sight such heavens be
What heavens are those we cannot see?

(ll. 55–6)

It is easy to underestimate the sense of freedom that staying for the first time in a foreign land and discovering a different style of life could awaken in the minds of young people, then even more than today. One cannot help wondering if the 'Dialogue' does not seek to express and exorcise, in the form a neo-classical poetic debate, the unvoiced tensions that troubled the minds of some tutors and of their students, when they discovered, in Saumur, that their religious certainties were challenged by a newly discovered sense of freedom.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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