

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced PDF of an article accepted for publication in *French Studies Bulletin* following peer review. The version of record for Adam Horsley, ‘‘Ne l’as-tu point vu passer, mon garde?’ Towards a third version of Cyrano de Bergerac’s *Le Pédant joué*, *French Studies Bulletin*, 123 (Summer 2012), 28-31 is available online at: <http://fsb.oxfordjournals.org/content/33/123/28>

NE L’AS-TU POINT VU PASSER, MON GARDE ? TOWARDS A THIRD VERSION OF CYRANO DE BERGERAC’S *LE PÉDANT JOUÉ*

ADAM HORSLEY, The University of Nottingham

Le Pédant joué is the earliest known example of Cyrano de Bergerac’s theatre and offers a valuable insight into the playwright’s artistic development. In order to appreciate fully the evolution of Cyrano’s writing style between his first play and his later literary works, the dating of *Le Pédant joué*’s composition is of great importance. The details of *Le Pédant joué*’s layers of composition remain uncertain. Historical references within the play, detailed below, indicate a lengthy period of revisions. This article considers an under-studied historical reference in *Le Pédant joué*, in order to narrow the period in which the earliest known version of the play, which has survived in manuscript form, could have been written.¹ In comparing this revised dating of the manuscript with contemporary textual references to Cyrano’s theatre, I also suggest that an additional, already revised version of *Le Pédant joué* existed before the two versions that have survived. These are, respectively, the 1651 manuscript version and the final version found in *Les Œuvres diverses*.²

For some critics, the centrality to the plot of Granger (the pedant protagonist) demonstrates that the play was written whilst Cyrano was in contact with the real-life Professor of Rhetoric, Jean Grangier, at the Collège de Beauvais.³ For others, a reference to the King of Poland’s marriage to Marie de Gonzague on 6 November 1645 proves the play’s date of composition:⁴ ‘...et l’autre jour encore les Polonais enlevèrent la princesse Marie en plein jour à l’hôtel de Nevers’ (*Le Pédant joué*, p. 787).⁵ However, Cyrano chose not to remove ‘l’autre jour’ from the version given in the *Œuvres diverses*, which in 1654 referred to a marriage nine years in the past.⁶ Furthermore, the numerous references in the play to historical events posterior to 1645 prove that several parts of the text could not have existed at this time. Other critics believe that Cyrano wrote his comedy in several stages. Blanc suggests that Cyrano may have abandoned writing his comedy during his schooldays, before returning to it later in life (*Le Pédant joué*, p. 16). This would explain how *Le Pédant*

joué incorporates a wide range of chronological markers in a mature writing style. Furthermore, Alcover remarks that the marriage reference dates ‘le passage, pas toute la pièce’ (*Le Pédant joué*, p. xl). It is with this point in mind that an examination of a neglected reference within the play allows for a more accurate dating of the 1651 manuscript.

In Act II Scene II, Chateaufort threatens violence against Gareau. Fearing that he may murder Gareau, Chateaufort cries out:

et, pour une plus grande prévoyance, je m’en vais faire promptement avertir Messieurs les Maréchaux qu’ils m’envoient des gardes pour m’empêcher de me battre. (*Le Pédant joué*, p. 782)

The guards in question here were one of many preventative measures against ‘l’hémorragie de sang bleu que représentent les duels’ in seventeenth-century France.⁷ Men who feared that a disagreement might have led them to be challenged to a duel were required by law to inform the maréchaux de France. They would then despatch a guard to prevent the two parties from fighting.⁸ The guards are first mentioned in an edict enacted on 7 September 1651, and do not appear in the two *déclarations* that directly precede this edict, dating from 11 May 1644 and 13 March 1646 respectively. The provision for the sending of the guards would therefore have been quite recent when *Le Pédant joué* was in its final stages of revision. Furthermore, in Act II Scene X, the guards are mentioned again by Chateaufort:

Sans mentir j’en ferai reproche à la Connétablie, d’avoir fié à un jeune homme la garde d’un diable comme moi. [...] C’est un garde que les maréchaux de France m’ont envoyé pour m’empêcher de faire un duel [...]. (*Le Pédant joué*, p. 793)

It is curious that Cyrano should explain the origins of Chateaufort’s guard by repeating the reference to the ‘maréchaux’ given in Act II Scene II. It is as if he anticipated that his reader, or a potential audience, would have been unfamiliar with the anti-duelling guards, or that he wished to highlight this recent edict. These lines must necessarily postdate the edict of 7 September 1651, and the detail in which the guards are described makes it seem likely that Cyrano added this reference to his comedy not long after the edict’s introduction. My suggestion, then, is that this version – the earliest one known to us – was written between 7 September and December 1651.

When the dating of the manuscript, made possible by the reference to a royal edict, is compared to a reference to *Le Pédant joué* in the anonymous *Le Parasite mormon* (1650), it seems likely that a third version of *Le Pédant joué*, now lost to us, was known to contemporaries:

croyez-vous en bonne foy que le Dom Quichot, & le Berger Extrauagant, les Visionaires, la Gigantomachie, & le Pedant joué, ayent moins acquis de gloire à leurs auteurs que pourroient auoir fait les ouurages les plus serieux de la Philosophie?⁹

For Alcover, this proves that the play was completed in 1650.¹⁰ However, as I have argued, at least two scenes in the earliest known edition of the play – those that mention Chateaufort’s guard – could not have existed at this time. It follows from this that the version mentioned in *Le Parasite Mormon* would have been significantly different to the manuscript version. Chateaufort’s stage exit in Act II Scene II must necessarily have been different from the one given in the 1651 manuscript version of the play, in which he leaves the stage to seek a guard from the Maréchaux de France. Furthermore, the majority of Act II Scene X is comprised of Chateaufort’s search for the guard that he claims to have lost. As those lines could not have existed when the play was alluded to in *Le Parasite Mormon* in 1650, the two characters on stage in this scene – Chateaufort and Paquier – would have shared only a single, inconsequential exchange in the entire scene. This makes it unlikely that this scene existed at all prior to Cyrano’s revisions to his comedy, which I have proposed took place in late 1651.

It is also noteworthy that *Le Parasite* gives the plays mentioned in chronological order of publication, separated by strikingly uniform ten-year periods, and that Cyrano’s comedy is not in keeping with this chronology.¹¹ Furthermore, if we are to accept Alcover’s proposed dating for the play, it is curious that *Le Pédant joué* is not mentioned in either Tallemant or the *Menagiana* (1693), while both refer to *La Mort d’Agrippine* (1653).¹² It can therefore be argued that in 1650 another version of the play was known, which predates the 1651 manuscript version. As it is apparent that Cyrano was making revisions to his play at this time, it would then be the case that the reference to *Le Pédant joué* in *Le Parasite mormon* is an ironic one, as Cyrano’s unfinished comedy is placed alongside popular, completed works of the period that would have been well-known by contemporaries.¹³

Although it is impossible to know how many times *Le Pédant joué* was revised, my study has suggested that the manuscript version of the play, dated 1651, must have been composed between 7 September and December of that year. The reference in *Le Parasite mormon* leads us to suppose that a more primitive lost version existed in the late 1640s. At some point prior to the publication of the *Parasite mormon*, possibly provoked to do so by the death of his estranged father in January 1648,¹⁴ Cyrano began revising his anti-authoritarian comedy. These revisions to *Le Pédant joué* would not have been undertaken in complete secrecy, as an author referred to Cyrano’s unfinished comedy alongside well-known completed plays in the anonymous *Le Parasite mormon*. Shortly afterwards, between September 1651 and January 1652, *Le Pédant joué* seems to have undergone further revisions, including the addition of references to the ‘gardes’ of the maréchaux de France. Finally,

between early 1652 and 1654, this version of the play, found in the 1651 manuscript, was edited one final time for Cyrano's *Œuvres diverses* of 1654.

Notes

¹ *Pédant et Lettres* (BNF Fonds Fr., Nouv. Acq. n° 4557). Madeleine Alcover suggests that this date, found on the title page of the *Lettres* section of this manuscript, is accurate; see Cyrano de Bergerac, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Madeleine Alcover, 3 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), I, pp. lii, lix and cii.

² *Les Œuvres diverses de M^r de Cyrano Bergerac* (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1654), privilege dated 31 December 1653. See also Alcover (ed.), I, p. lvi, and Cyrano de Bergerac, *Le Pédant Joué – Comedie*, ed. by Ferdinand Bôcher and H.B. Stanton (Boston: Jean de Peiffer, 1899), p. lvii.

³ The Frères Parfait and Paul La Croix adopt this position. For a summary of these critics' views, see Pierre-Antonin Le Brun, *Savinien de Cyrano Bergerac – sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1893), pp. 156-7. Alcover (ed.) notes that there is no evidence to place Cyrano at *Beauvais* (I, pp. xxiii-xxiv). Even if Cyrano did attend *Beauvais*, Jean Grangier died in 1643, making it unlikely that the majority of *Le Pédant joué*'s final version was written during his lifetime.

⁴ Le Brun, *Savinien de Cyrano Bergerac*, p. 156. See also Michel Cardoze, *Cyrano de Bergerac : Libertin-libertaire* (Paris: Editions Jean-Claude Lattès, 1994), pp. 96, 119; Jacques Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac: Poète et dramaturge* (Paris: Belin, 1978), p. 107, and Jacques Scherer and Jacques Truchet, *Le Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), II, p. 1461. All references to *Le Pédant joué* are taken from this edition, based on the manuscript version of the play, in the form of *Le Pédant joué* followed by the page reference.

⁵ André Blanc suggests that this reference was added in the 1650s to date the play's genesis: see Cyrano de Bergerac, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by André Blanc, 3 vols (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2001), III, p. 16. However, there is no evidence to prove this hypothesis for certain, nor is there any apparent reason why Cyrano would have wished to date his play in such a way.

⁶ Such an anachronism can also be seen in Act II Scene IV, which mentions the Pont de Nesle, demolished in 1652. See Cyrano de Bergerac, *Œuvres diverses*, ed. by Frédéric Lachèvre (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1846), p. 377, and Prévot, *Cyrano de Bergerac: Poète et dramaturge*, p. 107.

⁷ François Billacois, *Le Duel dans la société française des XVI-XVII^e siècles* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1986), p. 116.

⁸ See article IV of this edict in the *Recueil des edits, declarations, arrests et autres pieces concernant les duels & rencontres* (Paris: Sebastien Marbre-Cramoisy, 1659), pp. 272-3. The only critic to give a date for this edict, Blanc (ed.), claims that it was first published in 1653 (*Œuvres complètes*, III, p. 87).

⁹ *Le Parasite mormon, histoire comique* (1650), p. 159. For the various attributed authorships of this text, see Andrew Suozzo, 'Le Parasite Mormon or the "Heretical" Novel', *Cahiers du dix-septième siècle*, 7:1 (1997), 161-168 (p. 161).

¹⁰ Cyrano, *Œuvres*, I, ed. Alcover, pp. lii, lix. See also Madeleine Alcover, 'Ephémérides ou biographie sommaire de Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac', *Les Dossiers du Grihl*: <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/3817> [last accessed 10 September 2011].

¹¹ The other texts were published respectively in 1605 and 1615 (in two parts), 1627, 1637 and 1648.

¹² Cyrano de Bergerac, *Le Pédant Joué – Comedie*, ed. Bôcher and Stanton, p. lix. *La Mort d'Agrippine*, which carries a privilege dated 16 December 1653, is also mentioned in *Le Parasite mormon*, pp. 143-4.

¹³ For Truchet, the play is described 'non sans une évidente exagération, jusqu'à parler de la "gloire" qu'elle valait à son auteur' (*Le Théâtre du XVII^e siècle*, p. 1462). Lachèvre (ed.), on the other hand, sees this reference as 'une amabilité à Cyrano' (Cyrano, *Œuvres*, p. 169).

¹⁴ See these events in the life of Cyrano in Alcover, 'Éphémérides.'