

Hortense Mancini and Marie Mancini. *Memoirs*.

Ed. and trans. Sarah M. Nelson. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. xxviii + 218 pp. index. append. map. bibl. \$24. ISBN: 978-0-226-50279-3.

The memoirs of Hortense and Marie Mancini describe the adventurous lives of two women with exceptional connections in France and throughout Europe during the reign of Louis XIV. Both “undertook the writing of their life stories as maneuvers in their . . . struggles to live independently” (2) from the husbands chosen for them by their uncle Cardinal Mazarin, Louis XIV’s chief minister. For each, self-determination depended on defending her reputation in the face of gossip and notoriety. Both memoirs participate in seventeenth-century debates about marriage and female *gloire*, and offer fascinating glimpses of the noble society of the period. Hortense’s memoir adds her voice to other documents relating to her legal struggles with her husband. Marie’s is complemented by her letters and those of her husband. Both figure in the writings of contemporary observers, for their stories were much discussed. Sarah Nelson’s introduction offers useful information about the sisters’ lives and the various versions of the memoirs and surrounding documents, with a good bibliography leading to fuller discussions of some of the compositional and editorial questions they raise.

Both memoirs “seem like something out of a novel” (27), full of extraordinary characters, fantastic adventures, love affairs, loyalty, and betrayal. Along with eight other nieces and nephews of Mazarin, the sisters were brought from Rome in 1653 into the most intimate circles of the French court. Marie became Louis XIV’s first great love; in her memoir she describes their idyllic life. When Louis married Marie-Thérèse of Spain in 1660, Marie was married off to a Roman nobleman, Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna. After bearing him three sons, Marie banished him from her bed; she reports with surprise that he treated her with less warmth and engaged in numerous extramarital relationships. Hortense was a renowned beauty and her uncle’s favorite. He arranged a marriage for her with Armand-Charles de La Porte de La Meilleray, who took the title of Duc Mazarin after the Cardinal’s death in 1661. Duc Mazarin was a religious zealot, obsessed with his wife. He obliged her to accompany him as he travelled among the properties he had inherited from Mazarin, and refused her the company of relatives, friends, and servants. After bearing him three daughters and a son, Hortense sought a legal separation. Hearing that the courts were about to decide against her, Hortense fled to her sister’s home in Rome. When Marie left her husband, the two sisters travelled together for a while. After they separated, Hortense found protection in Savoie, while Marie made her circuitous way to Spain. Following the period described in the memoirs, Hortense settled in England where she became the mistress of Charles II and entertained in her lively salon. After her husband’s death, Marie divided her time between Madrid and Rome.

Nelson has ably translated the two memoirs from the best, most recent editions, and echoes well the style of the originals, creating lively, dramatic tales. This is an excellent teaching text and resource for scholars unfamiliar with these

works. Since no translation can adequately render all the subtleties of style and meaning, comparison with the French is advisable for more thorough analysis. For example, in the first paragraph of Hortense's memoir, Nelson has translated "la gloire d'une femme" as "a woman's glory" (27), without comment. Nelson had explained in her introduction ("The negotiation of feminine 'gloire,'" 12–15) that the word *glory* does not begin to render the rich and contested meaning of the word *gloire* in seventeenth-century France. Still, for many readers (especially students), the first appearance of the word *glory* in the translation requires a footnote. And when Marie reports on the false memoir published in her name, she attributes the "earnest entreaties" that she defend herself against it to "personnes de qualité" and not just to "people" (84): Marie's sense of class is uppermost in her mind. Both women, especially Marie, go out of their way to mention the names and titles of all the people (and they are legion) who assist or hinder them on their journeys. Nelson identifies each of them in erudite and thorough footnotes; readers who do not need quite so much information can bypass them and enjoy the tales for themselves.

JANE COUCHMAN
Glendon College, York University