

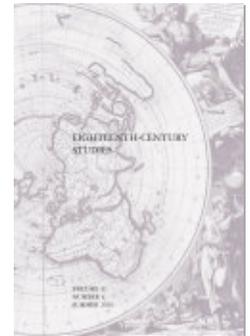


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Jansenist and a Convulsionary in the Century of
Enlightenment

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Eighteenth-Century Studies, Volume 43, Number 4, Summer 2010, pp. 419-433
(Article)



Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.0.0141>

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ETHOS IN TESTIMONY: THE CASE OF CARRÉ DE MONTGERON, A JANSENIST AND A CONVULSIONARY IN THE CENTURY OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Michèle Bokobza Kahan

INTRODUCTION: TESTIMONIES AND CONVULSIONARIES

The movement of the convulsionaries of Saint-Médard in the eighteenth century, linked to Parisian Jansenism, quickly exceeded the context of the religious and political quarrel. It traveled down the century of Enlightenment all the way to the French Revolution, becoming a means of legitimizing the Jansenist cause in a turbulent cultural and philosophical context.¹ The healing miracles occurred between 1728 and the Revolution; their intense manifestation during the first four years took place in the cemetery of Saint-Médard on the grave of Deacon François de Pâris, an appellant abbé of the parish of Saint-Médard. The proliferation of miracles, whose physical manifestation became ever more visibly concrete, and the rise of violence resulted in the accumulation of verbal testimony.

Many compilations of verbal testimonies manifested into heterogeneous documents: accounts of illness and recovery; testimonies dictated by the miraculously cured themselves, signed and certified before a notary; eyewitness reports of convulsionary manifestations; and theoretical essays on testimony and its necessity. These compilations were made either to accredit testimonies or denounce their falseness. The testimonies were aggressively publicized, first published and distributed separately and later republished as collections. The accounts of the convulsions and miraculous cures appeared in pamphlets, dissertations, and short articles in

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the Jansenist magazine *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. An enormous number of writings were dedicated to the subject, the main objectives being to introduce the Jansenists' cause to the community, to invite its members to judge their case, and to influence public opinion. Although still a small movement, with such publicity Jansenism became increasingly likely to affect the position of the institutions in power.

The various processes of compilation show how the validity of the testimony became the mainstay of the Jansenist proponents, who wanted to establish the reality of miracles in the consistency of factual events and written words. Once recorded, the testimony aimed to constitute a tangible, irrevocable document of the authenticity of the facts, without which no court could make a ruling.² Indeed, the testimonies of Saint-Médard, written as much by primary as by secondary sources—all signed and certified before notaries—lead the reader into an area where contrasts between signs of credibility and motives of suspicion are notable.³ For example, the logic of accumulation and iteration underlying the construction of a corpus comprising a vast number of testimonies of convulsions functioned as an argumentative strategy aimed at inscribing the sensible and the irrational within testimonial discourse. Repeating the same miracle in multiple variations produced two crucial effects on the written text: strengthening its authenticity because of the body of testimonies' simultaneous and collective aspect; and endowing it with a structure of authority because of the testimonies' empirical character. The use of this technique in the early Enlightenment in France attests to the predominant positivist method of the constitution of the matter of fact and the new organization of thought through Cartesian paradigmatic processes.⁴

Nevertheless, because we are talking about miraculous cures and irrational phenomena, the sin of subjectivity—which exists in every testimony to varying degrees—radically taints the credibility of the depositions and calls into question their reception by the targeted public. Moreover, this is the main accusation that critics of all shades of opinion leveled at the Jansenists: namely, that they deceptively presented their hallucinations as factual narratives. Dissociation from superstitious and marvelous discourses was necessary in order to avoid common critics of the wondrous and prevalent distrust in the enthusiasm and malady of imagination.⁵ In this specific case, the testimony becomes a crucial issue for the religious polemic. Therefore, the conventional conditions of reception in the process of recognizing testimony are especially acute for the audience's process of accreditation. Since it is crucial to recognize its function as incriminating evidence in court, it is also crucial that the witness be authorized to testify and that there be no doubt about the credibility of his testimony. One should assume that in the eighteenth century, the epistemic witness gained definitive priority over the ethical witness, and that the question of credibility relied mostly upon the authenticity of the facts related.⁶ However, the construction of the witness within the context of the Jansenist miracles leans on a variety of components: social, moral, and last but not least, rhetorical and aesthetic.

These points immediately yield the choice of discursive modalities brought into play to attest to the authenticity of the accounts, which the authors wished to distinguish from fictional narrative discourse and pure hallucination. How does one try to establish facts and procedures of verification perceived as the central factors of legitimizing testimony within the context of the eighteenth century? Can

one regard the testimony in this specific case as an argumentative discourse, which expressly tries to persuade the addressee? Moreover, who is that addressee? Given these questions, the conditions of testimony accreditation closely depend on the ethos of the witness, insofar as the targeted audience remains strongly influenced by its perception of the witness in deciding whether to accredit the testimony later offered by him.

The ethos designates the image of the self constructed by the orator through discursive choices in order to persuade his audience. The act of communication occurs in an institutional, social, and cultural context related to the speaker's real-life experience as an actor or an onlooker. In order to accomplish this task, the speaker must take into account the expectations of his listeners and build his discourse accordingly. However, the ethos, considered from a broader perspective, is dependant not only on the production of the orator's speech but also on his social position, which gives him the power to say certain things.⁷ Indeed, the addressees' confidence in the speaker rests upon a self-presentation that reinforces his authority, as well as upon expectations created by prior knowledge of the orator and the situation in which the speech is to take place.⁸ It remains to be seen whether within the context of deviant and transgressive religious practices this relation is constructed by means of discursive strategies commonly used in testimonial discourse, or with the aid of particular procedures.

The question of the ethos and its impact on a testimony's credibility lies at the center of the discussion regarding the testimonies composed by Carré de Montgeron, one of the most curious defenders of the cause of the convulsionaries and the Jansenists. Only a few people played a crucial role in this enterprise of legitimizing testimonies and of transposing the religious quarrel to the public space. Their work of collection and distribution emanated from the Jansenist controversy. Their different approaches may shed light on the various means likely to transform testimonies of an esoteric nature into a public affair that needs to be judged as a whole. Their objective was not limited to the transmission of real-life experience, but tended toward the construction of public opinion⁹ that was likely to influence the course of politico-religious events in France.¹⁰

Louis-Basile Carré de Montgeron was a councilor in the parliament, a former libertine converted to Jansenism in the face of the wonders of Saint-Médard. As a professional judge, he was aware of the importance of the dialogic situation of the testimonial utterance, and knew well the conditions under which material thus presented became credible and recognized as empiric facts. Our concern is to highlight through discourse analysis the very complex dialogue Montgeron engages in with his audience. We will see how he explicitly draws upon his prior, social ethos in order to construct a credible and reliable discursive image of the self, which nevertheless remains affected by a tension between the rational and the irrational.

JANSENISM: FROM RELIGION TO POLITICS

From its origin, Jansenism had shown hostility toward both the Jesuits and the Molinistic doctrine supporting the effectiveness of rites and the Church's role in leading people to salvation through their observance of orthodoxy. Jansenists

positioned themselves as advocates of Augustinianism in its most radical form, defending the principles of (1) original predestination, (2) salvation through adherence to the person of Christ, and (3) the negation of individual freedom. What began as strictly theological criticism developed to an extent that had nothing to do with the relevance or obsolescence of the Augustinian theses, insofar as the Jesuits had close and reciprocal ties with the monarchy and the papacy. Consequently, the religious differences of opinion coincided with the expression of a political antagonism toward the Jesuits' will to power.

One must take into account in the evolving controversy the institutional structures peculiar to France and the complex relations between the monarchy, the papacy, and the Gallican Church. Political and sociological factors quickly brought about a decisive turn that reverberated all the way to the French Revolution. Thus the series of increasingly intransigent bulls promulgated by the pope reveals negotiations concerning a power struggle among the Gallican Church, which was concerned about its autonomy; the Holy See, which wanted to exercise universal jurisdiction; and the French monarchy, which tended to eradicate any form of political subversion.

However, at the end of the seventeenth century, as the decline of Jansenism seemed inevitable, two royal decisions whose arbitrary nature could not escape notice triggered the restructuring of Jansenism on a very different scale. The first was the razing of the Port-Royal monastery, then removing the dead bodies and throwing them into a common grave. The second was asking the pope to issue the bull *Unigenitus*, which officially condemned Jansenism by banning Oratorian Pasquier Quesnel's *Réflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament*. This treatise was highly popular among French Catholic families; it had been approved in 1696 by the Archbishop of Paris, Louis-Antoine de Noailles, but was thereafter considered heretical.¹¹

The Jansenists of the early eighteenth century, identifying with the memory and the ideal of Port-Royal, emphasized the divine mission incumbent upon them through the work of remembering and the duty of bearing witness to protect the truth within a Church steeped in error, as demonstrated by the papal bull *Unigenitus*. A massive antiestablishment movement composed mainly of the lower order of clergy formed around a work entitled *Le témoignage de la vérité dans l'Eglise* (1714) by Father Vivien de la Borde, published in Holland. De la Borde hearkened back to Saint Paul's assertion that one ought to obey God rather than other men, and advocated a return to the egalitarian spirit of the early Church. Parish clergy from the countryside as well as Paris issued repeated appeals and transformed their refusal of the bull into a supreme act of faith.

The Jansenist miracles and convulsions taking place at the tomb of Deacon François de Pâris—in the cemetery of Saint-Médard at the heart of the capital—became part of this resistance movement. Deacon Pâris, as an alumnus of Saint-Magloire, intended to make his life an imitation of the martyrdom of the saints of Port-Royal. His ideal of poverty led to his premature death in 1727 at the age of thirty-seven. After his death, he became an object of veneration, through whom the popular response to the figurist doctrine found expression.¹²

THE CREDIBILITY OF TESTIMONY AND DISCURSIVE ETHOS

The debates on the reality of miracles—between Protestants and Catholics on the one hand, and free thinkers and traditionalists on the other—were strongly polemical in the religious controversies of seventeenth-century France.¹³ A few decades before the miracles of Saint-Médard, Pierre Bayle strongly criticized witnesses and historians, as well as those who tried to present irrational events as factual and authentic, in his *Critique Générale de l'Histoire du Calvinisme de M. Maimbourg* (1683). For him, the narratives on miracles found their *raison d'être* in falsifying reality and the basic unreliability of the witness himself, as well as in the stupidity and ignorance of the addressees. A year earlier, in *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* (1682), Bayle had argued that a naturalized religion was more immune to manipulation and ignorance. From his skeptical philosophical approach, Bayle, followed by most of the Enlightenment's philosophers, claimed that the central criterion for the recognition of truth relies on the personality of the witness. The situation of the verbal exchange in which the witness engages—namely, his degree of intelligence, culture, and probity and the ways he pronounces and narrates the facts—determine the degree of authenticity of the testimony. Honesty and sincerity were considered less important than clearness and precision; coolness and calmness were associated with objectivity and seriousness.

David Hume developed similar ideas in Section 10 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. The Scottish philosopher's reflections on miraculous events led him to describe the circumstances required to confirm the authenticity of a testimony:

There is not to be found in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable.¹⁴

According to these hypotheses, the perplexity aroused among the most skeptical thinkers when the Jansenists seemed to have fulfilled all the requirements for credibility is understandable. Further, when discussing the Jansenist miracles at the tomb of Deacon Pâris, Hume is astonished by the fact that those miracles were “attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age.”¹⁵ Similarly, although fundamentally hostile to these kind of manifestations, in his *Pensées philosophiques* (n. 54) Denis Diderot, confronted with the mass of testimonies, shaken by the biographical attestations of eyewitnesses, and troubled by the high social standing of certain witnesses, also admitted his perplexity.

Both of these texts emphasize nearly identical elements that impel these enlightened thinkers to accredit the convulsionaries' testimony: the witness's social status; the multiplicity of accounts of the same event; and the witness's presence at the event, which ensures the truthful nature of the narrative beyond the uncertainties

of memory and the distress associated with the force of the event. The philosophers also note the effort at neutrality and objectivity aimed at reducing the influence of those inevitably partial uncertainties of memory and sensory perception. They speak about the witness's qualifications as a subject capable of both seeing correctly and speaking rightly: that is, capable of producing a discourse perceived as reliable, coherent, and veracious. It is notable that the value of the testimony—the discursive product—relates, on the one hand, to the speaker's social position, and on the other, to the witness's sensory, intellectual, and moral capacities. These properties, which are constitutive of the image of the self and which the speaker constructs in every discourse, contribute to the legitimizing of the testimony, and to its recognition as a reliable and authentic account of the event that he reports.

Considering the specificity of Jansenist testimonies that depict exceptional events and represent an extraordinary world, the construction of the witness's ethos raises a number of new difficulties. By what means will the speaker try to prove that he is a reasonable, levelheaded, serious being, whose ability to see, understand, perceive, remember, and verbalize the miraculous event is unailing? What set of values and common beliefs will he rely on to communicate his views to his audience? In the present context, to what extent does the social position of the speaker reinforce the effectiveness of his speech? Should we privilege the image of the self constructed by his speech, or the image that emerges from his social position and our prior knowledge of him—the “institutional ethos” that Bourdieu talks about? These questions are relevant if we keep in mind that the century of Enlightenment no longer possessed blind faith in the authority of discourse and required guarantees to endow a subject with the status of witness.

POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ETHOS

The case of Louis-Basile Carré de Montgeron offers a particularly interesting way to broach this subject. He was a magistrate and councilor at the second *Chambre des Enquêtes*, a former libertine and deist who converted to the cause of the convulsionaries after a visit to the cemetery of Saint-Médard on 7 September 1731. From this date, Carré de Montgeron put his heart and soul into distributing and legitimizing the miracles of Deacon Pâris. Apart from his regular visits to Pâris's grave and his role as *secouriste*, assuming the responsibilities of surveillance and assistance in the convulsionaries' sessions,¹⁶ Montgeron risked his fortune and social status for the good of the Jansenist enterprise. He provided for the needs of poor convulsionaries, protecting some and hiding others. He contributed funds to *Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, subsidized the publication of a great number of works by convulsionaries, and apparently owned a few underground printing houses in Paris and Auxerre. His sole objective was to make known the truth of the miracles of Pâris and their divine nature. Fully aware of the diversity of attitudes among the Jansenist partisans, whose concrete mobilization and engagement varied according to social origins, Montgeron—as opposed to most wealthy believers, who favored a discreet support¹⁷—openly stood up to defend the miracles in the public arena.

To that end, he devoted five years of his life and a large part of his fortune to gathering evidence for the support of the irrefutable occurrence of the miracles. He corresponded intensely with sympathizers of the Jansenist cause: priests, bishops, theologians, doctors, magistrates, lawyers, and notaries throughout Europe,

particularly in France. He went looking for documents, depositions taken before notaries, medical certificates, and professional assessments. His work, *La Vérité des Miracles opérés à l'intercession de M. de Paris et autres Appellants, démontrée contre M. l'Archevêque de Sens*, was printed simultaneously in Utrecht under the care of Abbé Nicolas Le Gros and in an underground printing house in Paris, and published in December 1736.¹⁸

Montgeron intended the book for Louis XV himself. On 29 July 1737, dressed in his magistrate's gown, he went to Versailles with a magnificent leather-bound edition of the book, with gilded binding. Easily reaching the royal dining room, the magistrate knelt before the young king, delivered a short harangue, and presented him with the book. That very night, the authorities reacted, ordering Montgeron's detention by means of a *lettre de cachet* [arrest order]. The breach of decorum, the "extravagant act" of disrespect to the sacred person of the king, signified a serious transgression, which justified a severe reaction that even the parliamentarians, Montgeron's colleagues, felt compelled to approve.

In the context of the period, Carré de Montgeron made a truly offensive move, all the more scandalous by being aimed directly at the sacred person of the king. Beyond the dedicatory address, the magistrate transformed his words into a physical act that involved intrusion into the royal residence and irreverent interjection. Even though the protagonist held a respectable place on the social ladder, he had neither the legitimacy nor sufficient political standing to act as he had. In spite of the magistrate's gown, a sign of his status; the beauty of the book, a sign of his wealth; the respectful genuflection, a sign of his fidelity; and the pathetic harangue, a sign of his religious faith, Montgeron's breach of decorum entailed the inevitable consequences of rejection and discredit.

This surprising episode confirms in many respects Bourdieu's argument that the effectiveness of speech depends entirely on respect for the rules determined by the institutional framework within which that utterance occurs. Indeed, Bourdieu insists on external social circumstances alone as legitimizing the orator's speech in a given situation. If a person is not authorized to speak before an appropriate public in an appropriate situation, he will not obtain the legitimacy needed to be effective. A basic condition for a possible communicative exchange and the accreditation of the witness's discourse is being appointed and authorized to speak as a witness. Otherwise, his chances of being heard and thought credible seem negligible. The case of Carré de Montgeron shows that people cannot establish themselves as witnesses without institutional support. Thus a respectable position, the production of a serious and documented work, and witnesses who are convinced of the authenticity of the events they experienced do not suffice. Testimony, like any other discourse, must be produced according to certain rules that have nothing to do with discourse.

In claiming a right that nobody gave him, Carré de Montgeron caused a scandal whose effects reverberated beyond the walls of Versailles and gave publicity to the Jansenist conflict. Even though the king did not hear the testimony, the incident endowed Montgeron's discourse with a dimension that may subsequently have reversed the situation in favor of the agent provocateur. In addressing the king directly, did the magistrate not show overall blind faith in a monarch who would question neither his respect nor his devotion to the monarchy? In acting in such a

radical way, did he not, after all, express the urgency and gravity of the situation? If Carré de Montgeron was ready to sacrifice himself for the good of his cause, was this not proof that the cause was just and the testimony authentic? Indirect participants who reacted to the event weren't the only ones to ask these questions¹⁹; they also emanated from Montgeron's own *Epître au Roi*.

DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES OF ACCREDITATION

The presence of these questions in his text reveals that the magistrate had foreseen the multiple consequences of his illegal act long before turning up at Versailles. In addition, he had considered the possibility of exploiting his failure in favor of constructing an image of a respectful man who reconciles faith and reason. The orator explicitly recognized as Montgeron is aware that his social position is inadequate for obtaining the king's consent, but he also knows that his failure can enlist the public's sympathy, if not its admiration.

The magistrate's transgression, therefore, involves the question of the orator's moral authority on the one hand, and nourishes the ethos he constructs in his discourse on the other:

J'ose assurer Votre Majesté qu'elle verra elle-même, que l'évidence des faits est écrite dans mon Ouvrage avec des rayons de lumière qu'il n'est pas possible d'obscurcir. Je ne dois donc pas craindre que Votre Majesté me blâme d'avoir enfreint un règlement de police, pour faire passer plus sûrement jusqu'à sa Personne sacrée des vérités si importantes, dont on lui dérobe la connaissance. J'ai pris ce chemin pour y parvenir, parce qu'il était unique, que toute autre voie eût rendu mon zèle inutile, et que j'ai eu lieu d'appréhender d'être un véritable prévaricateur, si la crainte d'une désobéissance apparente me faisait manquer à un devoir si essentiel. Le véritable respect, celui qu'un Sujet fidèle doit à son Roi, est d'être prêt à se sacrifier soi-même pour les intérêts de celui que Dieu lui a donné pour Maître. Un Magistrat qui s'expose au ressentiment de toutes les Puissances protectrices de la Bulle, pour faire entendre à son Roi la voix de la vérité, dans qu'aucun motif humain ait pu le porter à tenter une telle entreprise, ne peut être accusé que de trop de zèle. Eh ! peut-on en avoir trop, lorsqu'il s'agit de la gloire de son Dieu, et des vrais intérêts de son Roi?

I dare assure Your Majesty that he shall see himself that the evident facts are written in my work with bright clarity that is impossible to obscure. I need not fear, then, that Your Majesty will blame me for having infringed a police regulation in order to carry more safely to his sacred person such important truths whose knowledge is concealed from him. I saw myself forced to take this road because it was unique, because every other way would have rendered my zeal useless, and I had good reason to dread being a corrupt official, if the fear of an apparent disobedience had made me neglect so essential a duty. True respect, that which a loyal subject owes to his king, is to be ready to sacrifice itself for the interests of the one that God has given him as ruler. A magistrate who exposes himself to the resentment of all the powers protecting the bull to make his king hear the voice of truth, with no human motive capable of prompting him to attempt such an enterprise, can only be accused of excessive zeal. Ah, but can a person be overzealous when it is a matter of the glory of his God and the genuine interests of his king?²⁰

The inappropriate act of the witness, who wishes to make himself heard where he is not allowed, contributes to the construction of an ethos that insists on the importance of his mission. The love of God and the survival of human society motivate the magistrate's enterprise. The reason for having taken upon himself the duty of addressing the king is that he considers himself a loyal servant, and his position authorizes him to demonstrate the importance of the testimony as well as certify the authenticity of the given evidence. Although he is fully aware of breaking the rules, he emphasizes his social obligations in order to justify his actions.

Throughout the two texts that open the book, the *Essai sur la Dissertation sur la foi due au témoignage* and the *Epître au Roi*, Carré de Montgeron tries to inspire the addressee with confidence. He attempts to achieve this by constructing an image of one who meets the criteria of a good man, qualified to play the role of orator, whose intentions are honest and laudable. In the *Dissertation*, he puts forward the image of the jurist responsible for defending the rights of the community and of the Christian, responsible for passing on the truth for the sake of the happiness and protection of that same society. Montgeron insists on this double obligation in order to link social duty to religious duty. The inflation of the words *dieu, société, loi, témoignage* builds up a semantic network around the key argument, which consists of presenting testimony as the supreme condition of human communication and the establishment of a social community:

Dieu ayant créé les hommes pour le connaître, pour l'aimer et pour vivre en société entre eux, il était nécessaire qu'il leur donnât une loi, dont l'exécution leur facilitât les moyens d'arriver à sa connaissance, leur remît sous les yeux ses bienfaits, et formât des liens qui les attachassent les uns aux autres. Or cette loi qui est inséparable de la nature renferme, comme un des préceptes les plus importants, celui de croire les faits qui nous sont suffisamment attestés.

God, having created men so that they know Him, love Him, and live in society with one another, it was necessary that He give them a law, the execution of which would make it easier for them to come to know Him, set His blessings before their eyes, and form bonds that would tie them together. This law is the decree given to them to believe the events attested to by those who have seen them. (VM, 1)

Perceived as a vital law, testimony becomes essential to the proper functioning of every human society. Montgeron never tires of repeating that testimony is at the root of human communication. To challenge the testimony of another is to shake the foundations of society: "What chaos of uncertainty, what turmoil would we be throwing ourselves into if we were to establish that adding faith to a person's testimony is not necessary?" (VM, 3).

After demonstrating the importance of testimony, the jurist answers the question related to the criteria defining a good testimony. Montgeron first evokes the value of the oath that binds the teller to the thing he tells. To justify his intention to testify, he speaks of his total commitment to a cause he personally knows to be true. Relating his own conversion, he emphasizes his skills as a witness and explains why he has chosen to dedicate himself to distributing the convulsionaries' testimonies: "I myself was struck all of a sudden by a thousand shafts of light and fell at His feet" (VM, ii). In another passage, he summons his triple status as a witness to further justify his intervention:

Je suis un de ceux qui ont publié hautement les miracles, parce que j'en ai vu plusieurs, et que ma conversion en est un. . . . [Votre Majesté] verra même par le récit que j'ai cru devoir donner du miracle de ma conversion, que j'en suis redevable comme plusieurs autres Déistes, à la vertu du tombeau et à l'intercession de M. de Pâris: ç'a été pour moi une raison particulière d'être attentif aux miracles qui s'opéraient à son invocation, d'en recueillir les preuves, et de tâcher d'en faire connaître à tout le monde l'incontestable vérité.

I am one of those who have openly published the miracles because I have seen several and my conversion is one. . . . [Your Majesty] will see from the account that I thought I had to convey in the miracle of my conversion how I am beholden, much like several other deists, to the power of the tomb and to the intercession of M. de Pâris. This was for me a special reason to pay attention to the miracles that occurred at his invocation, gather evidence, and endeavor to make everybody know their incontestable truth. (*VM*, vi)

He lays out the different uses of the term “witness” and implicitly reminds the reader that he himself fits the three possible definitions of the word. Is he not, in fact, the speaker who utters the testimony, the one who was present at the events, and, finally, an object of testimony? Montgeron insists on the relevance of his depositions, which are the fruit of a real and repeated presence at the scene of the events.

Once the fundamental role of testimonies in society is established and Montgeron's status as a witness is recognized, he can justify his zeal by evoking his love for truth and justice. It is important for him to express his immense respect for the king, and at the same time to emphasize the divine dimension of the enterprise. He depicts the close link between the spiritual and the political—a link that also corresponds with his own ethos, composed, as we have seen, of the double image of a Christian and a jurist. If the magistrate must reach the king, it is because an indissoluble contract unites the French monarchy with Christianity. The convert, in the name of the God embodied by the King of France on earth, hails Louis XV, the “eldest son of the Church,” the Christian king:

J'ai fait, Sire, deux serments; l'un à mon Dieu, l'autre à mon Roi: je ne pourrais que mal remplir le second, en violant le premier. Aujourd'hui je remplis les deux; je parle pour mon Dieu en parlant à mon Roi, et je parle en même temps pour mon Roi en parlant pour le Dieu qui le fait régner, qui a fait sentir sa présence d'une manière évidente.

I have taken, Sire, two oaths: one to my God, the other to my King; I can only fulfill the second badly by violating the first. Today I am fulfilling both. I speak for my God when I speak to my King; and at the same time, I speak for my King when I speak for the God Who imposes His rule, Who has made His presence felt in a definite way. (*VM*, iii)

However, the marks of respect he offers to the king do not prevent the magistrate from defending his cause, quite persistently at times. In a passage of the epistle, he quotes God's words while erasing the usual typographical marks separating the two instances of utterance:

Oui, Sire, depuis plusieurs années le Dieu des dieux fait entendre sa voix parmi nous. Tout Paris en est ému, le bruit a retenti dans tout votre Royaume. Il a dit par les merveilles les plus admirables: Reconnaissez à mes œuvres que c'est moi-même qui vous parle . . . je parle, et en appelant ce qui n'est pas, je lui donne l'être: soyez donc attentifs à ma voix, et soumettez-vous à ma décision. Je suis celui qui est.

Yes, Sire, for several years now the God of gods has been making His voice heard in our midst. All Paris has been moved by it; its sound has been ringing throughout your kingdom. He has been saying in the most admirable wonders, "acknowledge through My works that it is I Myself Who am speaking to you. . . . I speak and by naming what is not, I give it being. Therefore, heed My voice and submit to My decision. I am the One Who is." (VM, iv)

In so doing, Montgeron lays claim to being God's direct spokesperson, which implicitly places him even above the king. However, the rarity of such blunders illustrates the effort made here to tone down the intransigent aspect of the Jansenist position and create an area conducive to a wide reception of the convulsionaries' testimonies.

THE HIDDEN ETHOS OF THE AUTHOR WITHIN THE NARRATIVES OF MIRACLES

While Montgeron speaks for himself in the two introductory texts, he becomes the spokesman for other witnesses in the other parts of the book. The first direct link between the historical subject, the witness who feels obliged to relate the miraculous events, and the discursive "I" in the written discourse disappears. As a narrator, who reports the testimonies of all those sick people suffering from all manners of ailments who were cured through divine help and the sainthood of Deacon Pâris, Montgeron has to erase his subjective presence. However, he continues to maintain a key position as the author and editor of the testimonies' compilation and to play a crucial role as the one responsible for the discourse.

A quick glance at the first volume of the *Témoignages* reveals the methodical principle governing the composition of the book as a whole. After the *Épître au Roi*, his personal testimony of the miracle of his conversion, and a short dissertation on moral issues concerning the witness's duty, Montgeron presents eight cases of illness and miraculous healing, all of which are narrated in the third person. The witness's description follows the narrative of the illness and its miraculous cure: certifications of identity and social and moral profiles whose aim is to guarantee the witness's respectability. Then, Montgeron presents official documents affirming the miracles: medical consultants' reports, surgeons' and pharmacists' validations of miraculous healing, notaries' records of testimonies, and various attestations.²¹ Finally, he closes the volume with a collection of essays and letters dealing mainly with the controversial arguments on the issue of the miracles. In spite of their varied nature and the heterogeneity of the voices invoked, the texts are combined into one entity, whose logical structure relies on a very clear principle of unification. The introductions, the stories, the documents, and the dissertations—all these different discourses are put together to create one organic discursive piece rather than a compilation of items. In fact, Montgeron succeeds in producing a book that

simultaneously stands as a coherent entity while still being open to an unlimited number of miracles.

The strong impression of unity is due mainly to the regularity of the typographical frame and the inner and external symmetry of the cases (i.e., same narrative structure, same visual cues in a very similar kind of story, which is more or less of the same length and possesses similar literary and stylistic components). Each testimony begins with two illustrations depicting the witness before and after the miracle, drawn by the well-known engraver Jean Restout.²² Under each picture, a short explanation introduces the reader to the specific story. The visual evidence that embodies the verbal testimony aims to provoke an immediate effect on the reader, who is asked to become involved sensuously and affectively by what he sees. This systematic use of the visual dimension in order to reinforce verbal contents reveals the aesthetic consciousness of the author, who is aware of all the tricky publicity necessary to capture the audience's attention.

Montgeron indeed spares no effort in publishing a very regular and beautiful book. He chooses different typographic characters for the title, the subtitle, the consecutive abstract, and the narrative. In doing so, he creates an admirable space for reading. In the abstract, written in italics, the first word of each sentence appears in bigger characters, while the sentences are arranged one beneath the other. The result is a list of epithets written in bolder characters, creating a double effect of accumulation (because of the number of details) and horror (because of the brute contents): "BROKEN . . . ATTACKED . . . TORMENTED . . . EXHAUSTED . . . SHAKEN . . . SHOCKED . . . CURED . . ." (VM, Case 4, 1). These visual tools—majuscules, different typographic signs, sophisticated editing—emphasize the extraordinary aspects of the event while at the same time creating an immediate reaction in the reader even before he has begun to read the story itself.

Beginning the narrative, the reader finds himself once again captivated by the pathetic description of the accidents and the catastrophic causes of the pathology. The voice of an extradiegetic narrator, which is far from being neutral, emerges from the framework of enunciation. Even though the speaker stands outside the story and seems to narrate the facts and events in an objective manner, as a historian would, he designs the construction of the secondhand testimony in minute detail.

For example, in the fourth case quoted above, regarding Marguerite Françoise Duchesne, the narrator constructs, as in the other cases, a testimonial discourse that is like a suspense story, combining the commonly used ingredients of fantasy in order to arouse fear and horror. The crescendoing tone, along with the accumulation of terrifying details of terrible accidents, and the spectacle of the gradual disintegration of the sick body, provoke in the reader a conflictive tension of pity and rejection. The metamorphosis of Marguerite from a simple lower-class girl to the heroine of a novel—courageous and strong, faithful to her belief and optimistic, hard-working, and never complaining—serves to further heighten the tension. These components contribute to the immersion of the reader within the story and involve him concretely. The reader cannot but react in a dual movement of adhesion and identification. However, this response has nothing to do with the accreditation of the facts; the literary writing plays an important part in the processes of validating the testimony, and the fictionalization of the testimony constitutes a supplementary strategy of seduction.

Behind this very organized and precise enterprise stands the master of the work, Carré de Montgeron, who displays his skills and talents as a publisher and a storyteller, with his accurate comprehension of the power of visual and verbal tools on the mind of the addressees and its impact on public opinion.

CONCLUSION

Comprehending the image of the self (ethos) the witness develops in his testimonial discourse is essential to understanding discursive evolutions and procedures of accreditation. However, it is important to note that the construction of the discursive ethos rests on a series of strategies that are not all rhetorical. The witness is engaged in a dual procedure: he introduces himself both as somebody who was present in the event and as a witness personally implicated in the telling. He is also responsible to those who were with him, as well as to the ones to whom he speaks and offers his testimony. Since the communication circulates and involves all the participants of the exchange, the presence of the witness and his relationship with his listeners affect narrative procedures and rhetorical conventions of testimony. The discourse can change according to the situation of communication, but it can also change according to the witness' goals. The image of the self is inferred both from historical sources relating to Montgeron's case and from the discourses of the magistrate himself, either direct or reported.

In this essay I have identified three components which are not obviously connected to the credible and reliable image of the witness engaged in the Jansenist cause: first, the episode at Versailles; second, the personal investment in a cause that Montgeron is convinced is true; and third, the aesthetic choices made in presenting the ailments and their miraculous healings and cure in an attractive and convincing way. Testimony is always uncertain due to the following contradictory relations: between the witness's credibility and the suspicion he arouses in his audience; between the objective and the committed discourse; and between the external context and the discursive staging. In the case of the Jansenists, as with any political cause, accreditation depends upon the militant adherence of as large a public as possible—hence the making of scandalous events that cause a stir. Specifying the different strategies of accreditation and defining the dynamic relations of reciprocity, complement, and emphasis between these components allow us to better understand how the truth is constructed, especially when we have to deal with a jurist who manipulates many rhetorical strategies in order to place his radical religious discourse within the field of the rational.

Behind the discursive strategies chosen for the accreditation of Jansenist testimonies, we discern the beginning of the profound changes of the eighteenth century. The circulation of printed testimonies and the accumulation of accounts reveal the emergence of the written word in the public space, and the opening up of hearings once held in camera to the "justice of the people." They show the will and the right to knowledge for as large an audience as possible. Undeniably, the Jansenists knew how to take advantage of the new possibilities offered to them by a society in the making. But most of all, the multileveled ethos analyzed here leads us to the conclusion that a profound change occurs with the emergence of the testimonies of Saint-Médard and the phenomenon of a popular religious conflict within the absolute monarchy in France on the one hand, and the arousal of the

Enlightenment on the other. Confronted with the Enlightenment's paradigm of rationality and empiricism, Montgeron twists the initial functions of testimonial discourses. Already, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, neither a juridical nor a historical imperative exclusively subordinated the testimonial discourse. Religious militants had learned to manipulate it as an instrument of polemic and of protest.

NOTES

1. Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1590–1791* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1996).

2. See B. Robert Kreiser, *Miracles, Convulsions, and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978); and Catherine Maire, *De la Cause de Dieu à la cause de la Nation: le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998).

3. Renaud Dulong, *Le Témoin oculaire* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1998).

4. See Jean-Robert Armogathe, "A propos des miracles de Saint-Médard: les preuves de Carré de Montgeron et le positivisme des Lumières," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 180, no. 2 (1971): 135–60.

5. See Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998).

6. See Andrea Frish, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004).

7. This is the position of Pierre Bourdieu, who argues that the image of the orator depends on his social position. See his *Langage et pouvoir symbolique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001).

8. See Ruth Amossy, "Ethos at the Crossroads of Disciplines: Rhetoric, Pragmatics, Sociology," *Poetics Today* 22, no. 1 (2001): 1–23.

9. In using this problematic term in the context of the period, I am taking into account the numerous studies dedicated to this question, in particular Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Seuil, 1990); Keith M. Baker, "Politics and Public Opinion under the Old Regime: Some Reflections," in *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France*, ed. Jack R. Censer and Jeremy D. Popkin (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1987); and Mona Ozouf, "L'opinion publique," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Keith M. Baker (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987).

10. See Catherine Maire, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard, miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au 18ième siècle* (Paris: Gallimard/Julliard, 1985); and Michèle Bokobza Kahan, "Les Lumières au service des miracles," *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 39 (2007): 175–88.

11. See William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001); and Bryan E. Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansenists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640–1799* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

12. Figurism values are related to a mixture of monotheism and paganism, typically involving orthodox and superstitious activities and beliefs; see Kreiser, *Miracles*.

13. See Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 93–124.

14. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), sec. 10, pt. 2, para. 92, 102.

15. *Ibid.*, sec. 10, pt. 2, para. 96.

16. Kreiser, *Miracles*, 259–60.

17. Nicolas Lyon-Caen, "La Minute du miracle," *Revue Historique* 646, no. 1 (2008): 61–83.

18. For more details on Carré de Montgeron, see Kreiser, *Miracles*, 375–88.
19. See, for example, Montesquieu, *Spicilège*, n° 775.
20. *La Vérité des miracles opérés par l'intercession de M. de Pâris, démontrée contre l'Archevêque de Sens*, par M. Carré de Montgeron, conseiller au Parlement de Paris, tome I, A Utrecht, chez les Libraires de la Compagnie, 1737, v. (Hereafter cited in the text as *VM*; all translations are mine.)
21. See Lindsay Wilson, *Women and Medicine in the French Enlightenment* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993), chap. 1.
22. See Christine Gouzi, *L'art et le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Nolin, 2007).

