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British, but also French:

Paul Mascarene's Translation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* in Colonial Nova Scotia

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Abstract:

This article examines a little-studied manuscript translation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, made in eighteenth-century British Nova Scotia by a military officer named Paul Mascarene, for what it can tell us about the complicated assimilation of Huguenots in the global refuge. It argues that the undated manuscript shows the surprising extent to which Mascarene, a Huguenot who fled France in childhood, remained culturally French even as he was a perfectly assimilated Briton, and that he can be seen as a cultural ambassador between his homelands new and old. The manuscript here is closely scrutinized in relation both to Molière's original 1666 play and a published English translation that is approximately contemporaneous to Mascarene's own effort. Comparison of the three versions of the play show that Mascarene was a skilled and thoughtful translator, committed to accurately rendering Molière's words while also making changes that reflected his personal, religious values. This article also considers the assertion that Mascarene's translation served as the basis of a performance in Annapolis Royal in 1743 or 1744, and shows that close scrutiny of the manuscript does not support this conclusion. Instead, Mascarene's translation of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* may best be understood as a sign of how Huguenots like

him may have maintained and even sought to share with others aspects of their former identities even as they sought to conform to the cultural norms of their new homelands.

#### Résumé:

Cet article étudie une traduction manuscrite du *Misanthrope* de Molière, réalisée dans la Nouvelle-Écosse britannique au 18e siècle par un officier militaire nommé Paul Mascarene, pour ce qu'elle peut nous dire sur l'assimilation compliquée des Huguenots dans le refuge mondial. Il soutient que le manuscrit montre à quel point Mascarene, un Huguenot qui a quitté la France à l'âge d'onze ans et qui est réputé parfaitement assimilé à la culture britannique, est resté français culturellement. Le manuscrit est ici examiné par rapport à la pièce originale de 1666 de Molière et à une traduction anglaise publiée qui est à peu près contemporaine de celle de Mascarene. La comparaison des trois versions de la pièce montre que Mascarene était un traducteur habile et réfléchi, déterminé à traduire fidèlement les paroles de Molière tout en apportant des changements qui reflètent ses valeurs personnelles et religieuses. Cet article examine aussi l'affirmation fréquente selon laquelle la traduction de Mascarene a servi de base à une représentation à Annapolis Royal en 1743 ou 1744, et montre qu'un examen attentif du manuscrit ne corrobore pas cette conclusion. Au lieu de cela, le manuscrit peut être mieux compris comme un aperçu de la façon dont les Huguenots comme Mascarene auraient pu maintenir et même chercher à partager avec d'autres certains aspects de leurs anciennes identités tout en cherchant à se conformer aux normes culturelles de leur nouvelles patries.

A curious fact sometimes included in accounts of the life of Paul Mascarene, a Huguenot refugee who became a military and civic leader in colonial British Nova Scotia in the early eighteenth century, is that he was a translator of France's most famous comic playwright, Molière (Peterson

2019, 263; Moody 2004, 2). This choice of activity is perhaps surprising for a career soldier who is now remembered as a loyal and well-assimilated British subject, and whose life was marked by frequent conflict with the French. Mascarene was born in 1685, in the Huguenot stronghold of Castres in Languedoc, just in time to see his family torn apart upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and his father's consequent banishment from France. He departed himself when just eleven years old, spending sixteen months in Geneva and settling in England by 1706 after having lived in Utrecht. He enlisted in the British military, and received orders in 1708 to travel to Boston and join the troops then assembling to contest the French in Canada. In 1710, he participated in the siege of Port Royal and its subsequent transfer to British control, as well as the ensuing long and tense negotiations with the French-speaking Acadian settlers who were viewed as a potential threat to the new colonists, particularly if they ever took the side of the French in an effort to reclaim the colony. And the end of his career saw renewed armed conflict with the French and their Indigenous allies in the context of King George's War.<sup>1</sup> Although understandably overshadowed by his role in these high-stakes dramas, Mascarene's work rendering Molière into English is worthy of attention for what it can tell us about the complicated assimilation into a new country of a Huguenot refugee. This article examines Mascarene's unfinished English version of Molière's comedy *Le Misanthrope* and argues that it is best understood not as the remnant of a theatrical performance in Annapolis Royal for which it has been taken, but rather as a sign of Mascarene's capacity and willingness to bring French culture to his British countrymen even as he sought to conform to the cultural norms of his new homeland.

Mascarene's manuscript English version of the first three acts of *Le Misanthrope* is apparently the sole surviving example of his literary work between two languages. It is now held in the

British Library, in a volume of Mascarene's papers related to his military service collected decades after the fact by the Scottish minister George Brown, who devoted nearly eight years to preaching in Nova Scotia during the last two decades of the eighteenth century and "spent much of his leisure time in collecting and studying historical documents" (Shepperson 1987, 1). The manuscript covers four large sheets of paper, front and back, and the front of a fifth, for a total of nine pages. Apparently at the moment of binding with the other papers collected by Brown, these sheets were numbered from 109 to 113. Throughout this article, I cite Mascarene's text using these numbers, with r and v to indicate recto or verso. Approximately 1,800 words of the original French version of the play are missing from Mascarene's manuscript, an absence that causes a nonsensical jump from the middle of the first scene to the middle of the second. Since Mascarene's handwriting—small, cramped, and sometimes difficult to decipher—ranges from 800 to nearly 1,300 words per side of a page, this absence seems best explained by the loss of a single, double-sided sheet of Mascarene's translation at some point prior to its binding with his other papers. Also missing are the final two acts of the play. The available clues do not allow for any firm conclusion about the reasons for this absence, but the remaining space at the bottom of the manuscript's last page and its entirely blank reverse side suggest Mascarene simply stopped before finishing his translation. There is no date or reference to contemporaneous events on any page that could provide certainty as to when, precisely, Mascarene translated the play. My own transcription of his manuscript is freely available in the University of Alberta's Education and Research Archive: <https://doi.org/10.7939/r3-8vn0-cw43>.

It is not immediately obvious, at first glance, that the manuscript is an English version of *Le Misanthrope*. There is no title, nor any explicit indication that the text is a translation. Instead, the abbreviated names Ph. and Al. are centered at the top of the first page. Upon reading the text,

however, it is clear that these characters are Molière's famous Philinte and Alceste. Just as in the original French version, the play begins with the pair arguing over the latter character's rejection of social conventions. Alceste's commitment to honesty and consequent rejection of false politeness lands him in a series of difficult situations. He is in love with Célimène despite her skill at the dishonest courtly manners he finds so distasteful. He complains that she has too many other suitors, men like Acaste and Clitandre whom she claims to receive in her home only out of social obligation, and fumes when she refuses to abandon such insincere conventions. He refuses to speak approvingly of a poem written by another man, Oronte, that is not to his liking, landing himself in legal jeopardy for the insult. Meanwhile, Célimène finds her coquettish behavior criticized by another woman, Arsinoé, who pretends to be motivated by friendship. Mascarene translated all of these key points of Molière's play nearly word for word, although he did occasionally stray from the source text. His adherence to Molière's scene breaks, for example, becomes increasingly sporadic throughout the manuscript before finally ending entirely in act three. And he also occasionally omitted single words or phrases, such as the dandy Clitandre's one-word answer—"non"—to Célimène's inquiry as to whether anyone knows who might have just arrived by coach in act three, scene two (Molière 2010, 687; Mascarene 112r). Some more systematic and potentially revealing changes made by Mascarene are explored below.

Although unfinished, the manuscript is plainly not a quickly dashed-off first draft, but a piece of work over which Mascarene hesitated. Throughout, there are many lines that are crossed out, with more accurate or smoother translations scratched in above or below. To mention only a few representative examples, Mascarene altered his first version of Philinte's complaint about his irascible companion near the beginning of the play—"I can not comprehend your for ever falling into these humours"—to make it read instead "I can not comprehend these odd humours" (109r).

Oronte's insistence that he does not need Alceste's approval for his verses also underwent revision, from "I shall be very easy without your approving them" to "I shall make no great accounts of your not approving them" (Mascarene 112r). And Célimène's criticism of an absent socialite changed from "he wants to appear too much a man of witt" to "he strives too much to shew himself a man of witt" (Mascarene 111r). It is perhaps not surprising that Mascarene seems to have hesitated over how best to translate Molière's lines. Scholars who have considered the various efforts to translate Molière into English over the centuries have commented on the particular difficulty of this task, in which faithful adherence to the text is often impossible to balance with preserving the comic effect of Molière's lines (Peacock 2000, 958; Copley 1960, 116). Emendations like those noted above are common throughout the manuscript, frequently improving Mascarene's translation and testifying to a particular care on his part to accurately represent Molière's words.

Indeed, comparing Mascarene's renderings to the published translation that appeared in London at approximately the same time, Henry Baker and James Miller's version of *Le Misanthrope* contained in their ten-volume *The Works of Molière: French and English* (1739), shows how attentive the British officer was to Molière's language. Miller was a preacher and playwright (O'Brien 2004) who appears to have been intimately acquainted with Molière's plays. As Joseph Tucker noted in comparing their respective oeuvres, "Of the ten plays written by this preacher-dramatist between his salad days at Oxford and his death in 1744, three may be considered dramatic crazy quilts in which he combined parts of no less than fifteen of Molière's comedies. Two of his other plays have long passages taken directly out of Molière" (1942, 87). Baker, on the other hand, was a natural philosopher and editor of a journal, a friend of Miller whose own literary works do not seem to reflect any particular interest in Molière (Turner 2004;

Tucker 1942, 88). Both men were life-long Britons and native speakers of English, who nevertheless managed to produce translations that have long been appreciated for their close adherence to Molière's original French versions, with reprints and performances continuing to appear late into the twentieth century (Peacock 2000, 958).

In some cases, Mascarene's translation of *Le Misanthrope* is simply more accurate than Baker and Miller's version. To mention only a few examples, in the play's second scene, Alceste critiques the poetry written by another character, Oronte, and says if he wrote such bad verses he would refrain from showing them to people: "je me garderois de les montrer aux gens" (Molière 2010, 665.) Mascarene accurately translates this comment as "I would take care not shew them" (110r), while the published translation makes it less absolute: "I should take care how I shew'd 'em to people" (Baker and Miller 1739, 39). Criticizing another of Célimène's suitors in the first scene of act two, Alceste mentions the man's piercing, falsetto way of speaking, his "ton de fausset" (Molière 2010, 669.) Mascarene renders this as "shrill voice" (Mascarene 110v), which the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* confirms as a fine choice, as the term is there defined as designating a voice with a "dessus aigre, et ordinairement forcé." The published translation, on the other hand, calls it a "soft tone of voice" (Baker and Miller 1739, 45). Later in the same act, Mascarene leaves unchanged Célimène's exclamation of dismay or aggravation—"Ah!"—when Alceste demands that she make clear, in the presence of other suitors, her romantic choice, while it becomes a defiant "Nay" in the published translation (Molière 2010, 674; Mascarene 111r; Baker and Miller 1739, 53). In these and in similar cases throughout the manuscript, Mascarene was often closer to the mark than his countrymen Baker and Miller.

In other cases, both translations offer justifiable renderings, but Mascarene's version arguably reflects a more nuanced understanding both of French and of Molière's play. In act three, for

example, the prudish Arsinoé explains her criticism of Célimène's flirtatious behavior by claiming to be motivated by an obligation born of friendship: "Je viens par quelque avis que j'ai cru vous devoir" (Molière 2010, 689). The verb *devoir* in French signals various kinds of obligation, and can mean that a person owes, has to, needs to, must, or is bound to do something. Although both Mascarene's translation and the contemporaneous published version offer renderings that fall within this range—"I thought myself bound to give you," for Mascarene (112v), and "I thought I ow'd you," for Baker and Miller (1739, 77)—the former is clearly more reflective of Molière's text. Arsinoé is referring not to a transactional obligation, in which she must repay in kind what she has received, but rather to the duty of one friend to another. Indeed, it is in these terms that she justifies her criticism of Célimène's behavior, claiming that she is only passing along the harsh words of others out of friendship (Molière 2010, 689). In another case, Philinte complains in the play's first scene about Alceste's excessive vexation: "Ce chagrin Philosophe est un peu trop sauvage" (Molière 2010, 651). The published translation uses the most obvious homonym to render *sauvage*: "This sour philosopher is a little too savage" (Baker and Miller 1739, 17). Mascarene's translation, in contrast, correctly recognizes that *sauvage* in seventeenth-century French usually designated things and people that were wild in the sense of uncultivated, and did not necessarily carry the more violent connotation of its English counterpart, *savage* ("wild, fierce, barbarous," in Kersey's early eighteenth-century *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*). In Mascarene's version, Philinte complains that "This philosophick temper has something in it too wild" (109v). Surrounded by Indigenous people known as *sauvages* in French, Mascarene no doubt was in a better position than his compatriots Baker and Miller to understand the nuances of this particular word, and the inappropriateness of "savage" as a translation.



This is not to say that Mascarene's unfinished translation is consistently superior to the published Baker and Miller version, which, as noted above, has been much appreciated in the centuries since its appearance. Indeed, Mascarene sometimes strayed further from the source text than Baker and Miller did, albeit usually in ways that appear to reflect an aversion to blasphemy more than any deficiency in his French or understanding of Molière. Mascarene was a "determined Christian and devout Anglican" (Moody 1976, 153-154), which perhaps explains why he removed all of *Le Misanthrope*'s less-than-pious expressions, constituting his most systematic set of changes to the play. In the play's first scene, Philinte chastises Alceste for his ill humor and pessimism toward humanity in a ten-line speech. In the original French, this monologue is interrupted mid-way by Alceste: "Mon Dieu, laissons là, vos comparaisons fades" (Molière, 2010, 651). Mascarene omitted the entire line, perhaps to rid his text of the potentially offensive "Mon Dieu," thereby erasing Alceste's interruption of Philinte's complaint about his behaviour. Another blasphemous utterance in Molière's play—Acaste's enthusiastic "Dieu me damne" (Molière 2010, 677), in reaction to Célimène's witty but cruel comments about an absent socialite—became "by all that's good" in Mascarene's manuscript (111r). Finally, Mascarene left out one aspect of Acaste's recitation of the factors that he believes make him loveable at the beginning of act three, his idolatrous love of a good play: "A faire aux Nouveautés, dont je suis idolâtre, Figure de Savant, sur les Bancs de Théâtre; Y décider, en Chef, en faire du Fracas À tous les beaux Endroits qui méritent des *Has*" (Molière 2010, 684). Mascarene skipped this sentence entirely (112r). And he even omitted all of the euphemistic, religious-themed swear words uttered by Alceste and the other characters, exclamations like *morbleu*, *parbleu*, and *par le sang bleu* that replace *dieu* with the rhyme word *bleu*. The Baker and Miller translation, in contrast, offers egad, split me, s'death, s'heart lack-a-day, my stars, and other mild exclamations,

clearly surpassing Mascarene's accuracy but also bringing into relief how his own religiously motivated standards shaped his translation. Such intentional departures aside, it is clear from comparison to the well-regarded and roughly contemporaneous Baker and Miller translation that Mascarene's manuscript is the result of skilled and thoughtful engagement with his childhood language.

There are signs elsewhere in Mascarene's writings that French was not, to his mind, a mere tool that could be wielded clumsily as long as it facilitated communication with the Acadians, but was instead a subject about which he had strong feelings. A notebook containing what appear to be Mascarene's own copies of the letters he sent to his children and others, now held by the Massachusetts Historical Society, contains a message to his son John Mascarene dated November 23, 1742, in which he offered advice on improving one's French, apparently in response to news of the younger Mascarene's own efforts to do so (*Mascarene Family Papers* 1969, 41-42 of the letter book). He recommended a book—the title of which is regrettably illegible—in which “the language is writt in its purity,” and followed this suggestion with two more that apparently met the same standard: a French translation of Terence and the works of Molière. Mascarene also urged his son not to be satisfied with reading alone and instead to seek conversation with fluent speakers—and also to avoid certain kinds of interlocutors. Wrote Mascarene, “Reading certainly will bring you to understand and even to write and spell French: butt speaking it will come only by conversation which you must choose with those who speak the language in its purity. Mr. Dyson whom you seem to believe on account of conversing in French has learn't that language here where the inhabitants speak in a Jargon of various pronunciation and contrary to all rules of grammar” (*Mascarene Family Papers* 1969, 41 of the letter book). Neither the French spoken by the Acadian settlers nor that of his fellow Britons who

had learned it through contact with them were, it seems, up to Mascarene's personal standards. Instead, what he considered to be "the language in its purity" was metropolitan French as found in works like Molière's plays and in the mouths of native speakers like himself. It seems that even in Mascarene's own mind, the variety of French used by the author whose play he chose to translate was a site of his enduring difference both from other British speakers of French and from the Acadians.

At the same time, however, Mascarene's translation seems to testify to his understanding that signs of this dissimilarity from those around him were perhaps best not signaled too clearly, at least outside of his use of the language in liaising with the Acadians on behalf of the British Crown. As noted above, the manuscript bears no title or other indication of its relationship to Molière's play. And some of the translation choices could also suggest an effort to obscure its French origin. In one of their exchanges about Alceste's antisocial attitude, Philinte suggests that the pair are behaving like Sganarelle and Ariste, two brothers with contrasting outlooks on life who are the principal characters of Molière's 1661 play *l'École des Maris* (Molière 2010, 651). Mascarene omitted this remark, along with Alceste's one-line objection, collapsing the exchange into a single short speech by Philinte (Mascarene 109v). Similarly left out is one character's reference to the *coucher du roi*, the ceremonial undressing and putting to bed of the king that was a part of French court life (Molière 2010, 680; Mascarene 111v). Perhaps Mascarene erased these clear signs of the play's French origin because he knew that it would not have been altogether prudent for a French-born officer, whom rivals sometimes hinted may have divided loyalties (Sutherland 1974, 3), to be seen admiring a French play enough to bother translating it. Or maybe he simply chose to minimize references to French literature and culture that may have been unfamiliar to his fellow Britons, in which case these omissions—and the fact that a

reference to the Louvre survived translation (Mascarene 111r)—suggest that Mascarene possessed a full bicultural fluency that allowed him to gauge which aspects of French culture had to be omitted for the sake of comprehensibility in English, and which he could retain. Whether they were intended to conceal the play's origin or to make it more understandable to a British audience, these omissions signal that Mascarene may have translated *Le Misanthrope* in preparation for a public presentation of it.

Indeed, historians of theatre have frequently reached the conclusion that such a performance took place in Annapolis Royal. David Emmett Gardner appears to have been the first to suggest that Mascarene's *Misanthrope* may have found its way to the stage, in his 1983 doctoral dissertation on the history of Canadian theatre. He identified the winter of 1743-1744 as the probable time in which the performance took place, and the most likely venue as the military garrison in Annapolis Royal. Gardner's tentative conclusion in favor of such a performance rests not on any sustained attention to Mascarene's manuscript, but on an item in the April 1744 issue of the Boston periodical *The American Magazine and Historical Chronicle*. A brief letter, attributed only to A. B., reports that "We hear from Annapolis-Royal that a Play was acted the last Winter for the Entertainment of the Officers and Ladies at the Place" (348-349). This record of a performance, coupled with the presence of the manuscript in Mascarene's papers, led Gardner to conclude that the performance "was probably an English translation of *Le Misanthrope*," although he hastened to acknowledge the speculative nature of the claim (Gardner 1983, 201). In the decades since, however, this possibility has been repeated as a certainty by scholars who appear to have followed Gardner's lead. To mention only a few examples, André-Gilles Bourassa asserted that Mascarene was responsible for the first presentation of Molière in America, his own translation of *Le Misanthrope* (2003, 153). And Patrick B. O'Neill similarly

reported the performance as a fact, as did Odai Johnson and William Burling (O’neill 1989, 388; Johnson and Burling 2001, 127).

Although it is certainly plausible that Mascarene had a performance in mind when he began translating *Le Misanthrope*, the various ways in which the manuscript is unfinished leave plenty of room to doubt that one ever occurred. First, although they often improved the accuracy or clarity of individual sentences, as mentioned above, Mascarene’s emendations did not always result in a clear indication of what he intended. In the first scene of act two, for example, Alceste complains about Célimène’s popularity with other men: “Vous avez trop d’amants, qu’on voit vous obséder” (Molière 2010, 668). Mascarene rendered this as simply “You have too many lovers,” but “are continually beset by” is written just above the line, apparently as a replacement for “have” (110r). This substitution no doubt better captures the second half of the French line, but Mascarene did not cross out his initial version, suggesting that he perhaps was hesitating over whether it was enough of an improvement to bother. Similarly, when Philinte is testing the limits of his companion’s commitment to always tell the truth in the play’s first scene, Mascarene made him ask “What would you go and tell old Aminta—that it ill becomes her age to pretend to beauty?” “Appear handsome” is scratched in above the line, and seems to be intended as a replacement for “beauty,” but the latter is not crossed out (109v). Later, in the first scene of act two, the phrase “on that topic” appears as a translation for “là-dessus,” and “head” is written in above topic (110v). Similar cases are common throughout the manuscript.

In some cases, the accumulation of revisions and discarded options results in the absence of a coherent translation for a particular line. In her above-mentioned conversation with Célimène about her coquettish behavior, for example, Arsinoé explains that she has come to share a concern, rooted in friendship, about Célimène’s public behavior: “l’amitié doit surtout éclater

Aux choses, qui le plus, nous peuvent importer Et comme il n'en est point de plus grande importance Que celles de l'honneur, et de la bienséance, Je viens, par un avis qui touche votre honneur, Témoigner l'amitié que, pour vous, a mon cœur" (Molière 2010, 689). Mascarene returned to this sentence several times, making many changes but leaving no clear final version. His discarded options—indicated in the manuscript by a line running through them—are here struck through, and options scratched in between two lines or in the margins are given in italics: "Our friendship Madam can never be better ~~express'd~~ *We can never better express our friendship Madam I appear than by the share we take in what is of most concern in expressing to our friends than by showing the our concern have for what most interests our friends* and as there can be nothing that can so nearly affect us as our honour and good name I come to testify ~~my~~ *the regard I have* for you by imparting an advice to you which ~~which~~ *concerns touches* your honour" (112v). Although a reasonable translation of Molière's lines can certainly be extracted from Mascarene's effort, the lack of clarity in this case and in others like it makes it difficult to imagine an actor using the surviving manuscript to prepare for a performance.

Another pattern of incompleteness that would seem to undermine the manuscript's status as evidence of a performance of the play are the occasional blank spots in the manuscript where Mascarene appears to have skipped French words that he was not immediately able to translate, perhaps intending to come back later but never doing so. Alceste admonishes Célimène in the first scene of act two, for example, that "Et votre complaisance, un peu moins étendue, De tant de soupirants chasserait la cohue" (Molière 2010, 668). Mascarene appears to have stumbled over the word *complaisance*: "If you would extend less your [BLANK] to them you would soon be ridd of this crowd of admirers" (110v). And in their lengthy exchange in the fourth scene of act three, Arsinoé protests that that she did everything she could to defend Célimène from her

critics: “Je fis ce que je pus pour vous pouvoir défendre, Je vous excusai fort sur votre intention, Et voulus de votre ame être la caution” (Molière 2010, 689). Mascarene translates this as “I did all I could to defend your character. I excus’d you on your intentions being good and made my self answerable for the [BLANK] of your heart” (112v). Later in the same scene, Arsinoé objects to Célimène’s reference to the difference in their ages: “Certes, vous vous targuez d’un bien faible avantage, Et vous faites sonner, terriblement, votre âge: Ce que, de plus que vous, on en pourrait avoir, N’est pas un si grand cas, pour s’en tant prévaloir” (Molière 2010, 692). Mascarene skipped the last few words of this passage: “Indeed you pride yourself much on a slight advantage and you sett off your youth att a strange rate. It doth not appear that the few years one may have above you deserves such great [BLANK]” (112v). Corrections that are not accompanied by the striking out of previous language, occasional incoherencies caused by multiple revisions, and skipped words throughout the manuscript make it doubtful that this particular version of *Le Misanthrope* ever saw the stage. In too many cases, it is simply not clear what an actor would have been expected to say.

Finally, the absence of the last two acts of *Le Misanthrope* from Mascarene’s translation also seems to pose a challenge to the notion that the manuscript is the remnant of a performance, because this version of the play stops before any of its dramatic tension is resolved. The third act ends with Alceste and Arsinoé departing Célimène’s house together, and the former promising to show her disgruntled companion proof that Célimène has not been as faithful to him as she claims, in an apparent effort to seduce Alceste for herself. In the final two acts of Molière’s play, missing from Mascarene’s translation, Alceste reacts with fury to the letter proving Célimène’s treachery that Arsinoé shows him and tries, with another of her suitors, to force her to choose between them. He proposes to marry her on the condition that they flee society together and,

when she refuses, goes into exile alone. Mascarene's version of the play ends, then, at the moment when it seems possible that Célimène's perfidy will be proven, but before she is unmasked or any of the consequences are made manifest. It is hard to see how this could have yielded any kind of satisfactory viewing experience for an audience, a fact that Mascarene—reputedly an intellectually inclined man of broad cultivation (Moody 1976, 1-2)—surely must have known. It remains possible, of course, that Mascarene's translation as reflected in the manuscript was staged, or that a more complete version once existed, was used for a performance, and then was lost at some point afterward.<sup>2</sup> But in light of the ways both large and small in which Mascarene's translation is incomplete, it is fair to say that the available clues do not make a performance of *Le Misanthrope* in colonial Annapolis Royal the certainty it has sometimes appeared to be in scholarship. Indeed, it is just as likely that the theatrical performance that was reported in the *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle* was a reprise of *The Recruiting Officer*. The *Boston Gazette* reported that George Farquahar's 1706 comedy had been performed at the garrison in Annapolis Royal on January 22, 1733, giving "universal Satisfaction to all the Spectators" (1-2).

Whether he intended it for a performance or not, Mascarene's reasons for translating *Le Misanthrope* in particular remain a mystery about which one can only speculate, since he does not appear to have explained the choice in any of his surviving writings. Still, it is not hard to imagine why the play may have resonated with a person in Mascarene's particular situation. Perhaps Mascarene was drawn to Philinte, whose reasonable arguments and pleas for moderation on the part of Alceste go unheeded throughout the play. Persuading suspicious and resistant interlocutors to come around to his point of view was a central challenge of Mascarene's career, as he played a key role in decades-long attempts to extract an oath of loyalty to the British



Crown from the Catholic, French-speaking Acadians who had remained in the colony after its transfer to British control, in hopes of preventing them from fighting on the side of the French in any renewed conflict (Stanwood 2020, 186-188). On the other hand, maybe Mascarene—a man who, as noted above, was devout and particular about propriety, and whose career advanced more slowly than he apparently desired for much of the early eighteenth century (Moody 2004, 1)—saw something of a kindred spirit in Molière’s *Alceste*, who is rigidly committed to honesty and encounters personal and legal difficulties at every turn. Or perhaps it was not sympathy for *Alceste*, but rather satisfaction with the punishment of his folly at the end of the play that attracted Mascarene’s attention. Indeed, in his above-mentioned letter to his son John, Mascarene cited the French playwright’s skill in skewering unseemly behavior as a particular strength: “Molière, the best of the French commick Poets...has cast every where marks of infamy upon vice, and in an inimitable manner ridicul’d the oddities that are to be seen more or less in most men’s characters” (*Mascarene Family Papers* 1969, 42 of the letterbook).

Whatever may have led Mascarene to translate *Le Misanthrope*, the interest in and care for French to which his manuscript testifies bring nuance to his reputation as a perfectly assimilated Briton. Among the unmistakable signs of his integration into his new homeland are the facts that he was born Jean-Paul Mascarene, but truncated and thereby anglicized his first name at some point after leaving France; that he was a devout Anglican despite the presence of a French Protestant church in Boston, where he spent most winters; and that he gave his children—John, Elizabeth, Joanna, and Margaret—English names, wrote to them in English, and, to judge by John Mascarene’s quest to learn French, did not speak his native tongue to them at home. And yet, Mascarene’s careful attention to *Le Misanthrope*, appreciation of Molière in general, and attitudes about the French language show that he also remained different from his new

countrymen, even by his own reckoning. He was neither wholly British nor entirely French, living his life instead between the two cultures and capable of serving as a kind of ambassador between them. Other scholars have already pointed out that Mascarene was adept at presenting British culture to speakers of French, such as when he undertook to explain Anglican theology in a lengthy correspondence with a French Catholic priest (Stanwood 2020, 188-189). His sensitive translation of *Le Misanthrope* shows that this capacity for cultural translation was not unidirectional; it could also include bringing aspects of French culture to the Britons with whom he lived and worked. This insight points to an opportunity to further revise the longstanding notion that Huguenot refugees were quickly absorbed into their new homelands after fleeing France, notably articulated by Jon Butler (1983). Scholars have been increasingly attentive in recent years to how refugees like Mascarene maintained their Huguenot identities even as they adopted new, assimilated ones (for example, Carlo 2016, Van Ruymbeke 2016, Stanwood 2020). Mascarene himself, as Owen Stanwood has recently argued, “never stopped being a Huguenot,” maintaining lifelong ties to his childhood religious identity even as he was a “perfectly assimilated Briton” (2020, 189-190). The curious case of Mascarene’s engagement with *Le Misanthrope* suggests that it may be worthwhile to investigate whether other Huguenots in the global refuge not only maintained their religious identities as they assimilated into new homes, but also, in some ways, remained French, and introduced aspects of this cultural identity to their new communities.

Mascarene’s translation of *Le Misanthrope* in colonial British Nova Scotia is certainly a unique moment in the history of eighteenth-century North American theatre, in which there appear to be no other traces of the play nor of any other efforts to translate Molière. But it is also part of a broader phenomenon that has perhaps not received the attention it is due. French plays

were occasionally performed in the original language in Anglophone cities like Baltimore, Charleston, and Philadelphia, including works by Molière, Beaumarchais, and Voltaire, among many others (Waldo 1942, 241-243). And English adaptations of French plays by Molière, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire, and others—imported from London—were fixtures of those cities as well as New York and Boston from 1750 until the beginning of the nineteenth century (Waldo 1942, 220-240). Excellent studies of literature and theatre in the Atlantic world have appeared in recent decades (Dillon 2014, Miller 2008, Roach 1996), but they generally have examined the French and British contexts in isolation from each other. Mascarene’s translation of *Le Misanthrope*—a French play, rendered into English by a bilingual former Frenchman who was at work in the service of England and operating in the context of past and anticipated armed conflict between two powers vying for control on the North American stage—suggests that it may be fruitful to systematically examine the ways in which French and British theatrical cultures of Atlantic World intersected.

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<sup>1</sup> The details of Macarene’s life and career given here and throughout this article are drawn from Moody 1976, Brebner 1928-1929, and Sutherland 2003.

<sup>2</sup> My own search for another manuscript has turned up only a handwritten transcript made in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, on which Gardner based his analysis and which he seems to have mistaken for the original (1983, 472n3).

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