

JYU DISSERTATIONS 114

Elina Kauppinen

Power, Politics, and Pillowtalk

The Role of Royal Mistresses in British and French Discourses on the Legitimacy of Monarchical Rule, 1714–1774



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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ABSTRACT

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Unlike modern mistresses of politically powerful men, early modern royal mistresses were not merely a scandal that were best concealed from audiences. The royal mistresses were a practice and a phenomenon, even an institution, of the royal courts that had their significant role in contemporary political cultures. The mistress had an established and traditional function in which she, as well as the discourses on her and her actions, served and supported the monarch and the monarchy. However, in 1760 in Britain and 1774 in France two kings acceded to the throne who interrupted the immemorial practice of keeping a royal mistress. By then, the meaning of a royal mistress both as a practice and as a vehicle of political discussion changed. This dissertation examines the role of the royal mistresses in political discourses between 1714 and 1774. Semantically and rhetorically oriented analysis demonstrates how the writers describing the royal mistresses used her semi-fictional figure as a tool to create images and imageries about the right and wrong kind of rule, participated in defining the nature and use of legitimate power, negotiated relations of power, and strived to reassert or remodel conceptions of monarchy as a political system. The figure of the royal mistress has always been a tool of power. Yet, during the eighteenth century, the expanding debates outside the royal courts offered new uses and roles for the figure of the royal mistress. By mid-century, the role of the royal mistress faced changes, and by the 1770s at the latest, the royal mistress no longer served the monarchy in its traditional supporting and protecting role. Rather, her figure formed a tool with which criticism and discontent was directed specifically at the monarchy as a political system, at its fundamentals and its prevailing practices. This was possible due to two simultaneous trajectories. On the one hand, the mistress served as a tool through which debate and criticism was aimed at those concepts, ideals, and practices upon which the legitimate monarchy was constituted. The discourse on the royal mistresses was not essentially revolutionary. Yet, the writers utilised it when challenging certain aspects, practices, or features related to it, as for example when they delegitimated *personalness* in political decision-making. On the other hand, the curiosity, scandalousness, and triviality related to the royal mistresses served the formation, needs, and demands of the emerging public debate. The semi-fictional and often scandalous figure of the royal mistress offered a popularisable means to simplify complex political struggles, conflicts, and ideas. The seeming trivialness of the discourse on the royal mistresses functioned in favour of distributing a political information and message. Thus, the royal mistress functioned as a nexus in which manifold contemporary concerns and debates were brought together and in which the private and the trivial gained public and political meaning when connected in discussions on legitimate power.

Keywords: royal mistress, public debate, political scandal, political culture, political language, conceptual history, comparative history, monarchy, gender, eighteenth century, France, Britain

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Toisin kuin nykyään, varhaismodernina aikana valtaa pitävien rakastajattaret eivät olleet yksiselitteisesti skandaali, joka pyrittiin kätkemään katseilta. Kuninkaalliset rakastajattaret olivat hovien käytäntö ja ilmiö, jopa instituutio, jolla oli oma paikkansa ajan poliittisissa kulttuureissa. Rakastajattarella oli vakiintunut ja perinteinen tehtävä, jonka puitteissa sekä hän henkilönä että keskustelu hänestä ja hänen toiminnastaan palvelivat ja tukivat monarkkia ja monarkiaa. 1760 Britanniassa ja 1774 Ranskassa valtaistuimelle nousivat kuitenkin monarkit, jotka katkaisivat ikaikaisen perinteen pitää rakastajattaria, mikä viittaa siihen, että rakastajattaren merkitys sekä käytänteenä että poliittisten keskustelujen välineenä oli muuttunut. Väitöskirjani tarkastelee sitä, mikä oli kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren rooli poliittisissa keskusteluissa ajanjaksolla 1714–1774. Semanttinen ja retorinen analyysi osoittaa, miten kuninkaallisia rakastajattaria kuvaavat kirjoittajat käyttivät rakastajattaren puolifiktiivistä hahmoa välineenä, jonka kautta he loivat mielikuvia ja kuvastoja oikeasta ja väärästä vallasta, osallistuivat oikeutetun vallan luonteen ja käytön määrittelyyn, neuvottelivat vallan suhteista ja pyrkivät vahvistamaan tai muokkaamaan käsityksiä monarkiasta poliittisena järjestelmänä. Rakastajattaren hahmo on aina ollut vallan väline, mutta 1700-luvulla laajeneva julkinen keskustelu hovien ulkopuolella tarjosi uusia mahdollisuuksia rakastajattaren hahmon käytölle. Vuosisadan puoliväliin tultaessa rakastajattaren rooli koki muutoksia, ja viimeistään 1770-luvulle mennessä rakastajattaren hahmo ei enää palvelutkaan monarkkia ja monarkiaa perinteisessä suojaavassa tehtävässä, vaan siitä muodostettiin väline, jonka kautta kritisoitiin monarkiaa poliittisena järjestelmänä, sen perusteita ja sen vallitsevia käytänteitä. Tämän mahdollistivat kaksi rinnakkaista kehityskaarta. Toisaalta rakastajattaren hahmo oli väline, jolla keskustelu ja kritiikki ohjattiin niihin käsitteisiin, ihanteisiin ja käytänteisiin, joiden varaan legitiimi monarkia oli rakennettu. Keskustelu rakastajattarista ei ollut vallankumouksellista, vaikka kirjoittajat käyttivät diskurssia hyväkseen haastaessaan tiettyjä monarkiaan liittyviä piirteitä ja käytänteitä, esimerkiksi delegitimoidessaan *henkilökohtaisuutta* poliittisessa päätöksenteossa. Toisaalta taas kuninkaallisiin rakastajattariin liittyvä uteliaisuus ja triviaalius palvelivat julkisen keskustelun muodostumista, tarpeita ja vaateita. Rakastajattaren puolifiktiivinen ja usein skandaalimainen hahmo tarjosi popularisoitavissa olevan keinon yksinkertaistaa monimutkaisia poliittisia kamppailuja, konflikteja, ja ideoita. Rakastajattaren hahmon näennäinen triviaalius palveli poliittisen tiedon ja sanoman levittämässä. Rakastajattaren hahmo toimi risteyskohtana, jossa tuotiin yhteen moninaisia ajankohtaisia huolenaiheita ja debatteja ja jossa yksityinen ja triviaali saivat julkisen ja poliittisen merkityksen kun ne liitettiin osaksi keskustelua legitiimistä vallasta.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The royal mistresses: from royal curiosities to a political institution

Let's face it – people have been and continue to be obsessed with sex and political power. Sex enters the realm of politics in many forms: it comes in various products of popular culture, in genres of both fact and fiction; it comes in scandalous exposés of the sex lives of politicians in tabloid journalism; it comes in gossip and satire, but also in news; it comes in forms of entertainment, of scandal, of shock and ridicule – and of crime. The interconnection of sex and power is embedded in our cultural understanding – *power* in itself is constructed as an aphrodisiac – and the figure of the mistress of a ruler has become its symbol.

The past and present mistresses of ruling monarchs and leading politicians never cease to intrigue audiences, and consequently, their figures flood popular culture and historical studies alike. This element of popular curiosity and related publicity in the form of scandal, inherent in the figure of any mistress of a ruler, at any given time, is an element that cannot be ignored – even though it is just because of this element that royal mistresses as a phenomenon have been regarded as light and entertaining, trivial rather than having particular political significance. The complex entanglement of sex, power, and publicity is the object of this study investigating eighteenth-century royal mistresses in French and British political cultures. This dissertation explores the phenomenon of the royal mistress by means of constructivist historical research of political discourses and cultures, and illustrates the royal mistress as a nexus of multifaceted debates on the nature of monarchy and monarchical rule. In chapter 2, we will meet the royal mistresses as a phenomenon and a practice of royal courts with its traditional and justified grounds. Chapter 3 explores the meanings of wealth, consumption, and differing interpretations and uses of the figure of a mistress in relation to royal spending.

Chapter 4 discusses the royal mistresses as political or politically significant agents as well as the gendered definitions of legitimate/illegitimate rule.

Given the great interest in the royal mistresses, it comes as no surprise that there is an abundance of studies describing the lives of the famous royal mistresses. Certainly, as curiosities, the lives and personas of the royal mistresses have drawn the attention of all kinds of writers even during their own lifetime. This interest has produced an ever-growing field of biographical inquiry into the celebrated eighteenth-century royal mistresses, especially the most famous French royal mistresses, Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry. The key question behind this biographical interest – especially in the most popular and commercial kind – seems to have revolved around the idea that *there is a woman behind every successful man*. Consequently, the power and influence of singular and individual royal mistresses have engrossed the attention. It has been a quest for the woman behind the curtain.

In this dissertation, however, attention is directed away from the singular and individual royal mistresses to the royal mistresses as a phenomenon – or rather a key element – of the eighteenth-century political cultures in France and Britain: a phenomenon with significant political potential. Thus, the mistresses of the ruling monarchs as well as the mistresses of the heirs apparent were included in this study. Also, the relation of the mistresses to the queens, the lawful wives of the ruling monarchs, will be taken into consideration.

In order to get at and examine the level of royal mistresses as a phenomenon, there are a few points to address: a) the tradition or traditional practice of the monarchs of keeping mistresses, and the eighteenth-century continuities and discontinuities of this tradition. b) The redirection of analytical focus from the acts of the mistress to the debates surrounding the royal mistress, or to the secret and public discourses on the royal mistress. c) The element of impersonality and imaginariness in the representation of the royal mistress – or of any public figure with assumed influence.

First of all, the royal mistresses were rarely objects of popular interest in themselves, on account of their own person and persona. It is doubtful that wider audiences would have been interested in, for example, Mme d'Étiolles, wife of a Parisian financier – at least not until she became the king's mistress and received the honours of Marquise de Pompadour. Thus, it is justified to ask the question: what are we talking about when we talk about royal mistresses?

The renowned ladies were the object of curiosity, but not the sole object. The mistresses were – and are – interesting because of their exceptional connection to the person at the top of political decision-making. Consequently, their figures offer glimpses of the person making the political decisions for the realm and of the practices of his political decision-making. That is to say, when we are talking about the mistresses of powerful men, we are actually talking about the powerful men themselves and the ideals and norms regarding political power and its use within the prevailing political system.

The impersonal element in the representations of the royal mistresses arises from the inherent popular interest and publicity. As historians interested in the

changes in modes of public debate have noted, the eighteenth century was the time when printed texts and their circulation expanded despite the restrictions on communication and a time of heavy censorship. In Europe, the volume of written texts increased rapidly, the topics and genres diversified, and supply and demand created a market for readers and writers.¹ As part of this development the debates concerning the royal mistresses also surged – the royal mistresses became a *cause célèbre*, celebrities like never before.² The onslaught of anecdotes, *bon mots*, panegyrics, songs, ballads, poems, libels, novels, political fiction, and caricatures all presented, represented, and discussed the royal mistresses, disseminating information regarding their (assumed) actions, characteristics, and motives among the urban population.

This indicates primarily the popular interest towards the mistresses, but also their political potential. The royal mistresses were not only discussed in various genres and modes of communication, but their figure was also exploited for a variety of purposes. Because of their inseparable connection to the personally ruling prince and to the heart of monarchical decision-making, the figure of the royal mistress was also utilised in order to discuss matters and affairs that related to the practices of political rule and the persons wielding the power. That is to say, the presentations of the royal mistresses did not only accidentally and unintentionally offer a glimpse into the interior of the court and its restricted centre around the ruling prince – they were also intentionally designed to discuss political matters, the monarchy as an institution, and to persuade the readers. To be sure, this was a public image that the royal mistresses could not and did not control. It was also a public image of their person and actions that did not necessarily match their persona – it might even lack any factual foundation whatsoever.

Thus, in this dissertation, the represented figure of the royal mistress in eighteenth-century secret and public debates is understood as a semi-fictional figure that was utilised in order to discuss other matters relating to the monarchy – especially during a time when heavy censorship prevented direct public discussion on political persons, events, and matters of the day, as was the case in eighteenth-century France and, to some extent, in Britain as well. The increasing debate on the royal mistresses thus indicates that the figure of the royal mistress had a peculiar place in eighteenth-century political cultures.

If we are to discuss the discourse on the royal mistresses instead of the royal mistresses as individual persons, we are indeed getting at the level of royal mistresses as a phenomenon. With this approach it is possible to leave aside the perennial and yet elusive – near unanswerable – question of whether singular and individual royal mistresses actually used power or not. With this approach

¹ See, e.g. Darnton 2001; Darnton 2004, 108–110, 120; Darnton 1971, 85–86, 90, 94–98, 100; Darnton 1995a, 69–81, 199–212; Darnton 1984b, 477; van Horn Melton 2009, 86–92, 92–104; Jones 2007, 249; Hesse 2007; Roche 2006, 172; Graham 2000, 42; Graham 2006, 144; Munck 2002, 15, 46–48, 77–80, 89; Black 1987, 7–8, 12–14, 27, 51, 104; Jacobs 1999, 50; Murdoch 2007, 109–111.

² See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 64, 139; Darnton 2004, 103; Darnton 1971, 81; Darnton 2000, 9, 19; Darnton 1984b, 482; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997, 366; Graham 2000, 56–95, 103.

it is rather about the question of what it *meant* that the royal mistress was (or was not) presented as a holder of power. By establishing the object of this study in the communications on the royal mistresses themselves – i.e. to the discourses on royal mistresses – it is possible to locate and understand the phenomenon of the royal mistresses in its context of wider changes and continuities in eighteenth-century French and British political cultures.

At this point, we encounter the royal mistresses as a paradoxical phenomenon constituted by various conflicting, even inconsistent, conceptions and notions. To be sure, the inherent paradoxes in the figure of the mistress were and are the element that ensures their continuance as curious figures exciting both popular and academic attention. These underlying paradoxical conceptions extend from sex and gender, norms, morals, and values to the use of power and political decision-making, and to the problematic entanglement of public and private in the person of an administrator of public affairs. Thus, we need to stress two elementary paradoxes within the figure of an eighteenth-century mistress. Both of them were – and to some extent still are – an inseparable element of any mistress and simultaneously the source of the political potential embedded in the figure of a mistress. That is to say, because of these two inherent paradoxes, the figure of the royal mistress was politicisable.

The first of the key paradoxes obviously concerns the cultural understanding of the proper romantic relationship, which has long been defined through heteronormative monogamous marriage. This is why we also have to pay attention to the presentations of the queen consorts in relation to the royal mistresses. As numerous scholars have pointed out, during the early modern period legitimate love was confined to the relationship between husband and wife. This was defined as the only proper, legitimate sensual relationship between a man and a woman. Marriage was the sacred institution that was further considered the cornerstone of all social and political order, in very practical sense as well as symbolic, and consequently, enforced both legally and normatively. Hence, all extramarital sensual relationships were deemed as *criminal*, violating secular law, ecclesiastical codes, and the normatively constructed sense of right and wrong moral behaviour alike.³ Yet, at the same time it was also a well-established practice among monarchs to keep mistresses: another kind of a norm – if not an institution – in itself.

By the accession of George I to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland in 1714 and the minor Louis XV's succession to the French throne in 1715, the practice of keeping royal mistresses was already an immemorial one: rulers were (and are) known to have kept mistresses since antiquity.⁴ The previous century had ended and the new one dawned under the reign of monarchs who kept

³ See, e.g. Farr 1991, 400; Boone, de Hemptienne & Prevenier 2003, 31; Hufton 1998, 48–49, 303.

⁴ “Les empereurs Romains éleverent souvent à la faveur des femmes d’une naissance plus obscure que la mienne [Mme de Pompadour]:” Poisson 1766a, 5. “The Roman Emperors often raised to favour and eminence women of more obscure birth than mine [Mme de Pompadour]:” Poisson 1766c, 6. Whenever available, English translations from French originals originate from already translated published editions which will be duly marked. All other translations are mine.

mistresses habitually. In France, the famous *Roi Soleil* Louis XIV had numerous mistresses, and he not only acknowledged but even legitimised his children with his mistress Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart de Mortemart, Marquise of Montespan. What is more, he married another of his mistresses, Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon.⁵ Across the Channel, the last Stuart monarchs ruling over the British Isles did not lag behind in their reputed taste for love affairs. Especially Charles II was notorious for his numerous mistresses – the most famous of whom must be Barbara Palmer (*née* Villiers), 1st Duchess of Cleveland; Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth; and actress Eleanor "Nell" Gwyn – as well as for his even more numerous acknowledged adulterine children.⁶ Of the last Stuart king, James II of England and Ireland and VII of Scotland, posterity remembers the famous mistresses Catherine Sedley, Countess of Dorchester and Countess of Portmore, and Arabella Churchill, from whom started the line of FitzJames of illegitimate royal blood.⁷ Since there was an established tradition of keeping royal mistresses, we must also include the mistresses of the heirs apparent, or destined future kings, in this study.

Given the long tradition, it was not a surprise to contemporary audiences that Louis XV of France and George I and George II of Great Britain paraded their mistresses. George I (1714–1727) commenced his reign with a scandal. He left for his new realm without his wife, Sophia Dorothea of Celle. Instead, he brought with him his mistress Ehrengard Melusine von der Schulenburg, known as Duchess of Kendal and Duchess of Munster, and his half-sister and assumed mistress Sophia Charlotte von Kielmansegg (*née* von Platen), known as Countess of Darlington and Countess of Leinster. George II's (1727–1760) relationship with Henrietta Howard, later Countess of Suffolk, started before his accession to the throne. In the mid-1730s, Mrs. Howard was replaced by Amalie Sophie Marianne von Wallmoden, later known as Countess of Yarmouth. Louis XV (1715–1774) chose his first notable mistresses in the 1730s and 1740s in a scandalous manner. Successively, he took into keeping four of the five daughters of Louis de Mailly, Marquis de Nesle: Louise Julie de Mailly-Nesle, Comtesse de Mailly; Pauline Félicité de Mailly-Nesle, Marquise de Vintimille; Marie Anne de Mailly-Nesle, Duchesse de Châteauroux; and Diane Adélaïde de Mailly, Duchesse de Lauraguais. In the mid-1740s' the last mistress of the Mailly-Nesle sisters, Duchesse de Lauraguais, was replaced by Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Mme d'Étiolles, the famous – or notorious – Marquise de Pompadour. After her death in 1764, Louis XV did not have an established romantic relationship until the end of the decade, when he openly took Jeanne Bécu, Comtesse du Barry, as his mistress. Besides these well-known ladies, the monarchs and heirs apparent had a few lesser-known mistresses – and certainly, were rumoured to have numerous more.⁸

⁵ See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 113–114, 119, 129; Zysberg 2002, 15.

⁶ See, e.g. Corp 2002, 55–56; Schenkelberg 2012; Beauclerk 2006.

⁷ See, e.g. Barclay 2002, 80; Beauclerk 2006, 107, 210.

⁸ Just to name a few: Mme de C – sl – n or Cecilia, see, e.g. Anon. 1760, 25–34; Fauques 1766a, 93–100. Mme Gianbonne, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 59; Bécu 1777a, 2. Mme David, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 59; Bécu 1777a, 2. Mlle Morfi, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775,

The long line of royal mistresses and acknowledged royal illegitimate children indicates that the mistresses had a firm position in the prevailing courtly cultures and practices. Besides, especially the most famous eighteenth-century French mistresses were not just any extramarital fancies of the male monarchs. They had an established position in the royal court under the title of *maîtresse-en-titre*, or “the King’s declared mistress in all the forms”⁹ – a position and status specifically as the king’s mistress that was recognised through the formal ceremony of official introduction.¹⁰ This title traces back to the Renaissance court of Charles VII whose mistress Agnès Sorel was the first to bear the status of *maîtresse-en-titre*.¹¹ The special status of the official mistress was further stressed by the practice that there could be only one *maîtresse-en-titre* at a time. Yet, having a *maîtresse-en-titre* did not mean that the king could not have other mistresses as well. For example, Louis XV had a relationship with his *maîtresse-en-titre* Mme de Pompadour, but simultaneously had romantic relationships with other women, usually referred to as *petites-maîtresses*.¹²

This recognised, formal, and official status and place as the king’s mistress assisted the mistresses, who enjoyed the title in many ways. Firstly, it was a mark

59; Bécu 1777a, 3. Mlle Sélin, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 59; Bécu 1777a, 3. Duchesse de Gramont, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 72–73; Bécu 1777a, 24. Princess of Lamballi, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 214; Bécu 1777b, 206. Mme d’Amerval, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 221–222; Bécu 1777b, 217–218; BL, Stowe MS 89, 19. Mlle Raucoux, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 254–255; Bécu 1777b, 266–267. Mlle de Tournon, Vicomte du Barry, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 288–289; Bécu 1777b, 313–314. Mme de Choiseul, see, e.g. Pierre 1902a, 172–173; BL, Egerton MS 3456, From Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 22/11th 1751, 93; BL, Egerton MS 3456, From Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 29th Nov. 1752, Private, 295–296; BL, Stowe MS 88, 7. Mlle Romance, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/261, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 89. Mme d’Esparbès, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris 4th May 1765, 83. Lady Coventry, see, e.g. Russell 1843, Mr. Rigby to the Duke of Bedford, 1752, 111–112. Mme Seran, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 256. Mrs. Pope, see, e.g. Walpole 1820a, To George Montagu, Esq. Arlington-street, 19th May 1756, 501. Mme de Guerchy, see, e.g. Walpole 1843a, LETTER LVII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 14th May 1764, 198. Anne Vane, see, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 65; Hervey 1848a, 285–286. Lady Archibald Hamilton, see, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 65; Hervey 1848b, 24–26, 95. Lady Middlesex, see, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 65–66. Miss Anne Brett, see, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 480; Walpole 1845b, 32–33. Lady Sarah Lennox, see, e.g. Walpole 1845a, 63; Walpole 1843a, LETTER XI. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 23rd July 1761, 36. Mme d’Elitz, see, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 100. Lady Tankerville, see, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 38. Miss Bellenden, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 95. Lady Diana Spencer, see, e.g. Walpole 1818, 93–94. Lady Deloraine, see, e.g. Walpole 1833a, LETTER LIII. From Orford to Mann, Houghton, 16th Oct. 1742, 88; Hervey 1848, 38; Hervey 1931, 744–745.

⁹ Fauques 1758a, 40.

¹⁰ For example, the diplomatic correspondence shows the lengthy and difficult process of Mme du Barry’s presentation. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 11th Jan. 1769, 31–32; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Jan. 1769, 81; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, 106–107; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 5th Feb. 1769, 112; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 20th Feb. 1769, 130; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 20th Mar. 1769, 172; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 26th Mar. 1769, 181; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Saturday night 22nd Apr. [1769], 44–45; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 56–57.

¹¹ Wellman 2013, 25.

¹² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 95; Fauques 1758b, 10; Fauques 1766a, 159.

of the monarch's continuous favour and affection that helped the mistress to ensure her position in the hierarchical and competitive royal court. It was, after all, an official title that provided certain honours. After the official introduction, the mistress was, for example, entitled to receive ceremonial and ritualised visits from ministers of state and foreign ambassadors.¹³ Secondly, the title of a recognised or official mistress came with considerable advantages, such as a yearly allowance or pension and apartments in the royal court.¹⁴

However, what we are interested in here is not so much the advantages attached to the formal position and status, but the effect of the formal and official recognition of a mistress as *maîtresse-en-titre*. After the ceremonial introduction, the official mistress transformed from person *incognita* into a public person, who had a considerable role in the royal ceremonies both within and outside the royal court, and who attracted the attention – and who were subjected to the gaze – of wider audiences both within the royal court and outside of it.

The term *maîtresse-en-titre* was known in Britain as well, although it was not used in relation to domestic royal mistresses. In Britain, the royal mistresses did not enjoy similar official or semi-official status and did not receive formal presentation as the king's mistress similar to their French counterparts. However, eighteenth-century writers and commentators presented the most famous or long-standing mistresses in terms that connoted their established status and position in a manner similar to the French *maîtresse-en-titre* – and most likely mimicking the French term and practice – as *reputed mistress*¹⁵, *acknowledged mistress*¹⁶, or *established mistress*¹⁷. Even though the title of mistress was not as official in the court of St. James as it was in Versailles, the mistresses of the British kings enjoyed benefits, such as their own apartments and usually considerable pensions – and a generally known status.¹⁸

In other words, regardless of the pressure posed by normative monogamous marriage, George I, George II, and Louis XV habitually kept mistresses in accordance with the tradition and the example set by their predecessors. However, the next generation of British and French kings broke the tradition, and chose to reign, rule, and live without mistresses – established or otherwise. George III of Great Britain (1760–1830) and Louis XVI of France (1774–1792) opted for faithful marriage and constant family life. Therefore, it is important to ask what happened between 1714 and 1760 in Britain and 1715 and 1774 in France that the new monarchs decided to cease the tradition of openly kept mistresses.

It is certain the royal mistresses faced an onslaught of criticism, especially in mid-century, and they became rather unpopular figures. But, the explanation that the tradition of keeping mistresses ended because of unpopularity based on

¹³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 84–85; Bécu 1777a, 29.

¹⁴ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430.

¹⁵ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 93, 120.

¹⁶ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 30.

¹⁷ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 83.

¹⁸ See, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 144–145 about apartments prepared for Madame Walmoden; Hervey 1848b, 21 about pensions granted to Mrs. Howard.

rumours and gossip is not convincing. First, because that would indicate that popular gossip had some kind of power to pressure or direct the royal will. Second, as has been noted and will be discussed further in section 3.1, the royal mistresses had a traditional role and function in attracting discontent away from the person of the monarch.¹⁹ Equally unsatisfactory would be the explanation based on the personal preference of the individual monarchs to content themselves with their wives, as will be further discussed in chapter 2. The mistresses, as an established practice and a part of the monarch's public image, had their traditional part to play that could not be changed only by the king's personal preference. Rather, the end of the tradition rested upon wider and deeper changes of practices, norms, values, ideals, and ideas regarding marriage, a proper relationship between the sexes, family life, meanings of public image, and, most importantly, the conceptualisation of monarchy. Consequently, we should consider what the royal mistresses as a practice offered to the monarchy as a political system in the first half of the century, and further, how and why the practice of keeping mistresses became threatening or unappealing to monarchy after the mid-eighteenth century.

After all, the first two or three quarters of the century were still the time of the tradition of royal mistresses. There were in Britain and France alike established royal mistresses, who enjoyed a recognised status and position as specifically the king's mistress, and who were simultaneously a part of the royal court and the king's inner circles, but also a part of the political centre that was visible to larger audiences outside the royal court. Which brings us to the second paradox embedded in the figure of any mistress and especially of those enjoying a recognised position, namely the complex interconnection of public and private in the figure of any given political or public character.

As long as there is a dominant and normative idea of monogamous marriage – charged with heteronormative assumptions – the ruler's mistresses are never just a private affair, private mistake, or private crime of the monarchs, but a public matter of morals and mores. Thus, the royal mistresses could not remain a private matter of the king's heart: they were a political scandal – exposed to the public eye and used in public debates. During the eighteenth century mistresses were recognised as widely visible parts of the royal courts, courtly practices, and political systems as a whole. Their presence and potential influence in the courts and on the kings engendered debates on morality, virtue, decency as well as on use of power, practices of political decision-making, and fortunes of dynasties – that is to say, on the monarchy as a form of government and on the principles of use of political power. To argue further, the royal mistresses were a phenomenon through which public political rule could be discussed as a private moral question – or morality could be politicised as a discursive tool for defining legitimacy/delegitimacy of monarchical rule.

¹⁹ Regarding the tradition of *evil advisors* in general, see, e.g. Graham 2000, 57–58; Spellman 1998, 23; Kaiser 1996, 1042. Regarding the royal mistresses' and queen consort's role in particular, see, e.g. Wellman 2013, 18.

The entanglement of public and private was all the more problematic in the political cultures of eighteenth-century Europe because of the ideas relating to the public nature of the monarch and the private nature of political decision-making. But first, we should take a look at the complex terms themselves. The terms *public* and *private* have been used in historical research as analytical tools, but they have been used as concepts in the contemporary eighteenth-century debates on political matters as well. These various uses have diversified the meanings of these terms. Yet, at the same time, they have been used in such a general manner that the different meanings have been obscured.

The concepts *public* and *private* have been important analytical terms or categories in historical research from various perspectives. Especially in the fields that inquire into the emergence of the *public*, the politicisation of *public* debate, and the political thoughts that helped to create a space for *public* political participation, these concepts have been crucial. In this respect, we can distinguish quite a few different meanings for this binary opposition of *public/private*. Firstly, they can be used to separate spheres of home and outside the home, in the form of *domestic/public spheres*. Secondly, they can be used to define the boundaries of political affairs and political participation from a- or non-political affairs, in the form of *state affairs/personal affairs*. Thirdly, they can be used to separate secret or hidden matters and affairs from those that have been known, open, or accessible to all, in the form of *public matters/secrets*.

In general, it is not even common to distinguish these different meanings: they do have overlapping areas of meaning. For example, the studies focusing on the public debate in various national contexts tend to refer to all these points when i) demonstrating *public debates* as debates happening in non-domestic arenas, ii) stressing the importance of widening *public debate* as a mechanism for distributing information, or, making matters and affairs known to wider *publics*, and iii) highlighting the debates discussing *public matters* as topics relating to politics (or rule, government, and administration of general matters concerning all subjects) as well as attempts to influence political decision-making through the debates in the *public* arenas.²⁰ In fact, it is precisely this entanglement and its changing meanings that makes the binary opposition of *public/private* such an important analytical concept in studies focusing on eighteenth-century political cultures.

Besides being analytical concepts in historical studies of various fields, public and private were eighteenth-century concepts through which political ideals were discussed, as for example in the forms of *public business*²¹ (meaning

²⁰ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton1984a; Darnton 2000; Munck 1998; Black 1987; Barker 1998; Popkin 1989; Shovlin 2010; Chisick 1988; Merrick 1986; Merrick 1994.

²¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 139; Poisson 1766c, 5; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXVII. To the countess of Baschi, 119; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLVIII. To the cardinal de Bernis, 164; Fauques 1766b, 10; Pierre 1902b, 65; Pierre 1902a, 196–197, 206; Pierre 1902b, XLI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 21st Apr. 1758, 172; Anon. 1760, 184; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 17th Jan. 1771, 32–33.

state affairs and policies concerning the whole realm), *bien public* or *common good*²² (connoting the utilitarian and benevolent aspects of the political rule in common matters relating to all subjects), or *private interest*²³ (a delegitimizing term, connoting inappropriate and objectionable motivation behind action in any area of life – though, as noted in various previous studies, one of the most important political concepts of the eighteenth century²⁴).

Furthermore, both in Britain and in France, the debating audiences witnessed the increasing use of *public opinion*/*l'opinion publique* as a rhetorical device for justifying variant opinions and demands. The term was used as a claim of authority, or as a rhetorical tool that seemed to appeal to a new source of authority, *public*, in attempts to influence political decision-making.²⁵ However, this new authority was essentially composed of private communications and exchanges, where private problems of individuals formed a collective opinion.²⁶ Thus, there was no consensus on whether public opinion was political in the first place.²⁷ This public was certainly none of the old social categories. However, it was clear that it was outside the conventional ruling elites.²⁸ Rather, as a rhetorical device, *public opinion* located the claimed authority in two very inexplicit sites: i) outside the king and his court, and ii) in civil society rather than in the state.

Furthermore, there have been two ideas of eighteenth-century political thought relating to the nature and practice of the political rule by the personally ruling monarch that have ensured the continuity and permanence of the oppositional conceptual pair *public/private* as both pivotal and problematic

²² See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 101, 107; Pierre 1902a, 198; Fauques 1766b, 22, 130, 146; Mairobert 1779a, Le. LETTRE. De Mr. de Maupeou, 5 déc. 1770, 67; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER L. From the Chancellor Maupeou, 5th Dec. 1770, 54; Mairobert 1779a, LIVE. LETTRE. De Mr. de Maupeou, 75; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LIV. From the Chancellor Maupeou, 61; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLIX. A Mr. de Bussi, 78; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLIX. To mr. de Bussi, 168; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXI. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 103; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXI. To the countess of Baschi. 1762, 93; London Evening Post, London, Thu. 11th Mar. 1756, iss 4422; Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser, London, Tue. 1st June 1762, iss 10330; Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser, London, Tue. 15th Oct. 1782, iss. 612; LAD, 7md19, traduit de l'anglois par mr d'Équilles, Apologie de Milord Chesterfield a L'occasion de sa sortie volontaire du Ministere, 7; LAD, P/12019, [Chammolel; Chavigny], Mémoire concernant la Grande Bretagne, 1732, 248.

²³ See, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 11–12; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXVIII, To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 71–72; Walpole 1820c, 142–143; Walpole 1822b, 23–24; Pierre 1902a, 146–147; BL, Stowe MS 89, A continuation of the Account of the Affairs of France, VOL II, A Memorial on the Affairs of France, 25th Oct. 1775, 48.

²⁴ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 67; Goldie 2006, 68; Wilson 2000, 50; Ihalainen 1999, 195; Rosanvallon 1987, 437; Ferguson 2006, 124–125.

²⁵ See, e.g. Jacob 1994, 95, 104; van Horn Melton 2009, 27–28, 57–58. Gordon 1989, 308, 312; Gordon 1992, 886, 892, 909, 925; Baker 1990, 168, 187; Barker 1998, 1–2, 10–12; Bell 1992, 920–921, 925; Kaiser 1989–1990, 189–190; Graham 1997, 89–90; van Kley 1997, 763; Drévilion 2000, 344–345, 353.

²⁶ Maza 1992, 940; Gordon 1992, 899; Baker 1990, 186–187; Baker 1987a, xviii.

²⁷ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 188. Baker 1987a, xviii. For example in *Encyclopédie* (1765), opinion was distinguished from rational knowledge and it appeared individual and precarious, but during the century public opinion transformed into something rational, objective and universal. Baker 1990, 167–168; Bell 1994, 5.

²⁸ See, e.g. Barker 1998, 3.

concepts and analytical tools. Firstly, the ideas relating to the *Mystère du Roi/King's Mystery* or *Secret du Roi/King's Secret* that were supposed to securely place political decision-making and information in the hands of the monarch only.²⁹ Secondly, the theories concerning the *king's two bodies* that entwined the personal and impersonal person of the monarch, and further created interconnections, associations, and comparisons between the person of the monarch and the totality of the realm.³⁰ These ideas were inherited from the previous century as they had their roots in renaissance political theories.³¹ Thus, they formed an important point of continuity/discontinuity in eighteenth-century French and British political ideas, thoughts, debates, and practices.

First, it is important to note that there existed a political model, where both political decision-making and political information were restricted as the king's *private* matter – that is, it was not accessible and open, it was the *King's secret*. This was justified through conceptions of the king's special attributes and capacities, most importantly his reason and knowledge that enabled him to see the complex totality of the whole realm and the consequences of political decisions. That is to say, the ruling monarch alone was able to understand the *Arcana imperii* or *the Mysteries of the state*.³² However, this idea did not exclude a small circle of royal advisors. Quite the contrary, the king was expected to seek counsel and advice from his councils and ministers who were chosen by him to facilitate his decision-making process through providing information necessary for the right decision.³³ The expanding public debates and audiences hungry for information on topical and political events clashed with this idea, both when distributing and even demanding information that was the king's secret and when attempting to influence royal decision-making by the authority of public opinion.

In the discourse on the royal mistresses, the traditional interpretation of monarchical rule was generally stressed and affirmed.³⁴ The writers did not separate the impersonal state mysteries from the personal and individual monarch, rather they stressed it. For example, the Abbé de Bernis used language that drew a parallel between the Secrets of the State and the King's papers, "that, being the depositary of State secrets and of the king's papers"³⁵, and even between political affairs and secrets of the king's soul, "She [Mme de Pompadour]

²⁹ See, e.g. Baker 1987a, xiii; Wilson 2000, 50–51; van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Molas Ribalta 1996, 20; Drévilion 2000, 283; Drévilion & Serna 2000, 279–280.

³⁰ See, e.g. Merrick 1986, 499; Kantorowicz 1957, 207–232, 438–439; van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Baker 1987b, 469–671; Antoine 1987, 5; Drévilion 2000, 283–284; Giesey 1987, 48–49; Valensise 1987, 455; Roche 1999, 231; Baker 1990, 225–227; Baecque 1997; Kelly 1981, 270, 276; Kelly 1986, 5, 14, 18; Franko 2003; Franko 1994, 74, 77.

³¹ See, e.g. Wilson 2000, 50; Graham 2006, 139; van Horn Melton 2009, 47.

³² See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Baker 1990, 114, 226; Wilson 2000, 50; Hirschmann 2008, 63; Merrick 1986, 499. Darnton 1995a, 188; Darnton 2000, 4; Kantorowicz 1957, 18, 114; Gruder 1987, 365; Baker 1987b, 470.

³³ See, e.g. Baker 1990, 169; Bell 1992, 922; Molas Ribalta 1996, 20–22, 24; Drévilion 2000, 284–285; Spellman 1998, 55, 67; Henshall 1992, 179.

³⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 154–155; Poisson 1766c, 153.

³⁵ Pierre 1902a, 274. "[...] qu'étant dépositaire des secrets de l'État, des lettres de Sa Majesté." Pierre 1903, 354.

was the depository of the secrets of his soul; she knew intimately all his affairs; [...].”³⁶

Second, the meanings of public and private acquired another complex form in the person of the monarch, who, according to the theories on the *king's two bodies*, was simultaneously and inextricably a *public* and a *private* person, and an *individual* and a *collective* body.³⁷ For example, Hervé Drévilleon (2000) has further proposed that the expanding charges of royal immorality in pamphlets and satire spread an image of dysfunction between the king's two bodies.³⁸ This was a problem especially in French political culture, where – in theory – there was no other political authority but the monarch, and consequently, there i) was no other public or political person in the realm but the ruling monarch and ii) were no legitimate political actions outside the monarch.³⁹ The monarch was thus the only public person of the realm, which rejected the political claims of public debate.⁴⁰ It also further alludes to the question of whether the king was public in his private capacity as well. This would mean that the personal, or *private affairs* – such as love affairs – of the monarch could not be separated from his *public* character and nature.

The theories concerning the king's two bodies further supported the idea that the monarch alone represented the interest of the realm and the realm itself was embodied and represented in the monarch and by the monarch: “l'État, c'est moi”, as Louis XIV allegedly put it.⁴¹ Thus, *body* offered a symbolic model through which the conventional relations of the state, the people, and the monarch were conceptualised. The human body provided one of the most important concepts for discussing and understanding the political, social, and cultural formations.⁴² Firstly, the analogy of the state and body gave a concrete and easily illustrated model of the relations of different estates of the realm through the model of the human body, and emphasised the monarch as the only irrecoverable part of the great body of the realm, whether as head, heart, or soul – thus accentuating the difference between active and passive political structures and agents.⁴³ Secondly, the theory about the *king's two bodies*, the personal,

³⁶ Pierre 1902a, 276. “elle [Mme de Pompadour] était dépositaire des secrets de son âme, elle était au fait de toutes ses affaires, [...]” Pierre 1903, 356.

³⁷ See, e.g. Merrick 1986, 499; Kantorowicz 1957, 438–439; van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Baker 1987b, 469–671; Drévilleon 2000, 296; Antoine 1987, 5; Giesey 1987, 48–49; Valensise 1987, 455; Roche 1999, 231; Baker 1990, 225–227; Baecque 1997; Kelly 1981, 270, 276; Franko 2003; Franko 1994, 74, 77.

³⁸ Drévilleon 2000, 295. We will return to this in chapter 5.

³⁹ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 45, 47; Drévilleon 2000, 283–284; Adams 2015, 165.

⁴⁰ Van Horn Melton 2009, 45, 47; Baker 1990, 114, 170; Wilson 2000, 80; Adams 2015, 165.

⁴¹ See, e.g. Merrick 1986, 499; Kantorowicz 1957, 438–439; van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Drévilleon 2000, 283–284.

⁴² See, e.g. Baecque 1997; Merrick 1994, 672; Ihalainen 2009, 7; Saccaro-Battista 1983, 35–37; Anon. 1997, 1840–1842; Outram 1989, 74–75; Kantorowicz 1957, 314–317, 438–439; Farr 1991, 393–394; Outram 1989.

⁴³ Baecque 1997, 89–92; Anon. 1997, 1840–1842; Saccaro-Battista 1983, 35–37; Ihalainen 2009, 7; Kantorowicz 1957, 314–317, 438–439; Kelly 1986, 5; Merrick 1994, 672; Outram 1989, 74–75; Farr 1991, 393–394. In use, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 172; Poisson 1766a, 219; Poisson 1766c, 216.

individual, and mortal *body natural* and the impersonal, immortal, perpetual, and collective *body political* united in the ruling monarch. Such a conception made possible the representations of the whole nation in the person of the king, and consequently, sustained the idea of the monarch as not only the embodiment of sovereign power but also as the locus of the totality and the unity of the realm.⁴⁴

Of course, there were other important and even rival conceptions for comprehending and understanding political, social, and cultural formations and organisations, such as *family*, and various mechanical metaphors, such as *clockwork*.⁴⁵ The mechanical metaphorical conceptualisations of the state as machinery of any kind (for example, clockwork, boat, coach) did not necessarily question the monarch's right to use sovereign power, as he/she could still be presented as the director or helmsman of the machine of the state.⁴⁶ Indeed, as many researchers have already proved, mechanical and organic metaphors coexisted in eighteenth-century political language and did not necessarily rule out each other or each other's legitimacy.⁴⁷

Yet, the metaphorical conceptualisation of the state as a machine instead of a body that highlighted the political system as a man-made structure instead of a natural, stable, and unalterable one offered means to conceive of the state as a political entity that could also be directed by someone else besides the king – meaning either other persons or even impersonal forces balancing each other.⁴⁸ The mechanical metaphors could thus be used in order to legitimise, for example, the Parlements' or Parliament's claims for political authority. But they could also be used in order to delegitimise certain types of or persons' use of political power, as for example in the illustration of Mme de Pompadour by Fauques: “[Mme de Pompadour] assumed all the authority of a despotic mistress, that gave what motion she pleased to the State-machine.”⁴⁹ It was understandable that the royal

⁴⁴ See, e.g. Baecque 1997, 4–13; Baker 1990, 225–226; Franko 1994, 74–75; Franko 2003, 71–72; Bucholz 1991. For the roots of theories regarding king's two bodies, see Kantorowicz 1957; Merrick 1986, 499; van Horn Melton 2009, 47.

⁴⁵ See, e.g. Ihalainen 2009, 8–9, 22; Anon. 1997, 1844; Valensise 1987, 452–453; Vovelle 1987, 78; Gruder 1987, 366; Roche 1999, 257–258, 266; Kelly 1981, 271; Hanley 1989, 26; Merrick 1994, 692–693; Spellman 1998, 61–65; Sharpe 2006, 114–115; Bucholz 1991, 298; Hassan Jansson 2011. In use, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 149, 219–220; Poisson 1766b, 219; Poisson 1766c, 148, 216–217; Poisson 1766d, 229–230; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXIX. Au Maréchal de Noailles, 1762, 89; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXIX. To the marshal de Noailles. 1762, 80–81; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIII. To marshal Belleisle. 1747, 51–52; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXIV. To the countess of Navailles, 752, 169; Hervey 1848a, 173; Fauques 1759, 178; Fauques 1758b, 129; Fauques 1766b, 120; Poisson 1766a, 2; Poisson 1766c, 2; LAD, P/12020, [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette, agent à Londres], Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre, 29; Pierre 1902b, LXII. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 1st Aug. 1758, 209–210; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 27.

⁴⁶ See, e.g. Kelly 1986, 9–13; Saccaro-Battista 1983, 39.

⁴⁷ See, e.g. Ihalainen 2009; Anon. 1997; Serna 2000, 430–431.

⁴⁸ See, e.g. Ihalainen 2009, 8–9; Anon. 1997, 1844.

⁴⁹ Fauques 1758b, 129. “Elle veut trancher du despote & donner à la machine politique, le mouvement qui lui plait.” Fauques 1759, 178. Also in Fauques 1766b, 120.

mistress – or queen consort⁵⁰ – could not *be* nor *become* the head of the great political body. But if the state or government was understood in mechanical terms, it was possible that she could seize the controls, helm, or reins. However, these statements relate to the wider debate about the illegitimacy of feminine rule and delegitimisation of certain practices of political decision-making that we will meet in section 4.2.3.

During the eighteenth century, the meaning of *body* as the foundation of political, social, and cultural understandings waned and especially the conception of the collective unity in the personal body of the monarch was intentionally challenged. However, prior to the 1770s the metaphorical ways presented above to use the concept *body* in relation to political and social understanding strongly supported monarchical rule, and even after the direct challenge to the ideas regarding the theories of the unity of the nation in the body of the monarch, the bodily metaphors survived and proved useful in consolidations of new republican understandings of political representation and participation.⁵¹ Thus, none of the French sources used in this research were revolutionary in this sense. They did not openly challenge the idea that the monarch was not – or was not supposed to be – the sole head of the government and that sovereignty was not solely in his person. In this sense, the writers of the French royal mistresses' memoirs were quite traditional, expecting to see the political rule of the realm descend from the royal throne. If they ended up testing the credibility of the monarchical use of power or even the monarchy as a system of government, they did it without directly questioning the royal prerogatives of the highest political decision-making.

Lastly, as if this complex entanglement of *publics/private*s was not enough, these two terms have very strongly gendered connotations – both in eighteenth-century political cultures and historical inquiries into it. Since *public* has been attached to the sphere of i) outside the home, and ii) the affairs of the state and official political decision-making, it has been strongly connected to men and masculinity.⁵² Respectively, as *private* has been attached to i) the domestic sphere of life, and ii) a- or non-political and personal matters, it has been equally strongly connected to women and femininity.⁵³ Certainly, recent studies interested in the history of gender, women's history, and especially on women's or feminine agency have been dismantling the strict separation between the masculine,

⁵⁰ As for example in the account of Queen Caroline by Lord Hervey: "The King is looked upon as the engine of his minister's ambition, and your [Queen Caroline] interest and influence over him as the secret springs by which this minister gives motion to all his master's actions." Hervey 1848a, 173.

⁵¹ See, e.g. Kelly 1986, 5-7; Ihalainen 2009, 25; Outram 1989, 74. E.g. Baecque 1997 analyses the conceptual changes in the metaphors of *political body* in the French revolutionary discourses and demonstrates how after 1770 the great political body of the nation was separated from the personal body of the monarch.

⁵² See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 13, 27; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xi-xvi; Clark 2007; Clark 1998, 20, 39; Hicks 2005; O'Brien 2007, 630-632; Kettering 1997, 71.

⁵³ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 13, 19, 22-23; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xiv; Clark 2007, 3; Clark 1998, 26; O'Brien 2007, 630-632; Parry 2007, 229; Hirschmann 2008, 147-148, 162-163; Bellhouse 1997, 696; Winston 2005, 270-271; Roulston 1998-1999, 216-217, 222; Hicks 2005; Spongberg 2002, 49, 73; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 24.

politically significant public sphere and the feminine private sphere without political meanings from various perspectives.⁵⁴ In practice, at least. However, even if it has been proven that the gendered segregation into feminine private and masculine public spheres did not materialise in the practices of the early modern monarchical system, the semantic and symbolic meanings of gendered separation were still significant in the British and French political languages. Private/public, with their gendered connotations, was a division that was used to legitimate especially political decision-making and participation, as will be discussed further in chapter 4.

When it comes to the royal mistresses, this conceptual pair of binary oppositions of *public/private* remains essential. In this research, we will encounter the terms public and private in their various meanings. They were rhetorical devices, concepts legitimating certain kinds of participations in (or exclusions from) political influencing, as well as very commonly used terms describing, for example, certain kinds of relationship between people or the nature of certain communications. The figure of the royal mistress embodied all these problematic meanings of public and private. The royal mistress, whose figure, function, roles, and representations were inseparable from the monarch, was – much like the monarch himself – simultaneously a *private* and a *public* person and affair, interconnected to all the meanings of *public* and *private* ranging from divisions into secret/not secret to the proper duties of men and women. However, in the discourse on the royal mistresses the political and public management of the realm was discussed from the viewpoint that stressed the monarch's individual and private capacity. As much as the monarch was first and foremost an impersonal public figure, embodying the meanings of the totality of the realm as well as political authority, the impersonal public figure of the mistress drew attention more to the personal, private, and individual person and body of the monarch. And this is what this study is about: what kind of political meanings did the tension of public privateness of the monarchical rule gain – and was charged with – in the presentations of the king and his mistress?

1.2 Research topics and questions

This thesis seeks to explain the discourse on royal mistresses and how it related to, participated in, and was used in wider political debates of eighteenth-century British and French political cultures – and most importantly, to understand the meanings and process of expansion, escalation, and politicisation of the discourse. In this respect, this study follows the lead of new political history where the *political* is detached from the age-old connection to state and government that has been taken as given in traditional political history. Rather, the political is

⁵⁴ See, e.g. Chalus 2000; Goodman 1989; Hesse 1989; Pieretti 2002; Berlanstein 1994; Spongberg 2002; Offen 2000; Norrhem 2010; Sandvik 2011.

regarded as a communicative sphere and/or activity.⁵⁵ Following the research done by the Bielefeld group, communication is understood as political if i) it concerns (or is considered to concern) the whole community or a substantial part of it; ii) it aims for peremptoriness when covering the rules of social life, relations of power, or limits of what can be said and done; and/or iii) it refers to an imagined collective entity.⁵⁶ By this definition, the discourse on royal mistresses can be regarded as a political discourse. It discussed the practices and institutions of the highest political decision-making that was certainly understood as touching all subjects and the imagined collective of the realm. It discussed the rules of social and political life and relations of power. It had a strong normative element that strived to obligate a certain kind of behaviour or actions. And it referred to a rising imagined collective identity of the *public*⁵⁷.

However, rather than conceptualising political as a sphere or a field of political communications, we should understand it more in terms of activity, because as an activity, political does not have limits or boundaries. Thus, all phenomena i) belong to political all the time, and ii) can simultaneously be something else as well (cultural, legal, religious, etc).⁵⁸ Accordingly, *politicisation* is understood as the active use of contradictions and inconsistencies that marks or names a matter or a phenomenon as political. Essentially, politicisation is action that opens up a horizon in which changes, new ways of action, or new resources of power and legitimacy are possible.⁵⁹ The royal mistresses were, after all, widely discussed and the political potential of their semi-fictional figure was tested. However, as there was a strong element of curiosity, ridicule, and shock at the heart of every scandal, this process of politicisation was not necessarily altogether an intentional process. Eighteenth-century writers may have had quite a range of motives for writing about the royal mistresses, ranging from intentional political pressure to the fun of passing on witty anecdotes. Nonetheless, since the texts contributed to the conceptualisation of monarchical rule, they had political impacts: they defined and redefined the norms and ideals of the legitimate use of power.

Thus, the *political* element in the debates on the royal mistresses was not necessarily about transferring a phenomenon or issue from one functional system to another, or as an act of introducing a phenomenon or a matter from a pre-existingly a- or non-political field into a political one.⁶⁰ Rather, it was about activating existing political potentials of the figure of the royal mistress. Debates

⁵⁵ See, e.g. Steinmetz & Haupt 2013, 21–23, 27–28; Steinmetz 2013, 39–40; Haupt 2013, 149–150; Palonen 2003; Kauppi, Palonen & Wiesner 2016, 75–76, 80–81.

⁵⁶ Steinmetz & Haupt 2013, 28; Papenheim 2013, 45.

⁵⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 45, 118, 159, 173; Fauques 1758b, 39, 99–100, 121–122; Fauques 1766a, 63–64; Fauques 1766b, 83, 145–146; Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, x–xi; Poisson 1766c, The editor's preface, xiii; Anon. 1760, 92–93, 159. On public as a new collective, authority, and/or source of legitimacy, see, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 2, 30, 34, 38–39, 52, 57, 116; Baker 1990, 167–199; Bell 1994, 83, 85; Ozouf 1987, 419–434; Bell 1992; Gordon 1989; Gordon 1992; Kaiser 1989–1990; Graham 1997, 88–91; Barker 1998, 2, 73; Jacob 1994.

⁵⁸ Palonen 2003, 171, 179, 182; Kauppi, Palonen & Wiesner 2016, 75–76, 82.

⁵⁹ Kauppi, Palonen & Wiesner 2016, 76, 74, 81–82; Palonen 2003, 171, 175, 182, 184.

⁶⁰ Steinmetz & Haupt 2013, 23–26.

on the royal mistresses sought new resources of power and legitimacy and they sought to open up new possibilities of change. And while attempting to create new horizons of possibilities, the writers sought to introduce a variety of new issues, terms, vocabularies, and discourses in the political debates – or, to mark new issues, vocabularies, and discourses as political.

Certainly, the process of *depoliticisation* was also an important element of the debates on the royal mistresses and the conceptualisations of the legitimate use of power. Here *depoliticisation* is understood as an act (though, usually an attempted act) of marking something as a- or non-political. In the discourse on the royal mistresses, there certainly were strong trends towards the politicisation of certain elements that were embodied in the figure of the royal mistress – and equally strong trends to *depoliticise* others. This complexity is the most visible in the debates that negotiated or utilised the meanings of the conceptual pairs *public/private*, *formal/informal*, and *official/unofficial* that we will meet in section 4.2.

Further stressing the interconnection of the uses of power and the political, in this research the *political* is considered an activity through which individuals and groups negotiate, demand, and function when they pursue their interest and place demands upon one another. Consequently, *political culture* can be understood as those means, discourses, uses of language, values, norms, practices, and conventions that surround political activity and through which political actions take place and gain meanings.⁶¹ Spatially, these extend from the level of government and administration to the whole political body of the nation and even across the boundaries of national entities in the form of transnational influencing and diffusion of political ideas, thoughts, and languages. Rather commonly, the new political history and the study of political cultures have sought to redefine the origins of the French Revolution by paying attention, for example, to the reasons behind it, changes in political rhetoric, agency, and public debate and its operations.⁶² Comparative studies also examine the diffusion of enlightened ideas and theories and evaluate their meaning in eighteenth-century policy-making.⁶³ Even though studies of political culture often focus on enlightenment ideas or high politics, political culture covers a wider range of political thinking and debating in various locations within a particular society and outside of it. Thus, for example, slanderous jokes about the famous royal mistresses that were told by commoners were as much parts of political cultures as Montesquieu's theories concerning forms of government.

⁶¹ Baker 1987a, xii; Baker 1990, 4–5, 17–18; Ihalainen & Sennefelt 2011, 3.

⁶² See, e.g. Baker 2006; Baker 1990; Baker 1987b; Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton 2000; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997; Kaiser 1989–1990; Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Baecque 1997; Bell 1994; Merrick 1992; van Kley 1987; Popkin 198; Ozouf 1987; Valensise 1987; Popkin 1989; Chisick 1988; Kelly 1981; Clark 2007; Gordon 1989; Gordon 1992; Bell 1992; Jaume 1987.

⁶³ See, e.g. Keith Michael Baker on French political culture with strong linguistic approach, Nicholas Henshall on English and French political systems before French Revolution, Peter H. Wilson on political systems and ideas of German speaking Europe as well as H. M. Scott, Derek Beales, M. S. Anderson, Kenneth Maxwell, Charles C. Noel, R. J. W. Evans, Charles Ingrao, Thomas Munck, T. C. W. Blanning, and Isabel de Madariaga on Enlightenment and enlightened reformers in Europe.

The specific objective of this study was to analyse the political nature and the various political meanings of the presentation of the relationship between the monarch and his mistress in various contemporaneous debates. Thus, this study sets out to fulfil a dual purpose. On the one hand, it expands the understanding of the royal mistresses as a practice and phenomenon of political cultures – and moreover, as one whose justification was increasingly challenged in the turbulent debates of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, it unravels the interconnection of the debates on the topic of the royal mistress to include the wider debates on monarchy as a legitimate political system and form of government.

In this research, the royal mistresses are not studied as singular and individual persons, but rather considered a phenomenon and a practice, or even an institution, that had a dual nature and function. On the one hand, the royal mistresses had a more practical and concrete function in eighteenth-century political cultures (and especially in courtly cultures). On the other hand, the royal mistresses simultaneously provided a semi-fictional figure for the eighteenth-century debaters and audiences that further offered means to participate in wider debates on political events, decisions, practices, and use of power. Especially in this latter function, eighteenth-century commentators tied together and politicised various issues and phenomena in the discourse on the royal mistresses. For example, in chapter 3, we scrutinise the political meanings of royal consumption that was discussed through the figure of the mistress. Further, in chapter 4, we see the royal mistresses as figures through which the ideals and norms of legitimate use of political power were defined. Thus, we are not interested in whether, for example, Mme de Pompadour used power or not, but what it meant that she was presented as having held power; nor are we interested in how she spent money, but what the presentations of her spending told about legitimate rule.

This research begins with the question of what: what were eighteenth-century writers and audiences talking about when they talked about the royal mistresses? Obviously, as previously stated, they talked about the monarchs – but also about the monarchical system of government with its practices, norms, and ideals. This question further helps to identify certain themes or general topics that were central, common, or continually reiterated in the debates of the various French and British publics discussing royal mistresses. Through this question, it is then possible to identify the volatile boundaries, or rather the general conventions, issues, and trends in the discourse on royal mistresses as well as to recognise the wider debates or discourses that it participated in, contributed to, or rested on.

In order to understand the meanings of the royal mistresses in the political culture we need more questions and answers clarifying the mistresses' presence in the court and by the side of the ruling monarchs. How did contemporary observers explain the attendance of royal mistresses in the royal courts? When and why were they perceived or presented as threatening to the monarch, the monarchy, or the dynasty? What were the limits within which they were

tolerated or accepted? And was there any moment, role, or function in which the royal mistress could be regarded or represented as needed and supportive of the monarch as a person and of monarchy as a political system? For example, in chapter 2, we will meet the royal mistresses as a traditional and accepted practice of monarchical courts, and we will see the premises of a justified mistress. In section 4.1, we will further discuss the functions of the royal mistresses in the royal court, both in relation to the complex networks of power within the court and in relation to political influencing.

The following analysis builds on a number of established branches of historical research. Scholars interested in kingship and monarchy from the perspective of representation, symbolism, mystification, and imaginations have noted that kingship has been a construction staged through symbolisms, ceremonies, and discourses – an imagined king, that is to say.⁶⁴ For example, Lisa Jane Graham (2000) has proposed that the early modern monarchy could be understood as a set of conceptions or images that exist synchronously in the person of the monarch (such as, for example, lawgiver, warrior, father, pardoner). These images all have their own history and development, as well as respective symbolisms, rituals, ceremonies, and languages reinforcing them.⁶⁵ I argue that the royal mistress should be considered similarly an imagined mistress, composed of various and often overlapping – or even contradictory – discourses and imaginaries.

With this approach, it is possible to identify the various roles and functions in which the royal mistresses were presented and discussed. However, this debate was far from a uniform or passive presentation of prevailing royal curiosities. It was an active politicising debate where the royal mistress – or more precisely, the constructed representation of the mistress – functioned as a device for other ends, either for commenting on topical political debates and phenomena, for bringing up political anxieties, or for persuading the readers to change their conceptions of the prevailing political rule, political system, or form of government and its legitimacy.

Thus, the second and more important objective in this research is to study what was *done* with the representations of royal mistresses: how were images of monarchy construed, maintained, and deconstructed discursively through the representations of the royal mistress and the relationship between the king and his mistress?

If the first set of questions focus on the illustrations and descriptions of the royal mistresses – indicating that the imagined figure of the mistress belonged to an intertwined and heterogeneous net of representations – then the second set reveals that, depending on the contexts, these representations could and did have divergent meanings and thus could be used in order to support various political

⁶⁴ See, e.g. Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Giesey 1987; Vovelle 1987; Bucholz 1991; Jacobs 2006; Sharpe 2006; Baecque 1997; Lecuppre-Desjardin 2006; Lecuppre 2006; Rabreau 2008; Chaouche 2008; Elias 2006; Sternberg 2013; Rombouts 1993–1994; Deploige & Deneckere 2006; Deploige 2006; Boureau 2006; Pieters & Roose 2006; Franko 1994; Franko 2003.

⁶⁵ Graham 2000, 204.

ideas and objectives. Further, as the imagined, semi-fictional mistress and the king imagined were inseparably intertwined, it is possible to evaluate what aspects or images of the monarchy were considered outdated, were contested or reinforced, were appealed to, or were subject to attempts at revision. In the discourse and presentations on the royal mistresses we encounter references to all kinds of traditional images of the monarch (e.g. fount of justice, warrior, peace-maker, father, pardoner), but we encounter something else as well: the image of the king as a *man*.

Thus, even though the royal mistresses – simultaneously as a practice, a phenomenon, and a device in the discourse – are the object of the study, its major task is to analyse the construction of the eighteenth-century monarchy as a discursive process, and understand how the popular and curious subject of royal mistresses was politicised as a device for discussing political power and its legitimate use: how the monarchy as a political system and a form of government was conceptualised and reconceptualised, supported or challenged, constructed or deconstructed through the discourses on the royal mistresses.

As we are interested in definitions of the legitimate/delegitimate use of political power, we are about to encounter eighteenth-century attempts at defining and redefining *political* itself. Yet, we should note what eighteenth-century audiences accepted as political on a general level, or what kind of issues they were talking about when discussing political decision-making or political influencing. Even if accepting the definition of *political* as activity that stresses the political potential in every issue, matter, and phenomenon,⁶⁶ it must be stated that some matters were commonly considered more essentially political than others. These matters also had a historical continuum of being accepted as political. In the eighteenth century, *politics* or *political* were not the most focal concepts used in order to discuss matters that we now define as political. Rather, the debates utilised vague terms and euphemisms, as for example, *business*⁶⁷, *public affairs*, *affairs of public*, *public business* or *public matters*,⁶⁸ *state affairs* or *state questions*,⁶⁹ *les affaires publiques*,⁷⁰ and *l'état* or *l'affaires d'état*⁷¹.

Generally speaking, politics had a much more narrow definition and meaning in the eighteenth century. *Political matters* tended to be understood as

⁶⁶ Kauppi, Palonen & Wiesner 2016, 76, 82.

⁶⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 173 "To return to politics: business went on [...]"; TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 9th July 1771, 33; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 18th July 1738, 289; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 1st June 1774, Confidential, 116; Pierre 1902a, 206; Pierre 1903, 224. The French equivalent was *les affaires*. See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 139–140; Pierre 1903, 207–208, 224; Poisson 1766a, 27.

⁶⁸ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 139; Fauques 1766b, 10; Pierre 1902b, 65; Pierre 1902a, 196–197, 206; Pierre 1902b, XLI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 21st Apr. 1758, 172; Anon. 1760, 184; Poisson 1766c, 5; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLVIII. To the cardinal de Bernis, 164; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 17th Jan. 1771, 32–33; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXVII. To the countess of Baschi. 119.

⁶⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766d, 5; Pierre 1902b, 35; Anon. 1760, 67.

⁷⁰ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 4; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLVIII. Au Cardinal de Bernis, 76; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXXVII. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 134.

⁷¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 175; Poisson 1766b, 5; Pierre 1903, 133.

those matters that were – or were considered to be – under the royal will and power, that is to say, royal prerogative. Royal prerogative certainly was a field of political decision-making that was reconstructed to seem ancient, static, and unchanging in eighteenth-century political cultures, especially in the French political culture,⁷² and yet at the same time it was continually negotiated – especially on the occasions of unpopular policies.⁷³ The debate on the royal mistresses was part of this negotiation as well, particularly when introducing the readers to the abuses of the royal prerogatives, either by the monarch himself (very rarely) or by his mistress.

Secondly, as researchers of eighteenth-century political cultures have demonstrated, *politics* or *la politique* was understood chiefly in terms of foreign policy.⁷⁴ Sure enough, the royal prerogatives relating to foreign policy were the least contested area of royal authority and use of power.⁷⁵ The decisions concerning the relationships between two courts were in the hands of the personal monarchs: the king had the prerogative to appoint his foreign ministers, his ambassadors, and his generals, he personally led the conversations with foreign princes, and he engaged in war and made peace.⁷⁶ In the world of diplomacy, the ambassadors waited for the king's answers to their propositions relating to the peace negotiations, and closely followed his reactions to and sentiments towards the current affairs of Europe and the colonies.⁷⁷ In mistresses' and courtiers' memoirs and correspondence, the king was given the decisive and active role in the resolutions of war and peace.⁷⁸ Thus, the monarch's prerogative over foreign policy was discursively accepted, reasserted, and legitimated.

Thirdly, there were a few fields of domestic affairs that were relatively easy to present as political. First of all, distribution of justice⁷⁹ – the king was after all still strongly conceptualised in traditional terms of a judge and a law-maker, and

⁷² See, e.g. Baker 1990, 50–54, 80; Gruder 1987, 363–364; Valensise 1987, 448, 451; Major 1994, 168–169; Antoine 1987, 3–5.

⁷³ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 151; Goldie 2006, 40–42; Tomaselli 2006, 14; Reitan 1966.

⁷⁴ See, e.g. Van Kley 1997, 754; Ihalainen 1999, 97. The eighteenth-century lexicographers defined *policy* as “the art of government, as it respects foreign power.” Allen 1765, “policy”; See also, Barlow 1772b, “policy”; Barclay 1774, “policy”; Ash 1775b, “policy”.

⁷⁵ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 158–161; Wilson 2000, 99; Black 2004a, 17, 23, 41.

⁷⁶ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 152, 158–161; Wilson 2000, 99; Black 2004a, 17, 23, 41.

⁷⁷ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 19th Sept. 1739, Most Private, 150; TNA, SP 78/258, Hertford to Halifax, Fontainebleau, 2nd Oct. 1763, 221–222; TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Sir Thomas Robinson, Paris, Wednesday 22nd May 1754, 246–247; TNA, SP 78/237, Albemarle to Bedford, Paris, 19th/30th Dec. 1750, 343; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, A Londres, 28 août 1714, 104.

⁷⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 144–145; Pierre 1902b, XXVI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 25th Jan. 1758, 138–140; Poisson 1766a, 71; Poisson 1766b, 150, 202; Poisson 1766c, 71; Poisson 1766d, 156, 211; Russell 1843, The Duke of Bedford to Mr. Yorke, Whitehall, 4th Apr. 1749, 24; Walpole 1820b, To George Montagu, Esq. Arlingtonstreet, 8th Nov. 1759, 124; Walpole 1843a, LETTER I. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 1st Nov. 1760, 1–2; Walpole 1845a, 128.

⁷⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 139–140; Poisson 1766d, 139; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 17th Jan. 1771, 32–33.

thus it was not possible to separate the judicial element from the royal politics.⁸⁰ Second, the work done in the ministries or councils – although, this was in most cases a very unspecified category since the information about their internal debates was not freely available to the writing and debating audiences.⁸¹ Thirdly, financial matters of the crown and realm, especially in the form of taxation. On this last point, the other political players beside the ruling monarchs (especially Parliament in Britain and Parlements in France) generated heated debates and expressed criticism.⁸²

Additionally, the term *politics* was usually employed in so unspecified and general a manner that its concrete object remained ambiguous. From the various phrasings of political matters it can be concluded that politics were considered to be the matters that were either questions of *state*⁸³ or questions of *public*⁸⁴. Both of these terms conveyed a strong understanding of politics as being something contrary to the private and individual (apart from being the king's private business). The reason for raising this point is to note that royal power was limited in both countries, and the boundary of royal power was marked by the conception of the private rights and liberties of the people: the power of the King or Crown did not extend to the private lives of the subjects and their rights

⁸⁰ See, e.g. Baker 1987a, xiii–xiv; Antoine 1987, 11, 15; Vovelle 1987, 78; Roche 1999, 230–231, 280, 285; Henshall 1992, 133, 151; Baker 1990, 62–63, 114; Graham 2000, 204; Kantorowicz 1957.

⁸¹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107. Even so, the discussions of the councils and ministries were subject to eager speculation. These speculations were the more effective, since they habitually utilised the technique of direct quotations. In all eighteenth-century texts, the quoting of letters, papers, memoirs or oral discussions at length was a conventional technique. It was a technique that was used in order to produce credibility and give authenticity to the written argument. But it was also a technique that put words in the courtiers', counsellors', ministers' etc. mouths. This unavoidably affected their public figure. But it affected the public figure of the king the more, since as Lisa Jane Graham noted, it reduced the distance between the king and his subjects, and furthermore, could position the king as explaining his political decision. The latter further implied that the king was accountable for his actions to wider audiences. Graham 2006, 140, 145–146, 156.

⁸² See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 103, 105, 156–157, 178, 187; Lieberman 2006, 321, 325; Cannon 2007, 76. The House of Commons held the rights concerning taxation, and consequently, its power increased during times of war, Lieberman 2006, 325; Cannon 2007, 76. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 67, 129, 156–157, 178, 187; Major 1994, 52, 170. Compared to the British Parliament that had constitutional and independent authority in the mixed or balanced monarchy, the French Parlements were local courts of justice that had no authority independent of the Crown or any part in the government of the realm. See, e.g. Doyle 1987, 157–158; Baker 1990, 228–229; Bell 1994, 24–25; van Horn Melton 2009, 47–48; Baker 1987b, 5–6.

⁸³ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 5; Pierre 1902b, 35; Anon. 1760, 67; Poisson 1766a, 175; Pierre 1903, 133.

⁸⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 139; Fauques 1766b, 10; Pierre 1902b, 65; Pierre 1902a, 196–197, 206; Pierre 1902b, XLI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 21st Apr. 1758, 172; Anon. 1760, 184; Poisson 1766c, 5; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLVIII. To the cardinal de Bernis, 164; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 17th Jan. 1771, 32–33; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXVII. To the countess of Baschi. 119; Poisson 1766a, 4; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLVIII. Au Cardinal de Bernis, 76; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXXVII. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 134.

concerning their individual lives, freedoms, liberties, and property.⁸⁵ In practice, this understanding caused serious tension and was a possible place of continuous opposition to royal policies regarding fiscal and economic reforms (which could be opposed as an encroachment on personal property⁸⁶) that were needed in order to raise funds for other royal policies. In Britain, where the fiscal power was lodged within the House of Commons, the fights over taxation spared the king from a lot of criticism concerning the royal violations of subjects' private property. However, in France, as will be discussed, for example, in section 3.5.1, the royal mistresses' semi-fictional figure had an important part to play in the debates concerning the limits of legitimate royal power regarding private property.

When defining affairs of state and/or public, the hypernym of *public good*⁸⁷/*bien public*⁸⁸, *public utility*⁸⁹ or *public weal*⁹⁰ highlighted the understanding of royal authority and power as being restricted to common and general matters that were related to the totality of the realm and its inhabitants – and with a good intention. The eighteenth-century lexicographers defined the object of *politics* as “Maintenance of the publick [sic.] Safety, Order, Tranquillity, and good Morals, Policy”⁹¹. In this sense, the monarch's responsibility as the political head of the realm was to ensure law and order in the realm in order to guarantee a peaceful and orderly society where the people did not need to be afraid of either foreign aggression or their own neighbours. This was the role of a royal judge and law-maker. The demand for the preservation of public order included the maintenance of the social hierarchy and protection of the particular privileges, rights, and liberties of the estates as well.⁹² Furthermore, in this same sense of preserving and improving the realm, the monarch was expected to instigate projects, reforms, and policies that supported the material well-being of his subjects and reinforced the glory and grandeur of the kingdom, as for example in controlling and enhancing commerce, production, public buildings, and networks of roads and canals.⁹³ The distribution of royal patronage to the arts, letters, and sciences, which will be discussed in section 4.2.2, was then a part of accepted and expected royal domestic policies.

⁸⁵ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Henshall 1992, 67, 129, 176.

⁸⁶ See, e.g. Major 1994, 52, 170; Henshall 1992, 67, 129.

⁸⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXI. To the countess of Baschi. 1762, 91–94.

⁸⁸ See, e.g. Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXI. A La Comtesse de Baschi. 1762, 121–122; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLIX. A Mr. de Bussi, 78.

⁸⁹ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 129–130.

⁹⁰ See, e.g. Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLIX. To mr. de Bussi, 167–168.

⁹¹ Bailey 1730, “politics”. See also, Bailey 1759, “politics”.

⁹² See, e.g. Munck 2002, 168, 195–196; Baker 1990 114; Baker 1987a, xiii–xiv; Spellman 1998, 10–11; Merrick 1987, 53; Roche 1999, 258; Wilson 2000, 41; Hochstrasser 2006, 432; Gruder 1987, 362.

⁹³ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 152; Serna 2000, 437–438.

1.3 Sources and methodology

When considering the previous studies that this research relies on, the studies that have inspired it, and the traditions of research it contributes to, there are three important fields of historical research: the field focusing on the history of the book and communication, the field interested in the history of sex and gender, and the field interested in political thought and language. If we are to discuss the royal mistresses as a phenomenon of political culture – as a practice or even as an institution of monarchy and simultaneously as a tool and medium of political debate – we are going to need the contribution of all these perspectives. However, all these relevant fields of historical research do not examine the royal mistresses with the same ambition. As we are about to discover, in some fields the mistresses, both as individual persons and as impersonal figures, have been noted and discussed in detail, while in some fields they remain nearly invisible. In most cases, this invisibility derives from the preferred sources. Then it comes as no surprise that the royal mistresses have been a prominent subject in research done in the history of the book and communication, and especially in studies interested in political slander, as for example in the studies of Robert Darnton, Thomas Kaiser, and Lisa Jane Graham.⁹⁴

This research pursued a wider comprehension of how a sex scandal was politicised in eighteenth-century French and British political cultures. As for example, J. G. A. Pocock argued, it is hard for anyone to bring under control and monopolise political language.⁹⁵ Thus, in order to understand the political meanings of the discourse on the royal mistresses, it is paramount to present and explicate a wide range of possible representations, understandings, and uses of their figure. This study was implemented using wide and diverse source material, ranging from materials reflecting and participating in the public debate (such as published memoirs and newspapers) to private papers of courtiers (letters and memoirs) and diplomatic correspondence.⁹⁶ This would demonstrate the multifaceted quality of the debates on the royal mistresses as well as the potential parallel, dissenting, or rival meanings that the presentation of the royal mistress gained or that were applied to them by differing writers, commentators, and audiences. Thus, this dissertation is a quest for meanings, functions, and uses of the (semi-fictional) figure of the royal mistresses in the discursive process of legitimisation/delegitimation of the eighteenth-century monarchies of France and Britain.

First, however, I would like to note what I mean by *discourse*. Discourse has been defined as the subject of this research: how legitimate use of power was construed, maintained, and challenged *discursively*, how the conceptions of legitimate rule and of political system were defined and redefined in the *discourse*

⁹⁴ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997; Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997.

⁹⁵ Pocock 1973, 34–35.

⁹⁶ The sources will be further discussed in section 1.3.2.

on royal mistresses. Here concepts, conceptions, and their formations are seen as parts of discourses, or, as discursive processes.

In this study, discourse does not refer to Foucaultian discourse since this study does not follow Foucaultian discourse analysis⁹⁷ where analysis usually focuses on well- or at least better-defined discourses, the internal structures of the discourse, and consequently, where the discourse seems to absorb the historical agents actually using and utilising the language for their own purposes.⁹⁸ Discourse on royal mistresses was not a well-defined discourse. Rather, better defined discourses, for example discourses on royal favourites, on consumption, on evil advisors, or religious or medical discourses on the sexes with their respective characteristics met and intersected in the discourse on mistresses. In this research, the intertwined nature of the discourses is embraced rather than considered a problem. It is possible to create new and changing meanings in political languages and to politicise new phenomena, topics, and discourses just because the discourses on differing topics intertwine, intersect, utilise, and lean on each other. Which is exactly the reason why this study embraces the approaches of conceptual history and the history of political thought that take into account both broader contexts of the discourses as well as more specific uses allowing more productive starting points. Under these circumstances, *discourse* in this research refers to sets of texts and debates on the topic of royal mistresses. However, it must be added that discourses on certain topics, as for example discourse on the royal mistresses, tend to follow certain identifiable trends, conventions, and norms, refer to certain tangential discourses and topics, and utilise certain vocabularies.

In essence, this is a study on the conceptualisations of monarchy and monarchical rule as they were discussed, negotiated, and contested in the discourses on the royal mistresses. Thus, it is about perusing the ways eighteenth-century debaters attached meanings to legitimate rule – and to illegitimate rule as its counterpoint. It is all about the norms and ideals concerning political decision-making, the process of making political decisions, and the right to make those decisions that were linguistically articulated, discussed, negotiated, and contested in the debates of various publics on the subject of the royal mistress.

Since the discourse on royal mistresses was essentially a discourse that utilised the meanings of the relationship between the king and his mistress (or, the illegitimate sexual relationship between a heterosexual man and woman) and attached them to the debates about political rule and the monarchical system, it should not be a surprise that gender plays a significant role here. Following the path paved by previous scholars, such as Joan Scott, Joan Landes, Sarah Maza, Matthew McCormack, and Anna Clark, studying the gendered nature of the power, I argue that the language used in order to define monarchy and the related legitimate/illegitimate use of power was in this particular discourse

⁹⁷ Or, *archeological analysis*. Foucault 2005.

⁹⁸ See, e.g. Foucault 2005, 41, 47, 96–103, 167, 206. For Foucault, the discourses were not monoliths but rather overlapped at their fringe. Foucault 2005, 40–42, 47, 57–69, 77–86, 96, 99–101, 158, 163, 167, 189, 205–211.

impregnated with gendered conceptions, notions, concepts, and practices. Hence, in this case, the political language was also highly gendered language⁹⁹.

In this study, the royal mistresses and the discourse on the royal mistresses are discussed as a practice and a phenomenon of eighteenth-century political cultures, which opens up the wider contexts of political thoughts and ideas, public debates, courtly cultures, cultural understandings of gender, and various interconnected discourses and languages. Accordingly, the analysis leans on theories and methods advanced in the fields of the history of political thought and conceptual history, social and cultural history, new political history, and gender history – not that these can always be distinguished as belonging to some specific field. The primary guiding principle for the analysis in this study is the constructivist orientation that considers language uses to be political actions.¹⁰⁰ The inspiration for the theoretical and analytical model for this study originates from the studies conducted in the fields of conceptual history and the history of political thought, especially from the lines of inquiry that started with the approaches promoted by Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner among others.¹⁰¹ These scholars have paid special attention to concepts, their meanings, and their uses, or as devices for understanding the changes in and dynamics of political thought.

Since the linguistic turn of the 1960s and 1970s, language-oriented methods have established their place in interdisciplinary research, especially in the field of new political history that strives to understand multifaceted *political culture* from diverse perspectives, as for example, from the viewpoint of public debate¹⁰² or gender.¹⁰³ When focusing on the political meanings of the presentations of the

⁹⁹ I refer to gendered language as uses of language that contain gendered notions, conceptions, or practices. An example of such use of gendered language is the seveneenth- and eighteenth-century father-king-analogy that combines a gendered conception of the father's rule and fatherhood with political theories on the legitimate use of power. This is gendered use of language that both a male and female language user can utilise. However, there is also another way to use the term gendered language. E.g. studies of literary criticism apply the term when defining gendered ways to use language, that is, to study the gender-specific uses of language or readings. In this work, however, I am not carrying out such an analysis on the gendered reading or writing processes. See, e.g. Schweickart & Flynn 1988.

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g. Pocock 1973; Skinner 2002, 2, 7, 82–83, 103–127, 145–157; Skinner 1969, 38, 46–49; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105–107; Koselleck 2004, 75–80, 155–159, 248–254; Koselleck 2006; Koselleck 1989a; Koselleck 1989b; Palonen 1999; Ihalainen 2006; Scott 1999, 23–24, 43, 54–65; Baker 1987a, xii; Baker 1990, 4–5, 17–18; Ihalainen & Sennefelt 2011, 2–3; Ihalainen 2006; Freeden 2011; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007; Clark 2007.

¹⁰¹ Koselleck 2004; Skinner 2002; Skinner 1969; Steinmetz & Haupt 2013; Steinmetz 2013; Pocock 1973; Freeden 2004; Freeden 2011; Palonen 1999; Ihalainen 2006.

¹⁰² See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton 2000; Graham 2000; Graham 1997; Graham 2006; van Horn Melton 2009; Kaiser 1989–1990; Kaiser 1997; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 2000; Gordon 1989; Gordon 1992; Maza 1993; Maza 1992; Bell 1992; Black 1987; Landes 1988; Merrick 1986; Merrick 1994; Merrick 1992; Baker 2006; Baker 1990; Roche 2006; Roche 1999; Hesse 2007; Goodman 1989; van Kley 1987; Munck 1998; Munck 2002; Chartier 1995; Popkin 1987; Sennefelt 2011.

¹⁰³ Landes 1988; McCormack 2005; Maza 1993; Clark 2007; Clark 1998; Merrick 1994; Merrick 1992; Bucholz 1991; Baecque 1997; Klein 1989; Sennefelt 2011; Wells 1999; Hicks 2005; Outram 1989.

monarch and his mistress, this study contributes to the tradition of new political history with a linguistic approach.

1.3.1 Power of language, language of power: representations as performative actions

The interconnections between what is often referred to as social reality and language have hounded the debates on research focusing on political thought, ideas, concepts, and languages at least since the linguistic turn. It is true that social reality and the way it is articulated in language are not necessarily the same thing. Yet, they cannot be separated from each other. Stressing the constructivist theory of Finn Collin (2002), so-called social reality is understood as conditional on the communications about it. That is to say, social reality arises from the processes of describing, talking about, and explaining social reality.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, social reality is communicable only through symbolic systems, and most importantly, through linguistic and visual meaning-making. This interconnection is the more important when we are dealing with abstractions – such as *authority*, *power*, or *legitimacy* – that are completely reliant on language, but that still have very far-reaching effects on social reality because they define relations of power and especially submission to the rule of others.¹⁰⁵

The entanglement of so-called social reality and language is the starting point of the history of political thought (Cambridge school) and conceptual history (Bielefeld school) that developed further the understanding of language in its dual nature. The use of language is representational – it describes social reality – and performative – it constitutes social reality – simultaneously and inextricably. Social and political agents describe and represent social reality, and simultaneously, re-evaluate it. People not only describe, represent, model, and evaluate their social reality with the conceptualisations but also construct, re-evaluate, model, and remodel concepts in order to better understand the world around them and their own actions in it. It is also a process in which the field of *potential* or available political action and decision-making is revised: it is possible to weaken or reassert prevailing practices or even legitimate alternative models of actions, whereupon performing them becomes possible.¹⁰⁶

Further, in both approaches, *politics* is understood in terms of continuous linguistic struggles and contests over central and recurring concepts, which are termed the *key* or *basic* concepts of political and social vocabularies. This perspective ties together the use of language as a use of power. The language is a battlefield: basic/key concepts function in constructing the political contests and they become contested when agents fight for control of the concepts with

¹⁰⁴ Collin 2002, 2–3. See also, Sheehan 1978, 318.

¹⁰⁵ Ifversen 2011, 67; Koselleck 2004, 128–129, 149–150, 222; Fernández Sebastián & Fuentes 2006, 107; Jordheim 2011, 29.

¹⁰⁶ Ifversen 2011, 67; Koselleck 2004, 222; Fernández Sebastián & Fuentes 2006, 107; Skinner 2002, 182–184. Skinner 2002, 5; Pocock 1973, 29–30; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105; Palonen 1999, 46–48; Skinner 2002, 6–7. Skinner 2002, 2–4, 82 Skinner 2002, 5; Pocock 1973, 29–30; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105; Palonen 1999, 46–48.

concepts. That is to say, basic concepts are simultaneously the objects of contests and the contested instruments of political actions.¹⁰⁷

Thus, the feature of the basic/key concepts that generates power – or significance as the tools of power – is their ambiguous nature. Ambiguity renders them contestable, contests obscure and diversify their meanings, and the power-struggles focus on the control of contradictory definitions.¹⁰⁸ And this is the point in which the approaches of the history of political thought and conceptual history part ways. The tradition of conceptual history is more interested in the concepts themselves and their wider and broader semantic meanings. The basic concepts are understood as forming and reforming in complex, possibly long-term semantic processes, in which they come to contain various connotations, meanings, and experiences.¹⁰⁹ The traditional approach of conceptual history maps out different, changing, transferring, disappearing, and reappearing historical meanings and connotations that are stratified or sedimented in the basic concepts of social and political vocabularies.¹¹⁰ That is say, conceptual history offers an approach to historical semantics at the macro level that Koselleck termed the space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*): that is, the totality of language, culture, practices, and history shared by a certain community that defines what can be said or done, through which people are able to act, and in which the past events and experiences are accessible as semantic layers.¹¹¹

The history of political thought adds further emphasis to the contests within concepts – or the contests over the control of the meanings of political key concepts. The introductions of conceptual changes – rhetorical redescriptions – are regarded as processes of legitimation.¹¹² Consequently, the traditional approach of the history of political thought focuses on the pragmatic micro-level constructions of meanings, especially on the ways individual speakers change – or strive to change – the conventional meanings of the concepts through intentional speech-acts. Accordingly, in the analysis the speech-acts and possibly

¹⁰⁷ Koselleck 2006; Koselleck 2004, 79–80, 156 (describing how groups strive to establish themselves through control over the concepts), 252–254, 368–369, 371–378, 381–383. Nevertheless, this perspective is also shared with the tradition of the history of political thought. See, e.g. Skinner 2002, 5; Pocock 1973, 29–30; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105. Skinner 2002, 5; Pocock 1973, 29–30; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105; Palonen 1999, 46–48. Koselleck 1996, 61; Fernández Sebastián & Fuentes 2006, 107–108. Koselleck 1996, 64.

¹⁰⁸ See, e.g. Koselleck 2004, 75–92; Skinner 2002, 79–80, 103, 106–107, 151–152, 178–182; Pocock 1973, 28–29, 33–34; Fernández Sebastián 2006, 106; Kauppi, Palonen & Wiesner 2016, 73, 82.

¹⁰⁹ Koselleck 2004, 75–92.

¹¹⁰ Koselleck 2004, 89–92. Certainly, the social, political, and situational context limit the amount of interpretations, meanings, and uses of the concepts. It determines what sedimented meanings and connotations are activated in each particular use. See, e.g. Koselleck 2006; Koselleck 1996, 61–63. Koselleck, though more interested in the process of signification, noted that there is also a referential dimension of language, which requires taking into consideration some problems concerning the micro-level language-use. Koselleck 2006, 79–80. However, he did not develop a theoretical approach aiming to analyse language-uses specifically.

¹¹¹ Koselleck 2006; Koselleck 1989b, 649, 657; Koselleck 2004, 9–25, 75–92; Fernández Sebastián & Fuentes 2006, 103.

¹¹² Skinner 2002, 5; Pocock 1973, 29–30; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105; Palonen 1999, 46–48.

multiple meanings of the concepts are contextualised in the wider intellectual context that refers to those terms of language that were available to specific language-users in a certain place at certain times.¹¹³ Linguistic conventions are thus enabling and restrictive at the same time. They set limits to what can be said and how, but they are also a resource in attaining certain goals. However, since the approach of the history of political thought focuses on speech acts that are intentional – and thus striving to do something in relation to a certain topical debate – they are not tied only to the general contemporary political vocabulary and linguistic conventions, but also to both social and spatial context and to the context of the utterance.¹¹⁴

During the last two decades, the theories regarding linguistic constructivism and the methods for analysing conceptual changes as expressed by the traditional Bielefeld and Cambridge schools, have faced criticism from outside the discipline as well as from within. In response, the approaches to conceptual change, speech-acts, and political uses of language have been revised and advanced. Two identifiable trends have had a significant influence on this research.

First of all, especially in Jyväskylä, there has been a tradition of combining the approaches to historical semantics and historical pragmatics.¹¹⁵ Following this tradition, I too propose my interpretation of the creative possibilities of the pragmatic uses of language in the frame of possible meanings of historical semantics. Historical semantics is understood as the macro-level of the language, vocabularies, and meanings available to certain speakers at a certain place and certain time. In this research, this macro-level was pursued by analysing the textual context of the primary sources, by observing the meanings, concepts, and terms as they were presented in contemporary dictionaries as well as by relying on previous research. Since the French Revolution has been an event and a phenomenon that has intrigued the historian, there is an abundance of research conducted from the semantic perspective on the revolution and pre-revolutionary discourses, concepts, and political thoughts. For example, the quest for the origins of the French Revolution has engendered a wide range of studies paying attention, for example, to the changes in political thought, rhetoric, and agency, to the public debate(s) and their operations, and to the diffusion of enlightenment ideas and theories and their meaning in eighteenth-century policy-making.¹¹⁶ These approaches provide a wider set of possible meanings, uses, and connotations for linguistic articulations. Against this background, it is possible to perceive and analyse the pragmatic language uses as expressed in the

¹¹³ Skinner 2002, 3, 4–5.

¹¹⁴ Skinner 1969, 38–40; Skinner 2002, 3, 4–5, 84, 86–88, 105–106, 114–117, 125, 133; Fernández Sebastián 2007, 105; Pocock 1996, 31, 33, 49.

¹¹⁵ See, e.g. Ihalainen 2006; Ihalainen 2010; Häkkinen 2014; Kaarkoski 2016.

¹¹⁶ Research on Revolutionary or pre-Revolutionary French political culture with strong linguistic approach, see e.g. studies by Keith Michael Baker (2006, 1990, 1987), Mona Ozouf (1987), Marina Valensise (1987), Jeffrey Merrick (1986), Antoine de Baecque (1997), G. A. Kelly (1981), Anna Clark (2007), Daniel Gordon (1989 & 1992), and Thomas Kaiser (1989–1990).

discourses on royal mistresses, identify deviant uses and definitions, and recognise transfers from one discursive, temporal, or spatial context to another.

Thus, when it comes to combining the approaches of historical semantics and pragmatics there are a few constraints. The analysis of the pragmatic use of language as traditionally conducted in the history of political thought relies on the contextualisation of the utterance at the moment of the speech act: that is to say, on knowing the speaker, the personal and intentional use of certain concepts, and the speech act as an event in a certain place at a certain time. Undoubtedly, eighteenth-century commentators were trying to do something, to achieve something when uttering their representations of the royal mistresses.

However, when dealing with a set of published sources – as for example some of the French royal mistresses' memoirs – that were written and published by an anonymous hand, and/or contain significant multivocality, and/or were texts that were published, republished, translated, and circulated widely (meaning that the texts themselves were revised in the process, and the contexts in which they were reproduced and read altered), we must be flexible with the strong contextualism of the utterance usually applied in the research of the history of political thought in the Skinnerian manner. In the case of such evolving and changing sources, the context of the original speech act would be both a limiting and misleading analysis. After every revision, the texts gained new and possibly unintentioned meanings, interpretations, and consequences. That is to say, the texts on the royal mistresses were doing something even after being removed from the original, intentioned moment of the utterance: as published texts, they continued to circle, continued to be read, continued to represent, and continued to be used and re-used.

Keeping this in mind, I propose that the analysis of such material should rely on the text, the textual context of the utterance, the argumentation as expressed in the text, and the more general semantic conventions of the time of the publication (or reissue) in the location of the release of the text. The commentators writing about the royal mistresses took part in the prevailing topical debates or anxieties, expressed their views on them, occasionally introduced their options for solving the problems, pressed their own agenda, and even pressured the government and/or the crown to capitulate to their proposals. Yet, the significance of the debate on the royal mistresses lay elsewhere: most importantly, in the policies within the royal courts and in the long-term processes of attitude change. This approach also brings forth the meanings that the discourses gained – or were loaded with – over time, the changing trends and currents, continuities and discontinuities within the discourses, the meanings of translation and transnational discourses on royal mistresses, and the significance of reiteration and accumulation.

Representations of the royal mistresses were uses of language that represented and reflected prevailing social and political reality but also did something at the same time. Simultaneously, they managed to (or attempted to) influence, model and remodel, challenge, reinforce, and/or authenticate the very same thing they represented – namely, legitimate the given representation.

Discourse on the royal mistresses represented the prevailing monarchical rule with its practices, ideals, and norms, but also simultaneously potentially redefined these guiding ideals and norms from the speakers' perspective – thus participating in the wider process of negotiating the monarchy as a political system. More than anything, this was a process where lines and borders were drawn for the justified, acceptable, and tolerated use of power – and the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress functioned as a tool in these discourses legitimating/delegitimating the prevailing rule.

The representation of the royal mistress thus encompassed representations of legitimate and illegitimate monarchical rule. The representations given, however, were not representations of eighteenth-century political philosophers or politicians who explicitly aspired to define the nature of power and rule. The texts and the debates discussing the royal mistresses were not coherent political manifestos and they did not include a well-defined understanding of the nature of political rule. Rather, they were fragmented representations based on the debates of various publics, they were representations meant to provoke, and/or to convey information in a very practical sense (as, for example in the diplomatic correspondence), and they were debates that drew together inspiration and ideas from various parallel discourses. Thus, the language and vocabularies utilised were not the ones that have traditionally been regarded as political. Certainly, we are about to encounter many familiar concepts, such as *despotism*, *interest*, or *public opinion*, that have been defined as pivotal political concepts of eighteenth-century political debates.¹¹⁷ However, for the most part, the conceptualisation of monarchical rule in the discourse on the royal mistresses was not necessarily conducted via concepts, languages, and vocabularies that have been understood as specifically political ones.

Which brings us to the second trend impacting on the analytical choices that I have made in this research: the criticism expressed on the inadequacy of the key/basic concepts as either the main subject of research or as its sole analytical tool. In the field of new political history that embraces the heritage of the linguistic turn there has been a distinct urge to escape the limits set by the key/basic concepts and to understand the use of language as a more complex act of power. The current trend understands the uses of concepts as parts or elements of discursive processes, and instead of focusing on the history of the singular concepts, it aspires to understand the dynamics of the debates and/or groups of concepts, constantly moving networks of meanings, and the diversity of the argumentations.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See, e.g. Tomaselli 2006, 26, 31; Goldie 2006, 68; Hont 2006, 383; Beales 2006, 511–521; McCormack 2005, 13, 67; Ozouf 1987; Rosanvallon 1987; Ihalainen 1999, 195; van horn Melton 2009, 2, 28, 52, 62–63; Papeheim 2013; Peltonen 2003, 99–300; Gordon 1989; Kaiser 1989–1990; Downie 1994, 121; Baker 1990, 25–27, 167–168; Bell 1994, 10–11; Doyle 1987, 157, 161; Valensise 1987, 448; Henshall 1992, 88–91; Scott 1990a, 4–5; Wilson 2000, 11, 39, 50; Kaiser 2000; Ferguson 2006, 124–125; Wootton 2006, 240–241; Graham 2000, 20.

¹¹⁸ See, e.g. Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015, 33; Freedden 2004; Freedden 1997; Freedden 2011; Häkkinen 2014, 42–47; Kaarkoski 2016, 30–31.

I propose that the political significance of the discourse on royal mistresses derives from the complex interconnection of the trivial and political where the trivial and a- or non-political can become politicised and the political trivialised. Even if the commentators discussing and describing royal mistresses utilised focal or topical concepts of the political debates, the political meaning and significance of the debate on royal mistresses did not originate from the redescriptions of predefined political concepts, but rather from the politicisation of new concepts, conceptions, ideas, images, and imaginaries. In what follows the discourse on royal mistresses will be accepted as a volatile discourse that was easily expanded into numerous themes and topics of contemporary debates – and consequently, created wide semantic connections.

Accordingly, in this research, political language is understood as a complex and fluid system, where formation of meanings is realised in complex semantic networks, interconnections, and references between concepts and conceptions, and revised via various figures of speeches articulating, representing, and possibly reforming the so-called social and political reality. In this respect, understanding the processes of meaning formations is also a means to understand the meaning. As stated by Roger Chartier (1995) and Lisa-Jane Graham (2006, 2000), the form affects the meaning. They were, however, not referring to the same thing. Chartier stressed the form of the text and the ways the changing textual forms influence the interpretations of the text.¹¹⁹ Graham, meanwhile, talked about the form in which the argument was carried out.¹²⁰ Essentially, the use of language as a political act and an act of power is competition over the control of meanings and images, and in that competition eighteenth-century writers utilised every means possible.

In what follows we meet a variety of ways to persuade the reader, to influence the opinions of debating audiences, and to impact on the formation of meanings, such as: appealing to emotions (outrage, compassion, humour); appealing to reason (affirmations of information used,¹²¹ quoting conversations, letters, etc.¹²²); uses of normative language (approving or disapproving of certain behaviour as good/bad, natural/unnatural, affected/unaffected); utilising or referring to binary opposition or conceptual pairs; exploiting existing stereotypes (concerning, for example, people of different ranks, countries, or sexes); and of

¹¹⁹ Chartier 1995, 1–4, 43–82.

¹²⁰ Graham 2006, 140–142, 145–148, 156–157.

¹²¹ A very typical manner, especially in the introductions or forewords of memoirs. See, e.g. Bécu 1777a, Advertisement, i–ii; Mairobert 1775, Préface, 1; Poisson 1771a, Préface, vi; Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, xi; Poisson 1766c, The editor's preface, xiv; Fauques 1766a, Advertisement, i; Anon. 1760, Advertisement of publisher, viii–ix.

¹²² This was a common style or convention see, e.g. Anon. 1760, 103–105; Mairobert 1775, 304–305; Bécu 1777b, 303, 339; Fauques 1759, 16, 29, 76–77; Fauques 1758a, 16, 34, 99–100; Fauques 1766a, 218–220; Poisson 1766a, 58–59, 163–166; Poisson 1766b, 30; Poisson 1766c, 58–59, 123, 154–155, 161–164; Poisson 1766d, 30; Hervey 1848a, 186, 322, 353; Hervey 1848b, 27–28, 30–31, 326; Hervey 1931, 744–745, 843–844; Walpole 1822a, 513; Walpole 1822b, 113; Walpole 1845a, 64; Walpole 1845b, 240; *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, London, Mon. 19th Feb. 1759, iss 5422, "London. Extract of a letter from Paris, Feb. 2"; *World*, iss. 1094, London, Tue. 6th Jul. 1790 "Account of M. de Latour".

course, playing with concepts and metaphors that are packed with temporally and spatially layered meanings and connotations.

From all the different possible ways of persuasion, the use of analogies is given special weight in this research. All language, political language included, is filled with analogies because analogies help in grasping and shaping the sense of abstractions, such as *power*, *right*, *legitimacy*, or *authority*. Analogies as rhetorical devices can be separated into a variety of categories, such as, for example, allegories, parables, similes (direct comparison of two things), and metaphors. Metaphorical language in its various types, for example antithesis, metonyms, paronomasia (play on words, like in *bon mots*), and parable (an extended metaphor told as an anecdote¹²³), and hyperboles (exaggeration) further provide tools for shaping imaginaries and conceptions of abstraction.

All the aforementioned figures of speech have their own operations. As we have already seen in this introduction, political language contains and utilises a huge variety of metaphors (for example, family-state and state-machine metaphors, the body politic and the king's two bodies, or conceptualisation of *political* as a sphere or an activity). Thus, especially metaphors should be noted in greater detail. The use of metaphors includes a specifically interesting feature. Metaphors are connected to traditional, culturally established parallels, and yet simultaneously the speaker has great liberty to add new meanings or references in and through the use of metaphoric language.

Metaphors are constructed in interaction between two accustomed or familiar terms whereby it is possible to draw meanings from two different semantic fields and, by doing so, to also produce new meanings.¹²⁴ A metaphor is created by using one of the terms as a "frame" and the other as a "focus". "Frame" is the part of the metaphor that is described or conceptualised by the "focus", which is the part that is used in a figurative way.¹²⁵ When forming a metaphor, it is possible to exploit the qualities and meanings of both the frame and the focus. For example, in Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* (1775) Mme de Pompadour is referred to as "la Sultane principale"¹²⁶. In this case, Mairobert conjoined the semantic fields of sultana (focus) and official mistress (frame) using existing or alleged similarities surrounding court, recognised position, intimate and sensual relationship, and centre of power.

Since the concepts contain possibly numerous semantic layers, events, experiences, and meanings, the contexts are essential in order to limit the amount of interpretations and meanings. Similarly to concepts, the construction of the meanings of metaphors is related to context.¹²⁷ Metaphors also have an historical dimension and as such they rise above the immediate experiences and store past

¹²³ Thus, anecdotes actually condense complex situations into simple representations. See, e.g. Gossman 2003.

¹²⁴ Schäfer 2012, 31–34; Kövecses 2005, 237–239.

¹²⁵ Schäfer 2012, 31; Ayoob 2007. Also the terms "target"/"target domain" and "source"/"source domain" are possible. Usually the source domain is slightly more physical or concrete (e.g. "family") and the target domain more abstract (e.g. "state"). See, for example, Kövecses 2005.

¹²⁶ Mairobert 1775, 58–59. "chief sultana", Bécu 1777a, 2.

¹²⁷ See, e.g. Ricoeur 1974, 100, 105.

experiences.¹²⁸ Surroundings, social contexts, and relations of power influence the formation of metaphors in a specific language.¹²⁹ The formation of metaphors is also bound to cultural practices, beliefs, and especially systems of knowledge.¹³⁰ Since metaphors seal in multifaceted meanings, the communicative situation defines what meanings are activated in certain uses of metaphors.¹³¹

It is also possible to connect a certain focus to various frames or a certain frame to various focuses. Thus, metaphors can occur in parallel and in variations. For example, both state - family and state - machine analogies were well-known in the eighteenth century.¹³² Consequently, it is possible that metaphors contend for legitimacy.

Finally, metaphors also have a strong rhetorical aspect and they tend to map ideas beyond the basic correspondence,¹³³ thus making rhetorical redescriptions possible through the use of metaphors. This feature, the ability to refer beyond the basic comparison, is the one that makes metaphorical language and parallels potentially powerful. For example, the previously mentioned mistress-sultana parallel gained meanings from several loci: both the semantic fields of the focus *sultana* with all her residing attributes (for example, harem, sultan, luxury, idleness, women's oppressed status, sexuality, Turkey, despotism/tyranny, exoticism) and the frame *maîtresse-en-titre* with all her residing attributes (for example, royal court, monarchy, king, civility, grandeur, glory). Metaphorical reference suggests that if the royal mistress was like a chief sultana, the king would be like sultan; the court like the harem, and so forth until France was like Turkey. Here, the cultural and political traditions activate another dimension in the message of the analogy. In eighteenth-century Europe, Turkey provided the model for illegitimate rule, that is, of despotism.¹³⁴ Through this analogy, it was then hinted that the French form of government was not a legitimate monarchy but an illegitimate Turkish despotism/tyranny. Of course, in order to be

¹²⁸ Palti 2010, 204; Kövecses 2005, 231–232, 241–243.

¹²⁹ Kövecses 2005, 231–233.

¹³⁰ Kövecses 2005, 234–236.

¹³¹ Schäfer 2012, 34–37; Kövecses 2005, 232–233, 235, 236–241.

¹³² On family-state metaphor, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 149, 219–220; Poisson 1766b, 219; Poisson 1766c, 148, 216–217; Poisson 1766d, 229–230; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXIX. Au Maréchal de Noailles, 1762, 89; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXIX. To the marshal de Noailles. 1762, 80–81; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIII. To marshal Belleisle. 1747, 51–52; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXIV. To the countess of Navailles, 752, 169. On mechanical metaphors, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 173; Fauques 1759, 178; Fauques 1758b, 129; Fauques 1766b, 120; Poisson 1766a, 2; Poisson 1766c, 2; LAD, P/12020, [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette, agent à Londres], Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre, 29; Pierre 1902b, LXII. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, August 1, 1758, 209–210; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 27. Additionally, on state-body metaphor, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 172; Poisson 1766a, 219; Poisson 1766c, 216. On state metaphors in literature, see, e.g. Baecque 1997; Anon. 1997; Kelly 1986; Ihalainen 2009; Saccaro-Battista 1983; Wootton 2006; Kantorowicz 1957, 15, 218–219, 314–317, 438–439, 447; Valensise 1987, 455–456; Roche 1999, 191; Farr 1991, 394; Merrick 1994, 692; Franko 2003; Franko 1994.

¹³³ See, for example, Kövecses 2005, 5–10.

¹³⁴ See, e.g. Kaiser 2000; Beales 2006, 512; Bailey 1730, "despot"; Barlow 1772b, "Turkey"; Barclay 1774, "Turkey".

understandable to the reader, such allusions needed hints and guides throughout the anecdote.

Thus, by paying attention to the process of meaning-formation in the arguments it is possible to unravel the political hints and statements that were embedded especially in *bon mots*, jokes, and parallels typical of gossip, slander, and anecdotal narration.

1.3.2 Multi-sited debate on royal mistresses: the sources

This study analyses discourses on monarchy and legitimate use of power as they were discussed in the debate on royal mistresses by various commentators in various forums or arenas of political culture. That is to say, essentially the interest is in the *multi-sited* discourse on royal mistresses. As stated by Mia Halonen, Pasi Ihalainen, and Taina Saarinen (2015), political debates typically transpire in several interconnected arenas, forums, and mediums nationally and transnationally, simultaneously and through time.¹³⁵ During the eighteenth century, royal mistresses formed a topic that interested different kinds of European publics, and accordingly, publics discussed and utilised the discourses on royal mistresses differently for their own purposes. Though this study has been more interested in common features and themes in the presentations of the royal mistresses, the chosen set of source materials shows that the representations of royal mistresses, their functions and roles in the court, as well as their assumed uses of power or influence, were very inconsistent – which in itself demonstrates that the commentators using their representations had varying agendas.

The sources used comprised a variety of texts from various genres that presented and discussed the royal mistresses. Certainly, the mistresses as royal curiosities inspired all kinds of writers and commentators utilising all possible genres of their day. Thus, there were plenty of options available for compiling the sources for this research, ranging from caricature and song to political fiction and theatrical pieces, and from state papers to private correspondence. Consequently, the selected sources are composed of specific cases of debates on the royal mistresses where they were discussed by name in various loci. Namely, sources that could be understood as belonging to the highly problematic eighteenth-century public debate(s),¹³⁶ specifically published memoirs of the famous royal mistresses and newspaper materials, and sources that could be regarded as more private – or even secret: namely diplomatic correspondence and the private correspondence and memoirs of ministers and courtiers. Thus,

¹³⁵ Halonen, Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015, 3.

¹³⁶ On the eighteenth-century debates concerning the nature and political potentials of *public debate*, see, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2000; Graham 2000; Graham 1997; Graham 2006; Kaiser 1989–1990; Kaiser 1997; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 2000; Baker 2006; Baker 1990; van Horn Melton 2009; van Kley 1987; Gordon 1989; Gordon 1992; Bell 1992; Bell 1994; Maza 1992; Merrick 1986; Merrick 1994; Merrick 1992; Roche 2006; Shovlin 2010; Black 1987; Goodman 1989; Goodman 1992; Chartier 1987; Chartier 1995; Sharpe 2006; Ozouf 1987; Sennefelt 2011; Habermas 1989.

the discussions highlight the multiple possible understandings and functions that the figure of the royal mistress offered the various publics.

It is possible to regard the sources as reflecting, representing, and participating in two kinds of politically significant debates, namely debates in the royal courts and outside of them. Certainly, this is a rough and oversimplifying division, as we will later see. For now, let us indulge this duality for a moment. The texts produced by the commentators and audiences inside the royal court and by the world that was conscious or introduced into the practices and processes of political decision-making certainly served a different purpose, used different means, and utilised the figure of the royal mistress in a different way than the wider audiences outside the royal court. The task of analysis is to bring forth meaningful similarities, differences, and transfers between the various debating audiences or publics.

The first set of sources would then be the texts illustrating and discussing the royal mistresses publicly, or more specifically, texts that were available to larger audiences both within and outside the circles of the royal courts and courtiers. This set is comprised of texts that were written and published in eighteenth-century Britain and France, and describe either British or French eighteenth-century royal mistresses by name¹³⁷. In this respect, the focus is on the memoirs of the French royal mistresses as well as on the British newspaper materials.

The most prominent group of published texts are the memoirs of the royal mistresses. This category also includes the published correspondences of the royal mistresses, since they tend to take the form of an epistolary novel where the letters have been arranged in chronological order to resemble a biography or memoir. This set of sources features the French royal mistresses, Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry, and there was no equivalent for the eighteenth-century British royal mistresses. Further, this set forms the most important core of this study. All types of sources discussing and presenting the royal mistresses shared certain themes, languages, and imageries – and in all types of sources the writers utilised heavily anecdotal presentation of royal mistresses. Yet, the biographies of royal mistresses arranged these in the form of a narrative and offered the most coherent representations of royal mistresses. Occasionally the memorists even sought to explain certain events or anecdotes related to the mistress. This peculiarity of the biographies also offers us a clearer view of the context in which the contemporaries perceived the royal mistresses. As published texts, the biographies and memoirs of royal mistresses belonged and contributed to the public debate of the latter half of the eighteenth century that was characterised by rapid expansion of printed texts on broadening themes.

Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Mme d'Étiolles after her husband, known as Marquise de Pompadour (1721–1764), was the mistress of Louis XV from 1745.¹³⁸ Of the memoirs presenting her life, the most notable are Marianne-Agnès Pillement Fauques' versions. Firstly, they are the only memoirs that were not

¹³⁷ Thus, excluding political fiction, as e.g. fable-like allegorical representations or plays where the royal mistresses were described under a pseudonym.

¹³⁸ See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 145–146; Zysberg 2002, 172.

anonymously published. Secondly, they seem to have been popular, since they were printed, reprinted, revised, and translated quite frequently. In this research, I have included the earliest available French version, *L'Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1759), the earliest English version, *The history of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1758), as well as the edition that was revised and enlarged after the death of the famous Marquise, *The life of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766).

Fauques' memoirs are a narrative about the decay and degeneration, both moral and physical, of the notorious royal mistress. Beside the story of the life and deeds of the Mme de Pompadour, Fauques discussed and reviewed the French political system, the court, and political practices. She reported the topical political events only briefly. Instead, she fiercely criticised the French political system and the Catholic Church for their practices, often by comparing the French and the British political systems. Thus, the language used and opinions expressed resonated with both British and French readers as well as with wider anti-clerical and anti-superstitious trends of eighteenth-century enlightened and urban audiences.

While Fauques presented her readers with a coherent narrative of a royal mistress, the anonymously published *History of the Marchioness de Pompadour, mistress to the French King, and First Lady of Honor to the Queen* (1760), on the other hand, relayed a collection of miscellaneous courtly anecdotes and gossip, usually giving reader anecdotes without any further comments or explanations. The tone of the text was quite critical of courtly practises, although it seems that the memoir was written to amuse its readers. There are no similar strong sentiments against the Established Church, its practices, or its doctrines as in Fauques' texts, nor eager enthusiasm for the British political system or practices.

Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour (1766)¹³⁹ was attributed to Mme de Pompadour herself. Doubtful though it is that Mme de Pompadour had written the memoirs herself, the narrator took a quite different tone than the previous memoirists. First of all, the writer was far less critical of the mistress and treated the monarch with great sympathy. Secondly, unlike other memoirs, this version went into great detail in describing topical political events, such as wars and their particular battles, peace negotiations, and the internal conflicts between the Crown, the Parlements, and the Gallican Church. The collected correspondence of Mme de Pompadour, *Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour depuis MDCCLIII jusqu'à MDCCLXII, inclusivement* (1771, 1772)¹⁴⁰, also attributed to herself, correlate significantly with the narrative of *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour*. The anonymous writer takes a clear stand against superstition and excessive religious devotion, and even expresses anti-clerical sentiments – though not as passionately as Fauques.

¹³⁹ Translated into English under the name *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766).

¹⁴⁰ From now on, *Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour*. The English translation, *Letters of the Marchioness of Pompadour: From MDCCLXVI to MDCCLII inclusive* (1771, 1772) will be referred to as *Letters of the Marchioness of Pompadour*.

Further, in these memoirs Britain offered an important point of comparison but not an admired one.

Jeanne Bécu, known as Comtesse du Barry (1743–1793), was the last official mistress of Louis XV. Her relationship with the king started in 1768, but she was officially presented as the king's mistress in 1769.¹⁴¹ The account of her life used in this research was originally anonymously published as *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* (1775), which has since been attributed to Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert. *Genuine memoirs of the Countess Dubarre, mistress to Louis XV*¹⁴² (1777) was attributed to Mme du Barry herself as well, but it is obviously an English translation of Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri*. However, *Anecdotes* includes a wider overview of Mme du Barry's early years than *Genuine memoirs*. Mme du Barry's correspondence, *Letters to and from the Countess Du Barry, the last mistress of Lewis XV* (1779), also attributed to Mairobert, is obviously an epistolary novel where the writer has organised the letters chronologically as a narrative about the rise and degeneration of a royal mistress. The narrative in Mairobert's two works is similar. In fact, if read side by side, the *Letters* seem to affirm the story narrated in the *Anecdotes*. Compared to the style and central themes of the previous biographies, Mme du Barry's memoirs paid the most attention to the courtly circles. They presented the reader with the courtly rivalries and intrigues of the courtiers, focusing especially on the power struggle between Mme du Barry and Étienne-François, Marquis de Stainville, 1st Duc de Choiseul.

The biographical texts of the French royal mistresses were a unique set of sources representing and participating in the public debate on the contemporary royal mistresses. Biography was a popular genre in eighteenth-century Western Europe that fulfilled a dual function of being simultaneously both instructive and entertaining. Biography was regarded as an ideal form of historical writing for the purpose of education, because it was quite informal and animated emotions. An eighteenth-century biography aspired to present the most important events in the life of the person they were describing, but also to give the reader an image of the person's temperament, character, and motives as well as a more general description of the time and events.¹⁴³ These strains of genre made the biographies of the royal mistress an effective tool for disseminating information on topical events and important persons, influencing the opinions of the readers, and consequently, an effective political weapon as well. In this research, the royal mistresses' biographies were read as belonging to the public debates. Or, more specifically, as political texts, whose writers endeavoured to tell the story of a royal mistress, and by that means, to present the reader with an image of the ways, means, and persons ruling France.

There certainly are challenges in grasping the political meanings of the royal mistresses' memoirs. First of all, most of the memoirs and correspondences were published anonymously. Secondly, the writers' motives for writing and

¹⁴¹ See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 156; Zysberg 2002, 309.

¹⁴² From now on, *Genuine memoirs of the Countess Dubarre*.

¹⁴³ See, e.g. Caine 2010, 9–11, 30–31; Gordon 1989, 302; Marvick 1996, 957.

publishing were manifold. These, as discussed, pose a challenge to the analysis of historical pragmatics. Thirdly, and most importantly, the debates on the royal mistresses as captured, created, and represented in the memoirs, were diverse, multifaceted, multi-sited, and multivocal by nature.

Since the royal mistresses as royal curiosities intrigued a variety of European audiences, they and their semi-fictional figures were discussed and exploited in various genres and in various tones. This variety is present in the published memoirs of the royal mistresses as well. Even though most publishers and/or writers advertised the biographies as works that aspire to inform and educate the readers of the political events and persons of the day,¹⁴⁴ most of the memoirs fall into the category of entertainment rather than that of serious biography. Despite the writers' and publishers' attempts to convince otherwise, the biographical texts concerning the royal mistresses were mainly scandalous and libellous literature. More than anything, they were assembled from the mass of published and orally circulated rumours, gossip, songs, and jokes.

To be sure, they were also forbidden and censored literature. The writers and publishers did not try to hide that fact. Instead, they took advantage of the scandalous curiosity surrounding anything secret and forbidden when selling the books.¹⁴⁵ In France, the notoriously heavy censorship and restrictions on speech sought to make sure control of the public voice was with the Crown, especially in relation to political matters and political persons.¹⁴⁶ However, as there was demand for anything forbidden, the writers, publishers, printers, and booksellers found ways to print and sell censored literature. The forbidden books were, for example, printed clandestinely, or printed abroad and smuggled to French markets – which only serves to highlight the fact that eighteenth-century communication and media included transnational elements.¹⁴⁷ Occasionally, the printing and smuggling of scandalous books even caused tension in foreign affairs. For example, Mme du Barry was caught up in international blackmail, when Charles Théveneau de Morande extorted money from her (among other

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 1–2, 12–22, 110–111, 151, 230–242; Poisson 1766b, 71–101, 122–123; Poisson 1766c, 1, 12–22, 110, 149, 182, 228–237; Poisson 1766d, 74–105, 127; Fauques 1759, 113–118, 119–127; Fauques 1758b, 37–39, 42–50; Fauques 1766a, 185–191, 195–207, 213–216; Anon. 1760, 8–14, 20–24, 65–77; Mairobert 1775, 70–71, 148–149, 161–163, 166; Bécu 1777a, Advertisement, ii, 20–22, 122–124, 140–144, 148.

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1766a, Advertisement, i; London Evening Post, London, 11.–13. Nov. 1779, iss 8986; Morning Post and Daily Advertiser, London, Sat. 13th Nov. 1779, iss 2210; General Evening Post, London, 16.–18. Nov. 1779, iss 7157; St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post, London, 2nd Dec. 1779, iss 2922.

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 64; Hesse 2007, 373–374; Roche 2006, 180; Graham 2000, 25–31; Munck 2002, 86; Baker 1990, 170–171. Severe punishments were occasionally narrated in the sources as well. For example, Fauques describes in *L'Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1759) and in *The life of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766) the case of Monsieur de Reffelier, who was sentenced to encagement after spreading slandering verses about Mme de Pompadour. The cage was considered an extremely harsh punishment. Fauques 1759, 61–63; Fauques 1766a, 86–89.

¹⁴⁷ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 65–66; Kaiser 1989–1990, 187–188; Darnton 1995a, 8–11; Censer 1997, 194–198; Black 1987, 33–34, 87–97, 218–221; Munck 2002, 3.

members of high society) with an intended scandalous exposé from the safety of Britain.¹⁴⁸

As the biographical texts concerning the royal mistresses were collated from a huge mass of circulating anecdotes, what else can they be but collections of anecdotes? The contribution of the writer has been in collecting anecdotes and rumours concerning the royal mistresses, and putting them together. Yet, the royal mistresses' memoirs were not mere collections of anecdotes. Certainly, one must be aware of their internal multivocality. The anecdotes and gossip that provided the sources for the writers had various origins and were circulated for various reasons. There are imprints of various contemporary debates and modes of communication in them.¹⁴⁹ Yet, the writers organised their anecdotal material and tied them together by the means of a narrative.

Since the writer was actively participating in creating the narrative of the royal mistress and arranging the collected anecdotal material supporting the main narrative and his/her agenda, it is possible to bypass the problems concerning the anonymity of the writers. The arrangement of the anecdotes and the connecting narrative provide us with an ample textual context. Since both the original anecdotes and the collated memoirs were comments on contemporary debates, the writers surely wanted to be understood by the readers, and wished to communicate their opinions and influence the readers' conceptions.¹⁵⁰ When analysing sources, the researcher has in hand textual and linguistic contexts articulated in the source language in the form of such narrative where the writer has aspired to communicate certain meanings and create certain notions and images. Within textual analysis, it is important to notice text as a coherent, meaning-carrying, and functional whole where different parts of the text gain meaning in relation to each other.

Additionally, the form of arguments through which the writers sought to influence the readers' opinions must be noticed. When compiling anecdotes and other textual bits into continuous narrative, the writer creates new meanings and directs readers' interpretations by arranging the anecdotal bits of circulating information, through manipulating, recreating, and hiding, for example, the communicative contexts of utterances. For instance, the same anecdote about Louis XV's utterance can be found in two different biographies: in *Letters to and*

¹⁴⁸ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/285, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris 20th May 1772, Secret & Private, 206, 212. The Chevalier de Morande case was brought up in diplomatic correspondence again in TNA, SP 78/285, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 17th July 1772, 285; TNA, SP 78/285, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 16th July 1772, Secret, 293–294. Also mentioned in e.g. Bécu 1777a, 167–173; Bécu 1777b, 366–371; Mairobert 1775, 184–189, 314–317, 325–328. By no means was Morande's case the only international point of tension with respect to publishing texts about royal mistresses, see, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 6–7; Poisson 1766b, 123; Anon. 1760, Advertisement of the publisher, viii–ix, 1–2; Bécu 1777b, 314–315, 353; Mairobert 1775, 311–313.

¹⁴⁹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 42, 45, 129–130, 181; Fauques 1758a, 51, 55; Fauques 1758b, 55, 95–96, 133; Fauques 1766a, 59, 63–64; Fauques 1766b, 22, 80, 176; Poisson 1766a, 145, 226; Poisson 1766b, 158; Poisson 1766c, 144, 224; Poisson 1766d, 164–165; Mairobert 1775, 74, 92, 124–125, 133–134, 163, 177, 215, 262–265; Bécu 1777a, 26, 40, 88, 102, 144, 156; Bécu 1777b, 208, 276; Anon. 1760, 17, 31, 56, 155, 200.

¹⁵⁰ Skinner 2002, 94, 96–97; Pocock 1973, 28.

from the Countess Du Barry "I see very well my children have lost all regard for me"¹⁵¹ and in *Genuine memoirs of the Countess Dubarrè* "I see plainly that my children do not love me"¹⁵². In both cases, the form of the anecdote seems very similar. Yet, Mairobert was channeling readers' understandings of the utterance through textual context and by careful placing of the anecdote within the whole of the text. By these means, he produced very different interpretations of whom the king is referring to when speaking about "his children". In both cases, Louis XV was depicted as talking about his natural children. Yet, in the *Genuine memoires* Mairobert was also more clearly giving a hint in the direction of the symbolical greater family of the realm.

The biographical texts were collated from circulating material that focused on everything that had value as outrageous, shocking, laughable, or as revealing the hidden secrets of the personal lives of the king and his courtiers. This feature calls for two more notions. Firstly, the image the royal mistresses' memoirs convey about the royal mistresses and the courtly circles was largely negative, with the exception of *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766), which disseminate an exceptionally positive picture of several royal mistresses of Louis XV and a very understanding image of the king himself.

Secondly, the writers were interested in representing the characteristic and interrelated motives and emotions of the royal mistresses, the monarchs, and the courtiers. Of course, the narratives did not give a glimpse into the sentiments of either the kings or the mistresses, but showed how contemporaries rationalised the relationship between the king and his mistress as well as the actions or assumed actions of the mistress. This applies to both biographical texts concerning the royal mistresses that were written and published in eighteenth century, as well as to those concerning the kings that were written in the eighteenth century but intended to be published only after the death of the writer or the king portrayed in the text.

To supplement the memoirs and correspondences, I also included texts presenting the royal mistresses that were published in London newspapers. It is noteworthy that London newspapers did not discuss the domestic royal mistresses as much as they discussed the contemporary French royal mistresses. At least partly, this would be due to censorship. The eighteenth-century British commentators considered their freedom of press to be a unique, specifically British feature, and even a source of national pride.¹⁵³ Regardless of this self-approbation, the free printing press and public debate were largely the rhetoric of daily politicking, and functioned more in the creation of an illusion of freedom of speech and press.¹⁵⁴ Even though in Britain writing, printing, and debating might have been freer than can be said about many contemporary counterparts, it was still not the Promised Land of the freedom of speech.¹⁵⁵ The political

¹⁵¹ Mairobert 1779b, 142, footnote.

¹⁵² Bécu 1777b, 332.

¹⁵³ Van Horn Melton 2009, 19; Barker 1998, 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 114; Barker 1998, 4, 9, 10-12; Black 1987, 8, 115.

¹⁵⁵ For example, the British government tried to suppress the publication of Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz's biography of Sophia Dorothea, wife of George I. See, e.g. Black

system was not open in the modern sense and did not encourage a free press and open debate, especially about principles of government, sources of authority, and the personages of royal court. Accordingly, Parliament and the Crown had means to restrict printing and publishing.¹⁵⁶

The second set of sources comprises texts that discussed the royal mistresses in more narrow circles, namely correspondences of the courtiers, ministers, diplomats, and members of the high societies in France and in Britain. However, between the two categories, there is an interesting set of memoirs that I have included in the corpus of this research: the memoirs of the courtiers. These memoirs, concerning either the king, the court, or the writer's own life, were a set of sources that were most likely intended to be published after the death of the writer or the person they were describing. Thus, in this research they are understood more as private memoirs instead of belonging to the eighteenth-century public debates. It must, however, be kept in mind that the writers wrote as if the text was going to be published, and thus they were taking a stand on some discussions that were topical during the time of writing. Also, as the writers were intentionally writing a memoir or a biography, they utilised styles and rhetorical devices typical of memoirists of the eighteenth century, which included, for example, anecdotal recollections and extensive quoting of letters, printed information, or oral conversations.

The most significant accounts of the eighteenth-century Hanoverian kings, courts, queens, and mistresses were conducted by Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford and John Hervey, 2nd Baron Hervey. Walpole's works, especially *Walpoliana* (1804) and *Reminiscences* (1818), focus largely on gossip and rumour of court and courtiers. However, in his *Memoires of the last ten years of the reign of George the Second* (1822) there is also a historical narrative. Both Walpole and Hervey in his *Memoirs of the reign of George the Second, from his accession to the death of Queen Caroline* (1848) and *Some material towards memoirs of the reign of King George II* (1931) stress the role of Queen Caroline in the court and on political decision-making. This further calls attention to the differences and similarities between the presentations of the uses of power by the royal mistress and by the queen. Both Walpole and Hervey also give an account of the king's amours. Walpole's *Memoirs of the reign of King George the Third* (1845) is also included in the corpus even though George III did not keep a mistress.

Additionally, Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield's works *Characters of eminent personages of his own time, written by the late Earl of Chesterfield: and never before published* (1777) and *Miscellaneous works of the late Philip Dormer*

2004a, 77. Also, threatening writings could be considered a crime, as evident in the case of Chevalier de Morande: "The Duke [d'Aiguillon] had been told, that the writing of threatening Letters in England, was deemed a Capital Offence, but he was not informed at the same Time, that the Letter must be wrote to some Person in Great Britain, in order to make the Crime Capital." TNA, SP 78/285, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 20th May, 1772, Secret & Private, 206.

¹⁵⁶ Black 1987, 2-3, 115, 153, 156; van Horn Melton 2009, 31-33. Removal of censorship meant mainly preventive censorship, i.e. prior to publication. See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 20 on Licensing Act.

Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield (1779) illustrate the royal and famous persons and scandals during the reign of George I and George II.

Of the more private or secret debates on the royal mistresses, I have included in the corpus some more recent and possibly more heavily edited memoirs and published correspondences, as for example, François-Joachim de Pierre's, Abbé de Bernis' *Mémoires et lettres de François-Joachim de Pierre, cardinal de Bernis* (1903); several collections of Horace Walpole's extensive correspondence; Henrietta Howard's correspondence in *Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk* (1824); and Mary Wortley Montagu's correspondence in *The letters and works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (1837). In their private correspondence, the writers, especially Horace Walpole, eagerly shared anecdotes concerning both past and present amours at the royal courts, but also discussed the person, actions, and connections of the known mistresses as well.

However, it must be noted that the private correspondence, even though presented here as the more private debate on the royal mistresses than the public debate in the form of memoirs and circulating news, was still not altogether private or contained solely between the writer and the addressee. There is evidence that the letters were shown or even circulated in the recipient's circles. Furthermore, it seems to have been an established practice, since occasionally the writers prepared for this, as for example John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford in his letter to George Grenville when writing:

I begin another leaf, that should you have a mind to communicate the former part of this letter, to any to whom this latter part may seem to you improper to be shewn, you may be at liberty to do it.¹⁵⁷

As for diplomatic correspondence, I have analysed letters archived in les Archives Diplomatiques at La Courneuve, Paris; in the National Archives at Kew, London; and in the British Library, London. There are some breaks in representation, and consequently, in the diplomatic correspondence that are worthy of notice. There was no permanent representation during the times of war, as for example 1744–48 (the War of the Austrian Succession) and 1754–62 (the Seven Years' War). However, even when there was no ambassador, the embassy was not left unattended. Diplomatic relations were carried on through chargé d'affaires, attachés, or via special missions.

The archived letters sent by the British Ambassadors stationed in France to the Southern Department of Foreign Affairs between 1731–1774 have been included in this research, the year 1732 being the time when Louis XV took Louise Julie de Mailly-Nesle, Comtesse de Mailly, as his first official mistress. From the French diplomatic correspondence, the archived letters sent by the French ambassadors and chargé d'affaires to Affaires Étrangères have been included for selected years. In making the selection, the times when the monarchs or their heirs apparent took new mistresses or the mistresses caused some public commotion were stressed, as for example, George I's arrival in Britain and the

¹⁵⁷ BL, Add MS 57811, Woburn Abbey, 26th June 1765, Bedford to Grenville, 31–32.

early years of his reign (1714–1717), the South Sea Bubble (1720), the death of Sophia Dorothea of Celle (1726), the death of George I and the coronation and early years of George II (1727–1728), George II’s journeys to Hanover (for example, 1734) when Caroline remained in Britain and George I courted his German mistresses, the removals of the known mistresses (such as Henrietta Howard’s in 1734), or the introductions of the known or rumoured mistresses (such as Henrietta Howard’s in 1723, Anne Vane’s in 1731, Lady Archibald Hamilton’s in 1735, Lady Deloraine’s in 1737–1738, or Lady Sarah Lennox’s in 1760).

In general, diplomatic communications, even though rather short notices, included detailed accounts of the most prominent persons at the court and occasionally also descriptions of their circles and even characteristics and abilities. It should be kept in mind that diplomatic correspondence was intentionally designed to fulfil the purpose of conveying the most important and minutely detailed information to assist in decision-making in political affairs and especially in foreign policy.

For good reason, diplomatic correspondence should be considered *secret* debate on the royal mistresses. The information conveyed was intended for a very restricted audience including only the recipients at the ministry. However, there are some variations. Some letters were marked as *secret*¹⁵⁸, or even *most secret*¹⁵⁹. Some were marked as *private*¹⁶⁰. In general, private letters included more anecdotal material or circulating news as well as the writer’s own and detailed observations and opinions on the royal mistresses than other types of letters sent by the diplomats. Additionally, some letters passing information on royal mistresses were cyphered, either partially or entirely.¹⁶¹ Diplomatic intelligence was known to get opened before leaving the country, or get lost or stolen on the road.¹⁶² Obviously, the royal mistresses were considered a flammable topic in diplomatic correspondence.

In the private and secret correspondence of diplomats and private courtiers, we encounter a very different discussion where the royal mistresses functioned in a very different role than in the public debate of the printed texts. This correspondence is a source produced by persons who were, if not residents, then

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret and separate, 150; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and confidential, 256–257.

¹⁵⁹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/215, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 15th/26th June 1737, Most secret and particular, 125–126; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Fontainebleau, Tuesday 30th Oct. 1753, Very secret, 177–178.

¹⁶⁰ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 2nd July 1738, Most private, 276–278.

¹⁶¹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Fontainebleau 14th Oct. 1738, Most private, 125; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley to Pitt, Received from Mr. Stanley, 12th June 1761, 86–87; LAD, P/10902, de M. D’Iberville, A Londres, 4 juin 1714, 119–121; LAD, P/10907, de M. d’Iberville, A Londres, 23 oct. 1714, , 405–410.

¹⁶² See, e.g. Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCCXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 27th Nov. 1758, 386; Walpole 1844b, LETTER CCCXCIII. From Orford to Mann, Berkeley Square, Thursday, 23rd Jan. 1783, Add. Friday, 62; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCCXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 14th Apr. 1758, 365–366; TNA, SP 78/283, Blaquiere to Rochford, Paris, 2nd Dec. 1771, 317.

at least accustomed to socialising in the royal courts. Hence, they were habituated to the presence of a royal mistress, or even could have known her personally. Also, at least some of the gentlemen had mistresses of their own.¹⁶³ Thus, in their eyes the mistresses, royal and others, were a commonplace thing, a habitual practice and part of *la vie galante*¹⁶⁴ that as such did not usually require elaborate commenting.

Even if the practice itself did not inspire the writers to reflections, they nonetheless wrote about the royal mistresses. After all, the mistresses were interesting marvels. None of the eighteenth-century writers embraced this aspect of the royal mistresses as Horace Walpole did. Already in his day he was a well-known enthusiast for courtly gossip and royal curiosities, as is evident from his letter to John Chute in 1769 after being disappointed in his hope of seeing Mme du Barry:

I have not yet seen madame du Barri, nor can get to see her picture at the exposition at the Louvre, the crowds are so enormous that go thither for that purpose. As royal curiosities are the least part of my *virtù*, I wait with patience.¹⁶⁵

The courtiers described to their correspondents the royal mistresses they had seen and reported anything interesting or unusual they had heard or witnessed concerning the royal mistresses. Even though the existence of the royal mistresses was not pondered, between the lines it is possible to deduce justifications and explanations for keeping mistresses. For example, accounts of the moments when the king was about to break up with his mistress or about to take a new one are revealing, as well as portrayals of the relationships between the kings and their queens.

However, even given the great interest, the mistresses and their actions were commented and reported on, both in private and often in diplomatic correspondence, but usually quite briefly. This means that their characters, motives, or personality were not necessarily discussed as such – at least in such length as in biographies dedicated to the task. Instead, the mistresses served

¹⁶³ Kept mistresses and illegitimate children were not uncommon in the royal courts. E.g. Sir Robert Walpole openly kept a mistress, Maria Skerritt. See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 288, 389; Hervey 1931, 745, 748; LAD, P/12019, [Chammorel, Chavigny] Mémoire concernant la Grande Bretagne, 1732, 248; Wortley Montagu 1837b, To the Countess of Mar, Cavendish-square, 1725, 193; Wortley Montagu 1837b, To the Countess of Mar, Twickenham, Jan. 1726, 202; Wortley Montagu 1837b, Letter to Lady Pomfret, Venice, [1739], 264–265. John Hervey had an affair with Anne Vane, and possibly with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; Earl of Waldegrave's mother was Henrietta Fitz-James, illegitimate daughter of James II and Arabella Churchill; Earl of Albemarle married Lady Anne Lennox, who was a granddaughter of King Charles II through an illegitimate line, and he was famous for his taste in women. See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 158; Poisson 1766c, 155; Poisson 1766b, 185; Poisson 1766d, 194.

¹⁶⁴ See, e.g. Berlanstein 1994, 480; Berlanstein 1997, 162.

¹⁶⁵ Walpole 1820c, To John Chute, Esq. Paris, 30th Aug. 1769, 302. Horace Walpole's interest in the royal mistresses is both obvious and famous. He not only eagerly shared anecdotes concerning the royal mistresses, but also visited the residences of the current and previous royal mistresses like tourist attractions, i.e. in order to catch a glimpse of the famous ladies and of the way they lived. See, e.g. Walpole 1820c, To John Chute, Esq. Paris, 30th Aug. 1769, 302; Walpole 1820c, To George Montagu, Esq. Paris, Sunday night, 17th Sept. 1769, 312–318.

another function and were presented in different roles than in public debates on the subject. These functions related especially to the mutual relationships, the supporting networks, and the rival factions within the court. We will meet the discourses on royal mistresses in the courtly networks in section 4.1.

Finally, before entering into the more detailed description of the analysis of the sources, we must address the question of who were the people debating on the subject of royal mistresses. The correspondence and memoirs of the courtiers are easy to place within the courtly or high societies. Regarding the public debate, the question is more complex. As stated, there was significant multivocality in the memoirs of the royal mistresses. Yet, the discourse studied in this research can be placed in the urban culture. Further, even if the anecdotal source material circulated widely among all sorts and ranks of people, in the printed form the memoirs of the royal mistresses were largely out of the reach of the lowering sorts. This would locate the intended audience among the educated and wealthy urban population – the audience that had time and money to spend on leisure.

Fixing the debate on the royal mistresses on an urban location, and further, on the wealthy and educated part of the urban population, is further authenticated in a peculiar feature regarding the themes and discourses present in the debate on the royal mistresses. Namely, the absence of direct religio-moralist condemnation of the royal mistresses. Instead, all texts conveyed, if not clear anti-clerical and anti-superstitious critique, then at a least certain reserve towards strong religious sentiments and public signs of devotion.

The interconnection of religious thought (either Protestant or Catholic), sense of morality, and criminality is a complex one. Certainly, general sense of morality was both based on and reasserted in and through the Christian teaching of moral conduct. After all, the practice of keeping a mistress was a crime against the sense of (both Catholic and Protestant) Christian marriage, morality, decency, and virtuous life. However, in the case of discourse on royal mistresses religious teachings and thought did not solely direct the discussion on the nature of the crime and scandal. Numerous modern historians of eighteenth-century France have noted that the century has been characterised by an anxiety for the degeneration of the *moeurs*, or morals and manners, as indicated by, for example, enlightenment debates about the meaning of political virtues, the flood of moralists' writings, or the fortification of the system of policing the writing, speaking, and behaviour of Parisians.¹⁶⁶

Regardless, it is striking how little the religious discourses concerning the proper relationship between a man and a woman appear in the debates on the royal mistresses that have been chosen as the sources of this research. Religio-moralist condemnation was a rarity in these eighteenth-century debates about royal mistresses for several reasons. First of all, the sources were not mainly produced by members of the clergy but by laic ministers, officers, and courtiers.

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g. Kaiser 2000, 6; Graham 2000; Cheek 1994–1995. On the link between the eighteenth-century general worry regarding the corruption of *moeurs* and *public debate*, see, e.g. Fauques 1766a, 141–142, where indecent literature was constructed as corruptive and alluring its readers into vice.

The Abbé de Bernis was an exception to this rule, and yet, his memoirs are not dominated by religious tones either. Instead, they focused on his political career.

The absence of religious discourse did not allude to atheism. The writers were Christians and shared norms and ideals that were based on Christian values and biblically justified norms of behaviour, especially regarding relations between the sexes. Atheism was after all a rather uncommon phenomenon in eighteenth-century Western Europe.¹⁶⁷ But equally so was religio-moralist ranting among diplomats, ministers, and courtiers. Instead, in the British and the French court alike, the persons who betrayed either too little or too much religious or moralist sentiment were ridiculed.¹⁶⁸ A certain amount of reserve was then exercised against moralistic condemnation of the royal mistresses in the courtly or high society. After all, the mistresses were a rather commonplace thing in the court: "If the scandal [Louis XV keeping Mme de Pompadour] was not much at a court, familiarised to such examples; [...]."¹⁶⁹

The second reason for the scarcity of religio-moralistic condemnation of royal mistresses would then be the fact that nearly all, courtiers and commoners alike, shared the norms that were based on Christian values. Everybody already knew that having an adulterous affair was against the sanctity of marriage and against the will of God – of this they did not need to be reminded, but quite the contrary, it was already a boring topic to discuss, while the royal mistresses were not. They were curiosities. For example, Horace Walpole, famed and still famous for his interest in gossip, eagerly picked up and shared anecdotes about the romantic affairs of British high society. From his manner of writing about the amours of others, it is easy to discern the *scandalousness* referring to the breach of the normative ideals about marriage, sexuality, and relationships between persons of different marital status, rank, or sex. Furthermore, his tales about and the interest in the love-intrigues of high or otherwise prominent personages of British high society denote that extramarital relationships were nonetheless quite common. It was exactly this tension within the love-affairs, their being morally reprehensible and yet a common practice, that made them an interesting topic for discussions, speculations, and gossiping in a purely entertaining manner.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ See, e.g. McMahon 2007, 172; Munck 2002, 139.

¹⁶⁸ As, e.g. Louis, Dauphin of France See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 102–103; "The dauphin, a dull bigoted prince, [...]", Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 189. Conversely, Mme de Pompadour was praised since "In her last hours, she [Mme de Pompadour] shewed neither bigotry nor irreligion." Fauques 1766b, 173.

¹⁶⁹ Fauques 1766a, 67. "Passons sur le scandale: il ne pouvoit pas être des plus grands, à une Cour accoutumée de longue main à ces sortes d'événemens." Fauques 1759, 47. On the accustomed habit of high society to keep mistresses, see, e.g. Count John du Barry's scandalous behaviour when marrying off his mistress but still continuing to frequent her: "Il ne continua pas moins de vivre avec elle, & se donne les airs d'afficher ainsi un scandale, réservé jusques-là seulement pour les Princes, les Grands Seigneurs, les Ministres, afin de braver, ce semble, davantage l'honnêteté publique." Mairobert 1775, 218. "He continued, however, to live with her, and affected thus to proclaim a scandal, that, till then, had been confined to princes, noblemen, or ministers, as if he meant to insult public decency more." Bécu 1777b, 212.

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1833a, Letter CV. From Orford to Mann, London, 29th May 1744, 290; Walpole 1833a, Letter XXXII. From Orford to Mann, London, 29th Apr. 136; Walpole 1833a, LETTER CXXXVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 20th Sept.

Thus, these texts on the royal mistresses and the morally questionable relationships were first and foremost secular discourses of urban audiences. Yet, there are occasions when the prevailing religio-moralist discourses, the established Churches, and their agents, teachings, and/or practices became both visible and meaningful. For example, occasionally there was references to rule by angels¹⁷¹, which referred to medieval political theology that conceptualised the monarch as a divine being.¹⁷² Yet, the comprehensive legitimization of monarchical rule through the idea of divine kingship is absent.

Further, there were certainly quite a lot of people who could be understood as agents of the Churches in the court, for example, the confessors of the kings, members of the royal family, and high-ranking courtiers, or chaplains in charge of the royal chapels who preached to the kings. Additionally, there were bishops, priests, and members of religious orders in the royal councils and ministries, and among the courtiers. Further, there were active priests, abbots, bishops etc. in Paris, provinces, and Parlements. These agents are sometimes visible in the sources, and occasionally were even disapprovingly presented as agents of a vague Church or religion.¹⁷³

From time to time, eighteenth-century writers commented on some sermon preached to the king, or even quoted it, or made parallels and references between topical events or persons and Bible stories.¹⁷⁴ Certainly, citing or quoting arguments was a way to confirm and repeat certain statements that would have been incriminating if expressed directly as one's own opinion. However, in the case of religious discourses, this does not seem to be the main point. The commentators were not necessarily trying to reframe a religious or religio-moralist argument. It must be kept in mind that many of the writers, especially the French ones, were quite censorious of the established Catholic Church with its prerogatives, arguments, ceremonies, influence, or orthodoxy.¹⁷⁵ In these

1745, 360–361; Walpole 1833b, Letter CCI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 17th May 1749, 83–84.

¹⁷¹ Poisson 1766b, 106; Poisson 1766d, 110.

¹⁷² Kantorowicz 1957, 8, 385–401, 458–460.

¹⁷³ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 121; Fauques 1758b, 43; Fauques 1766a, 197–198; Fauques 1766b, 103, 168; Poisson 1766b, 22, 69; Poisson 1766d, 23, 72; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE V. A Mr. Diderot, 8; Poisson 1771c, LETTER V. To mr. Diderot, 15; Poisson 1772, LETTER XLI. To the duke of Nivernois. 1749, 90–91; Mairobert 1775, 317; Bécu 1777b, 354.

¹⁷⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 20–21; Poisson 1766d, 21–22; Mairobert 1775, 267–268; Bécu 1777b, 281–282; Mairobert 1779a, CXXXVIII. LETRRE. A Mr. l'Abbé de Beauvais, alors Chanoine de Noyon, Prédicateur du Roi, actuellement Evêque de Senez. Du Jeudi Saint au soir 1774, 193–194; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVIII. To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senez. Holy Thursday at Night, 1774, 157–158; Walpole 1818, 33; Walpole 1843a, LETTER XXII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 29th Jan. 1762, 68; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXVII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 28th Feb. 1769, 26; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXL. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th May 1769, 37; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 30th Nov. 1769, 58; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXVII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, Saturday evening, 29th Dec. 1770, 122.

¹⁷⁵ These themes were directly linked to eighteenth-century controversies that had both a political and religious dimension, the most notably controversies concerning Jan- senism and the rights and liberties of the Gallican Church. From the memoirs of

debates, the various memoirists represented, revealed, or reframed the religious arguments as the religious agents' means of extending their influence over the king or the mistress, claiming authority, or defending their traditional authority that seemed to be at risk for one reason or another.¹⁷⁶ As such, the actions of the religious agents were usually rendered base, ridiculous, and as such, illegitimate. Consequently, it was not a debate about religion but rather about the legitimate/illegitimate influencing of the highest political decision-making. Thus, it was possible that religion, and especially the established Churches and their agents, were the subject of the debates. Yet, the debate itself was not necessarily religious or religio-moralist. Instead, they were debates about the topical events and persons, in which the agents of the Churches participated, or were presented as participating, and most commonly in a non-spiritual manner.

In this research, we should nevertheless note that the religio-moralist discourses or arguments in condemning the royal mistresses occasionally exuded from sources that are not unequivocally positive regarding the established Church. One of the most notable occasions that Christian thought and tradition was expressed and affirmed in the debate on the royal mistresses was when the commentators expressed their wish for the king to function as an example for his subjects. This theme we will meet in section 3.7.6. To conclude, I suggest that the discourse on the royal mistresses should be understood as a discourse about power and its proper use that highlighted moral. Political power and its use was a moral matter, and morality was a political matter. Yet, this was not a religious debate, but a secular one, stressing rationality rather than spirituality and worldly justifications instead of other-wordly.

1.3.3 Multi-sited debate on royal mistresses: the analysis

The attitude to political debates as essentially multi-sited is first and foremost a notion that guides the compilation of sources, and of course, the critical approach to them. However, it affects the reading, interpretation, and analysis of the chosen texts in two specific ways as well. First, as represented by Halonen, Ihalainen, and Saarinen, the analysis is focused on the nexus in which multi-sited political debates come together – or more precisely, bring and tie together diverse

royal mistresses, Fauques wrote in very anti-Catholic terms without being irreligious. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 119–122, 165–171; Fauques 1758b, 42–43, 107–117; Fauques 1766a, 196–200; Fauques 1766b, 91–100.

¹⁷⁶ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 197–199; Poisson 1766b, 19–22, 137–138; Poisson 1766c, 195–197; Poisson 1766d, 20–23, 142–144; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVIII. To the countess of Brézé. 1748, 82–84; Mairobert 1775, 267–268; Bécu 1777b, 281–283, 354; Mairobert 1779a, CXXXVIIIe. LETRRE. A Mr. l'Abbé de Beauvais, alors Chanoine de Noyon, Prédicateur du Roi, actuellement Evêque de Senez, du Jeudi Saint au soir 1774, 193–194; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVIII. To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senez, Holy Thursday at Night, 1774, 157–158; Fauques 1759, 20–21, 114, 169; Fauques 1758a, 22–23; Fauques 1758b, 33–34; Fauques 1766a, 23–24, 188; Fauques 1766b, 99–101; Pierre 1902b, I. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Ambassador to the Court of Vienna, Versailles, 20th Jan. 1757, 87–88; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 24–27; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCLXXIV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 23rd Feb. 1756, 270.

discourses from different arenas, forums, publics, audiences, and mediums.¹⁷⁷ In this dissertation, the analytical nexus is the royal mistress. The semi-fictional figure of a royal mistress, as it was presented and represented in various discourses, is considered a site where various contemporary concerns and anxieties came together, were discussed, and were negotiated.¹⁷⁸ Here as well, the continuities and discontinuities, the temporal variations and historically formed layers in the debates and discourses over certain themes, topics, and concepts participate in the formation of meanings and the political contests over the control of the political debate.

Second, the notion of multi-sitedness further guides the attention to the transnational meanings of the debates on the royal mistresses. This is a comparative study focusing on British and French political cultures that seeks to understand the debate on the royal mistresses as it expanded, heated up, and became politicised. The comparison between the British and the French political systems is a very traditional approach. This is not an accidental combination nor merely an interpretation or preference of modern scholars, but it is based on the comparisons that eighteenth-century writers made themselves. The reasons for choosing to continue this tradition arise mainly from the sources themselves.

Firstly, eighteenth-century commentators and writers eagerly adopted juxtapositions between Britain and France, and especially comparison between the British and the French political systems. This comparative composition is very evident from the sources used in this research. In British debates, France was an important *Other* against which the ideas about Britain, the British nation, and British culture were constructed – usually as an opposite. Contrariwise, the French commentators constructed oppositions and comparisons most frequently in relation to Britain.¹⁷⁹ Certainly, there were other options as well. Ethnic or religious groups or minorities (foreign or domestic), other European states, especially Germany, and colonial encounters provided potential Others as well.¹⁸⁰ The choice and use of Other differed in relation to what was being defined and redefined in the discourse. Yet, the comparison between the two, the Catholic France with a monarchical system that stressed the wide royal prerogatives and where the impersonal Crown did not recognise any

¹⁷⁷ Halonen, Ihalainen & Saarinen 2015, 17–18.

¹⁷⁸ Megan Ryan Schenkelberg (2012) adopted a similar perspective in her dissertation on the royal mistresses of Charles II. Her view was that the general anxieties regarding topical social and political issues and anxieties, especially in relation to prostitution and religious tensions, were discussed in the representations of royal mistresses.

¹⁷⁹ Fauques 1759, 123; Fauques 1758b, 46; Fauques 1766b, 141; Poisson 1766a, 28, 138, 157–158, 190, 221, 224; Poisson 1766b, 123–125, 134, 137–138, 233; Poisson 1766c, 28, 137, 156, 188, 218–219, 221–222; Poisson 1766d, 128–129, 139–140, 142–144, 243; Poisson 1771c, LETTER I. To the duke of Mirepoix, 1753, 1; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE IV. A Mr. Berrier, 6–7; Poisson 1771c, LETTER IV. To mr. Berrier, 12–13; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE X. Au Duc de Mirepoix, Juin 1755, 16–17; Poisson 1771c, LETTER X. To the duke of Mirepoix, June 1755, 34–36; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLIX. A Mr. de Bussi, 77–79; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLIX. To mr. de Bussi, 167–168; Hervey 1848a, 114; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 37; Dyche 1756a, “conseil”; Dyche 1756b, “monarchie”, “parlement”; Bailey 1759, “monarchy”; Bailey 1730, “parliament”; Barclay 1774, “prince”.

¹⁸⁰ See, e.g. Richter 2006; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 66; Outram 2007.

institutionalised limits to its sovereign powers,¹⁸¹ and the Anglican Britain with its balanced, limited, or mixed monarchy where the powers were divided among the Monarch, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons,¹⁸² was a conventional one.

The general sense of polarity between the two monarchies intensified with the conflicts of the eighteenth century. After all, during the eighteenth century Britain rose to be amongst the most powerful countries in Europe, thus challenging French domination at sea, in colonies, and in economic competition. Even though there were times when the British and French governments sought rapprochement,¹⁸³ the two nations remained rivals throughout the century and enemies in war on a regular basis. The great European wars in which Britain and France met as enemies, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713), the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), and the Seven Years' War (1758–1768), left their mark on general or popular sentiments. The sense of rivalry did not fade even though there was mutual interest and enthusiasm in the form of Francophilia in Britain and Anglophilia in France.¹⁸⁴

Thus, there was a general sense of difference in political systems and cultures between Britain and France that was enhanced by a sense of rivalry between the countries as well as mutual interest in the other. This general sense of difference, especially in terms of monarchical rule, is the first reason for continuing to contribute to the tradition of historical comparisons between British and French political cultures.

Secondly, even by briefly glancing at the set of sources, it is evident that the French royal mistresses were more famous, or more prominent than the British ones – and by far so. In France, the debate on the royal mistresses escalated by mid-century, producing texts unique to the French debate: the memoirs of the famous royal mistresses that were revised, reprinted, and translated, over and over again during the century. In Britain, there was no similar trend. Certainly, there were works that were masked as the memoirs of royal mistresses, such as the anonymously published *The fair concubine: or, the secret history of the beautiful Vanella* (1732)¹⁸⁵, a *roman à clef*, or a novel in which topical and famous persons are discussed under fictitious names that parodied Anne Vane, mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales¹⁸⁶. Also, the fate of Sophia Dorothea of Celle, wife of George I, who was imprisoned after being suspected of an adulterous

¹⁸¹ See, e.g. Henshall 1992; Beales 2006, 513; Baker 1990, 228; Bell 1994, 83; Merrick 1986, 499.

¹⁸² See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 45; Wootton 2006, 214; Tomaselli 2006, 19–20; Lieberman 2006, 317–318, 321.

¹⁸³ See, e.g. Black 2002, 149–150; Zysberg 2002, 108–111.

¹⁸⁴ See, e.g. Claydon 2007; Haikala 2002; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 28, 55, 66–84, 144.

¹⁸⁵ Anon. *The fair concubine: or, the secret history of the beautiful Vanella. Containing, Her amours with Albimarides, P. Alexis, &c. Her departure from the Court. The particulars of her settlement. An account of several curious incidents that happened in the course of her rivalry with Miss Mordantia. Faithful copies of several of her letters, particularly one to P. Alexis on her first finding herself pregnant; and another to the Q --- concerning her condition; together with all other remarkable occurrences thro' the whole course of her intrigues. To which is annexed, The Lady's last shift; or, a cure for shame. A tale. 1732.*

¹⁸⁶ Heir apparent until his death in 1751.

relationship, intrigued British, French, and German audiences. The German writer Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz wrote her memoirs under the title *Histoire secrète de la Duchesse d'Hanover* (1732) – scandalous memoirs whose release the Crown sought to prevent.¹⁸⁷ Yet, eighteenth-century royal mistresses did not inspire their contemporary writers to works similar to the various memoirs or epistolary novels of Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry.

The disparity between the role and meaning of the royal mistresses in these two political cultures, or more precisely, their role and function in the court and its practices, in the formation and operation of public debates, and their semi-fictional person as a vehicle for discussing the prevailing rule, is the second reason for choosing Britain and France for this comparative study. The dissimilarity in both the phenomenon of royal mistresses and the practices of discussing them engendered more questions that helped in the endeavour to understand the wider political meanings of the royal mistresses. Why did the British royal mistresses not excite a similar onslaught of debate outside the royal courts? Why were the French royal mistresses so prominent in the French political culture? Did the British royal mistresses even occupy a similar function in the royal court to the French ones? Was the difference caused by the conventions of public debate? Or was the difference caused by the difference in political system itself? One of the most important features of the royal mistresses in the French debate was their closeness to the person that personally made the political decisions of the realm. Was the monarch's power in Britain so balanced or limited in the mixed monarchical system that there was not enough room for the royal mistresses' political influencing? Or perhaps the distribution of powers also distributed the criticism in the sense that the royal mistresses were not needed as the *evil advisors*, as the tools of indirect criticism.

These questions helped to understand the wider phenomenon of the royal mistresses, to identify the wider conventions of the practice of keeping royal mistresses, and to perceive the shared trends regarding the discourses on royal mistresses – as well as to outline the differing meanings that the figures of the royal mistresses gained in specific national contexts. There definitely were distinct wider and more general themes in the discourses concerning the royal mistresses, such as for example the debates concerning money, luxury, and political influencing. Yet, there were also very specific discourses and uses of the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress. Even when discussing the same topic that was conventionally connected to the royal mistresses in both political cultures, the discourses highlighted different aspects of the monarchy and the figure of the mistress gained diverging meanings in the French and in the British debates. For example, the royal mistresses' assumed eagerness for money was a conventional attribution in both countries. However, as will be further discussed in chapter 3, there were distinct meanings and emphasis attached to the figure of the royal mistresses in the British debates that diverged from the French debates.

Now, this would be sufficient if we were interested in the debate on the royal mistresses solely as limited to the national context. However, as previously

¹⁸⁷ Black 2004a, 77.

indicated, the multi-sited political debates stretched across the national borders, which brings into question the transnational meanings of the debate on the royal mistresses. There was involuntary transfer, conscious borrowing, and intentional mimicking involved in the phenomenon of the royal mistresses, both as a practice and a discursive tool. For example, as mentioned earlier, the British writers tended to refer to the mistresses of the Hanoverian kings with a term connoting their known and established position as the king's mistress¹⁸⁸ even though there was no formal position of *maîtresse-en-titre* in the British court.

As the French cultural model, crafted during the reign of Louis XIV, worked as an inspiration and model for other monarchical courts around Europe, it is understandable that there was wide interest in the fashions and trends of the French court.¹⁸⁹ Of course, the court of Versailles was no longer the sole dictator of fashionable courtly manners and styles. During the eighteenth century, many countries and courts intentionally started to create and implement their own cultural models and modes. All around Europe, there were also distinct aspirations to separate from the cultural hegemony of the French court. Yet, the French court was closely watched and its customs, practices, events, and prominent persons still grabbed the attention of European high societies.¹⁹⁰

Thus, not surprisingly, the famous French royal mistresses were also discussed outside France. The high societies followed the news of the French court and especially the published biographies of Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry circulated widely in Europe.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, the correspondences or epistolary novels and memoirs of the French mistresses were translated into other European vernaculars, as for example, into English, German, and Swedish.¹⁹² Thus, there was interest in and audiences for the debate on the French royal mistresses also outside France and among the French-speaking European gentilities and high societies.¹⁹³ This wider European interest in the French royal mistresses and their memoirs engenders the following speculation. We must

¹⁸⁸ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 93, 120; Walpole 1818, 30, 83.

¹⁸⁹ See, e.g. Wilson 2000, 72; Elias 1978, 10; Jones 1994, 962; Clark 1998, 28–29; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 85; Blanning 2006, 49–50.

¹⁹⁰ See, e.g. Blanning 2006, 215–221; Beales 2006, 504; Corp 2002, 59–60; Wilson 2000, 73, 78–79; Clark 1998, 28–29; Peltonen 2003, 183–184, 239, 245.

¹⁹¹ E.g. Baron Leijonhufvud bought Mairobert's *Lettres originales de Madame La Comtesse du Barry* from an auction in Helsinki in 1786. The Henrik Database, http://dbgw.finit.fi/henrik/henrik_english.php, [8.11.2018].

¹⁹² As e.g. Fauques' *L'histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* was published also in English under the title *The history of the Marchioness de Pompadour* and in German as *Die Geschichte der Marquisinn von Pompadour* (1759). However, the Dutch *Historie van Mevrouw de Hartoginne van Pompadour* (1761) by Franciscus Lievens Kersteman is not a translation of Fauques' book. The anonymously published *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) was published in English under the title of *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766) and in Swedish as *Fru Pompadours lefverne, uti hwilket orsakerna til de förda krig, afhandlade fredslut, ambassader och underhandlingar wid de fläste europeiske hofven, de hemliga hof-intriguer, samt generalers och ministrers characterer uptäckas och beskriwas, som under de senare 20 åren, af konung Ludvic den 15:des regering, i Frankrike förekomma. Författat af henne sjelf på fransyska, och öfwersatt på swenska af L. L. S. I-II* (1768).

¹⁹³ French was the language of educated elites throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. See, e.g. Blanning 2006, 50–51; Elias 1978, 10–11; Munck 2002, 3, 117; Black 2002, 33.

keep in mind the question of what meanings and purposes these texts had and served in the context of French political culture as well as other European political cultures. Did these texts possibly offer non-French readers ways to debate domestic royal mistresses during times when it was not possible to have open conversations on the subject due to censorship? Further, did the debate on the French royal mistresses offer a means to conceptualise the domestic monarchical system with its practices, norms, and ideals? For example, in section 3.8 we will encounter the debate on the French royal mistresses as a vehicle through which the understandings of normatively proper English political masculinity were discussed and defined.

For this reason, I have included both the French originals of the memoirs and correspondences of Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry and their English translations in the corpus of this research. These texts were hugely popular in France, as indicated by the number of reprints and revised editions¹⁹⁴ and the rigorous research of Robert Darnton,¹⁹⁵ just as they were in Britain, as indicated by the number of advertisements in the London newspapers promoting the prints, reprints, and revised or translated editions of the French mistresses' memoirs and correspondences¹⁹⁶.

¹⁹⁴ E.g. Mairobert's *Anecdotes* was published at least in 1775 and 1778 (London). Anonymously published *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* was published in 1766 and 1772 (Liege, London). Likewise, anonymous collection of Mme de Pompadour letters, *Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* was published in 1771, 1772, and 1774 (London).

¹⁹⁵ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 64, 77; Darnton 2004, 103; Darnton 2000, 9, 19; Darnton 1984b, 482; Darnton 1995b, 194, 227, where he has charted the best-selling books of the eighteenth century, among which was Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* (1775) as well as studied Mlle Bonafon's *Tanastès* (1745), a roman à clef censuring Mme de Pompadour.

¹⁹⁶ The memoirs of Mme de Pompadour were advertised in, e.g. *Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette*, London, 30th Sep.–7th Oct. 1758, iss 27; *Public Advertiser*, London, Tue. 24th Oct. 1758, iss 7474; *Public Advertiser*, London, Sat. 28th Oct. 1758, iss 7478; *Public Advertiser*, London, Thu. 9th Nov. 1758, iss 7488; *London Chronicle*, London, 7.–9. Dec. 1758, iss 304; *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, London, Tue. 13th Mar. 1759, iss 5441; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 29.–31. May 1764, iss 505; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Tue. 25th Dec. 1764, iss 11172; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Thu. 17th Jan. 1765, iss 11196; *London Chronicle*, London, 8.–10. Apr. 1766, iss 1452; *London Chronicle*, London, 17.–19. Apr. 1766, iss 1456; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 8.–10. Apr. 1766, iss 796; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 12.–15. Apr. 1766, iss 798; *London Chronicle*, London, 3.–5. June 1766, iss 1476; *London Chronicle*, London, 3.–5. June 1766, iss 1476; *London Chronicle*, London, 17.–19. June 1766, iss 1482; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Mon. 26th Jan. 1767, iss. 11823; *Whitehall Evening Post*, London, 11.–13. Feb. 1772, iss. 4009; *General Evening Post*, London, 16.–18. Feb. 1775, iss. 6402; And the various memoirs of Mme du Barry were promoted in, e.g. *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, London, Fri. 7th Mar. 1777, iss 2433; *London Evening Post*, London, 11.–13. Nov. 1779, iss 8986; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Sat. 13th Nov. 1779, iss 2210; *General Evening Post*, London, 16.–18. Nov. 1779, iss 7157; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Mon. 15th Nov. 1779, iss 1779; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Tue. 16th Nov. 1779, iss 2212; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Thu. 18th Nov. 1779, iss 2214; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Sat. 20th Nov. 1779, iss 2216; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, London, Mon. 22nd Nov. 1779, iss 2217; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Sat. 27th Nov. 1779, iss 15847; *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 2nd Dec. 1779, iss

When analysing these translations, we must note that translating itself is an inventive process that participates in the construction of meanings.¹⁹⁷ When the texts, and the debates that they encompass, move and are moved from one context to another, their meanings do change. Due to their ambiguous nature, the utterances gain new interpretations and meanings that their writers' did not originally intend. Furthermore, as the texts are translated, there is always a possibility of unintentional mistakes and unfortunate mishaps in transferring meanings from one language to another, as well as of intentional alterations made by the translator for the sake of his/her own agenda. Thus, we must closely compare the French originals and the English translations of the royal mistresses' memoirs and correspondences. By this means, it is possible to grasp some of the meanings that the English audiences attached to the debates on the French royal mistresses.

Which leads us to questions and problems concerning contexts. After all, this is a qualitative research based on contextual reading of the sources. If we are to grasp both the general or wider lines of the debate on the royal mistresses as well as its peculiar features and uses in two political cultures, as provided by the perspective of multi-sitedness and comparison, then we must first understand the contexts in which the texts were written, read and interpreted, printed, reprinted, and revised, and in which the meanings were forged. As we have seen, there were the spatial contexts of the French and British political cultures, with their own, specific conventions and fashions of political debates and political languages as well as those that were shared. In other words, there most certainly were terms, motifs, and discourses that were shared or at least understood in both political cultures, those that did not translate fully, as well as those that were understood and used in a completely different manner.

Furthermore, there were also some temporal distinctions. Debates on the royal mistresses ran throughout the eighteenth century, as indicated by the fact that the mistresses' memoirs were reprinted, revised, and translated even after the French Revolution. In the course of time, the meanings of the texts unavoidably changed. In consequence, some meanings and debates contained in the texts might have lost their significance, and their influence in shaping the readers' opinions and images might have diminished in certain areas. For example, the writers of the French royal mistresses' memoirs could, and did, take a stand on some debates or crises that were topical at the time the texts were written, as for example, the provincial or local bread crisis or certain parliamentary disputes.¹⁹⁸ In time, however, it is likely that this side of the

2922; *General Evening Post*, London, 11th Dec. 1779, iss 7168; *London Evening Post*, London, 29th Jan. 1780, iss 9020; *St.James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 15th Jan. 1780, iss 2941; *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, London, Wed. 9th Feb. 1780, iss 15910; *Whitehall Evening Post*, London, 10th Feb. 1780, iss 5281; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, London, Thu. 3rd Feb. 1780, iss 3342; *St.James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, London, 17th Feb. 1780, iss 2955; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, London, Tue.22nd Feb. 1780, iss 3358.

¹⁹⁷ See, e.g. Pernau 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Fauques 1759, 49, 120–123, 176–178; Fauques 1758a, 60–61; Fauques 1758b, 43, 102–103, 126–127; Fauques 1766a, 69–70, 196–199, 202; Fauques 1766b, 117–118; Poisson

function of the texts diminished, and the illustrated phenomenon ceased to be a statement and was rather read as a reflection or example of past political practices, though usually of failed policies or abuses of power.

On the other hand, it might also be that some embodied debates, images, and meanings gained a new emphasis. Darnton (1995) also noted the continual reiteration, as for example in reprinting, as a cumulative process where certain aspects of debates were established or solidified through continuous repetition. That is to say, there was a possibility that in time and through repetition certain gossips could be understood and taken as presenting the actual state of affairs. As Darnton among others stated, by the 1780s France was deluged with *libelles* that recycled texts and styles. Courtly gossip and slander had a long lifespan, and consequently they participated in the long-term process of attitude change. For example, there were some widely circulated persistent anecdotes, caricatures, jokes, and songs that could be (and were) connected to any mistress. For example, an anonymous writer conveyed a little poem to his readers that presented the fate of France in terms of its most famous ladies, namely Jeanne d'Arc and Mme de Pompadour:

O France! la sexe femelle
Fit toujours ton Destin!
Ton Bonheur vint d'une Pucelle,
Ton Malheur vint d'une Catin.¹⁹⁹

Obviously, this writer was repeating a widely circulated joke, as already a year before the publication of *The history of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1760) Horace Walpole had shared his translation of the same poem with his friend George Montagu.²⁰⁰ We find the French version again in Walpole's *Memoires of the last ten years of the reign of George the Second* (1822).²⁰¹ On all these occasions, the "Catin" was Mme de Pompadour. However, in 1775 Mairobert published it in his *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* and now it was addressed to Mme du Barry.²⁰²

Writing, printing, and reprinting functioned in two overlapping ways: i) in storing and distributing the felt, sensed, and spoken (discontent, in Darnton's analysis) in written and printed form, ii) as well as in arranging the felt, sensed, and spoken into wider narratives.²⁰³ The reiteration and recycling of anecdotes indicates that the anecdotes that might have been originally used in expressing current distress or discontent with certain royal policies – or circulated with the

1766a, 160–161, 169–171, 190, 265–267; Poisson 1766b, 110–111, 144–145; Poisson 1766c, 158–159, 167–169, 188, 265–266; Poisson 1766d, 114, 150; Mairobert 1775, 154, 160–161, 182; Bécu 1777a, 131, 141, 163–164.

¹⁹⁹ Anon. 1760, 205.

²⁰⁰ "[...] O France! still your fate you may lay at *****'s door;/ You were saved by a maid and undone by a whore." Walpole 1820b, To George Montagu, Esq. Strawberry-hill, Saturday, 11th Oct. 1759, 114–115.

²⁰¹ Walpole 1822b, 382.

²⁰² Mairobert 1775, 177; "Oh, France! the Fates have then, I find/ Subjected thee to womankind./ A maid preserv'd thee heretofore;/ Now art thou ruin'd by a w---e." Bécu 1777a, 156.

²⁰³ Darnton 1995a, 79, 138, 191, 199, 215–216.

intent of pressuring royal decision-making – could be stratified in collective memory or later used as examples of past misuses of royal power, and consequently, as examples of the flaws in the whole monarchical system. Thus, it is important to study the long-term debate on the royal mistresses as well as to compare different reprints and revised editions of the memoirs of royal mistress that were published throughout the century. By these means, it is possible to assess the changes in the grander lines of the narrative of the royal mistress as well as in the function that she, or rather her semi-fictional figure, served in the political centres, in courtly practices, and in the processes of discursive conceptualisation of monarchical rule.

1.4 The royal mistresses in the public debate: demystifying the monarchy

The field that has been the most eager to understand the royal mistresses as a phenomenon in eighteenth-century political culture is the research focusing on the history of the book. The royal mistresses have been examined in the context of changing modes of public debate and especially in relation to the *Revolution of printing*²⁰⁴, or more specifically, in relation to the huge growth of literacy in urban areas, of texts in circulation, and the simultaneous increase in the genres and topics of written texts.

First, we should note Robert Darnton's significant contribution to the history of the book and communication of eighteenth-century France. In his various studies, Darnton has participated in the field of historical studies tracing the origins, roots, or sources of the French Revolution by investigating what the French read in the eighteenth century. *Forbidden* – that is to say, censored – literature is at the centre of his research. He stresses the literature that represented notions on topical political decisions, political persons, and/or political systems in various popular genres ranging from political fiction to political slander, *libelles*, and pornography. Accordingly, he approaches the forbidden literature as a part of wider culture, where the writers of these rather scandalous, anecdotal, or slandering texts participated in wider political debates by conveying political messages or by giving general presentations of political actions, processes, or power-relations.²⁰⁵

Darnton's approach is a material one. While considering the reading, meaning, and reception as a social construction susceptible to individual (and thus nearly unattainable) interpretations, he stresses the diffusion of the texts.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ A term much debated, but still generally used. It refers to the significant changes in the practices of reading and writing, but also in the modes of communication and diffusion of information that started in the latter half of the seventeenth century and peaked in the mid-eighteenth century. See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton 2001; Hesse 2007; van Horn Melton 2009; Black 1987; Merrick 1994; Munck 2002; Chartier 1995; Roche 1999.

²⁰⁵ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton 1971; Darnton 2000.

²⁰⁶ Darnton 1995a, 181-197.

In his endeavour to understand the forbidden political debates of eighteenth-century France, Darnton has demonstrated that there was a huge demand and market for the literature, especially that written in scandalous tones, discussing political persons and political events in general – and royal mistresses in particular.²⁰⁷ That is to say, he has proved that political news, anecdotes, and scandals appealed to the eighteenth-century reading and debating audiences, and that the figure of the royal mistress was used in these debates. Thus, Darnton's greatest contributions do not relate to the debate on the royal mistresses but rather to the understanding of eighteenth-century public debate and its mechanisms, especially regarding popular debate on political topics. Yet, as Jeremy Popkin, for example, has argued, the political meaning and significance of the scandalous writing remains to be analysed further, especially in relation to the wider context of the prevailing trends of intellectual, political, and literary cultures.²⁰⁸ For my part, this research is an attempt to answer this need for a more comprehensive understanding of the political meaning of scandal.

Next, however, we should look into the work of Thomas Kaiser, who has contributed to the studies exploring the political meanings of the debate on royal mistresses from a slightly different point of view. Darnton's major observations on the debate on royal mistresses, as expressed in *Forbidden best-sellers* (1995), relate to the pre-Revolutionary France of the 1770s and 1780s, and specifically to the debates concerning Mme du Barry. Kaiser, on the other hand, focuses on the mid-century French debates featuring Mme de Pompadour. Thus, he has studied the crucial point when public opinion turned against the royal mistress in the latter half of the 1740s and the onslaught of *mauvais discours*, or seditious speech appropriated the figure of the royal mistress.²⁰⁹

The greatest difference between the approaches of these two historians relates to the understanding and emphasis of the *political* element in the debate on the royal mistresses. For Darnton the political element is in the unveiling of the political persons and practices of the political centre: discussing and debating on the subject of royal mistresses was peeping into the court of Versailles, into the royal bedchamber, and into the person of the impersonal monarch. What made it political was the connection to topical political persons and the impressions and representations that the texts offered on political decision-makers and political decision-making – as well as the notion that eighteenth-century politically powerful men considered this debate dangerous.²¹⁰

While for Kaiser, the political element is not only the representation of political persons and their political decision-making, but especially the slander and critique of the royal mistress as a tool that was utilised in the power-struggles

²⁰⁷ Darnton 1971; Darnton 1984a; Darnton 1984b; Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2000; Darnton 2004. Regarding the popular demand for the texts concerning royal mistresses, see, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 64, 77, 137, 166; Darnton 2004; Darnton 2000.

²⁰⁸ Popkin 1998.

²⁰⁹ Kaiser 1996, 1029; Kaiser 1997, 366.

²¹⁰ Darnton 1995a, 76–79, 139; Darnton 2004, 114–117; Darnton 1984a, 14; Darnton 2000, 31.

of the royal court. Using a wide range of sources, extending from the scandalous *libelles* and memoirs of Mme de Pompadour, eighteenth-century ministers, and courtiers to archived diplomatic papers, he connects the scandalous literature to the internal power-struggles of the royal court in his two articles, “Madam de Pompadour and the theatres of power” (1996) and “The drama of Charles Edward Stuart, Jacobite propaganda, and French political protest, 1745–1750” (1997). That is to say, for Kaiser, the debate on royal mistresses – especially the slander and criticism – belonged to intentioned campaigns of propaganda, where the contestants (especially *parti dévot*) sought to utilise the ambiguous *public debate* or *public opinion* in order to influence royal decision-making.²¹¹

As the public debate expanded during the eighteenth century, all kinds of actors sought to utilise it. This included the courtly elites and the Crown as well. Certainly, there was an ideal that the politicians, ministers, and monarchs should not let the debating outside governmental circles influence their opinions. Additionally, especially scandalous/slandering writing was considered indelicate and trivial, and as such, unthreatening.²¹² At the same time, the governing elites were concerned about the control of public debates and even participated in them and utilised them for their own advantage. The crown itself sought to mobilise public opinion for its own benefits, even with hired propagandists.²¹³ Foreign ambassadors and envoys tried to influence the local press in order to propagate positive impressions of their home country and its policies, suppress certain information, and even feed intelligence.²¹⁴ Especially during wars, eighteenth-century governments routinely produced propaganda to justify their resolutions and claims to their own people as well as to the rest of Europe.²¹⁵ Domestic traditional elites also participated in forming and manipulating public opinion.²¹⁶ Members of the governmental and courtly elites wrote about current issues and to the king and his mistresses in formats that dispersed the knowledge outside the circles of the elites. Rival factions or parties within the courts used public debate outside the courts for their confrontations. Influencing the royal opinion through public opinion is most evident in cases such as the rivalry between Mme de Pompadour and *parti dévot*²¹⁷ or the contest between Mme du Barry and Duc de Choiseul, then Foreign Minister of France²¹⁸. In both cases, the contest that was actually located in the royal court and concerned the relative positions of power between two courtly power-blocks was

²¹¹ Kaiser 1997; Kaiser 1996 1026–1030, 1042.

²¹² See, e.g. Black 1987, 129; Darnton 1995a, 198–200.

²¹³ van Horn Melton 2009, 67; Bell 1992, 917; Kaiser, 1989–1990, 187–199; Barker 1998, 55; Graham 2006, 139; Censer 1997, 193; Baker 1990, 140; Wilson 2000, 81.

²¹⁴ Black 1987, 221–234. However, ambassadors were rarely interested in the opinion of general public but rather that of the smaller political elite with whom they did their business.

²¹⁵ Shovlin 2010, 123–125.

²¹⁶ See, e.g. Popkin 1989; Graham 2006, 146–149; Graham 2000, 17, 57, 65–66; Clark 1998, 21; van Horn Melton 2009, 67–68.

²¹⁷ See, e.g. Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997, 370, 375–377; Darnton 2004, 104; Graham 2000, 65.

²¹⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 74 Bécu 1777a, 26. On the battle between Mme du Barry and Duc de Choiseul and Duchess de Gramont, see also, Bécu 1777a, 25–28, 40; Mairobert 1775, 114, 144.

transferred into the wider arena of debates outside the court, was transformed into slanderous rumours against the mistress, and was intended to influence the royal favour and preference on the authority of public opinion.²¹⁹ Rumour, then, was a means of influencing opinions, of conveying information, and of social control that penetrated all layers of society.²²⁰ Yet, it is extremely difficult to estimate the impacts of rumour, gossip, and scandal just because of their seemingly trivial nature. This research examines the political meaning of trivial discussion by investigating how differing contemporary political anxieties and discourses intertwine under the veil of a topic or a theme marked as trivial.

Extending from the field of the history of the book and research focusing on the meanings of the changing modes of communication and public debate, we must lastly remark on the research of Lisa Jane Graham. Her research does not focus solely on the royal mistresses, but instead on the wide range of *mauvais discours*, and the entanglements of expressions of fidelity and resistance in France from the 1740s to 1770s.²²¹ However, as she claims, by the 1750s the (fictional) figure of the royal mistress stands out as an established figure of an *evil mistress*²²². Combining the records of the Paris police and published scandalous texts, she studies in detail the *mauvais discours* of eighteenth-century France, with a focus on the problematic expansion of printed texts, its effect on the demystification and banalisation of the prevailing monarchy, and on the discursive mechanisms – specifically on literary techniques, modes, forms, and narrative strategies – used in this process.²²³ In Graham’s studies, the figure of the royal mistress is shown in her various political capacities: it was a figure through which it was possible to peep into the court and into the person of the monarch,²²⁴ and even appropriate the figure of the monarch himself,²²⁵ to express criticism against certain unpopular royal policies or discuss political events of the day,²²⁶ and to discuss the norms and ideals concerning monarchical rule²²⁷.

The royal mistress was then obviously a tool, medium, and subject of criticism. But at the same time, the mistress had an established part in the court and courtly politics, she functioned as a medium of royal favours and even as an extension of the person of the monarch – in Graham’s case, especially in relation to royal mercy and pardon, since her studies focus on the writers who were convicted and incarcerated.²²⁸

²¹⁹ On public debate in other rivalries utilising public debate, see, e.g. Bécu 1777a, 88; Bécu 1777a, 113 On Count Lauraguais’ caricature against Mme du Barry; Bécu 1777b, 208; Mairobert 1775, 285–286 On Count du Barry against Mme du Barry; Mairobert 1775, 124–125; Anon. 1760, 17 On Count de Tressan against Mme de Pompadour.

²²⁰ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 70–72; Kaiser 1996, 1030; Capp 2003; Darnton 1995a, 79, 138–139; Darnton 2004, 110, 115; Darnton 2000, 2–4, 15; Clark 1998, 21; Goodman 1989, 342; Munck 2002, 41; Einonen 2014.

²²¹ Especially in Graham 2000.

²²² Graham 2000, 112.

²²³ Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997.

²²⁴ Graham 2000, 84, 117; Graham 2006, 145, 147.

²²⁵ Graham 2000; Graham 2006, 143–144, 157–158.

²²⁶ Graham 2000, 112; Graham 1997, 95.

²²⁷ Graham 2000, 78–82, 204 – 240; Graham 2006, 145–153;

²²⁸ Graham 2000, 58, 112.

As discussed in the previous section, the eighteenth-century public debate on the royal mistresses was a bigger phenomenon in France than in Britain. There was a significant difference between the debates concerning royal mistresses between France and Britain, which indicate that there were significant differences in the practice, role, and function of the royal mistresses as well. Thus, it should not be a surprise that this line of research has been focusing mainly on the French context. There has been some similar interest in the English royal mistresses as well, although not in the eighteenth-century ones. However, when it comes to the current studies surveying the royal mistresses as parts of wider phenomena of political culture, the famous mistresses of Charles II have stolen the show. For example, Megan Ryan Schenkelberg's doctoral dissertation (2012) focuses on the seventeenth-century representations of the royal mistresses of Charles II. In her study, the royal mistresses have been studied as figures that offered a way to discuss other topical social and political matters and anxieties – especially in relation to religious tensions and concerns relating to prostitution.²²⁹

These approaches to the eighteenth-century mistresses and political debates, especially in the French context, are more than anything studies that focus on the aggrandisement of printed texts, the expansion of the public debate, and in relation to these, on the surge of slanderous texts concerning the royal mistress – and through the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress, the public figure of the monarch. Thus, they contribute to the studies concerned with the demystification, desacralisation, and banalisation of monarchy, that is to say, the debates and processes through which the monarchy came to lose its divine, sacred, mystical, and untouchable aura during the eighteenth century.

The object of these studies lies in the *mauvais discours*,²³⁰ or in the slander, in the criticism, in the forms and modes of discussion dismantling and challenging the monarchical authority and aura. In a sense, all these studies contribute to the research focusing on the great changes in eighteenth-century France that eventually made the French Revolution possible – or inevitable. From these studies, it can be concluded that the French Revolution did not happen because the publics circulated scandalous stories about the sexual encounters of their king – but it would not have happened without this. As Darnton, Kaiser, and Graham all claimed, it was the slander, the scandal, and the ridicule that banalised,

²²⁹ Schenkelberg 2012.

²³⁰ The most favoured sources have been Mathieu-François Pidansat Mairobert's *libel Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse Du Barry* (1775) in Darnton's *Forbidden best-sellers of pre-Revolutionary France* (1995); Marie-Madeleine Bonafon's *roman à clef Tanastés* (1745), in Darnton's "Mademoiselle Bonafon and the private life of Louis XV: Communication circuits in eighteenth-century France" (2004) and in Graham's *If the King only knew. Seditious speech in the reign of Louis XV* (2000); Barthélemy-François-Joseph Mouffle d'Angerville's *libel La vie privée de Louis XV* (1781) in Kaiser articles "Madam de Pompadour and the theatres of power" (1996) and "The drama of Charles Edward Stuart, Jacobite propaganda, and French political protest, 1745–1750" (1997); and libellous mémoires and letters of Mme de Pompadour, specifically Marianne-Agnès Fauques' *L'Histoire de Mme de Pompadour* (1759) and its translation *The history of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1879), and anonymously published *Mémoires de madame la marquise de Pompadour* (1766), in Kaiser's article "Madam de Pompadour and the theatres of power" (1996).

demystified, and desacralised the monarch and monarchy, and so cleared the way for contesting notions on political participation and political institutions outside the royal court and the person of the monarch.²³¹ We are about to see this process in this study as well. This study, however, deepens the understanding of the operations of a scandal. Instead of functioning only in clearing the way for new ideas by wrecking the image of the monarch, the writers disseminating the royal scandals also actively participated in constructing, formulating, and circulating new political notions and ideas.

However, this is only one side of the discourse on royal mistresses. It is understandable that the historians interested in the rising challenges to the French monarchy mainly note the various sources criticising the prevailing rule and rulers. Nevertheless, in this study we are interested in the phenomenon of royal mistresses at a more general level. The device of the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress was a prominent aspect of the function of the royal mistresses in eighteenth-century political cultures – but it was not the only one. As much as we should be interested in the ways that the figure of royal mistresses was used in order to challenge, criticise, and dismantle the authority, aura, and legitimacy of the monarch and monarchical rule, we should also pay attention to the figure of the royal mistress as it served the purpose of reinforcing, solidifying, maintaining, or legitimising. In this respect, I suggest expanding the set of sources, so that the corpus demonstrates the debates of a variety of audiences and publics, and consequently, a variety of alternative ways of utilising the figure of the royal mistress in political debates.

This approach locates the royal mistresses more closely in the context of the royal court and in the context of the royal tradition of keeping mistresses. The royal mistresses as negative figures contributing to the wave of criticism tend to take the practice of keeping royal mistresses for granted. Even though there is a blatant notion that the royal mistresses served the purpose of demonstrating the king's virility,²³² no comprehensive research has been done on the subject of why the monarchs insisted on keeping mistresses and what role and function they fulfilled in the monarchical political system that revolved around the person of the monarch and the royal court. After all, the practice of keeping mistresses was, as explained earlier, an established practice. Thus, it must have had reasons and functions – and ones that were not only about sex. We will discuss this further in chapter 2.

If we return to the point of slander, scandal, and ridicule as banalising, demystifying, challenging, and delegitimising the monarchical authority, aura, and system, I would like to further emphasise the question *how*. How did the scandalous texts on royal mistresses dismantle the monarchical aura and authority of personal majesty that allegedly in France preceded the full-scale overthrow of the monarchy as a political system? In order to answer this question, Darnton, Kaiser, and Graham have distinguished a set of ways that the royal

²³¹ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 165–166, 191, 241–242, 246; Darnton 2000, 15; Kaiser 1997, 366; Graham 2000; Graham 2006, 145, 140–141, 157–158; Graham 1997, 95.

²³² As, e.g. in Graham 2000, 103.

mistresses' figure was used in political debate, but also a certain set of themes, sources of discontent, and accusations against the royal mistresses that were discussed and exploited in the debate. Most notable of these was, unsurprisingly, the theme interconnecting sexual and political corruption revealing the mistresses' sexual rule over the king and the king's sexual desires and hedonism, even decadence.²³³ Other generally noted themes consist of attacking the mistresses on the premise of their base descent²³⁴ and their expensiveness²³⁵.

Yet, these motifs were not necessarily peculiar to eighteenth-century French debate on the royal mistresses. They were already known, used, and central when criticising royal mistresses in earlier centuries. For example, Kathleen Wellman brings up these exact same themes when discussing *Queens and mistresses of Renaissance France* (2013). Further, these themes are still quite recognisable in our modern discourse on the mistresses of powerful men: sex, corruption, and money were and are in the essence of a mistress. That is to say, all these themes have a long historical tradition and they still carry a meaning in our cultural understanding. Thus, it is tempting to take them for granted. I suggest that these themes should be considered general or umbrella terms or "perennial" themes that have been traditionally connected to the women associated with a private and intimate connection to men wielding political power. Hence, it is not enough to find debates relating to these themes in the discourse on royal mistresses: these themes form(ed) the most time-resistant core of the discourse on royal mistresses. Rather, it should be asked what was the meaning and significance of the discussion on these "perennial" themes in a certain place and at a certain time.

This is a question concerning the contextualisation of the debate, the figure, and the phenomenon of the royal mistress. Previous studies have been thorough when contextualising the scandalous literature concerning the royal mistresses in the context of the changing public debate, and have demonstrated especially the changing popularity of the monarch and/or monarchy during the eighteenth century.²³⁶ Likewise, as the royal mistresses are recognised as figures through which the eighteenth-century publics discussed and criticised topical events and especially certain unpopular policies, previous scholars have connected the slanderous debate on the political events of the day (as for example, the king's illness at Metz or the making of wars and peace),²³⁷ to the topical political crises

²³³ See, e.g. Darnton 1971, 107; Darnton 2000, 31; Darnton 1984b; Kaiser 1997, 375, 377; Kaiser 1996, 1035, 1037-1040; Graham 2000, 58-59, 117, 234, 234; Graham 2006, 145, 148, 151-153.

²³⁴ See, e.g. Darnton 1971, 107; Darnton 2000, 31; Darnton 1984b; Kaiser 1996, 1027, 1029; Graham 2000, 216. Here we see the meaning of rank and estate in eighteenth-century hierarchical societies. Rank and status were very important categories through which relations of power were articulated. However, in the scope of this study, I do not include detailed analysis of the meanings of the represented status and origin of the royal mistresses.

²³⁵ See, e.g. Kaiser 1997, 377; Kaiser 1996, 1031-1035; Graham 2000, 112, 216.

²³⁶ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Darnton 1971; Darnton 2000; Kaiser 1997; Kaiser 1996; Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997.

²³⁷ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 147-149; Darnton 2004, 15-16; Kaiser 1997; Graham 2000.

(such as Jansenism and Parliamentary crises),²³⁸ and to the unpopular policies and debates related to them (especially on taxation)²³⁹.

However, these connections have rarely been considered in their relation to changing currents of political thought, ideas, concepts, and debates at large. Of course, there is a standardised set of these that have been mentioned, as for example *despotism*, a pervasive concept of political and social vocabularies at least since Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* (1748); the *divine right* of kings; the *Secret du Roi* or *Mystère du Roi*, the most important political idea disagreeing with the public debate on political issues; the theory of the *king's two bodies*; and *paternalism* at the heart of understanding the use of legitimate power, most commonly conceptualised via the parallel of family and state.²⁴⁰ These ideas function as the basic context for evaluating the changes in popular conceptions regarding monarchical rule.

What I propose is to problematise specifically the long-standing and well-known themes of women's influence, corruption, and money by contextualising them more closely to the prevailing political thought and debates. In this study, we are about to see how these "perennial" themes were discussed, how the themes expanded in other directions and overlapped with other themes and discourses, and how the argumentation was constructed within the scope of certain themes. In other words, in order to know *how* the debates revolving around, for example, the themes of sex, corruption, and money dissolved monarchical legitimacy, we need to first understand *what* sex, corruption, and money meant in eighteenth-century political cultures, courtly cultures, and in the context of ideas and practices concerning the monarchy. Certainly, these themes were not just pointlessly reiterated – rather, they were reinvented, affirmed, rebuilt, and used in a process in which they gained new meanings.

For this purpose, I propose a more semantic analysis of the discourse on royal mistresses and the related central themes and concepts as depicted in the previous section. Semantic analysis reveals how various contemporary debates intertwined in the discourse on the royal mistresses and how the monarchy was conceptualised in the discourse on the royal mistresses. However, it is necessary, yet not easy, to illustrate historical change in a discourse that includes so many historically durable motifs associated with public women or women near power. The span of less than a century does not always render satisfactory results in locating the specific and particular. Further study could assess the long-term changes in the discourse on royal mistresses by mapping the transfers of genre as well as the central vocabularies and themes of the discourse. Instead, in this study the perspective of comparative history provides means to understand the spatial differences, and consequently, to grasp the elements that made the

²³⁸ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 147–149, 236; Kaiser 1997, 377; Kaiser 1996, 1040–1041; Graham 2000,

²³⁹ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 147–149; Darnton 2004, 115–117; Kaiser 1997, 377; Kaiser 1996, 1040; Graham 2000.

²⁴⁰ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 75–77, 154; Darnton 2000, 15–16; Kaiser 1997, 366; Kaiser 1996, 1039; Graham 2000, 20, 23, 58–59, 75, 79, 82, 88, 117, 123, 159, 164, 170; Graham 2006, 145, 148, 154.

discourse on the royal mistresses politically significant specifically in their own spatial and temporal political cultures.

With this approach, it is possible to understand more comprehensively the discourse on royal mistresses that surged during the mid-eighteenth century, gained both domestic and foreign popularity and significance, and was politicised as part of the debates concerning legitimate political rule. Here, we will meet the (semi-fictional) figure of the royal mistress in the context of thoughts, imaginaries, and ideas that framed possible, conceivable, and justifiable political action. After all, the debate about the royal mistresses was a political debate, one that participated in defining the conceptions of legitimate political rule and political participation as well as what *politics* and *political* is.

Thus, the most important contexts for understanding the meanings of the themes that were reiterated in the debate on the royal mistresses are those concerning the changing currents of political thought, and the norms and ideals regarding political actions and agency. Further, there can be distinguished two larger fields of historical research: i) research interested in sex and gender that outlines, and occasionally problematises, the normative, the ideal, and the deviant regarding the gendered spheres of public and political activity, and ii) research interested in the political ideas, political thought, and the ideals and norms regarding legitimate political rule. As we are about to see, these two fields are not necessarily far removed from each other, especially in the case of the royal mistress whose politicised figure itself embodied problematic entanglements of sex, gender, public, private, and legitimate or delegitimate political agency and action.

1.5 The political gender, the gendered political

Gender has a specific importance as an analytical tool. It is understood here as social gender, thus distinguishable from biological sex, although there is a deep and problematic interconnection between the two. Following Joan Scott's dual understanding of gender as a basic factor of social relations, and simultaneously, as one of the most important ways to indicate relations of power that are based on the culturally and socially constructed understandings of the difference between the sexes²⁴¹, I further stress gender as a politically significant historical artefact.

As the basic factor of social relations, gender is entangled with ambiguous cultural symbols, with the normative conceptions that strive to limit the possible meanings and interpretations of cultural symbols, and with social, political, and economic factors and institutions. Certainly, gender is constructed in and through all these, but it is most visible in the systems and institutions of kinship

²⁴¹ Scott 1999, 42. Certainly, social rank or estate is one as well, especially in early modern hierarchical societies. However, the analysis of social rank plays only a minor role in this study. The analysis of the political meaning of the estate, rank, and social status of the royal mistresses would provide an interesting subject for further studies.

(as for example, household and family).²⁴² The perspective on gender in its first aspect as a basic factor of social relations has inspired a great variety of research, especially in the fields of cultural and social history, that has focused attention on the practical level, actions, agency, and lived experiences and possibilities of members of different estates, ranks, and sexes in eighteenth-century France and Britain – as well as on ideal and normative masculinities and femininities. However, in this study, this is considered to provide a context in which the second aspect of gender functions.

The analytical perspective on gender originates from studies understanding *gender* itself as a discursive and ideological formulation and as a rhetorical tool in political contests.²⁴³ As Scott stated, gender is an important field in which power and relations of power are indicated – that is to say, expressed, performed, and negotiated – through seemingly inflexible binary oppositions. Thus, gender has an important legitimising function as well.²⁴⁴

As stated, the two aspects of gender are not separate but deeply interconnected. During the early modern period (but in later centuries as well) the language of power was highly gendered just because gender, gendered conceptions, and languages were embedded in the political theories and ideas regarding legitimate monarchical rule and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, as well as in the letter of the law that controlled the legal, social, and economic opportunities of men and women.²⁴⁵ This interconnection is most obvious in the conceptualisation of legitimate power and authority as well as submission to it in familial terms. As we will see in a moment in greater detail, participation in political decision-making was conceptualised and legitimised through capacities and abilities that were gendered – that is to say, explicitly masculine.²⁴⁶ Thus, a certain kind of dominion was legitimated by using gendered concepts and conceptions, and furthermore, this legitimised rule was enforced in the letter of the law that was in the hands of the ruler.²⁴⁷

Emphasising the interconnection of the conceptualisation of legitimate power and gender, this study stresses that it was also possible to renegotiate the relations of power and redefine legitimate rule through gendered language and conceptions. This was a process where there were continual efforts to mark new issues as political – or as a- or non-political – on the premise of gender. This study is interested especially in ways the eighteenth-century writers commenting on the royal mistresses attempted to *gender* (i.e. mark as feminine or masculine in this context) certain capacities, attributes, matters, or phenomena – an attempt that is further understood as a political act as it simultaneously attempted to

²⁴² Scott 1999, 43–44. Further, gender is intertwined with subjective identity. See, Scott 1999, 44.

²⁴³ Scott 1999; Landes 1988; McCormack 2005; Dudink, Hageman & Clark 2007; Clark 2007; Maza 1993; Sinha 2007; Hicks 2005; Sennefelt 2011.

²⁴⁴ Scott 1999, 42, 44–45.

²⁴⁵ Scott 1999, 44–50.

²⁴⁶ See, e.g. Scott 1999, 44–49; McCormack 2005; Sennefelt 2011; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xi; Clark 2007; Clark 1998, 20; Hirschmann 2008, 99, 102–103; Merrick 1994, 686; Hicks 2005.

²⁴⁷ Scott 1999, 44–50.

mark these matters, issues, and phenomena as either political/a- or non-political or legitimate/delegitimate. In other words, the interest in gender does not primarily relate to subjective or collective experience of sexual difference but rather to the ways representations and understandings of gender served as a tool in political struggles for conceptualising legitimate use of power. However, the wider context of gendered norms, values, roles, and duties as cultural constructions and further, as normative cultural expectations, must be noted. Just as any other cultural expectation, the normative conceptions and assumptions regarding gender and gendered roles were simultaneously to some extent binding, could be utilised as tools of social control, and were linguistically negotiated and utilised.

There are three traditions of research on the topic of gender that have inspired this research and provided an indispensable context for analysis that we need to note next: research focusing on family, on women's public and political participation, and on *gender* as a specifically political construction. First, springing from social history and women's history, there is a wide field of research on the subject of family and related gendered duties as well as ideals and norms of behaviour – especially those of sexual conduct. The context of ideas, ideals, and thoughts relating to family is crucial for this study for three reasons.

- i. Without a doubt, the royal mistresses were a scandal that related to deviations from normative sexual conduct. Sexual behaviour was primarily conceptualised through the ideas and ideals regarding marriage, the relationship between a married couple, and family life, both in dominantly Roman Catholic France and Anglican Britain. Furthermore, it was not only the ideals regarding sexual practices that were reasserted, controlled, and performed in the idea and locus of the marriage and family. The whole gender system with two mutually complementary sexes and their equally complementary duties, characteristics, capacities, and abilities was normatively constructed through the idea of family and marriage, and normatively controlled primarily in the context of family.²⁴⁸ That is to say, marriage and family was in the essence of gender: gender was constructed, performed, and controlled through the idea and locus of the family.
- ii. The family and marriage was the most important unit, practice, and phenomenon, through which men's right to power was conceptualised. That is to say, the family was the basic unit through which patriarchal power was constructed, maintained, and acted out. During the eighteenth century, there was a strict hierarchy between the sexes, explained either through biblical and religious explanations or theories concerning the laws of nature and natural philosophy (or both) that placed men, husbands, and fathers in power, and consequently, subordinated women to rule by men.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ See, e.g. Capp 2003, 8, 11–12, 27; McCormack 2005, 19, 27; Hanley 1989, 24–27; Taque 2001, 84–85; Wellman 2002, 269–270; Spongberg 2002, 49; Farr 1991, 400; Hirschmann 2008, 72–75, 138–140; O'Brien 2007, 630–631; Parry 2007, 229; Adams 1997; Harvey 2005; Winston 2005, 269, 271; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 31–33, 48, 285; Hufton 1998, 40.

²⁴⁹ See, e.g. Hanley 1989, 21, 26–27; Taque 2001, 80, 85–86; Hicks 2005; Wellman 2002, 269–270; Farr 1991, 400; Capp 2003, 3–6; Hirschmann 2008, 47, 59–60, 72–75, 150–151;

- iii. The family was understood as the microcosm of both the larger universal order and the organised state. Thus, the family offered a model through which the social and political organising of the state, the nature and justification of monarchical rule, and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled were conceptualised. In practice, this was accomplished through the analogy of family and state where the ruler was conceptualised as the father and the head of the family. Thus, the familial relationships and mutual ties were extended from the nuclear family to describe the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and to describe the nature of rule and submission.²⁵⁰ In the eighteenth century, the French Bourbon monarchy continued to legitimate its rule through the metaphor of family-state, and it is recognisable especially in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766).²⁵¹ The analogy was well known in Britain as well, although its use in the legitimation of monarchical rule diminished with the end of the rule of the Stuart dynasty.²⁵²

Summa summarum, in early modern Europe family was not only a social institution and basic system or unit for guaranteeing life or regulating and naturalising gendered expectations and possibilities of life. It was simultaneously an abstraction participating in the conceptualisations of state and relations of power which would transfer it as a basic political concept as well. Thus, the change in the understanding of the family and familial roles, duties, and relations that occurred during the eighteenth century had far-reaching consequences.

As the scholars interested in the history of family and related ideals and norms have shown, the conceptions of family changed during the eighteenth century, both in France and in Britain. The challenges or new possibilities opened up with the transition from the one-sex model of Aristotle and Galen to the two-sex model comprising two contrary and mutually complementary sexes,²⁵³ with the development of utilitarianistic political and economic ideas that stressed the *public utility* of the family and women, and with the idealisation of motherhood, domesticity, and sentimentality.²⁵⁴ The ideals of domesticity and domestic femininity have been strongly connected to the rise of the educated middling ranks and the bourgeoisie, and especially to the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau – not that the ideals themselves were actually new. Accordingly, this ideal model

McCormack 2005, 19, 27; Winston 2005, 271–272; Spongberg 2002, 40; Offen 2000, 35–36; Lown 1985; Shoemaker 1998, 91; Harvey 2005; Hufton 1998, 38, 40, 51.

²⁵⁰ See, e.g. Serna 2000, 431; Rendall 1985, 8–9; Spongberg 2002, 40–41; Merrick 1992; Hirschmann 2008, 44–60; Lown 1985, 31; McCormack 2005, 19–24; Munck 2002, 163, 193, 195–196; Harvey 2005; Henshall 1992, 143; Spellman 1998, 45, 64; Merrick 1986, 498; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 2–5, 26; Farr 1991; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 280; Downie 1994, 47.

²⁵¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 149, 219–220; Poisson 1766b, 219; Poisson 1766c, 148, 216–217; Poisson 1766d, 229–230. See also published correspondence, e.g. Poisson 1771b, LETTER LXIX. Au Maréchal de Noailles, 1762, 89; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXIX. To the marshal de Noailles, 1762, 80–81; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIII. To marshal Belleisle, 1747, 51–52; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXIV. To the countess of Navailles, 752, 169.

²⁵² See, e.g. Clark 2007, 8.

²⁵³ See, e.g. Dolan 2003, 14; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 21–22, 35–38; Shoemaker 1998, 18; Hufton 1998, 43; Hirschmann 2008, 147–152, 156–157.

²⁵⁴ See, e.g. Spongberg 2002, 81; Offen 2000, 29, 33, 46–48, 53–58; Hicks 2005; Bellhouse 1997; Bellhouse 1999, 991–992; Hicks 2005; Wahrman 2004, 12; Hirschmann 2008, 138–140.

of the nuclear family and sentimental domesticity highlighting the mother's role has been regarded as an alternative, and consequently a challenge, to the aristocratic model including arranged marriages, extended families, wet-nurses, governesses, and toleration of extramarital relationships for both of the spouses.²⁵⁵

Thus, the changing or varying models and ideas concerning family and familial life were brought into the political contests between the different estates or social ranks. But, the changing ideals also offered new options for the elites to perform gender as well. As sentimental domesticity bound women to the private domestic sphere as idealised mothers, there was also simultaneously introduced a new model for the male head of the family that stressed closeness and affection between the members of the family, and modesty.²⁵⁶ This change in the ideals of the husband, now understood through companionship, affection, and fidelity, offered a model of masculinity that was available to the political and social elites by the 1750s or 1760s as well. Obviously, the monarchs of the latter half of the eighteenth century embraced this opportunity: both George III and Louis XIV chose to build their public image as affectionate husbands and fathers, and chose not to keep mistresses.²⁵⁷

Further, there are fields problematising the influence, power, and public role of women. Advancing from the more concrete and practical side in the discursive direction, there has been a huge interest in women's agency and opportunities for public and political action in eighteenth-century Europe. Originating from the criticism against the Habermasian theory of public sphere, this line of inquiry has posed a challenge to the idea that the public sphere was a solely masculine space or that the formation of *public opinion* had no room for women's activities. In this respect, we are talking about concrete and practical participation and not the semantic or symbolic meanings of public, political, or gender. The most traditional perspective is the one interested in the *public*, where scholars have focused on women's participation in *public debate* and in the open and general space for discussion and political participation known as the *public sphere*. In this respect, historians have stressed female agency in the function of salons, the importance of salon culture at the heart of Enlightenment thought, and women's participation in the production and distribution of information in the form of texts.²⁵⁸

There is also a strong line of research focusing on women's political participation, or women's influence on public and/or political decision-making. For example, Elaine Chalus has studied the eighteenth-century social and political circles of eighteenth-century England,²⁵⁹ Judith S. Lewis has studied

²⁵⁵ See, e.g. Bellhouse 1997; Roulston 1998/1999, 217; Bellhouse 1999, 991–992; Hicks 2005; Wahrman 2004, 12; Maza 1993, 283–286.

²⁵⁶ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 110, 113.

²⁵⁷ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 13, 115, 139–140, 144, 145–147; Roche 1999, 476; Merrick 1992, 182–184; Orr 2002, 32.

²⁵⁸ See, e.g. Goodman 1989; Spongberg 2002, 87–89; van Horn Melton 2009, 197–225; Maza 1992; Gordon 1992; Gordon 1989; Pieretti 2002; Hesse 1989; Spongberg 2002; Jacob 2007.

²⁵⁹ Chalus 2000; Chalus 2001; Chalus 2009.

aristocratic women's participation in electoral politics in eighteenth-century England,²⁶⁰ Svante Norrhem has studied the wives of the members of the Swedish Council of the Realm (*Riksråd*) in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden,²⁶¹ and Kathleen Wellman has studied the political and cultural influence of the Renaissance queens and mistresses in France²⁶² – to name just a few. This line of inquiry follows the networks of power and highlights the political meanings of sociability and social sphere in early modern political culture. These scholars have outlined elite women's political participation and influence originating from the social and domestic arenas. They have shown that the role of the wives (as well as of the sisters and daughters) of ministers, counsellors of state, and other politicians was both politically significant and that there certainly were accepted roles and functions for women – specifically the feminine roles of a hostess, a mediator, and a supporter – that enabled women to participate in political endeavours.²⁶³ This perspective offers new ways to understand the possibilities of political influencing that were available to royal mistresses as well. We will encounter the royal mistress in these roles and functions especially in section 2.2. and section 4.2.2.

This trend of research has designedly challenged the traditional political history that focuses on the great men in politics (whether ministers, counsels, kings, or other politicians) within political institutions. The definition of *political* through political institutions (especially parliament and government, but also political parties) and political offices (as for example, minister, member of Parliament or Parlement) has upheld the strict separation of gendered public and private spheres, if you allow the spatial metaphor. Certainly, the perspective of high, noble, educated, and wealthy women's participation in the political sphere and public sphere, whether from the viewpoints of sociability, networking, patronage, or participation in public discussion, has dismantled the strict separation between the masculine public sphere associated with political action and the feminine private sphere without political significance. In fact, it would be more proper to say that there was no such strict division into public (political) and private (non-political) spheres in early modern political cultures that would have completely excluded women: the ideals of sociability and the networked nature of power-relations connected the domestic and social arenas to the public and political sphere.²⁶⁴ That is to say, at least in practice.

Which leads us to the third line of research investigating gender as a social and especially as a political construction, which brings out paradoxes between gendered conceptions and political uses of gender and the actual and practical role and function of women in political influencing. This line focuses on the representations of femininity and masculinity as part of debates concerning legitimate political participation. More than anything, this has been an endeavour to disentangle the connections of masculinity and citizenship or

²⁶⁰ Lewis 2001.

²⁶¹ Norrhem 2010.

²⁶² Wellman 2013.

²⁶³ Chalus 2000; Chalus 2001; Chalus 2009; Norrhem 2010; Hicks 2005.

²⁶⁴ See, e.g. Chalus 2000; Chalus 2001; Chalus 2009; Norrhem 2010; Hicks 2005.

legitimate public and political participation. As Joan Landes, Matthew McCormack, Karen Hagemann, Anna Clark, Stefan Dudink, Mrinalini Sinha, Philip Hicks, and Karin Sennefelt among others have pointed out, legitimate political rule and participation were charged with attributes, capacities, and abilities that were inseparable from the male sex and masculinity. Thus, masculinity was at the heart of public and political participation.

More than anything else, this line of inquiry relies on the notion of gender as socially constructed understanding of difference between two sexes – or, a binary oppositional pair. In this study as well, I stress the meanings of binary oppositions in the negotiation of legitimacy and legitimate political participation. Gender is further a system of difference that has a strong normative dimension. As normative conceptions, gendered conceptions tend to take the form of a strict and inflexible binary opposition that further appears timeless and perpetual.²⁶⁵ Even before the establishment of the two-sex model in medical and popular discourses, the distinctions of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine have been considered pairs of terms that were (and are) inextricably related and simultaneously encompass opposite meanings. Furthermore, the two sexes and genders were not only antithetical, they were also mutually complementary.

The associations through binary oppositions produce asymmetrical and unequal meanings for the masculine and the feminine.²⁶⁶ Further, asymmetrical counter concepts have political significance and possibilities in the process of stabilising asymmetrical relations. Asymmetrical conceptual pairs reveal and articulate political possibilities as well as enforce the shared experience of the speaker when defining the *Other* in negative terms.²⁶⁷ Analytically speaking, this means that when commentators represent or define any thing or matter, as for example a quality or a right, in gendered terms, its opposition is always present by implication. Or, if one sex was understood to encompass a certain set of features, the other sex was automatically acknowledged to encompass complementary or opposite features. In this research, asymmetrical associations are understood to make the definitions of power dependent on the definitions of gender – and this further makes the legitimacy of a monarch's rule dependent on his assumed and represented gendered (masculine) capacities, characteristics, and attributes.

Yet, the thing that makes the binary opposition of man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine politically significant is that these conceptual oppositions functioned alongside other binary oppositions that both reasserted their meaning and contained a value judgement. That is to say, gendered language and concepts refer to moral standards, rules of behaviour, ideals, norms, virtues, and vices as well. The binary opposition of man/woman was enforced by a system of binary traits, attributes, characteristics, capacities, and abilities that were regarded as masculine/feminine. Further, there were

²⁶⁵ Scott 1999, 43.

²⁶⁶ Scott 1999, 43.

²⁶⁷ Koselleck 2004, 159-189.

other sets of parallel binary oppositions in political language, most famous of which must be *public/private*. I further propose that the sets of parallel binary opposition could be tied together on the axis of gender. Thus, not unlike metaphors, oppositions containing gendered conceptions could create references and map ideas beyond the basic correspondence on the premise of assumptions regarding sexual difference.

In relation to gender and power, and especially to the two sexes' assumed and represented rights of participation in public activities and political decision-making, we discover a circular argument that was by no means an eighteenth-century innovation. By the eighteenth century, there was already an existing set of cultural understandings regarding the two sexes with their assumed characteristics. These assumptions did not cease to exist after the eighteenth century either. The gendered characteristics, with their reference to equally gendered virtues, vices, weaknesses, abilities, and duties, were further established as cultural norms through the use of normative language and especially through expressions connoting the *naturalness* of these assumed traits. Thus, women and men were regarded to have a set of characteristics, inclinations, and attributes that were considered i) inseparable from their biological sex, and ii) a perpetual and unchanging part of their existence.

As Scott has stated, gender is not only about cultural understandings about the normative characteristics and duties of men and women that affect behaviour, but it reflects on the structures of society as well – and in/on the possibilities in life, in/on the organisation and practices of education, and in/on legislation. For example, the practices of education and legislation followed the current understandings regarding the abilities or possible abilities of the sexes.²⁶⁸ The man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine oppositions and their control was in the interest of many agents – both secular and spiritual – in early modern societies: the churches (both Catholic and Reformed), developing police and law enforcement, educational trends, moral philosophy, and medicine among others were interested in participating in the study, the defining, and the control – that is to say, defining and guarding the normative limits – of the gendered features, attributes, characteristics, abilities, capacities, duties, weaknesses, virtues, and vices.

There have been numerous studies contributing to the representations and conceptions of ideal and normative gendered roles, virtues, and vices. The traditional sources for such inquiries have been either the documents of legal procedures (thus stressing the intolerable transgressions of normative rules and codes); the conduct literature for various ranks, estates, and social groups (providing the model for ideal social conduct); and – as is typical of the studies focusing on the eighteenth century – the materials related to the *Republic of Letters* and *Enlightened philosophers*. However, recent studies have also included very varying texts, for example diverse materials related to election campaigns,²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Scott 1999, 43.

²⁶⁹ As, e.g. McCormack 2005.

drinking songs and toasts,²⁷⁰ and paintings and other works of arts²⁷¹. Based on these studies, old and new alike, it is possible to sketch a very general map of the most commonly occurring – or stereotypical – gendered and binary or complementary characteristics, attributes, capacities, abilities, roles, duties, virtues, and vices that eighteenth-century men and women were assumed to have or that were assumed to be masculine/feminine themselves.

The most obvious masculine role in eighteenth-century Europe was of course the role of the head of the house. It was the father's and husband's duty to protect, to represent, and to control the dependent members of his household (meaning his wife, his children, and the household servants).²⁷² This duty was considered masculine and belonging to the male head of the family because of a set of corresponding capacities and abilities that were all considered masculine as well, the most important of which were reason and rational capacity,²⁷³ independence,²⁷⁴ self-control,²⁷⁵ free will and freedom,²⁷⁶ and responsibility²⁷⁷. Furthermore, there was an uncontested connection with men and property, economic activity, and ownership (especially in relation to landed property), since according to early modern British and French (secular) law married women could not own property.²⁷⁸ These were also the most important abilities and capacities that produced legitimate prowess for public or political participation: the preconditions, norms, and ideals for public and political activity were constructed on the masculine concepts of independence, self-control, proprietorship, and rationality.²⁷⁹

Men were also associated with fortitude, physical strength, courage, and bravery, as for example in their role as protectors of the state and their families.²⁸⁰ This association was represented in the most positive light in the genre of chivalric romances that stressed men's role as the protectors of women.²⁸¹ However, masculine strength and militancy was not solely a positive association, since it was also linked to excessive violence, violent temperament, emotional coldness, and coarseness.²⁸²

²⁷⁰ As, e.g. Sennefelt 2011.

²⁷¹ As, e.g. Clark 2007; Bellhouse 1999

²⁷² See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 19, 49, 75–76, 132; Clark 2007, 3, 8; Cohen 2005; Wilson 2004, 26.

²⁷³ McCormack 2005, 49, 6, 132; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xiii; Taque 2001, 87; Shoemaker 1998, 24.

²⁷⁴ See, e.g. McCormack 2005; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xiii; Clark 1998, 20; Hirschmann 2008, 147.

²⁷⁵ See, e.g. McCormack 2005; Harvey 2005.

²⁷⁶ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 14–15; Hirschmann 2008, 23.

²⁷⁷ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 18; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007, xiii; Dolan 2003, 14–16; Shoemaker 1998, 91.

²⁷⁸ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 17, 132; Clark 1998, 20; Dolan 2003, 14–16; Shoemaker 1998, 91; Clark 2007, 13–14; Clark 1998, 20–21; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 48.

²⁷⁹ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 18; Dolan 2003, 14–16; Shoemaker 1998, 91.

²⁸⁰ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 15, 19, 49, 75–76, 132; Clark 2007, 3, 8; Cohen 2005; Wilson 2004, 26; Hirschmann 2008, 147; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 48.

²⁸¹ E.g. McCormack 2005.

²⁸² See, e.g. Clark 2007, 13; Hirschmann 2008, 156–157.

Furthermore, men's strength and vitality was connected to the idea of virility, which – as a virtue – reflected the height of masculine physical and mental capacities, and was indivisible from sexual potency. Thus, heterosexual desire and proofs thereof were an integral part of masculinity that further was the precondition of all public and political activity.²⁸³

As the roles, abilities, and functions of the two sexes mirrored and complemented each other, the feminine – or women's – roles, attributes, and capacities were constructed in relation to masculine ones. Even though scholars have already pointed out that there was room for women's political participation in practice, there was – paradoxically – a general attachment of the women to the home, to the family, and to the non-political.²⁸⁴ There was a set of capacities, abilities, and inclinations that legitimated women's exclusion from public political participation. Many of them were negations of those attributes and abilities that legitimated and explained men's participation in public and political decision-making. Women were, for example, considered the less rational, even less intelligent sex, with lesser capacities for reasonable judgement.²⁸⁵ Likewise, women were connected to bodily weaknesses, frailty, and vulnerability, which subjected them to all kinds of ailments of body and mind.²⁸⁶ They were also the dependent, the protected, and the controlled – the unfree – in the family and in the society.²⁸⁷

There was, of course, also a set of feminine virtues or idealised attributes and traits that supported the assumption of women as the guarded and controlled sex. This included especially the sexual constraints through the feminine virtues of constancy, moderation, and decency,²⁸⁸ and the virtues that ensured women's submission to the rule of men, as for example the virtues of passivity, deference, obedience (to parents, to husband, and to law and sovereign), and the assumed and praised feminine desires to serve and please their husbands.²⁸⁹ Women were also the sex that was regarded to be more sensitive, sentimental, and delicate – also in matters of aesthetic taste. This sensibility, especially if connected to morality and spirituality, was a virtue that could benefit the family and society at large as well, as for example in the form of compassion, charity, and the care and education of children.²⁹⁰

²⁸³ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 87; Clark 2007, 3, 8; Clark 1998, 20, 26, 34, 38; Harvey 2005. See section 2.5.

²⁸⁴ See, e.g. Wilson 2004, 21; van Horn Melton 2009, 204; Munck 2002, 17; Parry 2007, 229; Bellhouse 1997, 680; Winston 2005, 271; Roulston 1998/1999, 216; Hicks 2005; Branca 1978, 17.

²⁸⁵ See, e.g. Taque 2001, 87; Hicks 2005; Hufton 1998, 338. Regarding Locke's theories, see Hirschmann 2008, 95, 99, 103. On Kant's thinking, see, Hirschmann 2008, 195–196. On Diderot's and Baron d'Holbach's writing, see Rendall 1985, 19.

²⁸⁶ See, e.g. Williams 2002; Hufton 1998, 44.

²⁸⁷ See, e.g. McCormack 2005; Hirschmann 2008, 23, 147, 195; Winston 2005, 271; Hicks 2005; Shoemaker 1998, 91; Parry 2007, 229; Rendall 1985, 27; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 24.

²⁸⁸ See, e.g. Hirschmann 2008, 147; Hufton 1998, 370; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 48.

²⁸⁹ See, e.g. Hirschmann 2008, 147, 155; Taque 2001, 85–87, 95, 97; Hufton 1998, 32, 38.

²⁹⁰ See, e.g. Offen 2000, 37; Munck 2002, 17; Clark 1998, 20; Wilson 2004, 21; Rendall 2007; Hirschmann 2008, 156–157; Taque 2001, 84; Rendall 2007; Timm & Sanborn

Besides these feminine virtues, there was also a very ambiguous feminine disposition that could develop either into a virtue or into a vice: passion. On the one hand, as the more passionate sex, women were connected to the emotions and sensibility that could produce desirable effects on the family and society. On the other hand, feminine passions were connected to sexuality and sex, which reflected the prevailing fears for women's uncontrolled sexuality.²⁹¹ In relation to public and political affairs, it was precisely the alleged passionate nature of women that delegitimised their participation. But this was not only because of the association with sex. There were also strong connections between passions and vices as well as between passions and lesser rationality. The passions were related to self-indulgence and the temptations of vices (such as excessive sexual desires) that the passionate and the weaker women were unable to resist.²⁹² Thus, feminine passions were actually feminine weaknesses: the desire to seek gratification and the inability to resist impulses and temptations. This was further connected to the larger debate on luxury, fashion, and women's assumed higher sense in matters of taste.²⁹³ Passion was also the enemy of reason. On the one hand, creatures with lesser abilities to reason and make rational judgements were more liable to the temptations of passions. On the other hand, excessive passions and their gratification blurred rational thinking as well as a person's abilities for self-control.²⁹⁴

Women were thus considered to have feminine characteristics, and capacities – mainly weaknesses and frailties – that excluded the possibility of their beneficial participation in public and political decision-making. Furthermore, the interconnection between political virtues and normative ideals, the preconditions of political participation, and the masculine attributes and capacities was strengthened in political discourses, as for example Matthew McCormack (2005) demonstrated in his research on Georgian Britain. However, this is not all. Women were represented to have qualities and attributes that made them not only unhelpful in the public and political sphere, but also dangerous to the management of public affairs. The weaknesses and vices that were antithetical to the political norms, ideals, and virtues were conceptualised in and as feminine characteristics. Thus, it is no surprise that women's rule was seen as unnatural and it was connected to fears of chaos and the overturn of social and political order. Women's attachment to the non-public sphere of the home and family was thus represented in terms of protecting both the women themselves

2007, 24; Shoemaker 1998, 24–30; van Horn Melton 2009, 204, 208; Garrioch 2007, 496. Spongberg 2002, 49.

²⁹¹ See, e.g. Offen 2000, 44–45; Hirschmann 2008, 138–139, 147; Roulston 1998/1999, 223, 226; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 62; Hufton 1998, 30, 32, 39, 57, 268, 314, 318–319.

²⁹² See, e.g. Clark 1998, 20.

²⁹³ See, e.g. Jones 1994, 963–964; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 19, 21; Taque 2001, 79; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 4; Ilmakunnas 2015, 117; Offen 2000, 37; Rendall 2007, 255; Harvey 2005; Hirschmann 2008, 138–139, 162–163; Munck 2002, 17; Merrick 1994, 686–688, 693; Winston 2005, 272; Hufton 1998, 30–31, 435. These will be further addressed in section 3.7.

²⁹⁴ See, e.g. Hirschmann 2008, 86, 138–139, 155; Hufton 1998, 338; Rendall 1985, 19; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 19, 21, 24.

and society at large.²⁹⁵ We will return to the gendered nature of legitimate power, or to the characteristics of gendered power, in chapter 4.

This model of virtues, vices, duties, and characteristics of the two sexes presented above is but a generalised model that serves as a general context as well as in highlighting that the understandings of gender were embedded in the social and cultural practices as well as in the political vocabularies and imaginations of power. This interconnection of gender and power introduces two points into this study. First, performativity. Since public and political participation was charged with gendered conceptions and notions, it was essential to demonstrate and perform those gendered virtues, attributes, ideals, and norms that were constructed as the ideals and norms, or precondition of public and political participation.²⁹⁶ Second, contests within gender. That is to say, contests for the definitions of gendered attributes and ideals that were reflected in political norms and ideals. Ideas of gender – or ideas concerning gendered capacities, features, virtues, and vices – were not stable nor uniform. There were variations, there were rival interpretations, there were ambiguities, and there was overlapping. That is to say, there were all the ingredients that made gender politically significant and useful in the negotiations of and contests for the legitimation and delegitimation of political decision-making. For example, as previous studies on women’s public and political participation have already demonstrated, there were also interpretations of gender and gendered abilities that created room for women’s participation.

The ambiguity of gender and of the meanings of gendered concepts proceeds from the fact that sex and gender were a multifaceted cultural, social, and political phenomenon in the eighteenth century. First of all, gender and gendered language offered important naturalised models for explaining the world, social relations, and relations of power. Secondly, gender and the duties and possibilities of the two sexes were not only a set of embedded norms and ideals, but they were also a topic of eighteenth-century debates in France and Britain. Eighteenth-century Europe witnessed and became immersed in a debate known as the *querelle des femmes* or the *woman question* about women’s capacities, role, and utility in civil society. The woman question has been discussed at least since the Renaissance, and discourse on women’s capacities for intellectual and political life (as well as the counter-imageries on women’s dangerous rule) have thus a very long historical trajectory. However, the eighteenth century brought new elements, such as familial sentimentality and public utility, to this age-old discourse.²⁹⁷ Third, gender and debates on gender intersected continually with other discourses (medical, political, religious, economic, education, etc.). The fact that gender, gendered language, and gendered concepts refer to a great variety

²⁹⁵ See, e.g. Hirschmann 2008, 162–163; Roulston 1998/1999, 216; Spongberg 2002, 41, on the unnaturalness of women’s rule; Offen 2000, 44, on the fears of chaos related to women’s rule; Richards 2003.

²⁹⁶ McCormack 2005, 39.

²⁹⁷ See, e.g. Offen 2000, 27–49; Spongberg 2002, 34–84; Rendall 2007; Wellman 2013; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 41–42. On detailed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates regarding gender, rationality, education, and freedom in philosophical and political texts, see e.g. Hirschmann 2008.

of prevailing discourses further encourages the analysis of the discourse on royal mistresses to take a thematically wide approach.

Fourth, there has never been only one, generally accepted model for representing the two sexes, their relationship, and their respective properties and dispositions. Gender intersected with other social categories, as for example rank and estate or nationality, providing varying ideals, norms, and models of behaviour for different groups in the social hierarchy.²⁹⁸ Rank and social status offer one explanation for the notable difference between the idealised and normative role of women (in home and family) and the accepted public and political influencing of the wives, sisters, and daughters of wealthy and powerful elite men.

The previous studies focusing on the public debate on royal mistresses have already pointed out that the social status, rank, and attached honours and privileges in themselves formed an important theme that was often entangled and utilised in the presentation of the royal mistresses.²⁹⁹ The tensions between (and occasionally within) the different estates and ranks of people in eighteenth-century hierarchical societies are visible in the discourse on royal mistresses as well. Further, in a hierarchical court and society, status and rank were often even more important than gender when defining the *proper* place, role, and rights of a person. In this study, there will occasionally be references to the utilisation of social status and rank in affirming other conceptualisations, understandings, or phenomena. For example, the presentations on Mme du Barry's expenditure on unworthy, *lowly*, subjects that we will meet in section 3.7 were inseparable from the narrative of her base origin. This narrative was connected to contemporary conceptions regarding proper patterns of consumption and lifestyle of different estates and ranks as well as regarding the ability and capacities of people belonging to different estates and ranks. However, I will leave the more detailed analysis of both discourses on rank and status as well as intersectionality for further study.

Thus, as the scholars interested especially in masculinity have noted that *masculinity* (and *femininity* as its polar opposite) itself was not a uniform and coherent category: it was negotiated and contested, and there were various parallel models and norms.³⁰⁰ Thus, the characteristics attributed to the two sexes were not perpetual, uniform, nor unchanging. They changed and they varied, and as they changed and varied, they offered ways to unbalance the gender roles and rules, and provided new vocabularies and imaginations for writers, thinkers, and commentators conceptualising and defining legitimate political participation and political decision-making as well.

²⁹⁸ As is evident in e.g. the competing models of family that have brought forth the conflict between the aristocratic model and the familial model of bourgeoisie. See, e.g. Bellhouse 1997; Bellhouse 1999, 991–992; Hicks 2005; Wahrman 2004, 12; McCormack 2005, 87; Clark 1998, 26; Harvey 2005.

²⁹⁹ See, e.g. Darnton 1971, 107; Darnton 2000, 31; Darnton 1984b; Kaiser 1996, 1027, 1029; Graham 2000, 216.

³⁰⁰ See, e.g. McCormack 2005; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007; Clark 2007; Sinha 2007; Clark 1998; Harvey 2005.

Consequently, instead of focusing on hegemonic masculinity or femininity, the focus is shifted to the dynamics of continual challenges and confirmations of them and especially to the politicisation of differing models of masculinities and femininities.³⁰¹ For example, Landes understands gender as a specifically ideological formulation in her study about the French political debates of the late 1780s and early 1790s. When criticising the Habermasian theory on the masculine public sphere, she has demonstrated that the creation of private/public-division was such a part of the ideological struggles of the revolutionary era where gender had a central role in defining political space, nature of political action, and right to political participation. In other words, dichotomies such as public/private had a meaning as ideas rather than lived experiences. In her study, oppositions of public/private and male/female were shown as belonging to distinctly bourgeois discourse. In this discourse the revolt against the old system was justified through denouncing it as feminine (and justifying the Republic as specifically masculine), which further resulted in the impossibility of accepting a legitimate public and/or political role for women in the new republic.³⁰²

As interesting as the perspective on political gendering of the public/private-division is, there is one point I would like to address. The studies focusing on the political meanings of gender during Revolutionary France that highlight women's exclusion from both public and political participation (which is justified through the notions of femininity) tend to rely on Rousseau – whose writings certainly did gain significant influence in 1770s. For example, both Landes and Sarah Maza (1993), who has studied the *mémoires judiciaires* (sensational published trial briefs of pre-revolutionary France) read and contextualised the political tensions within gender as relating to Rousseauian discourse. Further, they connect the notable criticism against the famous royal mistresses of Louis XV (Mme de Pompadour and especially Mme du Barry) and queen Marie Antoinette to the discourse springing from the writings of Rousseau.³⁰³ In this study, we are about to encounter concepts and themes that have been connected to Rousseauian discourse, such as denunciation of women's political participation and especially the themes of affectation and theatricality. However, I claim that the discourse on the royal mistresses was not – at least originally – a Rousseauian discourse for two reasons.

Most distinguishably, the discourse on royal mistresses did not offer some idealised domestic space as women's proper place nor denounce women's public role all together. As we will discuss further in chapter 4, the texts describing the royal mistresses, even the most scandalous ones, did not explicitly or implicitly deny either the visible role of the women or the mistresses, or their beneficial and politically significant contributions. Rather, in France and in Britain alike and even in the most critical presentations of the royal mistresses, the question was about setting limits to women's accepted politically significant influencing.

³⁰¹ Landes 1988; McCormack 2005; Dudink, Hagemann & Clark 2007; Clark 2007; Sinha 2007; Clark 1998; Harvey 2005; Cohen 2005; Jackson 1991.

³⁰² Landes 1988.

³⁰³ See, e.g. Landes 1988, 60–89; Maza 1993, 167–174, 178–183, 208, 210, 322.

Further, though accepting that the writings of Rousseau might have supported the more general discourse on the illegitimacy of both courtly use of influence and women's use of influence from the 1760s onward, the trends of conceptualising and criticising royal mistresses' power originate from historically durable trends (e.g. the tradition of presenting royal mistresses as evil advisors or the *woman question*, or more simply, from the perpetual themes traditionally discussed in relation to royal mistresses, such as money, sex, and corruption). These trends were already both clearly visible and well-formulated in early texts and biographies of the royal mistresses, such as Fauques' *The history of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1758). However, Rousseau's popular texts containing a formulated criticism against the prevailing political system through theatricality and femininity were published between 1758–1762.³⁰⁴ Thus, I propose that the tradition of discourse on royal mistresses offered a parallel alternative source and model of criticism and anxieties towards women's public political role besides the tradition originating from the writings of Rousseau.

The fields of research interested in either women's public and political participation or gender as a tool of political struggles, have given special attention to the oppositional pair public/private. As stated, these concepts did not only refer to different arenas or areas of life where political decisions were discussed, negotiated, and made, but also to linguistic abstractions through which certain kinds of political actions or participations were legitimised or delegitimised discursively. Thus, although we will discuss royal mistresses' accepted functions and influence in chapter 2 and especially in section 4.2.2, the main focus of this study is not on contributing to the tradition analysing the potential political and public influencing through women's private circles or private relations. Rather, it is about understanding the ways that the concepts *public* and *private* were gendered and how gendered public and private were used as a tool for legitimating, delegitimising, and/or trivialising certain kinds of uses of power.

However, we do not stop there. The dichotomy of public and private has been used as an example here just because it has already been problematised and scrutinised. There are still more problematic binary oppositions left to explore. The research examining the networks of power and interconnections of the social and political have stressed terms such as *feminine power*, *informal*, and *unofficial* when discussing the role, function, and influence of women.³⁰⁵ This indicates that even without the separation of public/private, there were still other divisions – gendered divisions – that were used in order to separate political/non-political, and possibly legitimate/illegitimate, political participation. As stated, during the early modern era, women were categorically excluded from public political participation – but, as Chalus and Norrhem among others have demonstrated, only in a formal and official capacity. In spite of some rather unusual exceptions, women could not hold formal and official political positions, offices, or posts,

³⁰⁴ *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758) ; *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) ; *Emile* (1762). For further discussion on Rousseauian influence in revolutionary debates, see, e.g. Landes 1988; Maza 1993, 167–211.

³⁰⁵ See, e.g. Kaiser 1996, 1026; Norrhem 2010.

and yet, they were able and expected to participate – and it was accepted for them to do so – in the realm of political influencing, politicking, and political decision-making through certain feminine roles and functions, mainly in the social arena but also publicly.³⁰⁶ Thus, instead of focusing solely on the dichotomy of public/private, I would like to introduce the dichotomies of *formal/informal* and *official/unofficial* for scrutiny.

This study therefore sets out to contribute to the field of historical research interested in the political cultures, political thought, and political meanings of gender. With a perspective on the use of language as a political act, it focuses on political rhetoric and especially on the binary oppositions utilised in the discourse on the royal mistresses. Many of them are by no means eighteenth-century innovations or unknown to the scholars of eighteenth-century French and British political cultures. Thus, in order to deepen our understanding of the royal mistresses as a phenomenon and the political use of their (semi-)fictional figure, the purpose of this study is to tackle the problem of perennality and to demonstrate how seemingly immutable themes, discourses, and concepts associated with the women attached to politically powerful men were actually connected to prevailing political debates, anxieties, ideas, and thoughts. Further, armed with an analytical focus on gender, this study problematises the construction and utilisation of asymmetrical conceptual pairs or binary oppositions in political struggles in conceptualising the nature and use of legitimate monarchical rule. In this study, we will meet a great variety of conceptual pairs, such as public/private, virtue/vice, secret/known, and family/state – and certainly, male/female. In spite of appearance, these were not stable formations. Certainly, when eighteenth-century writers sought to politicise them as a tool of political contest they were continually affirmed, reaffirmed, invented and reinvented – and yet not without new meanings and significance. In this study, we will see how especially gender as a binary opposition functioned in tying together parallel binary oppositions and in encouraging the creation of references between parallel oppositional pairs. Consequently, gender will be pivotal in understanding how eighteenth-century writers and commentators attempted to politicise/depoliticise or legitimate/delegitimate topical matters, problems, issues, or phenomena that they were describing. In what follows, we will see how eighteenth-century writers and commentators represented the royal mistresses, their characteristics, and their actions, and how these representations were used when conceptualising the nature and use of legitimate political power.

³⁰⁶ See, e.g. Hanley 1989, 6–7; Capp 2003; Kettering 1997, 71; Chalus 2000; Chalus 2001; Chalus 2009; Norrhem 2010; Lewis 2001; Vickery 2001.

2 MISTRESS DE RIGUEUR

The aim of this chapter is to analyse royal mistresses as an accepted phenomenon and practice of royal courts. The mistresses of rulers have been a phenomenon and institution of various conflicting conceptions and notions, with the negative and moralistic tones usually dominating the discourses. It is easy to identify the features characterising this objection. During early modern time, legitimate love was defined in terms of marriage, which was further constructed, symbolically and practically, as an essential of social and political order. When proper, legitimate sensual love was normatively and legally confined to the relationship between a husband and a wife, it is no surprise that all extramarital relationships violated the common sense of moral and legal propriety. Thus, also the sexual relationship between a king and his mistress was essentially a crime, adultery or double adultery³⁰⁷: “criminal commerce with the King.”³⁰⁸ Known mistresses were an easy prey for moralistic and often religiously oriented commentators during an era when sexuality and sex itself was considered more or less sinful, even in the marital bed.³⁰⁹ Furthermore, as part of the tradition of *evil advisors*,

³⁰⁷ See, e.g. Hufton 1998, 303; Adams 2015, 170; Hardwick 1998, 267; Hanley 1989, 24.

³⁰⁸ Fauques 1758a, 90. Also in Fauques 1759, 69, 170; Fauques 1766a, 100, 121. The expression was common in relation to the royal mistresses in Britain as well. See, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 20, where sexual activity between Henrietta Howard and George II was described as criminal. The criminality of the relationship between the mistress and the king could be approached from a different angle as well. For example, the criminality of Mme de Pompadour’s and Louis XV’s relationship could be understood in terms of Mme de Pompadour’s criminal elopement from her legal husband. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 75; Fauques 1758a, 97; Fauques 1766a, 129. See section 3.6.

³⁰⁹ In Protestant thought, there were tones that endorsed sexuality if exercised in matrimony and for the purpose of reproduction. In Catholic thought, sexuality was always sinful and even marital sex was defiling. See, e.g. Winston 2005, 264; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 21, 31, 33, 61–62. However, it is obvious that regardless of religious teachings, there were general uneasy feelings toward criminal extramarital sexual encounters. See, e.g. “Oui l’amour, lors même qu’il est le plus heureux, n’est jamais assuré qu’il ne ressentira pas, plus ou moins, le dégoût qu’entraîne après soi la satisfaction des désirs, dégoût qui semble être particulièrement fait pour les hommes & en quoi consiste l’ingratitude ordinaire de la jouissance.” Fauques 1759, 162; “[...] those disgusts of satisfied desire, which almost appropriately fall to the share of the Men, and constitute, with them, the usual ingratitude of enjoyment.” Fauques 1758b, 106–107; Poisson 1766a, 173–174; Poisson 1766c, 171; Poisson 1766b, 69; Poisson 1766d, 71.

the royal mistresses were the target of general general complaints and negative attention in times of distress.³¹⁰

These negative discourses on royal mistresses highlight the fact that, paradoxically, kings kept mistresses habitually and conventionally.³¹¹ Yet, this controversial practice of keeping mistresses has been largely taken as given. In the face of such a paradoxical phenomenon as royal mistresses, it is remarkable how scholars have avoided outlining the frame in which royal mistresses were considered as an accepted – or maybe even beneficial – practice.³¹² In this chapter, I will contest the notion of royal mistresses as self-explanatory and consider how eighteenth-century observers explained the existence of royal mistresses: why, when, and to what extent were mistresses regarded as not only accepted but even necessary and supportive to the monarch as a person and to the monarchy as a political system?

Here, I do not focus on single royal mistresses nor do I describe the limits to which their unique presence by the side of equally unique monarchs was accepted. Instead, I identify and explicate certain groups of explanations, or discourses that recur throughout various source materials. In this, the discourses, such as for example medical or aristocratic discourses, are distinguished for the sake of analysis. Commonly, however, the discourses tend to overlap in everyday language usage.

2.1 Health

First, let us address the issue of how royal mistresses were justified through medical discourses. After all, both in France and in England court physicians and ministers could – and did – recommend introducing a mistress into the royal bed for the sake of the king’s health. For example, after the death of Queen Caroline in 1737 Sir Robert Walpole urged George II to call his German mistress Amalie von Walmoden, later Countess of Yarmouth, from Hanover to Britain:

³¹⁰ See section 3.1.

³¹¹ Regarding mistresses as a commonplace practice among the nobility and in the courts, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 47; Fauques 1766a, 67; Mairbert 1775, 218.

³¹² In studies of political history, women’s history, and political culture, royal mistresses are occasionally noted as having influence in the royal court. See, e.g. Black 2004a, 42, 43, 106–107; Black 2004b, 603; Shennan 2007, 145–148; Elias 2006, 109; Swann 2007, 180; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 164; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 52–53, 123, 157, 158. Also, royal mistresses have been mentioned as a target of public criticism and discontent. See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 137–166; Graham 2000; Black 2004a, 75–77. Even biographers have evaded the questions of why mistresses were needed or accepted and settle on taking the mistresses for granted. See, e.g. Haslip 2005 on Countess du Barry; Kiernan 2006 on Maria-Louise O’Murphy; Gold 2012 on Melusina von der Schulenburg. Gold notices Schulenburg’s influence in political affairs as “feminine diplomacy”, and as such, equivalent to that of the queen, Gold 2012, 246. If the paradoxical existence of the kept mistresses is not completely overlooked in modern studies, it is usually brushed quickly aside with a comment on the king’s obsession with sex. See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 156–157 or Zysberg 2002, 170 on Louis XV and his “private brothel” Parc-aux-Cerf.

[...] he advised the King and pressed him to send for Madame Walmoden immediately from Hanover; said he must look forward for his own sake, for the sake of his family, and for the sake of all his friends, and not ruin his health by indulging vain regret and grief for what was past recall.³¹³

Exactly the same motive can be found in the French court. After the death of Queen Marie Leszczyńska in 1768 (and Mme de Pompadour's death in 1764), both courtiers and court physicians counseled Louis XV to take a new mistress:

Depuis les pertes successives que le Roi avoit éprouvées, S.M. avoit fait vuidier le Parc-aux-Cerfs, pour se livrer toute entiere à sa douleur. L'âge qui avançoit, & la facilité qu'a un grand Prince de satisfaire en tous sens ses passions, avoient très amorti celle des femmes chez celui-ci. Mais ce besoin, en diminuant, existe encore; & les Courtisans jugerent d'ailleurs nécessaire de distraire S. M. du spectacle long & douloureux que lui offroit alors la maladie de la Reine. Les Médecins firent entendre au Roi qu'il étoit dangereux de se sevrer aussi brusquement d'un plaisir nécessaire à son existence.³¹⁴

In both of these explanations, the two kings were presented as having abandoned the company of and sexual commerce with a mistress in order to indulge in their grief. However, these explanations were also founded on popularised eighteenth-century medical knowledge of both physical and mental health. Thus, a king's abstinence from the pleasures of a mistress was not only a matter of mourning, but a matter of his health as well.

Eighteenth-century medical knowledge relied heavily on the medical authorities of antiquity, such as Galen, Aristotle, and Hippocrates, whose influence was most visible in theories of humours.³¹⁵ As a system of medical thought, humoralism was both individualistic and holistic, especially in conjunction with theories concerning the effect of climate and environment on health and disease.³¹⁶ During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, other medical understandings emerged to explain the operations of the human body,

³¹³ Hervey 1931, 119. See also, Hervey 1848b, 397, where Sir Walpole was also presented as having persuaded the King's daughters in "[...] bringing women about him [...]", to introduce a new mistress to their father or summon Lady Walmoden from Germany "[...], for the sake of his health, [...]", Hervey 1848b, 397; Hervey 1931, 119.

³¹⁴ Mairobert 1775, 60. "Repeated losses had so far chagrined the sovereign, that he gave orders to un-people the deer-park, that he might indulge his sorrows in silence. The approaches of old age, and the facility with which a powerful prince may gratify all his desires, had greatly abated his passion for the sex. This appetite, however, tho' lessened, still subsisted; besides, the courtiers thought it expedient to divert his majesty from those melancholy ideas which the long and painful sickness of his virtuous consort had occasioned. The physicians suggested, that so sudden a privation of a pleasure that was become necessary to his existence, might prove dangerous." Bécu 1777a, 4. In modern research Parc-aux-Cerfs (or deer-park or stag-park) is often called the king's private brothel. Actually it was a hunting site for the aristocracy. However, there was a lodge where Louis XV was said to have accommodated his petites maîtresses, e.g. Mademoiselle O'Murphy.

³¹⁵ See, e.g. Dolan 2003, 13–14; Gidal 2003, 26; Porter 2001, 249–250; Shoemaker 1998, 18, 30; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 36, 37. According to the doctrines of humoralism fluids or humours of the human body (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm) constituted the temperament of a person, and the balance of the humours determined both physical and mental health and disorder. See, e.g. Wynne Smith 2010, 29; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 36–37.

³¹⁶ See, e.g. Wynne Smith 2010, 29; Gidal 2003.

as for example, theories on the system of fibres or nerves.³¹⁷ These explanations did not necessary challenge humoral pathology but co-existed with or augmented holistic visions of human health. Eighteenth-century medical theories did not only explain the causes of good or ill health but also defined bodily differences between men and women, and consequently were part of debates on the distinctive characteristics of men and women – and their respective mental and physical abilities, duties, and virtues. Thus, medical theories intertwined with social reality. When describing putative physical and sexual attributes, and states and disorders of mind and body, the theories and theorists actually described the predominant social order and participated in the various prevailing debates concerning the rights and duties of people belonging to different sexes or social groups.

In the case of kings, mistresses could be considered beneficial to the kings' health in two different ways. Firstly, and very practically, they maintained the physical or purely bodily health of the kings, by preventing their inclinations to overconsumption of pleasures, as for example, excessive and damaging consumption of wine and food.

Elle [Mme du Barry] étoit donc intéressée plus que jamais à conserver les jours du Monarque [Louis XV]. Elle présidoit aux plaisirs de la table, elle l'empêchoit de boire; ce qui donnoit quelquefois de l'humeur au Prince.³¹⁸

Secondly, and more importantly, the mistresses were regarded as essential to the kings' mental well-being. In the two cases that I have already mentioned, the mistresses were recommended to Louis XV and George II by their courtiers, ministers, and physicians *for the sake of their health*. The condition that was perceived as dangerous to the kings' health was paralysing grief or *douleur*. Another incapacitating state of mind, and one that occurred more frequently, was *melancholy*. Kings have been described as melancholic so often that in modern research it has been considered their peculiar feature or even an occupational disease.³¹⁹ Melancholy was indeed mentioned repeatedly as a condition or even *constitution* of kings, especially Louis XV's.³²⁰

³¹⁷ See, e.g. Porter 2002, 82–87; Shoemaker 1998, 20–21, 62; Offen 2000, 37; Rendall 1985, 253–257; Spongberg 2002, 49.

³¹⁸ Mairobert 1775, 220–221. “She [Mme du Barry] was, therefore, more interested than ever in the preservation of the life of the Sovereign. She presided over the pleasures of the table, and prevented him from the too free indulgence of the glass. This put the Monarch out of humour sometimes;” Bécu 1777b, 216. See also, Mairobert 1775, 221; Bécu 1777b, 216–217; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCLIX. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 1st Dec. 1754, 240–241, where the Duchess of Kendal is described as preventing George I from excessive drinking; Fauques 1758b, 124 Fauques 1766b, 114, on mistresses' duty to restrain Louis XV's “natural inclination” to pleasures and amusements.

³¹⁹ See, e.g. Marvick 1996, 951, where melancholia is read as depression and apathy, and mentioned to have been a characteristic feature of kings Henry II, Henry III, Henry IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV.

³²⁰ See, e.g. Poisson 1766d, 1 “his naturally melancholic turn”, 3 “naturally melancholic”, 19, 36, 64, 109, 134 “his melancholic state”, 141, 171 “his natural turn to melancholy”; Poisson 1766b, 19, 35, 105, 129, 135; Mairobert 1779a, CXLIIe. LETTRE. A la Marquise de

In eighteenth-century humoral pathology melancholy was regarded as the most difficult temperament and state of mind. In general, it was not necessarily a pathology and could be considered favourable to rational and intellectual pursuits. At times, however, it could result in maladies of mind and body.³²¹ Theories behind the conception of melancholy originated from various different sources, for example, from humoral pathology, classical physiology, classical philosophy, medieval medicine, and Arabic medical and astrological traditions.³²² These conceptions merged both in medical vocabularies and in popular usage, and the concept became even more obscure when it was used with fluctuating meanings, as for example, as a synonym for *sad*. Thus, melancholy was a mental state related to grief, as in Hervey's account of Sir Walpole prevailing upon George II's daughters to bring a mistress for their father:

[...] he [Sir Walpole] talked to them [George II's daughters] of looking forward, drying up their tears, and endeavouring to divert their father's melancholy by bringing women about him; [...] he would advise them in the mean time to bring my Lady Deloraine to their father, for the sake of his health [...].³²³

Other than grief, melancholy was also associated with a saturnine mood³²⁴, gloom³²⁵, languid state³²⁶, languor³²⁷, apathy³²⁸ and lethargic heaviness³²⁹. That is to say, melancholy was linked to various states that detached a person from normal activity and life.³³⁰ The royal mistresses' function was therefore to restore the king's mental condition:

Louis XV. est naturellement fort sombre; son ame est envelopée dans une épaisse nuit. Un tempérament triste lui fait couler des jours malheureux dans le sein même des plaisirs. Il est des moments où sa mélancolie augmente au point que rien ne peut le tirer de cet état de langueur. Alors le poids de la vie lui devient insupportable. La jouissance d'une belle femme peut bien pour quelque tems dissiper ses ennuis: [...].³³¹

Montrable, 200–201; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXLI. To the Marchioness de Montrable, 163–164; Poisson 1771c, LETTER LI. To the marshal de Soubise, 1761, 172; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LI. Au Maréchal de Soubise, 1761, 81; Poisson 1766a, 23, 24; Poisson 1772, LETTER XVIII. To the countess of Noailles, 1747, 41; Mairobert 1775, 60, 154, 268; Bécu 1777a, 4; Bécu 1777b, 283; Hervey 1848a, 114; Hervey 1848b, 397; Hervey 1931, 119; BL, Add MS 36789, Stanley to Pitt, 1st July 1761, 170.

³²¹ See, e.g. Gidal 2003, on English civic melancholy; Porter 2002, 83–85; Marvick 1996, 951, 955; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 37.

³²² See, e.g. Gidal 2003, 26, 30.

³²³ Hervey 1848b, 397. See also, Hervey 1931, 119.

³²⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 23–24. In the French version, Poisson 1766a, 23 “fort somber”, “tempérament triste”.

³²⁵ See, e.g. Bécu 1777b, 372; Poisson 1766c, 23. In the French version, Mairobert 1775, 329 “triste”; Poisson 1766a, 23 “épaisse nuit”.

³²⁶ See, e.g. Poisson 1766d, 183. In the French original, Poisson 1766b, “état de langueur”.

³²⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 23, 197; Poisson 1766d, 108, 200. In the French version, “langueur”, Poisson 1766a, 24; Poisson 1766b, 104.

³²⁸ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 114.

³²⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766c, 206; Poisson 1766a, 208 “état d'engourdissement”.

³³⁰ Gidal 2003, 25.

³³¹ Poisson 1766a, 23–24. “Lewis XV. is naturally of a saturnine turn: his soul is shrouded in a thick gloom; so that, with every pleasure at command, he may be said

Specifically, the royal mistresses' role was to enable the king to participate in the daily activities of his court and government – a role that could with good reason be considered vital: theirs was the duty “[...] to recover the King [Louis XV] from that lethargic heaviness which was growing constitutional, [...]”³³² And in this respect, the royal mistresses maintained, supported, and enhanced much more than one man's good spirits: they simultaneously served the royal family, the courtly life, and the good government of the realm when serving in the protection of the kings' life and capacity. The royal mistresses were regarded and presented as having ensured that the king was not incapacitated by his mournful emotions or melancholic constitution, and that he was fit and well enough to reign over his country.

2.2 Diversion

This is an appropriate moment to examine the question of what royal mistresses actually *did* in the courts for monarchs. Sexual commerce and services are the first things to come to mind, and they were indeed a constituent part of being a mistress. Yet, sex and sexuality seem to play only a minor part in the field of activity in which the royal mistresses engaged themselves. Sex was not even mentioned that often, and never as their sole duty – although occasionally it was described as “what is commonly thought the most essential function”³³³ of a mistress. As the most radical example, Mme de Pompadour did not even have sex with Louis XV. Their sexual commerce ceased due to her unspecified “female disorder”³³⁴, which it was feared would endanger not only her own life but the life of the monarch as well.³³⁵ However, Mme de Pompadour was not dismissed from her post as *maîtresse-en-titre*. She was regarded and presented in the role of the king's declared mistress until her death in 1764.

Furthermore, in order to have their sexual desires satisfied the kings did not necessarily need kept and openly declared mistresses:

to be unhappy. Sometimes his melancholy throws him into such a languor that nothing affects him, and then he is quite insensible to all entertainment and pleasure. In these intervals, life becomes an insupportable burden to him. The enjoyment of a beautiful woman for a while diverts his uneasiness; [...]” Poisson 1766c, 23–24.

³³² Poisson 1766c, 206. “[...] pour tirer le Roi de cet état d'engourdissement où son tempérament le jettoit, [...]” Poisson 1766a 208–209 .

³³³ Fauques 1758a, 72. “[...] le point essentiel de cette condition [...]” Fauques 1759, 56. See also, Fauques 1766a, 80.

³³⁴ Fauques 1758a, 72. “Un dérangement auquel son Sexe est sujet, [...]” Fauques 1759, 56–57. Mme de Pompadour's female disorder and the end of the sexual relationship with the king seems to have been common knowledge. See, e.g. Fauques 1758a, 90, 95; Fauques 1758b, 63; Fauques 1759, 69, 135; Fauques 1766a, 121–122; Fauques 1766b, 34–35; Mairobert 1775, 59; Bécu 1777a, 2, 3; Anon. 1760, 76.

³³⁵ Fauques 1759, 56–57; Fauques 1758a, 71–72; Fauques 1766a, 80.

Peu de Dames à la Cour de France se seroient défendu d'accepter le mouchoir ou, plutôt, de ne pas se le disputer.³³⁶

Obviously, the king was not wanting for ladies offering sexual favours. What, then, were the royal mistresses for if not for sex? The most important role and function of the royal mistress was to divert the king. Their role was to create entertainments and amusements, *diversions*, for the kings.

Outre cette attention de Madame Dubarri d'une part à contenir le Roi dans plaisirs que pouvoient lui nuire, elle devoit en avoir une autre plus pénible, celle de l'amuser. Elle imaginoit tous les jours quelque chose de nouveau.³³⁷

The most common entertainment that the mistresses were reported to have organised were dinners and especially soupers, both public and private.³³⁸ In addition to these, they organised various spectacles ranging from private musical performances and plays to visits to royal palaces, parties, and festivities for the whole court.³³⁹

For the contemporaries, such exceptional and even extravagant entertainments were indeed needed in order to divert the king, whose condition itself was considered singular in a rather problematic sense, as Fauques explained:

Les Rois, bien plus que le reste des hommes sont exposés à devenir la proie de la tristesse & de l'ennui. La malheureuse facilité qu'ils ont à se procurer des divertissemens; l'empressement extraordinaire d'une foule de courtisans uniquement occupés à les faire naitre sous leurs pas, en épuisent bientôt le fond. La source tarit. Le mal est sans remède. De là vient qu'on les voit à peine au milieu de leur carrière, que déjà la plupart de leurs passe-tems ont perdu le mérite de la nouveauté. Il faut avoir l'esprit bien inventif, pour en déterrer qui aient le bonheur de les satisfaire; & plus encore, pour

³³⁶ Fauques 1759, 18. "Few ladies at the court would have refused to pick up the Royal Handkerchief, or rather not have scrambled for it." Fauques 1758a, 19–20.

³³⁷ Mairobert 1775, 221. "Besides this attention of Madam Dubarrè, on the one hand, to restrain the King in pleasures that might be injurious, she had another task still more difficult. It was necessary to amuse him; she was continually studying to find out something new for this purpose", Bécu 1777b, 216–217.

³³⁸ On Mme de Mailly's soupers, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16; TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 19th July 1739, Most Private, 6. On Mme de Pompadour's soirées and soupers, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/237, Albemarle to Bedford, Paris, 19th/30th Dec. 1750, 343; TNA, SP 78/253, Bedford to Egmont, Paris, 19th Sept. 1762, 73. On Mme du Barry's soupers and entertainments, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/278 Harcourt to Weymouth, Saturday night, 22nd Apr. 1769, 44; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th May 1769, 123; TNA, SP 78/278, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 7th July 1769, 192; Mairobert 1775, 226. On Mme du Barry's dinners for foreign ministers, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 14th Aug. 1771, 63; TNA, SP 78/285, Blaquiere to Rochford, Compiègne, 6th Aug. 1772, 306.

³³⁹ As e.g. musical entertainments, see, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 104; Poisson 1766d, 108. Festivities organised by Mme de Pompadour to rejoice on the recovery of Dauphin, Poisson 1772, LETTER LXV. To the Duchess d'Étrées, 1751, 147; Poisson 1766b, 101–102; Poisson 1766d, 105–107. Pleasure journeys to royal palaces, see, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 130–131; Poisson 1766d, 136; Mairobert 1775, 120, 330; Bécu 1777a, 82; Bécu 1777b, 373; Mairobert 1779a, CXLIIe. LETTRE. A la Marquise de Montrable, 200–201; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXLI. To the Marchioness de Montrable, 163–164. See also, Kaiser 1996 on Mme de Pompadour's assiduous theatrical entertainments.

rendre les charmes de la nouveauté à ceux que la jouissance a déjà rendu fades & insipides, en sachant les manier avec art, les diversifier avec goût & les présenter toujours sous une forme nouvelle.³⁴⁰

Here we may observe how aristocratic and medical discourses intertwined. Aristocratic life included participation in different social events, and the uniformity of these entertainments and ceremonies or lack of change was frequently described as problematic – dangerous even.³⁴¹ The invariability, custom, and repetition were considered to dull the senses and result in listlessness and inactivity, which were always inexcusable in men of business, and even melancholy:

Il nous falloit ces ressources [nouveaux divertissements] pour nous tirer de cet état de langueur, où l'unité des amusements nous plongeoit. J'avois [Mme de Pompadour] employé ce que l'art a de plus raffiné pour dissiper la mélancolie du Roi [Louis XV]: mais tout s'use à la fin. La coutume a cet effet qu'elle détruit la nouveauté qui seule fait impression sur nos sens.³⁴²

Annoyance, ennui, and dullness were problems of courtly elites, but they were also closely linked to melancholy: especially English physicians construed melancholy as ennui.³⁴³ Thus, for eighteenth-century commentators there were obvious dangers in boredom, namely the ever-lurking melancholy. The royal mistresses served as necessary safeguards against the gloomy dullness and inactivity in their function as protectors of the king's good humour and procuresses of royal entertainments and diversions.

³⁴⁰ Fauques 1759, 35. "Kings have more hours of dulness [sic.] than other men, from their having early exhausted, the whole chapter of pleasures, through the facility of their coming at them, and the court assiduity of numbers, constantly employed, inspiring them for them. By this means before they are half-way through life, few diversions can have the merit of novelty to them. It must be great genius for invention, that can produce them the satisfaction of it; and a greater one yet that can give to pleasures palled by repetition of enjoyment, the grace of novelty, from the art of constantly varying and reproducing them under a new form, and with higher seasoning." Fauques 1758a, 41–44. See also, Fauques 1766a, 49–51. It is also possible to distinguish discourses that criticise courtly life as corruptive, in the sense that everything at court quickly wanes and is dulled due to overconsumption or too easy access. This will be discussed later in section 3.7. Here, in this quote on the dullness of the kings, however, Fauques seems to have toned down the criticism and deals with the kings' tendency to dullness as an unfortunate condition.

³⁴¹ See, e.g. "l'unité des amusements", Poisson 1766b, 135; "sameness of amusements", Poisson 1766d, 140–141; "most mechanic sameness", Walpole 1845b, 239.

³⁴² Poisson 1766b, 135. "Such resources as these [new entertainments] were necessary to rescue us from that languid state, wherein the sameness of amusements immersed us. I [Mme de Pompadour] had employed the greatest refinements of art to dissipate the King's [Louis XV] melancholy; but every thing is at length exhausted. Custom destroys even that novelty, which alone can make impression on our senses." Poisson 1766d, 140–141.

³⁴³ Gidal 2003, 25–26; Porter 2002, 83–85; Marvick 1996, 951, 955. Regarding *ennui* as life-threateningly dangerous in English culture, see Kaartinen 2017. On the link between dullness and melancholy, see also, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 19; Poisson 1766d, 19.

Kings evidently needed diversions for their “hours of dullness”³⁴⁴ or “tedious moments”³⁴⁵. At those times entertainment as pleasurable activity was needed in order to avoid *idleness*. In relation to the kings, idleness was rarely mentioned, but it constituted an important part of eighteenth-century imagery of vices and virtues. For example, when the French Comedy closed its doors it was considered a problem of the state because it ceased to offer diversions for the elites – thus encouraging idleness and all related vices, most notably inactivity:

Cette clôture [l’opéra de Paris] qui paroissoit une bagatelle étoit réellement une affaire d’état. Les Théâtres préviennent une infinité de vices que l’oisiveté fairoit naître.³⁴⁶

However, the case of monarchs was another thing. They had a court full of men and women who, in order to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their master, were eager to create entertainments for him. Thus, the problem was not the lack of entertainment but the pleurability of it. That is to say, its potential to really divert the king. The inactivity of the king was not the result of idleness but of melancholia that resulted from dullness and ennui. The royal mistresses distinguished themselves with their abilities to amuse the king. Beauty alone was not enough. Other accomplishments were required of the king’s mistress, such as elegance, singing, dancing, playing, acting, and telling amusing stories.³⁴⁷ The mistresses were supposed to have “talents for pleasing”³⁴⁸ or even the “art of amusing”³⁴⁹, without any double entendre. In this role, royal mistresses were not only accepted but praised as well.³⁵⁰ Ideally a mistress devoted herself fully to the task of diverting the king – whereas other courtiers sought to organise entertainments for the king only occasionally.³⁵¹

As already pointed out in Fauques’ lengthy quotation, the kings were considered to have greater need for entertainments than others. Yet this view needs to be elaborated. Kings were considered to have more hours of dullness since they had exhausted all known amusements and every diversion had lost its

³⁴⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1758a, 41–44. See also, Fauques 1766a, 49–51. In the French version, the employed expression was “la tristesse & de l’ennui”, Fauques 1759, 35.

³⁴⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 171.

³⁴⁶ Poisson 1766b, 133. “This theatrical vacation, which appeared trifling, was really an affair of state. Dramatic performances prevent an infinite number of vices which idleness creates.” Poisson 1766d, 138–139.

³⁴⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 109; Pierre 1902a, 153; Fauques 1759, 35–36; Fauques 1766a, 52; Poisson 1766a, 25; Poisson 1766b, 104–105; Poisson 1766c, 25; Poisson 1766d, 108–109; Mairobert 1775, 214, 221; Bécu 1777b, 207–208, 216–217.

³⁴⁸ Fauques 1766b, 35; Fauques 1759, 136 “tous les talens propres à plaire”.

³⁴⁹ Fauques 1766b, 4.

³⁵⁰ As, e.g. “Madame d’Étioles [Mme de Pompadour] avait toutes les grâces, toute la fraîcheur et toute la gaieté de la jeunesse : elle dansait, chantait, jouait la comédie à merveille; il ne lui manquait aucun des talents agréables.” Pierre 1903, 109. “Mme. d’Étioles [later Mme de Pompadour] had all the graces, all the freshness, all the gaiety of youth; she danced, sang, and played comedy marvellously [sic.] well; no agreeable talent was lacking in her.” Pierre 1902a, 153. See also, Fauques 1759, 36–37, 58; Fauques 1758a, 42–44, 73.

³⁵¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 145; TNA, SP 78/280, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 7th Feb. 1770 57; TNA, SP 78/280, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 17th Feb. 1770, Private, 58; Hervey 1848a, 354; Mairobert 1775, 121–122, 254; Bécu 1777b, 266; Fauques 1759, 56; Fauques 1758a, 70–71.

allure. Thus, kings needed more innovative attractions. But from what did kings need to be diverted? The underlying problem was the inactivity and listlessness caused by melancholy. Melancholic kings were incapable of, let alone concerned about, ruling their kingdoms wisely and reasonably. Kings needed to be entertained so that they could have a pleasurable existence and they would avoid the dangerous inactivity that resulted from melancholy. As for melancholy, it resulted from boredom, dullness, ennui and sadness but also from *business*³⁵², (*public*) *affairs*³⁵³, and *politics*³⁵⁴.

Pour faire diversion aux affaires publiques, qui prenoient beaucoup sur le tempérament du Roi, J'y [Mme de Pompadour] opposois de nouveaux amusements.³⁵⁵

In other words, the mistress's function was to divert the king momentarily from thoughts of politics and state affairs so that he could rest and amuse himself, and later return to business recharged.³⁵⁶ In this context, the most important diversions were not the most spectacular, but rather the little amusements that took place in the more private apartments of the king or his mistress.

L'opiniatreté du Parlement, l'obstination des Curés à refuser les sacrements augmentèrent la mélancolie du Roi. Je [Mme de Pompadour] pris le parti de redoubler les amusements ces petits appartements, pour le tirer de cet état de langueur, où les affaires le jettoient. Je le retenois le soir auprès de moi le plus tard que je pouvois, & ne le renvoiois qu'après avoir dissipé les nuages de son esprit, par tout ce que j'imaginois qui pouvoit produire sur lui cet effet.³⁵⁷

In the private diversions, such as private soupers, the mistress created an opportunity for the king to absent himself not only from troubling state affairs but also from the excessive ceremony and pomp that the kings were expected to uphold on other occasions.³⁵⁸ The private apartments of the mistress thus functioned as a retreat for the king, where he could momentarily drop the act of

³⁵² See, e.g. Poisson 1766d, 108.

³⁵³ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 196 "affaires publiques"; Poisson 1766c, 194; Poisson 1766b, 104; Poisson 1766d, 182–183.

³⁵⁴ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 27; Poisson 1766c, 27.

³⁵⁵ Poisson 1766a, 196. "Observing that the public affairs affected the King's temper and constitution, I [Mme de Pompadour] contrasted them with diversions." Poisson 1766c, 194.

³⁵⁶ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 26–28; Poisson 1766c, 26–28; Poisson 1766b, 175, on the melancholy caused by the disputes between the clergy and the parliament of Paris and dispelled by Mme de Pompadour; Also in, Poisson 1766d, 182–183; Mairobert 1775, 268, on Mme du Barry's spectacles organised to divert the king from his melancholic thoughts that were caused by a sermon; Also in, Bécu 1777b, 283.

³⁵⁷ Poisson 1766b, 104. "The obstinacy of the parliament, and the stubbornness of the curates in refusing the sacraments, increased the King's [Louis XV] melancholy. I [Mme de Pompadour] endeavoured to multiply the amusements of his private parties, in order to remove that state of languor which business had brought upon him. I detained him with me at nights as late as I possibly could, and did not let him retire, till I had dissipated the clouds of his mind, by every method that I thought would produce the effect." Poisson 1766d, 108. See also, Mairobert 1775, 154.

³⁵⁸ See, e.g. "Il laissoit de sa grandeur à la porte & entroit dans mon appartement sans ce faste qui l'accompagne ailleurs." Poisson 1766a, 23. "[...] leaving all grandeur behind him [Louis XV], and coming into my [Mme de Pompadour] apartment without any thing of that state which attends on him at other places [...]" Poisson 1766c, 23.

majesty. The mistress's private suppers were also a place where the king could enjoy the company of his subjects without all that grandeur and majesty that usually separated him from them:

Aux petits soupers, que le Roi [Louis XV] aime tant, & dont on a su banir ce que le cérémoniel a de gênant; au milieu de quelques personnes choisies, qui sont alors ses amis bien plus, que ses sujets; dépouillé de tous les dehors imposans de la Majesté roiale, il se livroit tout entier au plaisir de la voir animer cette troupe voluptueuse & y répandre l'esprit de gaité. Elle [Mme de Pompadour] étoit l'ame & la vie de toutes ces petites parties.³⁵⁹

This was the priceless service that the mistress could offer to the king and that the other courtiers or passing amorous adventures could not. Her task was to organise moments for the king, pleasurable intervals when he could lay aside all his troubles as head of state and all the exertions of being the king. Any one woman could offer the king sexual gratification, but it required special talents and attentions to define and fulfil the needs of a king who was fated to stand alone above common men.

2.3 Companionship

Aux petits soupers, que le Roi aime tant, & dont on a su banir ce que le cérémoniel a de gênant; au milieu de quelques personnes choisies, qui sont alors ses amis bien plus, que ses sujets; [...].³⁶⁰

This quote reveals one of the inherent problems of monarchy that is not considered too often in modern research. Namely the problems arising from the disparity between the king's position and that of all other men in his realm. As Norbert Elias (2006) has pointed out, a king was essentially a reigning prince that was distinguished from the rest of the nobility by prerogatives but also by continually repeated performances, shows of authority, power and majesty, etiquette, and ceremony.³⁶¹ The king's position was established and maintained through performances that distanced him from the rest of the court³⁶²: in his kingdom, the king was without equal. He was peerless, and consequently, he was alone. This, of course, was also a result of and a problem concerning the king's two bodies. That is to say, the condition of the king embodying simultaneously a

³⁵⁹ Fauques 1759, 37–38. "At those petits-soupers of which the King [Louis XV] is so fond, where laying aside all the stiffness of state, and unlacing royalty, he enjoys himself with a few selected, rather at that time companions and friends than subjects, no one more than she contributed to animate the company, and to keep up the spirit of joy in it. She [Mme de Pompadour] was the vital principle of those little parties." Fauques 1758a, 44–45. See also, Fauques 1759, 35–36; Fauques 1766a, 52–53.

³⁶⁰ Fauques 1759, 37. "At those petits-soupers of which the King is so fond, where laying aside all the stiffness of state, and unlacing royalty, he enjoys himself with a few selected, rather at that time companions and friends than subjects, [...]." Fauques 1758a, 44–45. See also, Fauques 1766a, 52–53.

³⁶¹ Elias 2006.

³⁶² Elias 2006.

body natural, personal and singular, and a *body political*, an impersonal totality of the realm and undying majesty.³⁶³ As a sovereign majesty, the King alone was unrivaled. He had no equal and hence he had no companions or friends but only subjects. But, as a mortal man, the king obviously had, and was accepted to have, needs that all mortal men were assumed to have: “[...] for kings have their troubles both as men and as Princes.”³⁶⁴

Connecting with another human being was presented as a very basic need: “The King [Louis XV] wants a Companion”³⁶⁵. Especially the justification of Mme de Pompadour was reconstructed on the premise of the king’s need for a companion and a friend: “That relation [of Mme de Pompadour and Louis XV] is founded on the necessity he has to open his soul to a safe and tried friend, [...]”³⁶⁶. The king’s need for friends or companions was described time and again as a perpetual issue:

Louis XV. se plaignoit souvent de n’avoir point d’amis; il me disoit qu’il avoit souhaité mille-fois d’être simple particulier, pour goûter les effets de la simpatie que les rois n’éprouvent jamais.³⁶⁷

The lack of trustworthy friends was regarded as resulting from the king’s position as the source of all favours. It was in the king’s hands to distribute offices of the crown (even in Britain to some extent), lucrative positions at the royal households, pensions, estates, apartments, ennoblements, and other forms of royal patronage that carried either monetary value or value as a means of distinction.³⁶⁸ All courtiers were seen – or feared – to be pursuing their private interest only, and in that pursuit they were assumed to flatter the king and feign friendship:

The king [Louis XV] said to me [Mme de Pompadour] yesterday: I have many a flatterer, and not a friend. Such is the misfortune of princes: they are adored, but seldom beloved.³⁶⁹

³⁶³ See, e.g. Kantorowicz 1957; Baecque 1997; Kelly 1986; Saccaro-Battista 1983.

³⁶⁴ Poisson 1766c, 249. “[...]”; car les rois en ont & comme hommes & comme Princes.” Poisson 1766a, 251. See also, “Now do I [Mme de Pompadour] know that kings may mourn like other men; [...]” Poisson 1772, LETTER VIII. To the marchioness de Fontenailles, 16.

³⁶⁵ BL, Add MS 36798, Paris, 28th June 1761, From Stanley to Pitt, copy, 101.

³⁶⁶ Pierre 1902b, To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Ambassador to the Court of Vienna, Versailles, 20th Jan. 1757, 87.

³⁶⁷ Poisson 1766a, 251. “Lewis XV. would often lament, that he had no friends, and had a thousand times wished to have been a private person, for the sake of cordial friendship and sympathy, to the effects of which Kings are always strangers. [...]”, Poisson 1766c, 249–250. See also, Poisson 1772, LETTER VIII. To the marchioness de Fontenailles, 16.

³⁶⁸ See, e.g. Elias 2006, 79–80, 109, 183–184, 194, 205–206, 216; Mettam 2007, 134; Henshall 1992, 154. The meanings of royal favour will be further discussed in section 4.1.2.

³⁶⁹ Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVI. To the duchess of Duras, 1748, 79. This was a widely discussed problem, both in France and in Britain. See, e.g. “Tous aiment la faveur, aucun n’aime le Roi.” Poisson 1766a, 251; “All love favour, and care little for the King”, Poisson 1766c, 249–250; “I [Horace Walpole] pity Kings; they have more false

This sorry state of the kings was further heightened by the obscurity of the problem in the eyes of larger audiences. Only those who were intimate with the kings knew their condition, and all others envied their high position and grand lifestyle:

Je m'aperçois de plus en plus que la condition des rois & des grands est bien triste, & je m'imagine qu'un palfrenier [sic.] est un peu plus heureux que son maître. Qu'il faut payer cher la pompe, la gloire, & les magnifiques bagatelles, que le peuple ignorant a la bêtise d'envier!³⁷⁰

The loneliness of the kings was an affair of the state in two ways. Firstly, in the sense that an unhappy king was prone to melancholy and, consequently, inactivity and misrule. Secondly, the king's choice of friends may affect the government of the realm. This was a matter that related to both royal favourites and eighteenth-century conceptions of the characteristics of the sexes. As a phenomenon and practice, male favourites are peculiar to seventeenth-century courts.³⁷¹ Yet, although their presence faded in eighteenth-century courts, the imagery and language related to it survived.³⁷²

The disappearance of male royal favourites is largely explained by the changes in conceptions concerning same-sex friendship, and especially friendship between male friends, which occurred in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century sociability and friendship between men was considered a higher or nobler form of friendship.³⁷³ In the eighteenth century, the demonstration of heterosexuality became normative, and in this process especially physical demonstrations of intimate friendship between male friends, e.g. embracing, were no longer accepted. Instead, they were regarded as potentially homosexual: sodomite, unnatural, and as criminalised sexual activity.³⁷⁴

As for eighteenth-century commentators who acknowledged the kings' need for intimate friendship, they preferred female companions to male ones; but not because of the increasingly homophobic general views on same-sex friendship. If it was expected and accepted that the monarch needed a friend – at

friends than anybody; [...].” Walpole 1843b, LETTER CCXIX. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 15th May, 1774, 276; Poisson 1766a, 251; Poisson 1766c, 250–251.

³⁷⁰ Poisson 1771a, LETTRE III. A Madame La Maréchale D'Etrées, 1754, 4. “More and more do I [Mme de Pompadour] perceive how piteous is the condition of kings and of the great: I absolutely believe a groom happier than his master. How dear bought are the pomp, the glory, and all the gaudy gawaws [sic.], which the vulgar world is stupid enough to envy!” Poisson 1771c, LETTER III. To the lady of the marshal d'Etrées, 1754, 7.

³⁷¹ “Favourite”, also in form of a “favourite first minister” was a new phenomenon in seventeenth-century European courts. Favourite refers to a king's male friend who has a confidential and intimate relationship with the king, and who used power through informal influence. Smith & Taylor 2009, 294–295; Reinhard 1996, 9; Molas Ribalta 1996, 28.

³⁷² See, e.g. Smith & Taylor 2009 on friendship between Lord Hervey and Frederick, Prince of Wales.

³⁷³ See, e.g. Smith & Taylor 2009, 296.

³⁷⁴ See, e.g. Smith & Taylor 2009, 296.

least as “[...] an evil both necessary and natural to absolute government.”³⁷⁵ – then it was supposed to have been a female friend, because she was less dangerous to the realm than a male companion:

Il faut aux souverains un confident ou une maîtresse, & presque toujours le favori fait plus de mal à l'état que la favorite. Un homme pour l'ordinaire a des desseins d'ambition qu'une femme n'a pas. Il cherche à profiter de la faveur du prince par tous les moïens qui peuvent l'élever à la plus haute fortune. Il s'approprie les finances publiques, s'empare des premières charges de l'état, donne à ses parens ou à ses créatures celles qu'il ne prend pas pour lui; ce qui cause une révolution générale dans le gouvernement. Il a des vuës de grandeur & d'élévation que les personnes de notre sexe ne sauroient avoir.³⁷⁶

This explanation was given on behalf of Mme de Pompadour, and the argument was reinforced with examples of male favourites whose ambition and avarice harmed their master's kingdom and reputation.³⁷⁷ The male favourites were portrayed as having ambitious views and inclinations, or a private interest, to raise themselves in terms of honour and wealth. They would amass all considerable offices and posts for themselves or for their dependents, and thus extend their power and influence in all affairs of the state. Instead, a mistress was represented as a safer choice. Since she was a favourite of female sex, she was not assumed to possess harmful vices that were distinct masculine characteristics,

³⁷⁵ Poisson 1766c, 38. “[...] c'est un mal nécessaire auquel les gouvernements absolus succombent toujours.” Poisson 1766a, 38.

³⁷⁶ Poisson 1766a, 38–39. “Sovereigns must either have a confident or a mistress; and of the two the state generally suffers most by the former. Men in general have ambitious views, which a women [sic.] does not trouble herself about. The confident studies to avail himself of the prince's favour in all the means of raising himself to the highest fortune; he gets the sole management of the public finances; he engrosses the most lucrative posts, and distributes among his relations and creatures, those which he does not take for himself: the consequence of this is a general revolution in the government. In short, he has schemes of grandeur and elevation quite foreign to our sex.” Poisson 1766c, 38–39.

³⁷⁷ The writer gives several illustrative examples, e.g. Cardinal de Richelieu, “first minister” of king Louis XIII: “[...] Richelieu désola la France par son ambition. Ce favori de Louis XIII. sacrifia tout au désir de paroître seul grand sur le théâtre de la France. Il coupa les nerfs de la puissance politique de tous les pouvoirs. Il détruisit les prérogatives de la noblesse qui seules pouvoient balancer le despotisme de nos rois; & par-là fit plus de mal à la France que jamais les favorites ne lui en feront.” Poisson 1766a, 39. “Richelieu's ambition brought a thousand mischiefs on France: that favourite of Lewis XIII. sacrificed every thing to a giddy desire of appearing to be the only person of consequence in the kingdom. He cut the very sinews of the political power of all other bodies. He annulled the privileges of the nobility, which alone could make any stand against the despotism of our Kings; and therein he did more harm to France, than ever it has to fear from any mistress.” Poisson 1766c, 39–40. Cardinal Mazarin, “chief minister” of Louis XIII and especially of Louis XIV: “Il fit emprisonner les princes du sang [...]. Il s'empara du trésor public, [...]. Il vendoit les premières charges de la couronne.” Poisson 1766a, 40; “He imprisoned the princes of the blood, [...] He got the public treasure into his possession; [...] He used to sell principal state employments.” Poisson 1766c, 40. Count Brühl, favourite of Prince-Elector Frederick Augustus II: “On a vu du nos jours le comte de Bruhl favori du roi de Pologne faire des dépenses si excessives qu'elles surpassoient celles du monarque son maître.” Poisson 1766a, 40; “And our times have seen Count Bruhl, the King of Poland's favourite exceed his master, in extravagance.” Poisson 1766c, 40.

such as excessive ambition.³⁷⁸ Certainly, female ambition was a very controversial point, especially in regard to royal mistresses. Some commentators considered women the more ambitious sex. For example, the Abbé de Bernis made his opinion quite clear: “The ambition to govern belongs to the [female] sex;”³⁷⁹ It is also evident that female rule in general was seen as threatening, and thus ambition in women was considered particularly problematic and dangerous.³⁸⁰

Nevertheless, a female favourite was regarded as the safer choice because she at least could not collect government offices for herself, since women could not hold offices. Also, if married, a mistress could not accumulate wealth in the form of apartments, estates, or land, since by law in France and Britain, such property belonged to the husband.³⁸¹

Whether more or less ambitious than a male friend, it is evident that a mistress was quintessentially an intimate companion:

[...]; elle [Mme de Pompadour] était dépositaire des secrets de son âme [Louis XV], elle était au fait de toutes ses affaires, le centre de ses ministres : ce n’était pas une maîtresse à renvoyer, c’était une amie qui ne pouvait être remplacée par personne. On juge bien sévèrement les rois; ils sont hommes comme nous : pourquoi avoir moins d’indulgence pour eux que pour nous-mêmes ?³⁸²

Furthermore, a mistress was especially the kind of companion whom the king could trust with his troubles and worries:

C’est dans le sein de cette Dame [Mme du Barry] que le Souverain versoit les chagrins & les soucis qu’il éprouvoit à cette époque critique.³⁸³

³⁷⁸ Poisson 1766a, 38–39; Poisson 1766c, 38–39.

³⁷⁹ Pierre 1902a, 146. “L’ambition de gouverner est proper à tout le sexe; [...]” Pierre 1903, 101. It is quite clear, that when Abbé de Bernis was describing the general female qualities, he was actually talking about the courtly ladies in general, and on several occasions, referring to Mme de Pompadour specifically.

³⁸⁰ See, e.g. Spongberg 2002, 37, 41, 73; Offen 2000, 44–45; Merrick 1994, 686–689; Sharpe 2006, 104–105; Norrhem 2010, 15–16; Bucholz 1991, 293; Shoemaker 1998, 91; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 44, 284; Branca 1978, 3. This theme will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.2.3.

³⁸¹ Hardwick 1998, 157–158, 160–162, 175; Hanley 1989, 21; Capp 2003, 5–6, 29; Hesse 1989, 476; Norrhem 2010, 9–10; Hufton 1998, 240. See also e.g. Mairobert 1775, 231–232; Bécu 1777b, 232, on Mme du Barry being unable to purchase lands or house for herself before getting a separation of property from her husband.

³⁸² Pierre 1903, 356. “She [Mme de Pompadour] was the depository of the secrets of his soul [Louis XV’s]; she knew intimately all his affairs; she was the centre [sic.] of his ministers; she was not a mistress, to be sent away; she was a friend, whom no one could replace. We judge kings severely, but they are men like us; why have less indulgence for them than for ourselves?” Pierre 1902a, 276. See also, “Ce Prince me disoit souvent qu’il étoit heureux d’avoir une véritable amie à qui il pouvoit faire part de ses plaisirs & confier ses peines; car les rois en ont comme les autres hommes.” Poisson 1766a, 174. “This excellent Prince [Louis XV] often said to me, that he was happy in having a real friend, to whom he could communicate his satisfactions and his troubles, for kings have theirs like other men;” Poisson 1766c, 172.

³⁸³ Mairobert 1775, 154; “’Twas in the bosom of this Lady that the Monarch poured out the cares and anxiety which he felt at this critical period.” Bécu 1777a, 131. The

The royal mistress could dispense advice and emotional support to the troubled monarch. But, as a *female* friend, she could assist the *male* monarch in other ways as well. Alongside the strengthening heterosexual norm, the idea of the sexes as completely different, or even opposite, and mutually complementary were popularised.³⁸⁴ In the frame of this idea, female influence in the form of a female friend or companion could be seen as beneficial for a man. Both the ideals of sensibility and politeness involve a notion of women as a beneficial agent in social interaction and even an essential element in sociability. Women were regarded to have a civilising and pacifying effect on social life, and seen as having the natural ability to calm down the destructive impulses in men and soothe violent behaviour that was considered a natural characteristic of the male sex.³⁸⁵ Occasionally the mistresses were depicted as pacifying the monarchs very concretely. For example, Horace Walpole stressed the pacifying influence of Mme de Maintenon on Louis XIV. He shared a little anecdote about the monarch who, being enraged by some disagreeable intelligence, would have physically attacked François-Michel le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, his Secretary of State for War, if his mistress had not stopped him.³⁸⁶

Thus, it can be concluded that a mistress as a woman complemented the king as a man. The mistress dedicated herself to him, restored his good humour, eased his burdens, and calmed down his destructive inclinations. All these were basically duties of a virtuous wife. Why did the king then need a mistress to fulfil the functions of a wife?

époque critique being the criticism arising from the suspension of the Duc d'Aiguillon's court proceedings and continual problems between the crown and the parliament of Paris.

³⁸⁴ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century medical theories about sex and sexuality threw aside the one-sex model that originated from classical texts, mainly from Aristotle and Galen. According to the one-sex theory, the complete human being was conceptualised through the male body. Accordingly, there was only one sex that occasionally (about 50% of the cases) occurred in imperfect or incomplete form where the genitalia remained, or turned inside the body instead of being outside, as they should have been. This malformation induced all kinds of weaknesses and incapacities, both mental and physical. In the eighteenth century, these two variations were increasingly regarded as their own sexes. As such, they were considered to have their own natural and particular characters, attributes, abilities, and functions. More importantly, the two-sex model regarded the sexes not only as different mentally and physically but as mutually complementary as well. See, e.g. Winston 2005, 271; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 21–22, 38, 60; Shoemaker 1998, 59, 61–62; Hufton 1998, 43; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 25.

³⁸⁵ See, e.g. LAD, P/12020 [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette], *Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre*, 28–29, where the French envoyes presented George II as having a great ambition and violent temper that was constrained by the moderation of Queen Caroline. In the literature, see, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 202–204, 207–208; Gordon 1992, 902; Offen 2000, 45–46, 71; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 31.

³⁸⁶ Walpole 1804b, 118–119.

2.4 Royal marriage

During the eighteenth century, marriage was seen as the best way to fulfil natural human needs, both physical and mental. Ideally spouses complemented each other for mutual benefit. Marriage was necessary for reproduction, for the care and education of children, and for social and economic security, but it was also meant to be enjoyed. The ideal of enjoyment and companionship in married life was reinforced for example in popular culture, especially in sentimental novels, but religious teaching, both Catholic and Protestant, was not unfamiliar with the ideal either.³⁸⁷

In practice, however, this ideal of marriage did not come true for everybody. Especially for elites and the aristocracy, marriage did not only function as an answer to personal happiness. Simultaneously, and occasionally more importantly, it was also a very practical means to ensure the continuity of the family in a respectable and noble manner, which included ensuring the family fortune and networks.³⁸⁸ This was the main aim of royal marriages as well. Royal marriages were to cement alliances between ruling families and countries, and their most important function was to ensure the continuity of the dynasty and preserve the royal blood by producing a legitimate heir to the throne.³⁸⁹ The wishes of the young nobles that were to be married were then rarely the first thing to be taken into account, as is evident in the description of the marriage of Louis XV and Marie Leszczyńska:

[...] ce mariage se fut fait, comme se font tous les mariages entre personnes de son rang, je veux dire, sans qu'on eut consulté ses inclinations & même sans qu'il y eut quelqu'ombre de vraisemblance qu'elles dussent jamais le porter vers elle, [...].³⁹⁰

In the eighteenth century, it was a well-known fact that such marriages could be loveless and that there might not be any affection or even respect between the spouses. For example, the marriage of George Louis, Prince Elector of Hanover, later George I of Great Britain, and Sophia Dorothea of Celle was notoriously unhappy.³⁹¹ George I did not even bring his wife to Great Britain after he was crowned. She was to remain in Ahlden castle where she was imprisoned for life after an alleged affair with Philip Christoph von Königsmarck. Instead, George I brought with him to Britain his mistress Melusine von Schulenburg, later

³⁸⁷ See, e.g. Taque 2001; Capp 2003, 31; Adams 1997, 61; Rendall 1985, 10; Trumbach 1992, 92; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 31, 62; Hufton 1998, 39. On the political use of domestic sentimentality in popular culture in pre-Revolutionary France, see, e.g. Landes 1988; Maza 1993.

³⁸⁸ See, e.g. Scott & Storrs 2007, 13; Swann 2007, 173–177; Bellhouse 1999, 992; Hufton 1998, 68.

³⁸⁹ See, e.g. Fleming 1973, 232, 236–237; Wellman 2013, 3–4; Black 2002, 11–12; Hufton 1998, 63. Almost all early modern monarchies were dynastic, or at least they had aspirations to become so. See, e.g. Black 2002, 10–18.

³⁹⁰ Fauques 1759, 14–15. “[...] the match had been made, as those of his rank generally are, without consulting in the least his inclination or so much as the likelihood of its ever being so.” Fauques 1758a, 14.

³⁹¹ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 39, 57–58, 74–75; Gold 2012, 4–5, 43, 55–62.

Duchess of Kendal and assumed mistress, his half-sister Sophia Charlotte von Kielmansegg, later Countess of Darlington and Countess of Leinster.³⁹² Here, we encounter the mistress in the function of providing a meaningful relationship, love and intimacy to the king who could not find that satisfaction in his lawful relationship.³⁹³ An anonymous presentation of Louis XV's and Mme de Pompadour's relationship even drew parallels with that of a married couple:

[...] for the long connexion [sic.] which has subsisted between her [Mme de Pompadour] and Louis XV. may well be esteemed in the light of a matrimonial one.³⁹⁴

As stated before, the marriages of royalty were arranged and as such possibly unhappy. This was not only the king's problem but the queen's as well. Since extramarital love affairs were out of the question for the queen³⁹⁵, the amours of the kings might also have provided some relief for the queen in an unhappy marriage. In fact, the king's extramarital relationships could be considered a source of relief even in royal marriages that were not particularly unhappy. When Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, quit the court, Queen Caroline's feelings were described as mixed. On the other hand, she was presented as having felt pride at having her husband George II back so that his affair would no longer tarnish her honour. On the other hand, she was presented as having been disappointed because after the departure of the mistress, she would have to keep him company constantly:

³⁹² See, e.g. Black 2004a, 39, 57–58, 75–77; Henshall 1992, 88; Walpole 1818, 25–26, 29–32; Walpole 1804a, 60–61; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 37, 112.

³⁹³ Fleming in "The politics of marriage among Non-Catholic European Royalty" (1973) notes the importance of long-lasting households with royal mistresses and morganatic wives on the grounds of royal marriages being arranged, but does not elaborate the point further. Fleming 1973, 237.

³⁹⁴ Anon. 1760, 76.

³⁹⁵ Of course, it is proposed that even the aristocratic women at the court could throw themselves into amorous adventures after the birth of the legitimate heir. See, e.g. Hufton 1998, 149; Elias 1978, 184. In *The civilizing process* (1978) Elias, for example, interpreted extramarital relationships of seventeenth-century courtly ladies as emancipation and considered that as the moment when the supremacy of husbands breaks down. Elias 1978, 184. However, much of these descriptions might be a part of the public debate reproaching the court and political decision-makers with corruption. During the eighteenth century, the view of courtly life as corrupted became more and more popular and contested. See, for example, Graham 2000, 78, 112; Chisick 1997, 125–126; Furniss 2007, 600; Hont 2006, 380, 384, 406. On the other hand, it was not unfamiliar that courtly ladies pursued amorous adventures, especially if there were the ulterior motives of making a fortune or rising in the social hierarchy. This, however, will be discussed in the following sections. Here, suffice it to note that even if the aristocratic ladies entered or were allowed to enter extramarital intimate relationships, that was not an option for a queen. Queens' extramarital relationships could call into question the legitimacy of the royal children – even those children that were born even before the extramarital relationship – and thus question the whole line of succession. This was actually attempted by the anti-Hanoverians and Jacobites during the reign of George I. As, e.g. "The singular and prevailing Sentiment, which were inviolably persevered in, during that Period, were that few German Electors were the Fathers of their Wives Children, which made them careless who were Heirs of their Dominions." Shebbeare 1757, 55.

The Queen was both glad and sorry: her pride was glad to have even this ghost of a rival removed; and she was sorry to have so much more of her husband's time thrown upon her hands, when she had already enough to make her often heartily weary of his company, and to deprive her of other company, which she gladly would have enjoyed.³⁹⁶

In relation to sexual commerce, keeping company with a king in the royal bed was a matter of great physical strain as well. During the eighteenth century, there was no effective birth control (besides abstaining from sex) and every pregnancy and childbirth was a burden and risk to the mother's health and life, even among the aristocracy with their higher living standards.³⁹⁷ After several births, and possible related injuries and health problems, it might have been a huge relief for the wife to be freed from her marital duty in the conjugal bed. For example, Queen Caroline has been described to have suffered from impairments following deliveries, resulting in an injury that was painful and eventually proved fatal.³⁹⁸ Louis XV's first turning to extramarital relationships for sexual gratification was justified in very similar terms through the condition of Queen Marie Leszczyńska:

On dit que l'âge & les nombreuses couches apportèrent à la Reine une froideur ou une indifférence dont l'amour ne s'accommodoit pas. La disproportion des années commença à se faire sentir de plus en plus. Mais, à voir l'estime que le Roi avoit pour elle, estime justement due soit qu'il considérait comme la Mère d'un nombre d'enfants chéris, soit qu'il fit attention à son excellent caractère & à sa piété sincère, on imagine aisément que ce ne fut pas sans combats & sans une répugnance extrême, qu'il songea à se départir de ce qu'il lui devoit.³⁹⁹

A mistress could thus be a relief for the king and the queen both, especially if the marriage was an unhappy one. For the king, she could provide a meaningful and affectionate relationship, whereas, a kept mistress could release the queen from the company of her husband – if that was deemed unpleasant – and free her from the duties of the marital bed. The last point is the more important, since, as will be discussed next, there was a correlation between the king's public image as a man with active heterosexual desire and legitimate political participation.

³⁹⁶ Hervey 1848a, 352. See also, Hervey's report on Princess Anna's sentiments after the Countess of Suffolk left the court: "I wish, with all my heart, he [George II] would take somebody else, that Mamma [Queen Caroline] might be a little relieved from the ennui of seeing him for ever in her room." Hervey 1848a, 353.

³⁹⁷ See, e.g. Branca 1978, 79–80.

³⁹⁸ "The queen's great secret was her own rupture, which till her last illness nobody knew but the king, her German nurse, Mrs. Mailborne, and one other person." Walpole 1818, 89; Stanhope 1779a, 157. She suffered from an umbilical hernia and a ruptured womb. Caroline and George II had eight living children. Ellis 1996, 81.

³⁹⁹ Fauques 1759, 16–17. "It is said the Queen's person had with her growing years, and the frequent childbearing, contracted certain infirmities rather fit to disgust than to invite enjoyment. The disproportion of age also began more and more to show itself. But with the regard the King had for her, as the common parent of his children, as well as for excellent temper, and unaffected piety, it may be believed that he did not easily, nor without many conflicts with himself, depart from his system of justice to her bed." Fauques 1758a, 17. Marie Leszczyńska and Louis XV had ten living children.

2.5 Éclat, virility, and independence

All the previous points explaining the royal mistress's existence as necessary could be considered reasons and justification relating to the personal and unique person of the monarch, or to the *body natural* of the king. However, I would not define them necessarily as *private* reasons, for, as explained, due to the composite body of the king they were reflected from the person of the personal monarch on to the impersonal monarchy, and on to imaginings of the government or political management of the realm by the monarch. Furthermore, a monarch could never be a private person, as was illustrated in the figure of the king aching for companionship in the *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766). Nonetheless, there was an air of a certain intimacy and non-publicness in these previous points justifying the existence of royal mistresses. They were explanations founded on the understandings of the functions and feelings of a personal and mortal body. This is an important distinction because there was also a group of explanations that rationally justified the existence of royal mistresses from the viewpoint of outward appearance and the king's public image. These accounts arose mainly from aristocratic discourses and are largely centred around grandeur, ceremony, and courtly life, but occasionally they intertwine with medical discourse as in the case of virility.

As previously stated, beauty alone was not sufficient for a royal mistress. Nonetheless, it was still an important element, since the royal mistresses were not only part of the king's personal life but occupied a visible part in the courtly life and ceremonies as well. Whenever the mistress was visible to audiences larger than the king's private circles, she was no longer an individual courtly lady but a *King's Mistress*, a woman who was closely intertwined with, and to some extent even represented the king's image. Accordingly, it was important that the mistress was magnificent since she was an extension of the king's magnificence – or to be precise, an impersonal mistress was an extension of the equally impersonal king's grandeur. The éclat of the king was present in the magnificence of his mistress as the éclat and grandeur of the dynasty and the country were embodied and represented in the king's majesty. This included notions of pomp, glory, éclat, elegance, and wealth.

Scholars, as for example Norbert Elias (2006) and Jeremy Black (2002), have already pointed out that grandeur and gloire were values per se. They were demonstrations of the king's position as a sovereign, and as such, they motivated the king's decision-making in relation to both political and personal judgements.⁴⁰⁰ In many instances these were actually the same thing, at least in so far as the king's honour was considered to be simultaneously the country's and governing to be the king's private secret. The king demonstrated his éclat, gloire, grandeur, and majesty continually through ceremony and etiquette.⁴⁰¹ For

⁴⁰⁰ See, e.g. Elias 2006, 145–147; Black 2002, 17. The most important source of gloire was a victorious war. See, e.g. Black 2002, 54–56.

⁴⁰¹ See, e.g. Elias 2006, 147; Chaouche 2008, 198–400.

the sake of royal magnificence and grandeur, it was important that the ladies who were chosen to act the part of the royal mistress before the eyes of the public stood out as prime examples of their sex.

The beauty of the mistresses of the kings and heirs apparent was often described, and usually with high praise. Dean Swift portrayed the Countess of Suffolk as “an ornament to any court”⁴⁰². Horace Walpole describes Lady Sarah Lennox, who was a mistress to George William Frederick, later George III, in festivities celebrating the new queen Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz:

Her [Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz’s] train was borne by the ten bride-maids [sic.], [...].but with neither features nor air, nothing ever looked so charming as Lady Sarah Lennox; she has all the glow of beauty peculiar to her family.⁴⁰³

More than that, the royal mistress’s beauty was not only exceptional but also enviable:

Au reste, si Madame Dubarri dépensoit plus que les Maîtresses de dix Rois, réunies, elle le faisoit toujours d’une manière agréable & galante. C’est ainsi qu’elle parut à la Revûe du Roi, de cette année, dans le plus grand appareil de magnificence, & dans un goût si exquis sur sa personne & sur ses vêtemens, que sa beauté en brilloit cent fois davantage. Elle ravit tous les hommes, & excita l’envie de toutes les femmes.⁴⁰⁴

Just like the royal court, the royal mistresses did not demonstrate royal brilliance only to the external audiences but also to the court itself, including the king.

Here, *beauty* is probably a slightly oversimplifying term. Eighteenth-century writers used a multitude of expressions, as for example, charm, elegance, magnificence, splendour, beauty, and grace to describe the appearance of the mistress. These usually referred not only to personal good looks⁴⁰⁵ but also to manners, conduct, taste, and dress, as is evident in the description of Mme du Barry on her presentation to the Mesdames, the king’s daughters, after her formal presentations as maîtresse-en-titre:

Tous les Spectateurs ont admiré la noblesse de son maintien & l’aisance de ses attitudes. Ce Rôle de femme de Cour est ordinairement étranger les premiers jours qu’on

⁴⁰² Howard 1824b, Dean Swift to Lady Betty Germaine, 8th Jan. 1733, 52.

⁴⁰³ Walpole 1843a, LETTER XIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 10th Sep. 1761, 41–42. Horace Walpole portrayed her as an exceptional beauty on various occasions. See, e.g. Walpole 1820b, 285.

⁴⁰⁴ Mairobert 1775, 227. “If Madam Dubarrè, however, expended more than the mistresses of ten sovereigns together, she always did so in a pleasing and noble manner. Thus she appeared at the review before his Majesty this year, in the greatest magnificence. The taste and elegance displayed in her dress, so far increased the splendor of her beauty, that she charmed all the men, and excited envy in the breasts of all those of her own sex.” Bécu 1777b, 224–225.

⁴⁰⁵ Even in matters of physical looks it seems that in the case of royal mistresses handsomeness was appreciated over beauty. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret & Separate, 150; BL, Egerton MS 3456, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 19th Dec. 1752, Private, 305; Mairobert 1775, 288, 300–301; Bécu 1777b, 313–314, 332; Mairobert 1779a, CIXe. LETTRE Au Duc d’Aiguillon, 151–152; Mairobert 1779a, CXIe. LETTRE Du Dec d’Aiguillon, 154; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CIX. To the Duke d’Aiguillon, 122; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXI, From the Duke d’Aiguillon, 124.

le fait; & Madam Dubarri l'a rempli comme si elle y eût été habituée depuis long-tems.⁴⁰⁶

The mistresses participated in public ceremonies, and as they were a royal curiosity, their appearance and behaviour was observed and reported in all kinds of media, including manuscript journals (as in the previous quotation) and correspondence. For example, the British diplomats noted Mme du Barry's attendance at public ceremonies as well. In his letter to Lord Weymouth in 1769 Lord Harcourt described the ceremonies in which Mme du Barry was to participate after her formal presentation as *maîtresse-en-titré*:

[...] I am first going to the Review in the Plaine des Sablons, where the King is to see the French & Swiss Guards this Evening. Madame Barré is to be there, and all Paris to see her.⁴⁰⁷

Lord Harcourt's illustration was a testament to the mistresses as a royal curiosity. The mistresses were not only visibly present and closely watched in the public ceremonies but the kings desired to show off their mistresses as well. During a visit to Chantilly, Louis XV was presented as having made a great show of Mme du Barry:

S.M. l'afficha aux yeux du Peuple des environs, en lui faisant suivre la Chasse en Calèche; ensorte qu'il n'y eut personne qui n'eût la liberté de la contempler à son aise. On admit aussi le Public aux soupers & aux fêtes, où le Roi parut affecter de plus en plus de lui faire des amitiés.⁴⁰⁸

Louis XV's motivation for parading his mistress seems to spring from the desire to show his attachment to his mistress, and by this gesture, help the newly presented mistress to improve her position among the court ladies.

Yet, displaying the mistresses for the sake of show itself was not unknown either, as was well described in the case of George II: "His other passions were, Germany, the army, and women. Both the latter had a mixture of parade in them: [...]"⁴⁰⁹ In hierarchical societies, such as court society, distinction was a value in itself.⁴¹⁰ Royal mistresses were one way to distinguish the king from the rest of the nobility in terms of wealth and grandeur. Outward appearance of both the

⁴⁰⁶ Mairobert 1775, 97. "Every spectator admired the dignity of her carriage, her graceful attitudes and motions. The part of a court lady is generally stiff and awkward [sic.] the first days of performance, but Madam Dubarré acquitted herself with as much ease as if she had been long habituated to the practice." Bécu 1777a, 47.

⁴⁰⁷ TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 58. See also, TNA, SP 78/286, Horace St. Paul to Rochford, Paris, 23rd Sep. 1772, Private, 61–62, where St. Paul praised Mme du Barry's brilliance in the opening ceremonies of a new bridge in Neuilly.

⁴⁰⁸ Mairobert 1775, 127–128. "His majesty exhibited his favourite to the whole neighbourhood, by making her follow the sports in a calash; so that every one was at liberty to take a near view of her person. The people were also admitted to see the feasts and entertainments; at which the king seemed to catch at every opportunity of shewing his attachment." Bécu 1777a, 93.

⁴⁰⁹ Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 154.

⁴¹⁰ Elias 1978; Elias 2006.

king as the highest man of the kingdom, and his mistress as his chosen lady⁴¹¹ were a matter of royal status, and it included distinction through manners and behaviour as well as through consumption and lifestyle, as for example clothing and housing: everything was supposed to express the highest status and rank.⁴¹² But for monarchs the keeping of royal mistresses signified other valuable aspects as well.

One of these would be the ideal, or fashionable, sociability between the sexes, as manifested in conceptions of *gallantry*, *chivalry*, *politeness* (or *politeness*), *civilité*, and *courtesy*. All the mentioned concepts belonged to some extent to eighteenth-century aristocratic discourse that valued women as an important element in sociability. Modern studies have sought to distinguish differences between cultures of politeness, gallantry, chivalry, and courtesy, but largely in vain. Even though there were some temporal and spatial variations in the terms used, all these cultural ideals largely shared the same language and conceptions.⁴¹³ Here, however, the common ground is more important than the differences. All these conceptions were cultural forms that paid particular attention to sociability between the sexes and simultaneously encompassed a great variety of other norms and ideals regarding, for example, behaviour, manners, clothing, and housing.⁴¹⁴ As such, these concepts capture ideals of aristocratic lifestyle and especially the behaviour that was expected from men with regard to women. Courtly men, the king included, were expected to be gallant, polite, civil, and/or courteous – whichever was the fashionable term of the moment. Through demonstrations of for example *chivalry* or *gallantry*, the king could demonstrate his masculinity in a socially acceptable and praiseworthy way. For example, Louis XV's exemplary behaviour in regard to Mme du Barry was described in a little story about Louis XV dropping his toothpick case. When Mme du Barry knelt to return the box to her royal lover, Louis XV “[...] threw himself at her feet, saying, This posture belongs to me, and for life;”⁴¹⁵. The

⁴¹¹ Of course, the queen's appearance was more important than the mistress's in relation to public ceremonies. However, the fact is that mistress was chosen by the king whereas the queen, and the rest of the ladies of the royal family that were above the mistress in hierarchy, were not. This difference is an important one: the characteristics of the chosen lady could be interpreted as telling something about the one who made the choice.

⁴¹² See, e.g. Elias 2006, 70–71, 74, 78–79; Outram 1989, 74; Scott & Storrs 2007, 24.

⁴¹³ For example, Klein in “Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century” (2002) and “Liberty, manners, and politeness in early eighteenth-century England” (1989) sees *politeness* as an eighteenth-century British idiom. Whereas Cohen in “Manners' make the man: Politeness, chivalry, and construction of masculinity, 1750–1830” (2005) considers politeness (*politesse*) a cultural character peculiar to the French eighteenth-century culture. Instead, Cohen sees *chivalry* as the British cultural trait that became fashionable in mid-century. In *The civilizing process* (1978), Elias noted that *civilité* lost its meaning in eighteenth-century court society because it became too popularised and its use spread among the lower classes. The term was replaced by *politeness*, *humanite*, and *delicatessen*. Thus, Elias demonstrated well the use and control of the language as the elite's means to establish distance from those lower in the social hierarchy.

⁴¹⁴ See, e.g. Klein 2002, 883–888; van Horn Melton 2009, 205; Hours 2002, 25, 32, 39–40, 53–55.

⁴¹⁵ Bécu 1777a, 84–85. “[...] se précipitant lui-même à ses pieds, lui dit: Madame, c'est à moi à prendre cette posture, & pour toute la vie; [...]”, Mairobert 1775, 122.

commentators praised the monarch's deed through a reference to a nostalgic image of chivalric romanticism as :

[...]; galanterie digne la vieille Cour, & bien opposée au ton leste & cavalier, dont nos Petits-Maîtres traitent aujourd'hui les femmes.⁴¹⁶

The keeping of a mistress offered a king a way to demonstrate – or to affect – his masculinity through gallantry, chivalry, or other fashionable cultural ideals. For example, Horace Walpole presented the motives of George II for keeping a mistress in terms of ideas of gallantry:

The king, though very amorous, was certainly more attracted by a silly idea he had entertained of gallantry being becoming, than by a love of variety;⁴¹⁷

More importantly, a mistress was a proof of the king's sexuality: his sexual desires, prowess, and activity. That is to say, a mistress was a demonstration of *virility*. Moreover, and increasingly more importantly, a mistress was a proof of heterosexual desire. Masculinity, sexual activity, and power were inseparably intertwined in early modern thought, as for example Matthew McCormack (2005), Frances E. Dolan (2003), and Anna Clark (1998) have noted.⁴¹⁸ On the one hand, masculinity and power were intertwined in relation to rationality and abilities in public or political participation, as is evident in political rhetoric where masculinity signified power.⁴¹⁹ On the other hand, masculinity and sexual activity were inextricably linked, and increasingly so in the eighteenth century when the fear of homosexuality made proofs of normative heterosexuality necessary.⁴²⁰ As far as masculinity and power were linked, the loss of manly image was dreaded, and in order to avoid the threat, masculinity needed to be demonstrated continually.⁴²¹ For example, in mid-eighteenth-century British aristocratic masculinity, erotic hedonism played an important role – especially in relation to political capacities.⁴²² For a king, as both a man and a representative of public power, demonstrations of masculine qualities, virtues, and characteristic, such as physical courage and abilities, wisdom, duty, and virility, were essential.⁴²³ Consequently, mistresses played an important role as a proof of orientation, capacity, and ability of royal sexuality, and accordingly, as proof of royal masculinity, activity, and vitality. Kings were expected to be amorous, and hence they were.

⁴¹⁶ Mairobert 1775, 122. “[...] a piece of gallantry worthy of the ancient days of chivalry, and very different from the careless indifference with which our modern petits maitres treat the fair sex.” Bécu 1777a, 84–85.

⁴¹⁷ Walpole 1818, 76.

⁴¹⁸ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 20, 87; Clark 1998, 20; Dolan 2003, 14–16.

⁴¹⁹ See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 20; Clark 1998, 20; Outram 1989, 69–70.

⁴²⁰ See, e.g. Smith & Taylor 2009, 296; Hufton 1998, 304.

⁴²¹ See, e.g. Clark 1998, 20; Dolan 2003, 14–16.

⁴²² McCormack 2005, 87. This discourse was challenged over the century and gradually lost its meaning by the end of the eighteenth century.

⁴²³ See, e.g. Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 292.

The king's fancy for ladies was indicated with descriptions of the ladies that the king was, or was assumed to be, involved with.⁴²⁴ Kings were also characterised as *amorous*, a term that encompassed prevalent romantic and sexual inclinations. For example, George I was depicted as "[...] the prince, who was extremely amorous, had several mistresses."⁴²⁵ George II was described as "very amorous"⁴²⁶. Most famous, however, was Louis XV's amorousness that was noted not only by the French commentators but by the British ones as well: "gout amoureux du Roi"⁴²⁷. Louis XV's amateness was even described as the "call of his constitution, which was naturally an amorous one"⁴²⁸. Thus, amorousness, indicating the sexual interest in women and normative (aristocratic) ideals of sociability between the sexes, was constructed as a fundamental part of the monarchs – as their inseparable *constitution*.

The last but not the least point in justifying mistresses would be *independence*. Independence was the most important masculine property in relation to public and political activity in the eighteenth century. In fact, it was seen as the prerequisite for political participation and action in public affairs. Thus, it was essentially part of the elite discourse that aimed to explain and limit the right to engage in political decision-making. As Matthew McCormack (2005) demonstrated, independence was a concept that referred to a wide range of political and social qualities. It was both an indispensable political virtue and precondition for participation in public activities. It encompassed ideals of financial autonomy, of morals and responsibilities, and increasingly in

⁴²⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 65–66, 154–155, 291–292, 514–515; Walpole 1822b, 480; Walpole 1845a, 63–65; Walpole 1818, 32–33, 71–75; Walpole 1804a, 86–88; Walpole 1833a, LETTER LVI. From Orford to Mann, London, 15th Nov. 1742, 195; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 20th Dec. 1768, 15–16; Hervey 1848a, 90–97, 406–407; Hervey 1848b, 24–25, 38, 52–53, 95–96, 103; Anon. 1760, 25–27; Fauques 1759, 19–22, 93–94; Fauques 1758a, 18–23; Fauques 1758b, 8–9; Fauques 1766a, 20–25, 93–94, 156–158; Mairobert 1775, 59, 214, 248, 285, 288–289; Bécu 1777a, 2–3; Bécu 1777b, 206–207, 257, 309–310, 313–314; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 20th Aug. 1738, Most Secret, 10; TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430–431; BL, Egerton MS 3456, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris 22nd/11th 1751, 93; TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret & Separate, 150; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday, 2nd May 1753, Private, 72–74; TNA, SP 78/261, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 89; TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 4th May 1765, 82–83; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 256–257.

⁴²⁵ Walpole 1818, 19.

⁴²⁶ Walpole 1818, 76. See also, Hervey 1931, 746.

⁴²⁷ BL, Egerton MS 3456, From Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 29th Nov. 1752, Private, 295.

⁴²⁸ Fauques 1758a, 17. Especially Louis XV's liking for little amorous adventures was noted on several occasions. He was described as "unsettled in his amours", Poisson 1766c, 30; or "Louis XV. avoit un goût décidé pour ces amours de passage qui commencent & finissent avec la possession : [...]". Poisson 1766a, 141; "very fond of these slightly amours, of which possession is both the beginning and the end." Poisson 1766c, 140. Usually these were affairs described as "transitory" or "fleeting" amours, "amours passangeres". See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 4, 8; Poisson 1766c, 5, 8; Poisson 1766b, 1, 20; Poisson 1766d, 1, 20.

eighteenth-century British political and cultural climate, ideals related to personal attributes such as self-control.⁴²⁹

Independence and dependence was a binary opposition that was understood through the idea of family. Man as the head of the family had the duty and responsibility to protect, control, and represent the dependent members of the family, which included his wife (who was legally and financially under the custody of the husband), his minor children (or all his children that lived in the household, in other words, that had not yet married and established their own households), and household servants, both male and female (who were dependent on their keeping especially in relation to salary).⁴³⁰ Independence was then measured in terms of a man's capacity to provide for his family. It was also linked to family fortune and especially to landed property, since those who supported themselves and their families with wages were considered to be dependent on their employers.⁴³¹ Independence was also a capacity of being able to decide of one's own accord, encompassing ideals related to self-control and self-mastery as well as to reason and rationality, which were virtues gained through education.⁴³² On public occasions, political individuals were required to demonstrate their independence, for example, through rhetoric of chivalry, where the protection of women and other dependents was a key element.⁴³³

In terms of property, the king's independence was unquestioned. He was the master of a huge royal household with many dependents, he was a large landowner (even though the hereditary Crown's lands were inalienable), and he had independent revenues at his disposal. In eighteenth-century Britain it is true that the Crown's liquid assets and expenditure were connected to the Civil List that Parliament granted to the king at the beginning of his reign. Nonetheless, this cannot be understood in terms of dependence and even less in the sense that Parliament controlled the king's expenditure. As Earl A. Reitan (1966), for example, has demonstrated, the case was quite the contrary. The Civil List was one of the most important contested points where Parliament and the Crown fought for supremacy. Essentially, it was not about the control of finance but about the power-relation between the Crown and Parliament in a balanced or mixed monarchical system where neither was supposed to have subjugated the other. Until Burke's economic reform 1780–1782, the Civil List was considered an instrument that guaranteed the independence of the Crown.⁴³⁴

The king's independence was then not connected to revenues. In the case of a monarch, the tricky point was in the independence of judgement, decision-

⁴²⁹ McCormack 2005, 2, 3, 13, 15, 20, 45–46, 56; Clark 1998, 20; Sparling 2013.

⁴³⁰ See, e.g., McCormack 2005, 19.

⁴³¹ See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 68; Cannon 2007, 79; McCormack 2005, 3–4, 13, 17, 19, 24; Clark 1998, 20; Bellhouse 1999, 965; Sparling 2013. The value of financial independence did not disappear even though the value of the landed property decreased in the rhetoric of political independence in the British debates during the latter half of the eighteenth-century. McCormack 2005, 18, 56.

⁴³² See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 68–69; McCormack 2005, 2–4, 12–13, 49, 72; Hamowy 2006, 370; Outram 1989, 69–70.

⁴³³ McCormack 2005, 39–40, 49.

⁴³⁴ See, e.g. Reitan 1966.

making, and self-mastery. In order to truly be the master, the king needed to be free from the influence of his advisors, ministers, and all subordinates about his royal person. In this, the royal mistresses were regarded as having a potentially liberating effect, as described by British ambassador Lord Waldegrave in 1738. In his illustration, Lord Waldegrave gave the credit for the positive change in the person and conduct of the rather young and timid Louis XV to his mistress Mme de Mailly:

He [Louis XV] now in a manner owns publicly his Inclinations for Madame de Mailly. [...] At night the Ladies supped with the King in his Cabinets, which was quite a new thing here, and thus it has continued three or four times a Week during the voyage[...] this new way of Life has made a great Alteration in the French Kings outward Behaviour, He is quite another man, He has thrown off his natural Bashfulness, is gay and affable, talks to every body with ease, and shews he has infinitely more in him than by his former Life could have been imagined, and that if he pleases to take a little pains, he is very capable of governing by himself whenever the Cardinal [Fleury] dies, and to play his part in the World notably.⁴³⁵

From this example, it is evident that the mistress's actions were considered to have a great impact on the king's mood and behaviour in relation to his confidence in his own capacities. Through the amusements and diversions, the mistress offered the timid king the support and encouragement needed to participate fully in the social and political life of the court. As for participation in courtly life, it indisputably improved his self-confidence, a quality that was crucial to every independent man, and relieved him of the influence of established advisors or favourites. Thus, the mistress could be considered an agent that not only ensured but also produced independence. This was a precious personal service that the mistress offered: she enabled the king to be his own master.

Since the kings were expected to be independent, they were not exempted from demonstrating their independence from advisors, courtiers, ministers, favourites, and especially from their wives. The eighteenth-century idea of the sexes was complementary but still hierarchical: men dominated women, husbands ruled their wives, fathers controlled their daughters, sons warded their sisters and so forth. As illustrated in many studies, this hierarchy was consolidated through legal practices, customs, medical doctrines, and religious teachings.⁴³⁶

In eighteenth-century culture, both popular and elite, the wife was always controlled by her husband, and obedience was considered to be proof of the wife's love and regard for her husband, of her own duty, honour and virtue as well as of the honour, virtue, and capacities of her husband.⁴³⁷ Thus, it is not surprising that there was a normative image common in popular culture that turned the ideal order upside down, and hence, was both ridiculous and

⁴³⁵ TNA, SP 78/218 Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart 313–314.

⁴³⁶ See, e.g. Shoemaker 1998, 16–17; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 22, 31–34; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 2–3, 5.

⁴³⁷ See, e.g. Taque 2001, 85–86; Harvey 2005; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 32–34, 280, 284; Hufton 1998, 38; Shoemaker 1998, 91.

frightening, namely the figure of a foolish husband that was ruled by his wife.⁴³⁸ Especially aristocratic masculinity was vulnerable to insinuations of wifely rule. In aristocratic discourses, the masculine ideals merged independence with virility and men's rule over women and further intertwined masculinity and political participation. In addition, this model of masculinity was implemented in fashionable sociability that included women's active participation.⁴³⁹

Kings were no less safe from this threatening image than any other husband in the realm was. Quite the contrary, they were even more vulnerable to such allusion since they were regarded as both the head of their own private royal family and the sovereign head of the larger family of the state. Accordingly, kings were worried about remarks about being ruled by their wives, George II even notoriously so. As Lord Hervey recalled, "he was infinitely jealous of being governed, [by Queen Caroline]."⁴⁴⁰

George II was, and largely still is, generally described to have been governed by his wife, Queen Caroline.⁴⁴¹ In this study, there is no interest nor sources to comment on whether he was under the rule of his queen or not. Although, I believe the amount of defamatory debates presenting him as a governed king has left an excessively strong mark on his reputation that still persists in historical studies. In this study, however, it is interesting and remarkable that mistresses were considered an essential demonstration of husbandly independence from a wife's rule. For example, both Horace Walpole and John Hervey commented on the practice of keeping mistresses as George II's means of showing his independence from his wife:

Her [Princess Louise of Great Britain] fate too had born a resemblance to her mother's [Queen Caroline's]: for the King of Denmark, though passionately fond of her, to prevent the appearance of being governed, had kept a mistress, [...].⁴⁴²

But the Queen [Caroline], knowing the vanity of her husband's [George II] temper, and that he must have some woman for the world to believe his mistress, [...].⁴⁴³

Thus, in this case of George II, who was rumoured to have been governed by his wife and consequently ridiculed, the keeping of mistresses was depicted as an attempted act of demonstrating independence.

In order to convince audiences of his independence from women, the king needed to prove to be independent from his mistress as well. For example, George II was described as having kept his mistress Henrietta Howard waiting:

⁴³⁸ See, e.g. Capp 2003, 12–13, 21; Merrick 1992, 179; Farr 1991, 392; Hufton 1998, 48–53.
⁴³⁹ McCormack 2005, 87; See, e.g. Harvey 2005; Chalus 2000; Spongberg 2002, 49, 87–88; Munck 2002, 17; Klein 2002. Also a fashionable ideal among the educated urban population. See, e.g. Goodman 1989; Goodman 1992, 9, 12; Gordon 1992, 907; van Horn Melton 2009, 202–205; Offen 2000, 45.

⁴⁴⁰ Hervey 1848a, 185.

⁴⁴¹ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 39.

⁴⁴² Walpole 1822a, 197.

⁴⁴³ Hervey 1848a, 97.

[...] his time of going down to Lady Suffolk's apartment was seven in the evening: he would frequently walk up and down the gallery looking at his watch for a quarter of an hour before seven, but would not go till the clock struck.⁴⁴⁴

By this means, George II demonstrated that he was in control of his sentiments towards the mistress and was not overcome by emotions for her. Such lack of self-restraint and subjection to sentiments and emotions would call into question his independence in relation to both his capacities to reason and to shun the influence of the mistress, which were the prerequisites for legitimate rational and independent decision-making.

2.6 Discussion

In modern research, there are rarely any remarks about the royal mistresses as a positive phenomenon or a needed practice of eighteenth-century courts. Contemporaries, however, sought to explain the king's practice of keeping mistresses and, more than that, they tried to rationalise and justify the extramarital and thus criminal intimate relationship. In this chapter we saw that the royal mistresses were regarded as having acceptable roles, functions, and duties by the side of the monarch that were justified through understandings relating to i) mutually complementary sexes with their respective features, capacities, duties, and virtues, and ii) needs that the monarch as a personal and mortal body, or further, as a heterosexual man, was assumed (and allowed) to have.

For the eighteenth-century commentators, the restoring and securing of the king's health was the most obvious explanation for the keeping of a mistress. A mistress played an important role in safeguarding the king's physical and mental health. The king's happiness was indeed an affair of the state as long as political decisions for the whole realm were made by a man, or by a king whose condition was to have a natural body as much as any other man:

On fait que c'est de la disposition actuelle de notre ame que dépendent toutes nos résolutions. Tel monarque qui refuse tout, quand une certaine mélancolie s'empare de son esprit, accorde tout quand cette vapeur est dissipée. Cette disposition, suite ordinaire des causes secondes, & qui tire sa source d'un son harmonieux, d'un coup d'œil, & le plus souvent de l'air du tems, ne suit pas toujours l'ordre de l'équité. Il est malheureux pour les peuples d'être gouvernés par des mortels sujets à une machine susceptible de toutes sortes d'impressions. Il faudroit, pour le bonheur du genre humain, que les hommes fussent gouvernés par des Anges.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁴ Walpole 1822a, 513. Similar anecdote also in, e.g. Walpole 1818, 83.

⁴⁴⁵ Poisson 1766b, 105–106. "We know that all our resolutions spring from the actual disposition of the soul. A monarch that refuses every thing when his mind is seized with a certain melancholy, grants every thing when this vapour is dissipated. This disposition, the usual effect of secondary causes, and which derives its origin from an harmonious sound, a wink, and most frequently from the temperature of the air, does not always pursue the rule of justice. It is unhappy for the people to be governed by mortals subject to a machine susceptible of every kind of impression. It

The royal mistress as a justified practice and a phenomenon was inseparably and primarily connected to the mortal and human body of the personally ruling monarch. As the private and personal body of the monarch was inextricable from his public, impersonal, and undying body, or more concretely, his public function and duties, the functions of the royal mistresses reflected on this public and political body as well. Especially in France, the debates about the royal mistress were debates about the king as the man who personally wields the highest political power. The inseparability and interconnection of the king's two bodies created the space in which the royal mistresses could be understood and shown as beneficial to the monarch and the monarchy – or even as *de rigueur* as the mistress was presented as a phenomenon or even an agent supporting and sustaining the good government of the realm by supporting and sustaining the person of the monarch.

Yet, even in these positive representations for the necessity of the royal mistresses, there lay hidden dangers.

The first of them relates to the different lifestyles, expected duties, and values of different social groups. The keeping of mistresses was an accepted practice among the ruling princes that was also mimicked by the aristocracy from the late seventeenth century onward.⁴⁴⁶ However, the lower orders were not entitled to such indulgence nor did the practice suit their lifestyle and moral values. In his memoirs, the Abbé de Bernis recalled his youth in the 1730s:

Quand j'entrai dans le grand monde, j'y trouvai établi qu'il était ridicule à un mari d'aimer sa femme, et à une femme d'aimer son mari; les mœurs à cet égard étaient si générales, que la Chaussée se crut permis d'attaquer ce préjugé dans une comédie qui eut du succès. La foi conjugale n'était alors une vertu que dans l'esprit de la bourgeoisie. Cette dépravation de mœurs n'est plus aujourd'hui si à la mode: on n'est peut-être pas plus sage, mais on est plus décent.⁴⁴⁷

This account reveals both the disparity between (and within) the aristocratic and bourgeois values in relation to sexuality and the change in attitudes that occurred during the eighteenth century. As stated before, the aristocratic lifestyle that called for status consumption and proofs of heterosexual masculinity was challenged in the latter half of the eighteenth century in both Britain and France. The challenger was a more moralistic ideal of moderation that was adopted, for example, in discourses against luxury and overconsumption as well as in bourgeois values of work and family. It must be stressed that this was not solely a bourgeois project. During the eighteenth century, enlightened and physiocratic strains of thought provided models highlighting rationality and moderation that

would be for the good of mankind if they were governed by angels." Poisson 1766d, 109-110.

⁴⁴⁶ See, e.g. Hufton 1998, 21.

⁴⁴⁷ Pierre 1903, 98. "When I entered the great world I found it was thought ridiculous for a husband to love his wife, or for a wife to love her husband; manners and morals in this respect were so [...]. Conjugal fidelity was at that time a virtue in the minds of none but the bourgeoisie. This depravity of morals is not so much the fashion at present; society may not be more virtuous, but it is at least more decent." Pierre 1902a, 144.

the educated elites and enlightened aristocracy advocated as well.⁴⁴⁸ In the latter half of the century, due to the external and internal criticism, aristocratic masculine hedonism had already seen its culmination and was on the wane. However, as for the kings who were brought up in the courts and to the courtly ideals of the first half of the century, they assimilated to aristocratic values and lived according to the ideals of aristocratic masculinity. Furthermore, their courts expected their kings to live according to the aristocratic masculine model that allowed or even demanded him to keep a mistress openly.

This change in the registers of aristocratic masculinity would also be one of the reasons why George II and George III had, and could have, a different attitude to keeping mistresses. Both of the monarchs were represented as loving their wives more than anything. For example, George II was repeatedly presented as having preferred his wife over his mistresses.⁴⁴⁹ Yet, it seems that George II could still not abandon the custom of kept mistresses, as he evidently needed them as proofs of his independence from his wife. For George III, on the other hand, there was already an established way to demonstrate heterosexual masculinity in terms of a devoted husband.

The king's mistresses did not only concern courtly elites and the aristocratic world. There was the larger audience outside the royal court, lesser nobility, bourgeoisie, and even lower estates, who received more information, at least in the form of gossip, about the events and persons of the royal court. These larger audiences, just like the courtly elites, wanted their king to represent the grandeur of the body politic in his person – that is to say, to be exemplary, but according to their own masculine ideals.

Le peuple aime rarement les maitresses de ses Rois. Il croit que le rang suprême qu'ils occupent, leur fait un devoir inviolable de la décence & du bon exemple; qu'ils sont entièrement inexcusables lorsqu'ils en donnent un mauvais. [...] Il ne s'attend pas à avoir des Rois, ennemis de la galanterie : peut être même ne le souhaite-t-il pas. Mais il vourdoit que cette galanterie se renfermat dans de justes bornes & qu'elle ne blessat pas les règles de l'honnête.⁴⁵⁰

The values of the bourgeoisie and lower estates did not have room for openly accepted extramarital sexual relationships. Thus, the royal mistresses gradually became more problematic in relation to the disparity of values and ideals between the courtly audience and the larger audiences outside of it. This wider cultural trend is also one explanation for the decision of George III and Louis XVI to abandon the tradition of keeping publicly proclaimed and paraded mistresses.

The second danger lay in the unveiling of the monarch's reasons for keeping his mistress. As stated, the mistresses were kept openly as proof of the king's masculine independence. This tactic would be successful only if the keeping of the mistress was not questioned as being only a show. However, since George II

⁴⁴⁸ See, e.g. Poussou 2014; Marraud 2014, 334; Hours 2002, 127–133.

⁴⁴⁹ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 84; Hervey 1848a, 95, 355.

⁴⁵⁰ Fauques 1759 130. "The people are rarely favourable to king's mistresses. They look upon the king as so highly born to the dignity of good example, that they never take well his setting too flagrantly a bad one; [...]. They hardly expect or wish him not to be gallant, but they require his being decent, [...]." Fauques 1766b, 27–28.

was presented as keeping Henrietta Howard as proof that he was not ruled by his wife Queen Caroline, how could he but fail in this objective?

The king, though very amorous, was certainly more attracted by a silly idea he had entertained of gallantry being becoming, than by a love of variety; and added the more egregious folly of fancying that inconstancy proved he was not governed: but so awkwardly did he manage that artifice, that it but demonstrated more clearly the influence of the queen.⁴⁵¹

The commentators revealed that the king kept his mistress merely for show: they called his bluff. And by doing so, they proved that George II was, as unmanly as it was, ruled by his wife.

Many of the descriptions of royal mistresses as crucial to the king's well-being are given by persons who had been accustomed to courtly life, who had seen the king and maybe even known him personally – or at least could relate to the burdens and griefs he had as a person. To these courtiers, ministers, and diplomats the king was an individual person who had needs and weaknesses just like any other man. Thus, the image they conveyed of the reasons for keeping a mistress was quite understanding, even empathetic.

Yet, to the larger audiences a king was still largely invisible in this personal and individual capacity. For them, he was the King: the impersonal embodiment of the body politic that became visible only in his pomp, grandeur, and majesty. Thus, the portrayal of royal mistresses as necessary for the sake of the king's needs as a man posed a threat to the image of the King, and consequently, offered a way to question the monarchy as a political system. Even when the mistresses were shown as a positive or even necessary phenomenon, they addressed the inherent issue of the monarchy as a political system: for better or for worse, the government was run by a man. However, unlike other men, the king's inclinations and problems as a man were not his private and personal ones but concerns of the whole country. As long as the realm was expected to be run by, or at least represented in, one man, it was significant what kind of a man he was considered to be.

This was not solely a matter of the tension between the king's private and public body, but rather between the king's personal and impersonal character. The royal mistress was not only attached to the private – as secret, unknown, or even non-political – body of the monarch. They were simultaneously essentially connected to the personal body of the king, relating to his personal and individual character, emotions, abilities, and will. In public debate, these personal traits were disconnected from the individual king as he was shown in his public character and understood as an impersonal king. This was not merely a dysfunction between the king's two bodies that was revealed to the eighteenth-century audiences, as Hervé Drévilion stated.⁴⁵² Rather, the debating audiences utilised the internal tension in the entanglement of the king's two bodies when discussing their prevailing monarchy and monarchical rule.

⁴⁵¹ Walpole 1818, 76.

⁴⁵² Drévilion 2000, 295.

The ambivalence of the king's two bodies, of the boundary between his private and public life as well as his personal and impersonal person is the reason why the image of the royal mistress was so paradoxical. And, for this same reason, all descriptions of the royal mistresses, even the most positive and sympathetic ones, were politicisable and could end up subverting the authority of the king.

3 MONEY AND THE MISTRESS

As we have now a framework in which the royal mistresses were regarded as tolerated and necessary for the monarch and monarchy, it is time to move on to the negative side of the phenomenon. Just as in the previous chapter we encountered the royal mistresses in the political function of consolidating the norms, ideals, and values that were attached to monarchical rule, we now encounter the opposing processes of delegitimation of the monarchy and monarchical decision-making.

As mentioned, the eighteenth century witnessed an onslaught of slanderous writing, *mauvais discourse* and *libelles*. In this avalanche of texts, the writers attacked the royal mistresses, and simultaneously, used the presentations of the royal mistresses as a tool in the discursive delegitimation of monarchical rule and its ideals, norms, and practices. The scholars interested in the changing modes of communication in eighteenth-century France, such as Robert Darnton, Lisa Jane Graham, and Thomas Kaiser, have discussed the meanings of this surge of defamatory writing, noting the significance of the *libelles* both in the process of banalisation of monarchy and in the contests of the courtiers and power-blocks within the court.⁴⁵³ This chapter is dedicated to the most common themes of criticism against the royal mistresses, namely, money and corruption. Certainly, these two themes have been so often mentioned that one cannot help but distinguish them as the most central themes in the discourse on the royal mistresses – alongside the theme of power or influence, but that will be discussed in chapter 4.

Also, it must be noted, generally the eighteenth-century writers and commentators in Britain and France alike liked to talk about money. Typically, the account of the royal mistresses' spending included an estimation of the price of the product as well. Calculating the exact sums for items of luxury was the prevailing style of writing about courtly life and consumption that can be found in all types of sources and in relation to all kinds of purchases of the king, his mistresses, his ministers, members of his family, and so forth. More than

⁴⁵³ As, e.g. in Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997; Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997.

anything, this convention was connected to the ideals and demands of the aristocratic lifestyle, where exhibiting one's wealth was an important part of demonstrating one's rank, status, and qualities.⁴⁵⁴ As has been noted in previous studies, instead of mere spending on extravaganza, new concepts such as *taste* came to define proper and ideal aristocratic consumption and were utilised in the aristocratic project of distinction from lower ranks.⁴⁵⁵ Yet, unspecified and expensive luxury still had a very important role in the representations of the royal mistresses. In the discourse on the royal mistresses, the reiteration of the examples served also the point of stressing the expensiveness of the royal mistress, especially if the mistress was considered to originate from a less than appropriate background, as for example Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry.⁴⁵⁶

In this chapter, I stress the semantic meanings of money and spending, corruption, gender, and to a lesser extent, rank and status. All these themes incorporated various contradictory sentiments, meanings, and connotations, extended to many other discursive directions, and shared significant overlapping. As claimed, the figure of the mistress functioned as a nexus for various contemporary anxieties. It was a figure in which various differing contemporary discourses intersected, were discussed, and/or were utilised in order to conceptualise monarchy and legitimate rule. Some of these discourses had a specific political significance or even target, as for example the discourse on corruption which extended to the political sphere in the form of discussion on evaluative standards for political decision-making. Nevertheless, some of them were not necessarily political discourses to begin with, as for example the medical discourses. Yet, when the eighteenth-century commentators connected them to the representations of the royal mistresses, they became politicised. In this chapter, we are about to see how discussions regarding royal mistresses' consumption or expensiveness expanded in various directions and were connected to debates that were not about money at all.

The expense of both the person of the royal mistress and the royal custom of keeping mistresses was, by far, the most generic reprimand that the royal mistresses faced and the most common evil that they were accused of in France and Britain alike. The general discontent with the royal mistresses' expenditures was explicitly expressed in all types of sources that were used in this research. One way or another, all mistresses were judged in relation to the fortune they accumulated, the splendour they lived in, or the money they spent. Thus, as we are about to see in this chapter, the discourse on money was the most pervasive among all the different, entangled, and overlapping themes and discourses that were intertwined in the representations of the royal mistresses. Consequently,

⁴⁵⁴ See, e.g. Chaouche 2008; Swann 2007, 162, 170–173; Scott & Storrs, 2007, 17; Mettam 2007, 145–146; Roche 1999, 373, 604; Hont 2006, 394; Elias 2006, 58–59, 65–68, 70–71; Elias 1978, 54–55, 67, 104–106; Clark 1998, 21; Clemente 2017, 62–63; Chatenet-Calyste 2015, 171, 175, 179–180.

⁴⁵⁵ See, e.g. Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017, 3–5; Clemente 2017, 60, 64, 66–68; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 2–3; Pajur 2017, 23.

⁴⁵⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 122–123, 143–144; Fauques 1766b, 58–59; Mairobert 1775, 224, 232–234, 273; Bécu 1777b, 220–221, 231–235, 290.

we should peruse especially the functions of the figure of the royal mistresses in the debates about different anxieties in relation to wealth, courtly or aristocratic lifestyle, and the royal use of money. This task was realised by looking into the presentations of the mistresses' consumption or of the royal spending on the royal mistress, and searching for the boundaries of appropriate/inappropriate and acceptable/unacceptable spending and consumption. Further, the examination looked at what the language, imageries, concepts, and conceptions used in the presentations on the royal mistresses' consumption and expenses told about the monarchy as a political system, about the authorisation and entitlement to the use of highest power, and about the nature of political power in monarchy.

However, first it must be noted that in these discussion the royal mistresses served in a dual function. First, they were discussed and presented as a part of the royal court. In this function, the mistresses themselves were not necessarily presented as active agents. Instead, their imagined figure was used as a means to express other topical concerns relating, for example, to the current sense of an economic crisis or more general anxieties about the corruption of morals and manners at the centre of political decision making. Second, the royal mistresses were presented as active agents, causing and creating, intentionally and unintentionally, various bad and expensive practices, policies, vices, and corruption. It is not my intention to claim that these two functions were always separated. Instead, in the jungle of representations and narratives, they overlapped quite often and generally contributed to supporting and affirming each other. Yet, analytically it is interesting to note these two functions as separate, since the duality occasionally explains the contradictory imaginations in the representations of royal mistresses in relation to money, wealth, and spending.

Let us begin by observing the most general anxieties of the realm that were reflected on the royal mistresses and the most common, general, and occasionally quite unspecific crimes and maledictions that were constructed as inseparable from the royal mistresses.

3.1 Evil advisor redescribed: the mistress as the target of general anxieties

For the most part, the outcry against against the expenses relating to the royal mistresses was quite general: royal mistresses were represented as having squandered the fortunes of the whole kingdom, ruined the finances, and impoverished the realm⁴⁵⁷.

⁴⁵⁷ On Mme Kielmansegg, see, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 119–120; On the Duchess of Kendal, see, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 120–121; LAD, P/11452 Correspondance politique, Angleterre, vol. 364, Supplement. Brogglie, 31 déc. 1728, Mr. Mist [Mist's weekly journal, translation], 389. On Mme de Pompadour, see, e.g. Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCLXVII, from Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 29th Sep. 1755, 256–257; Fauques 1759, 41–42; Fauques 1758a, 49–50; On Mme du Barry, see, e.g. Mairobert

Des gens mal intentionés me [Mme de Pompadour] reprochent le désordre des finances: on diroit que le gouvernement m'a chargé de leur administration: bien des personnes m'accusent d'avoir tout l'argent du royaume: elles mettent sur mon compte les dettes de la nation, comme si je les avois contractées moi-même.⁴⁵⁸

Certainly, these accusations were related to the general anxieties regarding the sense of economic distress. During the eighteenth century, France and Britain repeatedly entered costly wars, most notably the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) and the Seven Years' War (1754–1763). Consequently, in order to cover the rising costs of wars the administrations were forced to increase taxes and the public loan, which in turn strained the public credit.⁴⁵⁹ Periods of continuous wars can cause a general sense of economic instability or insecurity, which has left its mark on the historiography of eighteenth-century Britain and France. The history of eighteenth-century France is often written in terms of financial crisis, economic instability, and bankruptcy. The realm faced the increased costs of the unsuccessful and unpopular wars, failings of the taxation system and over-taxation that squeezed the subjects dry, misfortunes in population growth and harvests, failures of monetary and fiscal reforms, and finally the bankruptcy of the Bourbon monarchy either after the Seven Years' War in 1763⁴⁶⁰ or at the end of the reign of Louis XV in 1774⁴⁶¹.⁴⁶² Contrariwise, the history of eighteenth-century Britain is represented in terms of economic expansion, the victory of natural persons' rights to property, freedom of speech, the rise of imperial power and the triumph of trade in spite of the economic encumbrances of costly wars.⁴⁶³

However, some scholars, as for example Nicholas Henshall (1992), have indicated that these representations are not necessarily absolutely accurate. They emphasise that in France the tax burdens were not as heavy as usually represented, the population and economy continued to grow during the eighteenth century, the poor harvests were only periodic and local, the

1775, 272; Bécu 1777b, 289. On Louis XV's mistresses in general, see, e.g. Maiorbert 1775, 59–60.

⁴⁵⁸ Poisson 1766a, 256–257. "The rancour of all France is pointed at me. [Mme de Pompadour] [...] Many carry their malevolence so far, as to impute the disorders of the finances to me, as if the administration of affairs was lodged in my hands. I am accused of having all the money in the kingdom; I am charged with the nation's debts, as if myself had contracted them." Poisson 1766c, 255–256. See also, e.g. Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXXV. A la comtesse de Baschi, 161–162; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXXV. To the countess of Baschi, 149–150.

⁴⁵⁹ See, e.g. Scott 1990a, 33; Graham 2000, 99, 143, 185; van Horn Melton 2009, 34, 58; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 45–47, 127, 129.

⁴⁶⁰ See, e.g. Scott 1990a, 33.

⁴⁶¹ See, e.g. Tombs & Tombs 2007, 53.

⁴⁶² See, e.g. See, e.g. Graham 2000, 102, 143; van Horn Melton 2009, 54, 58; Shennan 2007, 99, 126–135, 135–137, 158; Munck 2002, 166, 197; Hochstrasser 2006, 420, 426; Henshall 1992, 15, 71; Scott 1990a, 33–34; Darnton 1995a, 148, 237; Sonenscher 2006, 488; Rombouts 1993–1994, 271; Kaplan 1985, 25–26; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 27, 31, 51–53, 127, 129, 161; Zysberg 2002, 177–178; Black 2004a, 108.

⁴⁶³ See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 75; Lieberman 2006, 317; Henshall 1992, 83, 105, 113, 178; Black 2008, 2–6; Murdoch 2007, 111–112; Spellman 1998, 157, 172, 175; Munck 2002, 85, 135; van Horn Melton 2009, 20; Mäkipelto 2002, 64, 70; Haikala 2002, 115; Black 2004a, 11; Shennan 2007, 108, 130; Zysberg 2002, 279.

government responded to the impending grain crises relatively well, and that even the bankruptcy of the monarchy or state was neither a new phenomenon nor did it mean the inevitable downfall of the ruling dynasty or the monarchy.⁴⁶⁴ Then again, in Britain there was continual popular unrest over taxation and public debt, which occasionally escalated into riots in both the mother country and the colonies. There was also fluctuation in the value of money and failures in the management of the public debt that reached their peak in the financial crisis of the South Sea Bubble (1720).⁴⁶⁵ Even though actual economic crisis and a popular sense of crisis or general anxiety are not necessarily the same, the latter was enough to pose a challenge to the prevailing political order, and to draw royal mistresses into the debate about economic degradation.

All the anxieties and worries concerning the economic situation of the realm and its subjects are not merely a context for the debate on the expensiveness of the royal mistresses. They were present in the debate on the royal mistresses as well, either by implication or because writers took the opportunity of discussing certain financial, economic, or fiscal matters in their representation of the royal mistresses. The most common fears and complaints that were expressed, discussed, or reflected in the debate on the royal mistresses concerned the worries about famine⁴⁶⁶, the lack of revenues in the public funds, and related complaints concerning the war costs⁴⁶⁷, as well as more general worries about the impoverishment of private individuals – especially in the form of general discontent regarding taxation⁴⁶⁸. The royal mistress became the target of all the complaints that the sense of general distress produced. As Mme de Pompadour

⁴⁶⁴ See, e.g. Roche 1999, 145, 438–443, 476–477, 497–498; Henshall 1992, 71; Shennan 2007, 28; Major 1994, 108; Kaplan 1985; Hochstrasser 2006, 425; Zysberg 2002, 325; Bien 1987, 89.

⁴⁶⁵ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 72; Gold 2012, 209–229; Claydon 2007, 281; Downie 1994, 96–101; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 47, 135, 155, 160. Of course, the disagreements over taxation are most evident in the political upheavals of the American colonies that eventually led to the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783).

⁴⁶⁶ As, e.g. BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 23rd May 1753, Private, 92; Mairobert 1775, 157; Bécu 1777a, 135. Fauques 1759, 176–177; Fauques 1758b, 126–127; Fauques 1766b, 117–118.

⁴⁶⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXIX. Au Maréchal de Noailles, 1762, 115; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXIX, To the marshal de Noailles, 1762, 77; Shebbeare 1757, 6, on the rising costs of war due to the defence of Hanover; Shebbeare 1757, 28, on the need of reducing the national debt and promoting trade and commerce (instead of nurturing Hanover); TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 256, on the signs of bankruptcy menacing the French Crown; TNA, SP 78/278Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 58, on the prospect that there are no revenues in the Treasury. On the general degradation of finances, see, e.g. Pierre 1903, 204–205; Pierre 1902a, 193–194.

⁴⁶⁸ On poverty at Paris, see, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 68; Pierre 1903, 204–205; Pierre 1902a, 193–194; Poisson 1766a; 126; Poisson 1766c, 125. On heavy or rising taxation, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 123; Fauques 1758b, 45–46; Poisson 1766a, 196, 217; Poisson 1766c, 193, 214–215. On the *twentieth denier*, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 112, 160–161, 167, 172; Poisson 1766c, 112, 158–159, 164–165, 168. On *fermiers généraux*, see, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 40–46; Poisson 1766d, 41–49; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXVI. To mr. de Machault, controuler-general, 1752, 173–174.

was given to regretfully say: "It has been in every body's mouth, that all the misfortunes of France were owing to me."⁴⁶⁹

Needless to say, the royal mistresses served as scapegoats for the poor economic situation of the realm. But this was nothing new. In the eighteenth century, the discourse of *evil advisers* was a well-known and an easily used pan-European way to criticise unpopular policies without questioning the sovereignty or authority of the ruling monarch.⁴⁷⁰ When the criticism targeted the *evil advisers* – that is to say, the persons near the monarch, as for example advisors, ministers, royal family, and especially royal mistresses and favourites, the attack was steered away from the monarch himself. Furthermore, when applying this tool of indirect critique, the critics and their complaints could be construed as an assertion of monarchical authority against wrongful usurpers of his power. The commentators appeared to be informing the monarch of the wrongdoers near his person, who exercised misguiding influence and tarnished his authority.⁴⁷¹ This, of course, was also the writers' attempt to avoid the charge of *lèse-majesté* during times when discussions on political matters were regulated and the person of the monarch was deemed by law to be above criticism.⁴⁷²

Thus, channelling the critique to the evil advisors was not an unconscious strategy. Eighteenth-century writers recognised the motive for representing the royal mistress as a scapegoat for all the calamities of the realm as well as the unlikelihood of their being able to actually cause all chaos and disaster. For example, Fauques, whose opinion of royal mistresses was a very critical one, pointed this out:

Aussi la haine publique est-elle montée à un si haut degré de fureur, que, si la peste ou la famine venoient à faire sentir leur pouvoir destructeur, on ne maqueroit pas de chercher dans la Pompadour, la cause de ces redoutables fléaux.⁴⁷³

Nonetheless, and especially regarding the anxieties concerning economic distress, the writers were eager to reproduce the discourse of evil advisors and construct the royal mistresses as the culprits to blame for the prevailing problems.

However, it would be an oversimplification to state that the prevailing mistress of the monarch was automatically chosen as the evil advisor of the day. It is notable that some writers tried to stand up for certain known mistresses against the accusations of squandering the revenues of the Crown, the King, or

⁴⁶⁹ Poisson 1766c, 34. "On dit souvent depuis dans le monde que j'étois la cause des malheurs de la France." Poisson 1766a, 34.

⁴⁷⁰ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 57–58; Spellman 1998, 23; Kaiser 1996, 1042; Wellman 2013, 18, 363–364; Drévilon 2000, 298.

⁴⁷¹ See, e.g. Graham 2000. This technique was widely used in royal mistresses' memoirs as well, as evident in e.g. Fauques 1759, 45; Fauques 1758a, 55. Also in Fauques 1766a, 63–64.

⁴⁷² Objection to and criticism against the will of the monarch was looked on as disloyalty to the sovereignty in all early modern monarchies and deemed as the capital offence of *lèse-majesté*. See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 70–71; Henshall 1992, 81, 88; Bregnsbo 2011, 56–58, 59; Langen 2011, 67–69, 75–76.

⁴⁷³ Fauques 1759, 181. "The public execration of her is actually risen to such a pitch of rage, that should any visitation of a plague or famine supervene, it would be currently imputed to la Pompadour." Fauques 1758b, 132–133.

the Realm. For example, the anonymous editor of *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) recalled the unpopularity of Mme de Pompadour and commented on the excessive accusations against her person:

Jamais favorite [Mme de Pompadour] n'essuïa plus de murmures & ne fut en butte à plus de reproches. [...] Les principales accusations tomberent sur le désordre des finances, qu'on attribua à ses amours avec le Roi. Ceux qui ont reproché à Madame de Pompadour d'avoir engagé Louis XV. dans de grandes dépenses, ont oublié celles que les maîtresses de ses prédécesseurs avoient causées à l'état.⁴⁷⁴

The editor raised the memory of the preceding royal mistresses of Louis XIV, Mme de la Valliere and Mme de Montespan, in defence of Mme de Pompadour.⁴⁷⁵ True, the editor may have succeeded in proving Mme de Pompadour *less ruinous* than her predecessors. Yet, even as the argument was cloaked in the form of a defence of Mme de Pompadour, the editor's argument was a criticising one. As the editor depicted the previous royal mistresses as the instigators of extravagant practices, he/she also stressed the continuity of the prodigal phenomenon and practice of the royal mistresses – even in the form of Mme de Pompadour.

Since the use of the royal mistresses as scapegoats, whether personal and named individual mistresses or the impersonal practice of keeping mistresses, was a conventional and customary means to take a stand on topical issues concerning finances, one way to approach the theme of money and the royal mistresses would be to examine the topics that were brought up in the contemporary texts. In royal mistresses' memoirs that were part of eighteenth-century public debates, the writers could bring up very specific concerns and burning political topics that could not be expressed otherwise. For example, the French royal mistresses' memoirs and correspondences are littered with little anecdotes reflecting the provincial or local bread or grain shortages.⁴⁷⁶ However, these do not necessarily relate directly to the royal mistresses – thus leaving the royal mistresses' memoirs as a mere medium through which to convey concerns and opinions. Instead, in this chapter, we shall rather explore the descriptions of the royal mistresses and fortunes of the realm as a complex and ambiguous debate that intersected with the discourses about the sexes, royal prerogatives, and status-consumption.

⁴⁷⁴ Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, v-vi. "[Mme de Pompadour]; never was a favourite more outrageously pelted with pamphlets, or exposed to more clamorous invectives. [...] The grand subject of murmur was the bad state of the finances, which they attributed to her amours with the King. They who brand the Marchioness with having run Lewis XV. into vast expences [sic.], seem to have forgot those which his predecessor's mistresses had brought on the state." Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, vi-vii.

⁴⁷⁵ Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, v-vi; Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, vi-vii.

⁴⁷⁶ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 291; Bécu 1777b, 317-318; Fauques 1759, 49, 176-178; Fauques 1758a, 60-61; Fauques 1758b, 126-127; Fauques 1766a, 69-70; Fauques 1766b, 117-118.

3.2 Mercenary love

On closer inspection of the reprimands against an imagined expensive mistress, we find that the most common allegation made against the royal mistresses was that they accumulated fortunes. Thus, avarice was represented as their most prominent attribute, as for example, in the case of Mme de Pompadour: "[...] her gaunt eagerness after money, [...]"⁴⁷⁷, or Mme Kielmansegg, alleged mistress of George I: "[...] Madame Kilmansegg attached herself to the one thing necessary, - getting what money she could [...]"⁴⁷⁸ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu represented Melusine von der Schulemburg's, the future Duchess of Kendal's, infamous love for money in the form of an anecdote. According to Montagu, she would have been too afraid to follow her royal lover George I to his new and foreign realm if it was not for the rapacity of the mistress and the impending prospects of wealth.

They [Mme de Kilmansegg & Mr. Methuen] took care to inform Mademoiselle Schulerberg of the fond reception all the Germans met with in England, and gave her a view of the immense fortune that waited her here. This was enough to cure her fears, and she arrived accompanied by a young niece who had already made some noise at Hanover.⁴⁷⁹

As there was a general assumption of the royal mistresses being rapacious, all mistresses were also judged in relation to how well they were assumed to have succeeded in accumulating property. Generally, the German born royal mistresses of British kings, and especially the aforementioned Duchess of Kendal, were considered very well-off even after the death of their royal lover.⁴⁸⁰ There were also notable paradoxes in the expectations regarding the riches the royal mistresses were supposed to have and the actual inheritance they left to their heirs. The most remarkable example of this inconsistency was Mme de Pompadour, who was widely believed to have enormous possessions and yet at her death this fortune was nowhere to be found:

On a publié en France & dans les autres états de l'Europe que Madame de Pompadour avoit des trésors immenses. A sa mort cette prodigieuse richesse a disparu: il n'a resté qu'un magnifique mobilier, [...].⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁷ Fauques 1758b, 122. "[...] son avide soif de l'or; [...]", Fauques 1759, 173. On Mme de Pompadour's alleged avarice, see also, Fauques 1759, 84, 174; Fauques 1758b, 123; Fauques 1766a, 100, 145; Fauques 1766b, 113, 114; Mme de Pompadour's greed for money was not believed only in France, since English writers shared the general assumption as well. See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 292.

⁴⁷⁸ Wortley Montagu 1837a, 119.

⁴⁷⁹ Wortley Montagu 1837a, 120-121. On Duchess of Kendal, see also, LAD, P/11452 Correspondance politique, Angleterre, vol. 364, Supplement., Broggliè, 31 déc. 1728, Mr. Mist [Mist's weekly journal, translation], 389.

⁴⁸⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1833a, LETTER LXXIII. Orofrd to Mann, Arlington-Street, 12th May, 1743, 227-228.

⁴⁸¹ Poisson 1766a, Avan propos de l'editeur, vii-viii. "It was given out in France, and all over Europe, that Madame de Pompadour was immensely rich; but nothing of this

Fauques explained the contradiction between the assumed wealth and the wealth that was (not) found in terms of the royal mistress's remorse at her deathbed. Mme de Pompadour was presented as having regretted her past misuse of royal favour. As her penance, it was explained that she had accounted for the fortunes she had wasted, and to have returned everything that she had not yet spent to the king.⁴⁸² Thus, through the idea of repentance, the rapacity of the mistress was both confirmed and condemned. The remorse of Mme de Pompadour did not save her from the reprimands. Rather, it served only to highlight her past avaricious conduct as wrongful and to provide figures on her cost. More importantly, in this text published in 1766, the king's response to the costs of his previous mistress was not noted, which left open the possibility of a repetition of the outrageous spending in the form of a new mistress. Thus, Fauques shifted the attention from the misdeeds of the mistress to the character of the monarch.

As all mistresses were judged by their rapacity and ability to accumulate fortunes, there was in fact one that became famous for being unsuccessful: Henrietta Howard, later Countess of Suffolk. She was frequently described as not achieving any pecuniary profit from her relationship with George II. At the time of her death Horace Walpole wrote to the Earl of Strafford:

She bore knowingly the imputation of being covetous, [...]. I have not yet heard if her will is opened; but it will surprise those who thought her rich.⁴⁸³

Thus, as far as assumed avariciousness was concerned, Mrs. Howard was not an exception among the royal mistresses – but when it came to fulfilling those greedy ambitions, she set an example of a mistress whose plans had failed.

This demonstrates sufficiently that there was indeed a general assumption that the prime attribute of any given royal mistress was avarice. The real question, however, is this: what did the rapacity of the royal mistresses reveal about the monarch?

First of all, love for money was contrasted to love for the king. A legitimate royal mistress entered the relationship with the king motivated by affection, and the sincerity of her feelings was measured by the profit she *did not make* from her position as a royal mistress. As, for example, in Fauques' presentation of Mme de Mailly, who was praised for loving the king only:

Jamais maitresse d'un Roi ne tira moins de profit qu'elle [Mme de Mailly] de son amant. [...] Elle ne demanda jamais rien pour elle même. [...] Loin qu'elle songeat à le dépouiller, ce fut toujours avec une forte de violence qu'elle reçut les petits présents

appeared at her death, except her magnificent moveables [sic], [...].” Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, ix.

⁴⁸² Fauques 1766b, 174–175.

⁴⁸³ Walpole 1820c, from Orford to the Earl of Strafford, Strawberry-hill, 29th July 1767, 214. Same expressed also in e.g. Walpole 1843a, LETTER CIX. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st July 1767, 357–358; Walpole 1818, 82. Also Lord Chesterfield notes the meagre profit Mrs. Howard made when serving as the royal mistress in, e.g. Stanhope 1779c, Characters by Lord Chesterfield contrasted with characters of the same great personages by other respectable writers, &c. Intended as an appendix to His Lordship's miscellaneous works. Character of George the Second by Chesterfield, 5–6.

que le Roi lui faisoit. [...] Quand le Roi cessa de la voir, elle se jeta dans la dévotion, mourut dans un couvent & y mourut sans pouvoir paier ses dettes. Tant elle avoit peu recueilli de fruits, d'un champ qui lui offroit de si riches moissons.⁴⁸⁴

Contrariwise, the false royal mistress started the affair for the sake of the benefits she could reap from her situation, as indicated by the term "mercenary love" in Fauques' presentation of Mme de Pompadour's motives:

[...] sa vanité, [...] son avide soif de l'or; une femme enfin, dont les passions prouvent démonstrativement, qu'elle n'aime dans elle même que ses passions, & dans le Roi, que la puissance de les satisfaire. [...] il n'est pas un seul homme qui connoit tant soit peu l'amour, qui ne soit forcé d'avouer qu'on n'en trouve pas la moindre ombre dans son cœur. L'essence de cette belle passion s'y oppose : c'est impossible. Ou, si l'on pouvoit concevoir, un penchant qu'on put désigner sous le nom d'amour mercenaire; [...].⁴⁸⁵

Assurances of feelings for the king and disinterest in money formed the foundation of the legitimate royal mistress. Thus, all royal mistresses were judged against the wealth they accumulated, or were assumed to have collected, and the amount of their property was used inversely as a measure of their affection for the king. This dynamic was implicitly present but rarely expressed as explicitly as in the story of Mme d'Étiolles' rise to royal favour. Here, M. Binet, Valet-de-Chambre of Louis XV, reassured his master that Mme d'Étiolles' feelings for the king were true:

Il lui dit qu'elle ne s'occupoit que de sa Majesté; qu'elle ne songeoit qu'à elle; que son image étoit continuellement présente à ses yeux, jusques dans les rêves du sommeil. "Pour parler franchement, lui dit le Roi, je craignois qu'elle ne fut comme les autres, je veux dire livrée à l'ambition ou à l'intérêt, passion bien moins noble & beaucoup plus condamnable que l'ambition." [...].⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Fauques 1759, 18–19. "No mistress ever made less advantage of a royal gallant [as Mme de Mailly]. [...] No favours she obtained from him, were for herself. [...] So far from pillaging him, she received the little presents he made her with reluctance. [...] When he left her, she threw herself into a deep devotion, died in a convent, and died insolvent. So little harvest had she made of her favor." Fauques 1758a, 20–21; Also in Fauques 1766a, 20–21.

⁴⁸⁵ Fauques 1759, 173–174. "[...] her vanity, [...] her gaunt eagerness after money; at the same time that no stronger proof need be required of her having loved nothing in him [Louis XV], but his power to gratify those passions, than those passions themselves. Once more, there is no one who knows any thing of love, but must know how incompatible with it are, in their very essence. Or could there even be such a thing, in nature, as mercenary love, [...]." Fauques 1766b, 113–114.

⁴⁸⁶ Fauques 1759, 29. "He told his Majesty she was full of nothing, thought of nothing, dreamed of nothing but him. "To say the truth, said the King, I was afraid she was too like the rest, of those I have had, either actuated by ambition, or perhaps, by yet a more sordid passion, that of interest. [...]." Fauques 1758a, 34; Fauques 1766a, 37. See also, Fauques 1759, 27, 30; Fauques 1758a, 32, 35; Fauques 1766a, 35, 38. The same justification is evident in Mme du Barry's memoirs as well. See, e.g. "Elle ne demandoit aucune grace ni pour elle, ni pour sa famille, & sembloit concentrée uniquement à s'occuper de mériter les bontés du Roi par son zèle & son attachement pour sa Personne sacrée." Mairobert 1775, 107; "She solicited no favours for herself or her family, and seemed to have no other wish or desire, but to merit the esteem and favour of the prince by her zeal and attachment to his person." Bécu 1777a, 61–62. Mairobert 1775, 62–63; Bécu 1777a, 8.

However, there were only rarely mistresses that were described as being content with the emotional relationship with the king. Sincere mistresses were those whose reign was short, removal quick, and/or who did not cause any disturbances or scandals after their dismissal from the court, such as *petite-maîtresse* Louise O'Murphy.⁴⁸⁷ Rarities though they were, they nonetheless played an important role as a contrast to rapacious mistresses and served to accentuate the false foundations of most royal mistresses' position in the court and in the king's heart, as for example, in the representation of Mme de Mailly by Fauques.⁴⁸⁸

The love for money and love for the king were thus constructed as mutually exclusive qualities, the latter of which also serving as the most basic justification for the mistresses' existence. Consequently, any given royal mistress's grounds for her position and possible influence could be questioned with an accusation of fundamental avarice. In this fashion, the accusations against well-known individual royal mistresses could be used as a way to persuade the king to give up an unpopular mistress, as was the case with French royal mistresses' memoirs and other texts participating the public debate, or the debates outside the royal courts. For example, Fauques linked Mme de Pompadour's false "mercenary love" and Louis XV's reputation in 1758 when France was in the middle of the Seven Years' War and the debates about a second *vingtième* had tested the popularity of both the ongoing war and the reigning royal mistress⁴⁸⁹:

Il devoit y avoir des difficultés presque insurmontables à prendre toujours & à succer, pour ainsi dire, son amant jusques au sang, sans décéler un esprit mercenaire, livré au plus sordide intèret. [...] Mais, si elle aimoit le Roi, ou si elle ne se disoit pas l'aimer, plus qu'elle ne l'aimoit en effet; n'y avoit-il pas une bassesse d'ame, inconue à la vraie passion, à mettre continuellement une personne aimée à contributions, à profiter de sa foiblesse pour en obtenir des choses capables de tenir sa gloire & de perdre sa réputation?⁴⁹⁰

Eventually, and most importantly, the keeping of an avaricious mistress was regarded as being about keeping an unjustified mistress – and keeping an unjustified mistress questioned the rationale of the king. As we have seen the royal mistresses were justifiable only as long as they devoted themselves to the king and were true in their love for him. Since the avariciousness of the mistress excluded genuine affection for the king, keeping such a false and harmful

⁴⁸⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 109–110; Fauques 1766a, 178.

⁴⁸⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 18–19; Fauques 1758a, 20–21; Also in, Fauques 1766a, 20–21.

⁴⁸⁹ On the debates concerning the highly unpopular income tax *vingtième*, see, e.g. Graham 2000, 99–100, 112, 185; Darnton 1995a, 236; Ravel 2004, 109; Zysberg 2002, 178–179, 287–288; Antoine 1987, 17–18; van Kley 1987, 184; Roche 1999, 419–420; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 129.

⁴⁹⁰ Fauques 1759, 44–45. "But difficult as it must seem for a mistress to be thus constantly receiving and squeezing her keeper, without any sign of a mercenary or interested disposition escaping her, [...] But if her love for the King was not a feigned one, or at least much exaggerated [sic.] by her, she was but the more justly accusable of a meanness unknown to that passion where it is real; that of laying the person she loved under unmerciful contributions, besides taking the advantage of his weakness to draw things from him, that could not but be hurtfull to his reputation. [...]" Fauques 1758a, 53–56; Also in, Fauques 1766a, 63–64.

mistress would unavoidably bring into question the king's rationality. Did he know that his mistress was unfit? How could he not know about the true nature of his mistress? Or even, did he know but chose not to care?

All charges against the rationality of the ruler were injurious to the legitimation of his rule. In the eighteenth century, monarchical rule was linked to the idea of the *King's Secret*, *Secret du Roi*, or *Mysteries of State*. This political theory was founded on the fundamentally rational king. The monarch was not the only rational man in his kingdom but he was the only one that could see the totality of the political body, whereas all other agents' visions were biased and clouded by partial interests. Accordingly, the monarch was the only party that was able to make political decisions that concerned the whole realm, or the *common good*.⁴⁹¹ The royal ability of rational decision-making was then an attribute of entitlement and authorisation that legitimated both his personal rule and the monarchy as a form of government.

The idea of the *King's Secret* and the correlative royal capacity for rational decision-making were more significant in France where the political sovereignty was completely vested in the hands of a single person.⁴⁹² In the French source materials, the assumption of the impersonal monarch's right to make decisions, and the corresponding decision-making capacities, is ubiquitous. It was not openly and explicitly challenged in matters directly relating to issues understood as political, which in itself indicates that the idea of an essentially rational decision-maker was the cornerstone of sovereign rule. Yet, when questioning the personal and individual monarch's abilities to make a rational decision for himself, as for example the ability/inability to choose a true mistress, the eighteenth-century writers could erode the belief in the impersonal sovereign's rationality that was the premise of legitimate rule. Not to mention that when describing a kept avaricious and false mistress there was always a possibility to construe the monarch as a fool who was defrauded and controlled by a woman: a woman who had succumbed to her passions of cupidity and who thus was considered wholly irrational. However, these reflections on mistresses' means – both possible and imagined – of using any influence or power belong to section 4.2.3.

In Britain, the affirmation of monarchical legitimation through assumed higher rationality did not have the same weight since the form of government was defined as *mixed monarchy* or *mixed constitution*. After the seventeenth-century turbulences of the English Civil War (1642–1651), the Exclusion Crisis (1679–1681), and the Glorious Revolution (1688), the powers were separated among the monarch, House of Lords, and House of Commons, and the three branches were considered to function as balancing each other and restraining

⁴⁹¹ Van Horn Melton 2009, 47; Baker 1990, 114; Wilson 2000, 50; Dréville & Serna 2000, 280–281; Graham 2006, 139; Hirschmann 2008, 63.

⁴⁹² On French royal absolutism (in the sense that the Crown did not recognise any institutionalised limits to its sovereign powers) see, e.g. Henshall 1992; Beales 2006, 513; Baker 1990, 228; Bell 1994, 83; Merrick 1986, 499; Dréville 2000, 283–284.

abuses of power.⁴⁹³ This is not meant to imply that the king did not use power or that the rationality of the king was not an issue. Quite the opposite, the king wielded considerable and often debatable powers over legislation and execution, let alone in exercising his prerogatives in foreign policy, the rights to appoint ministers, to fill the offices of the royal household, and to administer royal patronage, which were all political acts requiring rational political decision-making.⁴⁹⁴ But, since there was an idea, if not a consensus, that in the British system of government the powers were separated and balanced to safeguard against exploitation of power, it might just have relieved any anxieties about the irrationality of the king. At least he was not able to pour the entirety of the kingdom's wealth into the hands of his mistress, since the king did not have sovereign control of the revenues of the realm, as the charge for public finances was divided between Parliament and the Crown.⁴⁹⁵ Which leads us to the question concerning the money that the royal mistresses received: how and why were they paid, and were there costs that were accepted?

3.3 A proper compensation?

It is obvious that the position of the king's mistress and the service to the king were regarded as an opportunity to gain assets. Consequently, the title and the place of the king's mistress was desirable, as indicated by the competition for the king's attention.⁴⁹⁶ There were great expectations, possibilities, and hopes – and of course correlating contests – involved when stepping into any kind of service of a ruling prince. For example, both John Hervey and Horace Walpole shared a little tale concerning the rise of Henrietta Howard to the royal favour. As presented, the Howards belonged to the impoverished lesser nobility, and they were described as having left England with an aspiration to escape their poverty by establishing themselves in the service of George Ludwig, Prince-Elector of Hanover and future George I.⁴⁹⁷ Yet, in the light of the previous section, it must be stated that neither Hervey nor Walpole presented or speculated on Mrs. Howard's intentions and plans for gaining position in the court and in the heart of George Augustus, future George II. It was not explicitly expressed that she had

⁴⁹³ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009; 45 Wootton 2006, 214; Tomaselli 2006, 19–20; Lieberman 2006, 317–318, 321; Anon. 1997, 1842, 1844.

⁴⁹⁴ On royal prerogatives, see, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 321, 325–326; Henshall 1992, 109, 111.

⁴⁹⁵ Reitan 1966, 318–319.

⁴⁹⁶ See, e.g. "Madame de Mailly seems to have carried most of her Points, though she has not yet got rid of Madame de Mazarin; the Cardinal to avert that Blow has consented to the King's giving an ugly Sister [Louise Julie de Mailly] of hers 200,000 livres, and making an advantageous Match for her [Pauline Félicité, Mademoiselle de Nesle, Marquise de Vintimille] with Mons. de Ventimille, Grandson to the Comte de Lue, with a promise of the next vacancy in the Queen's Bedchamber." TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 19th Sep. 1739, Most Private, 151. Rivalries, struggles, and networks that were involved in actuating the power or influence of the royal mistress are more closely analysed in section 4.1.

⁴⁹⁷ Walpole 1804a, 86; Hervey 1848a, 94; Walpole 1818, 72.

planned on becoming the prince's mistress when she hoped to be of service to the House of Hanover.⁴⁹⁸ Thus, especially in Walpole's narration, it left room for presenting her motives to enter the relationship with the future George II in positive terms of affection instead of avarice.

It is nonetheless certain that there were presumptions of serving a prince as being profitable, especially if serving in the function of a royal mistress. This section peruses the limits within which and the means by which the royal mistresses could be rewarded and compensated justly and duly. As such, it functions as the context for transgressions against the limits of propriety that will be addressed further in subsequent sections. This section highlights the royal mistresses as a traditional practice of the royal courts that was connected to the prevailing assumptions regarding both royal consumption and royal service.

The princes and kings spent money on their mistresses for many reasons. As previously demonstrated, the king was supposed to spend some amount of money on his mistress in order to highlight his own *éclat* through the splendour and beauty of his mistress. This status-consumption was accepted as long as it could be regarded as advantageous to the monarch, either benefiting his public figure by being the extension of the impersonal or personal monarch's grandeur, or concretely contributing to the king's pleasures, as is evident, for example, from the editor's forewords in Mme de Pompadour's memoirs:

On a publié en France & dans les autres états de l'Europe que Madame de Pompadour avoit des trésors immenses. A sa mort cette prodigieuse richesse a disparu: il n'a resté qu'un magnifique mobilier, ostentation qui tenoit plus au rang qu'elle avoit à la cour qu'a sa vanité. Le Roi, qui la visitoit tous les jours, profitoit de ce faste & le partageoit avec elle.⁴⁹⁹

That is to say, there was consumption that was an inseparable part of the life of the monarch. And, as a part of the life of the monarch, the mistress participated in that status-consumption.

Both in France and in Britain, the kings were also expected to compensate their mistresses, both for their services and for the loss of honour and virtuous reputation that they suffered when agreeing to enter an otherwise disgracing extramarital relationship. Thus, the discourses on compensation did not relate only to understandings regarding appropriate royal consumption and spending. They were simultaneously about the relationship between the monarch and his subjects. As, for example, Hours and Drévilion have pointed out, in courtly and aristocratic culture royal service had an important position that participated in constructing the identity of the nobility. According to these ideals and discourses,

⁴⁹⁸ See, e.g. Walpole 1804a, 86; Walpole 1818, 72.

⁴⁹⁹ Poisson 1766a, *Avan propos de l'editeur*, vii-viii. "It was given out in France, and all over Europe, that Madame de Pompadour was immensely rich; but nothing of this appeared at her death, except her magnificent moveables [sic.], and these were rather the consequence of her rank at court, than the effects of her vanity. This splendor his Majesty partook of, as visiting her every day." Poisson 1766c, *Editor's preface*, ix-x. For further examples regarding the idea that the mistresses' apartments and lodgings should be exquisite and grand to befit their royal lover's rank and for his enjoyment, see, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 102-103; Poisson 1766d, 106-107.

the nobility was constructed as the servants of the king. Further, service and submission was voluntarily given. However, in order to keep this arrangement functioning, the king was supposed to recognise his servant's service and to compensate and reward his servants for the service they had provided. The monarch was supposed to show his gratitude in the form of an appropriate reward.⁵⁰⁰ By this arrangement, noble service to the king was not connected to salaried positions (even though it was occasionally connected to annual pensions) and it did not question the independence of the noblemen and -women in royal service.

The mistresses themselves expected to be rewarded when they were taken into service. The youngest and last of the Mailly-Nesle sisters who served as Louis XV's mistress, Marie-Anne, Marquise de La Tournelle, Duchesse de Châteauroux, made herself famous for her exact demands for compensation before agreeing to enter the king's service as a royal mistress:

Madame de la Tournelle, who having a great Advantage over her elder Sisters as to her person, which is very handsome, seemed resolved to make the best Bargain she could for herself. At first her Demands ran very high. She wanted to be declared the King's Mistress, to which Title a considerable Pension is annexed. She would have a House kept for her apart.⁵⁰¹

A second point at which mistresses expected to be financially remembered was when they quitted the royal bed and the court, especially in Britain. Anne Vane, mistress to Frederick, Prince of Wales, whose relationship with the Crown Prince did not end quietly, appealed to the prince's honour and pity when she sought pecuniary reimbursement for her many sacrifices to the love of the Prince:

I sacrificed my time, my youth, my character, the world, my family, and everything that a woman can sacrifice to a man she loves: how little I considered my interest, you must know by my never naming my interest to you when I made this sacrifice, and by my trusting to your honour when I showed so little regard, when put in balance with my love, to my own. I have resigned everything for your sake but my life; and had you loved me still, I would have risked even that too to please you; [...].⁵⁰²

A virtuous reputation and honour were clearly valuable qualities that the women themselves were not intending to part with easily, and that the public within the courts and outside of them expected to be recompensed. For example, the previous quotation is part of a note from Miss Vane to Frederick, Prince of Wales, as it was recalled by Lord Hervey. Miss Vane's removal from the court caused quite a commotion, since Frederick was eager to get rid of his former mistress in order to freely court a new favourite, Lady Archibald Hamilton, and Miss Vane was not about to move aside without proper compensation. According to Hervey, Miss Vane received compensation after writing some semi-public letters to her

⁵⁰⁰ Hours 2002, 28, 33–36; Drévilion 2000, 330, 333.

⁵⁰¹ TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430. The demands of Marquise de La Tournelle were noted by other commentators as well, as e.g. by Walpole, Walpole 1833a, LETTER LVI. From Orford to Mann, London, 15th Nov. 1742, 195.

⁵⁰² Hervey 1848b, 28.

former lover. Miss Vane thus appealed to the sense of justice and pity of the people around the Prince of Wales in order to press him to agree to her demands.⁵⁰³

In addition, Horace Walpole repeated this general supposition of virtuous reputation and honour as valued properties. In his anecdotal recollections, Walpole explained their significance in the case of his friend, Henrietta Howard:

From the steady decorum of Mrs. Howard, I should conclude that she would have preferred the advantages of her situation to the ostentatious éclat of it: but many obstacles stood in the way of total concealment; nor do I suppose that love had any share in the sacrifice she made of her virtue.⁵⁰⁴

It is thus quite clear that the virtue of a mistress was considered property that was either voluntarily given without further demands or sold. Hervey recollected this in his illustration of Lady Deloraine's prospects as a rising new mistress of George II:

However, in private, when she [...] pretended not to have yet yielded and said she was not of an age to act like a vain or a loving fool, but if she did consent that she would be well paid; adding, too, [...] that she thought old men and kings ought always to be made to pay well; [...].⁵⁰⁵

Thus, there were hopes of reward for the services offered to the king, but also a sense of a just compensation for the time, energy, and virtue sacrificed to the pleasing of the monarch. The kings indemnified their mistresses' services and loss of virtue and reputation in many ways. The most common was an annual income that was attached to the places or posts that these ladies occupied in the court and in the royal households. Only in the French court was the pension enjoyed by the royal mistress granted as specifically connected to her post as a king's mistress.⁵⁰⁶

In Britain, however, more common were pensions that were included in the posts in the royal households, usually in the household of the queen and/or royal children, as for example in the case of Lady Archibald Hamilton. Her position as the governess of a young princess was noted by French diplomats,⁵⁰⁷ and her position in the household service of the Princess of Wales in John Hervey's memoirs:

[...] the Princess [Augusta Saxe-Gotha] made it her request to ask the Queen [Caroline] that she should write to Hanover to the King [George II], to ask leave for her to take Lady Archibald Hamilton [mistress to Frederick, Prince of Wales] into her service; to

⁵⁰³ See, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 25–26; Hervey 1848b, 31. Hervey also cited these semi-public letters in length, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 24–31.

⁵⁰⁴ Walpole 1818, 75–76.

⁵⁰⁵ Hervey 1848b, 260; Also in Hervey 1931, 744–745.

⁵⁰⁶ See, e.g. Walpole 1833a, LETTER LVI. From Orford to Mann, London, 15th Nov. 1742, 195; TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430.

⁵⁰⁷ "Mylady Archibald Hamilton à été déclarée par le Prince, [Gouvernitute?] de la jeune Princesse, [...]." LAD, P/11483 Correspondance politique, Angleterre, vol. 395, Londres, 30 juil 1737, M. de Cambis, 225. "The Prince has declared My Lady Archibald Hamilton the Governess to the young Princess." (Translation E.K.).

which the King consenting, Lady Archibald was immediately made Lady of the Bed-chamber, Privy-Purse, and Mistress of the Robes to the Princess; with a salary, for all three together, of nine hundred pounds a year.⁵⁰⁸

Thus, in Lady Archibald Hamilton's case, the royal family continued the technique of incorporating the prince's mistress into the household of his wife, which had already proven successful in the case of Henrietta Howard who served as George II's mistress and as Queen Caroline's household servant.⁵⁰⁹ Mme de Pompadour also had the position of Dame du Palais (Lady in Waiting) to the Queen, which in itself included considerable honours.⁵¹⁰

However, this strategy of openly stationing declared mistresses in the lawful wife's household was not unproblematic. Rather, the king's public reputation needed to be taken into consideration. The problematics are evident from the debate Queen Caroline had with Sir Robert Walpole on her plan to invite George II's new mistress, Amalia von Walmoden, from Hanover into her own household, as it was recalled by Lord Hervey. The Queen seemed enthusiastic about taking Mme von Walmoden into her service – as she had taken Mrs. Howard before her – but Sir Robert Walpole advised otherwise. If the king were to consent to Queen Caroline's taking Mme von Walmoden into her service, it would add only negative impressions to the public image of the Queen, or far worse, that of the King. If it were understood as the Queen's idea, antipathy towards her would increase for patronising the king. And, if it were understood as the King's idea, it "[...] would bring an odium upon the King, if it should be concluded that Madame Walmoden had been forced upon her [Queen Caroline]." ⁵¹¹ Furthermore, Sir Robert Walpole refused to see the parallel between the situation of Mme von Walmoden and that of the previous mistress, Mrs. Howard, by stating that:

[...] the world would judge very differently of the two cases, as the King's making one of the Queen's servants his mistress, or his mistress one of the Queen's servants, were two things which nobody could see in the same light.⁵¹²

As this anecdotal recollection implies, it was not only the reputation of the mistress, or even that of the queen and the king, that was at stake when arranging positions in the royal households for the king's mistresses. It also included questions concerning the dynamics of power between the king, his wife, and his mistress – or assumed and imagined positions and relations of power and influence. These will be discussed further in section 4.1. At this point let us return to the possible ways of compensating the royal mistresses.

The third settlement to reward the royal mistresses that was used in France and Britain alike was to tie the pension to the title. When the royal mistress rose in social rank, she was entitled to larger pensions, higher and more lucrative posts, and greater honours. For example, British diplomats noticed the ascension

⁵⁰⁸ Hervey 1848b, 104.

⁵⁰⁹ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 512–513; Hervey 1848a, 94, 354; Hervey 1848b, 21.

⁵¹⁰ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 72–81; Fauques 1758a, 93–105; Anon. 1760, 162.

⁵¹¹ Hervey 1848a, 143.

⁵¹² Hervey 1848a, 143.

of Marie Anne de Mailly-Nesle, Mme de la Tournelle, who had just the previous year secured her position as the king's mistress from her sister Louise Julie de Mailly:

Madame de la Tournelle has this last Week been declared a Dutchess by the Stile and Title of Duchesse de Chateauroux with a Pension of Eighty Thousand Livres a Year.⁵¹³

In the case of Mme d'Étiolles, Louis XV gifted her the title of Marquise de Pompadour.⁵¹⁴ Also, Henrietta Howard's position in the Queen's household rose as well when she inherited the title of Countess of Suffolk after her brother's death in 1731. This new rank entitled her to have a higher position as the Mistress of the Robes instead of her previous post as a Woman of the Bedchamber, to which was also attached a higher annual income.⁵¹⁵

Beside these ways in which the royal mistresses were rewarded during their reign, there were also the costs arising after their dismissal from their position as a king's mistress, either due to the change of heart of the king (or, though far more seldom, of the mistress) or due to the death of the king. This was mainly a British practice. The French style was to marry off the lesser-known mistresses and to send the famous mistresses to a convent.⁵¹⁶ As mentioned, the British kings and princes compensated, and were expected to compensate, the loss of virtue of the mistresses they sent away, as in the case of Anne Vane, who was rewarded with an annual income of 1600£ for life, a house in Governor Street and the right to keep her son with her,⁵¹⁷ or of Henrietta Howard, whose pension George II intended to continue after she took her leave from the court⁵¹⁸. Hanoverian kings also remembered their mistresses in their testaments, although the sums the mistresses inherited remained unknown and subjects of speculations.⁵¹⁹ Additionally, the kings gave, and were expected to give, gifts to their mistresses, in forms of cash⁵²⁰, jewellery⁵²¹, and apartments or houses⁵²².

⁵¹³ TNA, SP 78/229, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 26th Oct. 1743, 7.

⁵¹⁴ Fauques 1759, 38; Fauques 1758a, 45; Also in Fauques 1766a, 54. Willem Keppel, Earl of Albemarle, ambassador of Great Britain to France (1749–1754) informed Thomas Pellham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle, then Secretary of State for the Northern Department about this gracious gift as well. TNA, SP 78/245, Albemarle to Newcastle, Fountainebleau, Wednesday 18th Oct. 1752, 158.

⁵¹⁵ Thomson 1847a, Countess of Pembroke to Mrs. Clayton, 1st July 232.

⁵¹⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 19, 109; Fauques 1758a, 21; Fauques 1758b, 27; Fauques 1766a, 21; Walpole 1820c, To George Montagu, Esq. Paris, Sunday night, 17th Sep. 1769, 317–318; Mairobert 1775, 59; Bécu 1777a, 2.

⁵¹⁷ Hervey 1848b, 25–26, 31.

⁵¹⁸ Hervey 1848a, 355.

⁵¹⁹ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 67, on the will of George I and his legacy to the Duchess of Kendal. On the will of George II and his legacy to Countess of Yarmouth, see Walpole 1820b, from Orford to George Montagu, Esq. Arlington-street, 4th Nov. 1760, 201; Walpole 1843a, LETTER I. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 1st Nov. 1760, 3.

⁵²⁰ See, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 21.

⁵²¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 206; Bécu 1777b, 195.

⁵²² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 42–43, 46–47; Fauques 1758a, 50–52, 57–58; Fauques 1766a, 65–66; Mairobert 1775, 88, 111; Bécu 1777a, 34–35, 67.

3.4 Miserly monarch

Thus, it was expected and accepted that the royal mistresses' services for attending to the needs of the monarch needed to be redressed. Within this framework of remuneration, the royal mistresses' costs to the kings were tolerated and accepted. This in itself is only the premise from which to advance debates, criticism, and argumentation. After all, more interesting are the occasions where the limits of accepted and expected use of royal revenues for the compensations of royal mistresses' services were breached. These were instances when the writers viewed and/or presented the mistresses' injured reputation as being left uncompensated, the king as having left their service unrewarded, or the pecuniary marks of his favour as exceeding the limits of propriety. Certainly, there were occasionally heated debates especially on the quantity of gifts that the kings granted to their mistresses.

First things first: since the recompense for the royal mistress for her troubles was expected, it was problematic if the king did not fulfil this expectation. In this section, let us explore the various possible meanings of the representations of those kings that were not regarded to have duly recompensed their mistresses. Here we will see how the imaginaries of the kings' spending on their mistresses intersected with ideas concerning justice, fairness, and even the limits of legitimate monarchical rule. However, before entering into these interconnections, let us first outline the meanings of *royal* use of money. The ideas and norms regulating the noble and royal use of money, especially spending in a conspicuous manner, provide the most important context in which the meanings of royal recompensation – or in this case, lack of it of it – were constructed. Here we will encounter the intertwined normative ideals of royal generosity and royal benevolence.

As I have noted, there were some royal mistresses that did not want any pecuniary favours from their royal lovers, and who were thus considered true and justifiable mistresses. Yet, the kings were nonetheless expected to offer them some kinds of reward, as for example in the form of gifts, as in the little anecdote about Mme de Mailly:

Loin qu'elle songeat à le dépouiller, ce fut toujours avec une sorte de violence qu'elle reçut les petits présents que le Roi [Louis XV] lui faisoit. Un jour que le Roi lui envoïa une paire de chandeliers d'or, elle se prit à rire & dit, que sa Majesté n'auroit pas du oublier les mouchettes. Chacun trouvera dans ces paroles, un badinage spirituel, bien éloigné de l'esprit d'avarice.⁵²³

This anecdote is a splendid example of the way in which both royal generosity and a justified royal mistress could be presented simultaneously and as mutually

⁵²³ Fauques 1759, 19. "So far from pillaging him [Louis XV], she received the little presents he made her with reluctance. Amongst other, the King one day, sent a pair of gold candlesticks, at which she laughed, and only said, his Majesty ought not to have forgot the snuffers: and this she said, more because she thought it pleasant, than from any cravingness [sic]." Fauques 1758a, 20–21.

supporting. The king displayed royal generosity, an embodiment of royal benevolence and royal magnificence (which, as previously explained, could be considered an embodiment of the glory and strength of the whole realm) by offering tokens of his love: gifts. Thus, he was given to displaying sincere attachment, which justified the keeping of the mistress from his side of the relationship. He was also represented as a king of honour and wealth who appreciated the service of his subject and rewarded her accordingly. And the mistress, she took the offered gift with reluctance, thus preserving her lover's reputation as just and honourable, and her own as a true mistress whose keeping was justified through her sincere fondness for the king and not his money.

However, here we are not interested in the justifications for the relationship of the king and his mistress, but rather the interconnection of royal generosity, magnificence, and benevolence. They were all concepts that were connected to the expectations of noble life. This concerned the monarch because he was the highest among the aristocracy, but also because these expectations were entangled with the conceptualisations of ideal rule as well. Parsimony might have been among the ideals of middling and lowering sorts of people but the highest aristocracy and royalty lived by another ideal of showing their rank through their grand lifestyle, as indicated by the adjectives *royally* or *nobly*. Nobility was not connected only to pedigree, but semantically also to magnificence, splendour, stateliness, and generosity,⁵²⁴ which were all attributes that could be actualised through appearance, style of living, and style of spending.

Furthermore, *generosity* and *benevolence* were interconnected concepts that related to all aristocracy. For example, when praising members of the aristocracy or high-ranking members of the court, eighteenth-century commentators commonly connected honesty, generosity, and nobleness, as for example in the Abbé de Bernis' presentation of Prince de Soubise: "Prince de Soubise, known only as an honest man full of generosity and nobleness, [...]"⁵²⁵ This, of course, might have been merely lip service or empty rhetoric, especially in the case of obituaries. However, as collocation, it reveals that at the level of ideals and expectations, noble honesty was indeed inseparable from generosity.

Generosity as an ideal and expectation inseparable from noblesse was the more important because it connected certain ways of distributing wealth to a

⁵²⁴ See, e.g. explanations on "noble" and "nobly" in eighteenth-century dictionaries: "belonging to the peerage; illustrious; magnificent; stately; pompous; or becoming a nobleman." Allen 1765, "noble"; "Descended of an ancient or splendid family; raised to a degree above the commons; great, worthy, exalted; magnificent, stately, generous, free; principal, capital." Ash 1775b, "noble"; Allen 1765, "nobly"; Ash 1775b, "nobly"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "libéralité"; Chambaud 1761, "généreusement", "grandeur", "royal", "royalement", "sompôteusement"; Dyche 1756a, "généreux", "grandeur"; Dyche 1756b, "royalement". Further, this connection was not an eighteenth-century innovation. It belonged to the traditional conceptualisation of nobility at least since the Middle Ages. See, e.g. Lainé 2014, 73-74.

⁵²⁵ See, e.g. Pierre 1902a, 305. "[...] le Prince de Soubise, connu seulement comme honnête homme, plein de générosité et de noblesse, [...]" Pierre 1903, 393.

disposition of mind.⁵²⁶ Generosity tied together liberality, benevolence, beneficence, charity, and – most importantly – good-will as descriptions of high rank, noble origin, dignity, wealth, and magnanimity. Generosity, or generous disposition, was not merely a characteristic of a person who spent richly but also a feature that was connected to magnanimity, genteelness, and gentility. Here we meet generosity as a virtue. For example, when complimented, the royal mistresses were commonly praised for their generosity, especially in relation to charitable acts, as for example in Mairobert’s presentation of Mme du Barry: “[...] Madam Dubarrè was exerting her influence in the cause of benevolence and generosity”⁵²⁷. Dean Swift presented Mrs. Howard as acting in her life with “[...] justice, generosity, and truth; [...]”⁵²⁸ Mme de Pompadour was presented as “[...] having a lofty soul, sensible and generous”⁵²⁹ by the Abbé de Bernis. Fauques praised Mme de Mailly as a model of a virtuous royal mistress:

Elle étoit généreuse jusqu’à l’excès. Elle ne demanda jamais rien pour elle-même. C’étoit toujours sur les autres que couloient les graces dont elle étoit le canal. Charitable, douce, affable & obligeante, on peut dire que le nombre de ses vertus effaçoient entièrement la tache qu’elle avoit faite à son honneur.⁵³⁰

Evidently, the idea of noble origin (genteel, gentility, noble) was linked to a certain idealised disposition of mind (friendly, gentle, generous, benignant). This was manifested and performed when living according to the expectations of noble life which included spending on personal appearance (splendour, magnificence) as well as giving money without vested interest (charity, gifts).

Of the ranks of nobility, the king was the highest, and consequently he was expected to display the highest splendour that was supposed to be out of the reach of all others. One of the marks of this highest magnificence was *royal generosity*. For example, Hours (2002) has noted the liturgic splendour of the court as a manifesto of royal generosity towards his courtly nobility and the image of a generous king in relation to his noble servants in the court.⁵³¹ However, in the discourses on the royal mistresses, the writers utilised the idea about the king’s two bodies and connected royal generosity to expectations of the impersonal majesty and the image of the realm as well. Especially in the eyes of the larger audience, kings were expected to show their wealth in a generous manner

⁵²⁶ For the latter sense, see, e.g. Mme de Pompadour’s rebuke to the British Ambassador Earl of Albemarle for his disparagement of her person which utilised this normative interconnection: “This conduct is neither generous nor genteel, [...]” Poisson 1772, 116.

⁵²⁷ Bécu 1777a, 78. “[...] Madame Dubarri profitoit ainsi de son crédit pour exercer sa bienfaisance, [...]” Mairobert 1775, 118. The meanings of charity will be further discussed in section 4.2.2.2.

⁵²⁸ Howard 1824a, Character of the Hon. Mrs. Howard, written and given to her by Dr. Swift, Dean of St. Patrick’s, 12th June 1727, xli.

⁵²⁹ Pierre 1902a, 153. “l’âme haute, sensible et généreuse; [...]” Pierre 1903, 110.

⁵³⁰ Fauques 1759, 18–19. “She was generous to excess. No favors she obtained from him, were for herself. Charitable, good-natured, affable, and obliging, she repaired in some measure, by a number of virtues, the blemish of her honor.” Fauques 1758a, 20. Also in Fauques 1766a, 21.

⁵³¹ Hours 2002, 131–132.

because in their person they showed the wealth of the kingdom.⁵³² Here the royal glory, or dignity, formed a conceptual pair with the glory of the realm where both bolstered each other: the king embodies the glory and wealth of the realm, thus manifesting it in his person – and the glory and wealth of the realm and its subjects is confirmed in and by the wealth and glory of the king. By distributing *royally* the wealth of the Crown the king reinforces the glory of his subjects, and consequently, his own. Thus, a parsimonious king would seem like a poor king of an insignificant kingdom – a ridiculous figure, if not even paradoxical.

Royal generosity was also inseparably interconnected to *royal benevolence*. The distribution of wealth (in form of, for example, gifts, pensions, salaries, and charity) also reinforced the idea about the king as a *benevolent* monarch that was concerned with the welfare of his subjects: a great monarch of a wealthy kingdom who has plenty to give and who gives plentifully. Royal generosity, or liberality, could be further connected to general good and charitable purposes. Here it was interconnected with the concept of royal beneficence or benevolence, as for example in this presentation of Stanislaus Leszczyński:

[...] : ce bon Prince en mourroit de chagrin; & il est bon qu'il vive encore pour l'exemple des Rois & le bien de ses peuples. [...] Sa bonté lui a acquis le surnom de Bienfaisant, qui est, à mon gré, le plus grand & le plus beau des titres pour un Roi.⁵³³

In this sense, *royal generosity* was considered a special royal virtue.⁵³⁴

This interconnection was also an inseparable element of the ideals and norms regarding royal greatness and justified rulership. Good-will, humanity, and benevolence were moral standards of a good monarch that legitimated the royal use of power, as for example in the case of anonymous writer's presentation of Louis XV: "He applied himself to it [politics] through that beneficent disposition, which naturally prompts him to solace his people."⁵³⁵ Certainly, the same expectation of royal generous benevolence can be found in British political culture as well.⁵³⁶ Thus, benevolent disposition was one of the most important

⁵³² See, e.g. Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.", George the Second, by Chesterfield, 4.

⁵³³ Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXVI. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 107–108. "That good prince would dy [sic.] of vexation; and it is desirable that he still should live for a pattern to kings, and the benefit of his people. [...] His goodness has gained him the surname of beneficent; which is, to my taste, the greatest and most glorious of titles for a king.", Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXVI. To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 61. Stanislaus Leszczyński was father-in-law to Louis XV. He was twice the King of Poland, but here he was discussed as Duke of Lorraine.

⁵³⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 41, 139; Fauques 1758a, 49; Fauques 1758b, 69; Fauques 1766a, 58; Fauques 1766b, 38.

⁵³⁵ Poisson 1766d, 2. "Il s'y [la politique] appliquoit par cette inclination bienfaisante, qui le porte naturellement à soulager ses peuples." Poisson 1766b, 2.

⁵³⁶ E.g. "His [George II] charity was liberal and extensive, and from indisputable authority, very far exceeded that of the most beneficent and bountiful of all his predecessors; and he had that humanity and tenderness of mind, [...]. To sum up the whole: he was [...] charitable without profusion; rich without covetousness; frugal without sordidness; humane and tender without weakness and effeminacy." Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." George the Second, by Dr. Chanler, 8–10; Stanhope 1779d,

characteristics of a legitimate monarch. And royal benevolence could be performed through royal generosity.

Therefore, a parsimonious king would not only be a ridiculous and absurd figure but there was also some potential for questioning his benevolent disposition of mind. Yet quite a few occasions of royal parsimony were presented – in fact, none of the monarchs investigated here escaped allegations of meanness. For example, as Fauques presented it, it was not only Louis XV who was parsimonious, but Fauques proposed stinginess as the general characteristic of Bourbon kings:

On a vu les Bourbons dépenser beaucoup en magnificence; L'amour est aussi parvenu quelque fois à en faire des prodigues; Mais la générosité ne fut jamais une de leurs qualités. Louis le bien aimé ne fait point exception à ce caractère général de sa famille. Naturellement porté à l'épargne, on ne la point vu recompenser en Roi, les faveurs de ses maitresses.⁵³⁷

Of course, Fauques was not praising the king for the frugal keep of his mistresses. In fact, as the argument continues, it was revealed that Louis XV might have previously followed the parsimonious path of his ancestors, but since taking Mme de Pompadour as his mistress, had found his liberality – and wasted generously in an inappropriate direction:

C'est à Madame d'Estiolles & à ses puissantes influences qu'il étoit réservé, de lever les écluses de sa liberalité, & d'en faire couler les eaux fertiles & abondantes sur soi & sur les siens.⁵³⁸

It is notable that the kings who were not presented as having sufficiently rewarded their mistresses were on the brink of collapsing into avariciousness themselves. Especially George II was accused of succumbing to the vice of loving money: it was a feature that was made fun of in his British dominions and abroad alike. The French ambassadors and envoys mentioned this quality when reporting back to Paris about the British state of affairs: "[...] il a en outre une autre qualité qui est d'aimer l'argent, [...]." ⁵³⁹ In Britain, Horace Walpole among others presented George II as ungenerous. He shared a little anecdote to Sir Horace Mann about the parsimonious ways of George II. When Lady Albemarle was robbed, George II gave her a gold watch and a chain the following day so as

Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." *George the First*, by Chesterfield, 1; Hervey 1848a, 251; Walpole 1818, 85.

⁵³⁷ Fauques 1759, 38. "The Bourbons have often been known to be expensive through ostentation, and sometimes lavish through love, but generosity was never their attribute. The present reigning one, is no exception to this general character of his family. Naturally parsimonious he had not very royally rewarded the favors of former mistresses." Fauques 1758a, 54.

⁵³⁸ Fauques 1759, 38. "It was reserved for the superior influence of madam d'Estiolles to unlock the sluices of his liberality, and they were poured out in a full flood upon her and hers." Fauques 1766a, 54.

⁵³⁹ LAD, P/12020 Correspondance politique, Supplement, Angleterre, [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette], *Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre*, 29. "[...] he also has another quality which is the love of money, [...]." (Translation E.K.).

to solace her and to show her compassion, which was expected from a great master during his servant's distress. However, the gift was deemed small:

"the manner was all" [said Lady Albemarle] – and indeed so it was, for I [Horace Walpole] never saw a more frippery present; especially considering how great a favourite she is, and my Lady Yarmouth's friend.⁵⁴⁰

Walpole took his chance to continue to jestingly censure George II's frugality:

The monarch is never less generous, than when he has a mind to be so: the only present he ever made my father was a large diamond, cracked quite through. Once or twice in his younger and gallant days, he has brought out a handful of maimed topazes and amethysts, and given them to be raffled for by the Maids of Honor.⁵⁴¹

In Walpole's representation, George II was deemed miserly, and his miserliness was regarded as resulting from avarice. Avariciousness was also the main feature of George II that the Jacobites underlined in their anti-Hanoverian writings:

Le Caractere d'Esreff [George II] est tout le contraire de celui du Sophi [Charles Edward Stuart], il est avaricieux autant qu'on le peut être et a une ambition [demesure] sans avoir les qualites necessaires pour la soutenir [...]⁵⁴².

To eighteenth-century writers the Hanoverian kings' ⁵⁴³ love of money and inclination to not be generous distinctly meant that the king collected money and was not willing to spend it as openhandedly as would have been expected from a great king. As stated, generous or liberal spending was assumed for magnificent monarchs of strong and wealthy kingdoms. The French diplomats directly connected the rapacity of George II to his honour:

Le Roy dont la figure et l'air n'ont rien de la majesté que l'imagination se plate de trouver dans les Princes, [...]. Regulier dans le payement de sa maison, mais, d'une avarice qui deshonoreroit meme cet particulier.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCX, From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 31st Jan. 1750, 108.

⁵⁴¹ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCX, From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 31st Jan. 1750, 108.

⁵⁴² LAD, P/11452 Correspondance politique, Angleterre, vol. 364, Supplement. Brogglie, 31 déc. 1728, Mr. Mist [Mist's weekly journal, translation], 390. "The character of Esreff [George II] is quite opposite to that of Sophi [Charles Edward Stuart], he is as avaricious as one can be, and has immoderate ambition without any qualities to support it [...]" (Translation E.K.).

⁵⁴³ George II was habitually accused of being avaricious, but George I did not avoid the accusations either. As, e.g. "The King's character may be comprised in very few words. [...] Fortune, that made him a king, added nothing to his happiness, only prejudiced his honesty, and shortened his days. No man was ever more free from ambition; he loved money, but loved to keep his own, without being rapacious of other men's. He would have grown rich by saving, but was incapable of laying schemes for getting; [...]" Wortley Montagu 1837a, 111.

⁵⁴⁴ LAD, P/12019 Correspondance politique, Supplement, Angleterre, [Chammorel; Chavigny], Mémoire concernant la Grande Bretagne, 1732, 247. "The King [George II] whose figure and air have nothing of that majesty one imagines to find in the Princes, [...]. Regular in his payments of his house, but of an avarice that dishonours even in that particular." (Translation E.K.)

It was thus expected that great kings spend money royally, and consequently, parsimonious kings were regarded as small. Royal generosity was a mark of wealth (of the realm and of the impersonal king) as well as that of (personal) royal character and honour. Hence, parsimony or avariciousness in royalty was regarded as ridiculous. Or even as repulsive, as for example, in an anecdote about the failed endeavour of the Prince of Wales, the future George II, to get the attention of Miss Bellenden. He attempted to show off his wealth by counting conspicuously the contents of his private purse. In other words, he was expecting that all the courtly ladies were seduceable by means of money. However, Miss Bellenden found it quite unappealing: "The prince's gallantry was by no means delicate; and his avarice disgusted her."⁵⁴⁵

Royal parsimony was reflected in the royal mistresses as well. If the king was presented as being mean in rewarding his mistresses, he could be simultaneously construed as a small man, as is usually the case with George II. The following anecdote by Horace Walpole exemplifies the king's unwillingness to take proper care of the person who was supposed to take care of him:

[...] my Lady Yarmouth has an ague, and is forced to keep a constant fire in her room [at Kensington-palace] against damp. When my Lady Suffolk lived in that apartment, the floor produced a constant crop of mushrooms. Though there are so many vacant chambers, the King hoards all he can, and has locked up half the palace since the Queen's death: so he does at St. James's, and I believe would put the rooms out to interest, if he could get a closet a year for them! Somebody told my Lady Yarmouth they wondered she would live in that unwholesome apartment, when there are so many other rooms; she replied, "Mais pas pour moy."⁵⁴⁶

Of course, there was another option for understanding royal frugality. It was, of course, generally assumed and presented that the royal mistresses could and would be rapacious, if given any chance.⁵⁴⁷ The king's frugality in the gifts to his mistress could be interpreted as caution or rationality, or in terms of independence. In any case, royal niggardliness was considered the lesser evil of the two, as insinuated by James, 1st Earl of Waldegrave, on George II's infamous love for money:

Too great attention to money seems to be his capital failing; however, he is always just, and sometimes charitable, though seldom generous: but when we consider how rarely the liberty of princes is directed to the proper object, being usually bestowed on a rapacious mistress or an unworthy favorite, want of generosity, though it still continues a blot, ceases, at least, to be a vice of the first magnitude.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ Walpole 1818, 74.

⁵⁴⁶ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCV. Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 17th Aug. 1749, 97. Reference to same anecdote also in Walpole 1820b, Orford to George Montagu, Arlington-street, 25th Oct. 1760, I tell a lie, I am at Mr. Chute's, 193.

⁵⁴⁷ That was the case with Mrs. Howard as well. See, e.g. "From the steady decorum of Mrs. Howard, I should conclude that she would have preferred the advantages of her situation to the ostentatious éclat of it: but many obstacles stood in the way of total concealment; nor do I suppose that love had any share in the sacrifice she made of her virtue." Walpole 1818, 75-76.

⁵⁴⁸ Waldegrave 1821, 7.

Mrs. Howard's case could be seen as George II's attempt to control and maintain his reputation. As observed in the previous chapter, George II was repeatedly described as having been uneasy about his reputation as independent, and having kept a mistress, Henrietta Howard, in order to avoid the allegation of being ruled by his wife Queen Caroline. Meagre keep of his mistress could have also been a part of George II's project of maintaining his independent reputation. If a kept mistress could generate an impression of the king being independent from his wife, then an exiguous compensation of his mistress could generate an impression of him being independent from the influence of his mistress.

Lord Waldegrave's thoughts about George II's avarice being the lesser vice tend to overflow with anecdotes of his cupidity and miserliness. Since avariciousness was a vice, it could test the king's reputation as a rational and thus justified ruler. But the vice of avariciousness could be constructed as an effeminising quality as well. Even though there were a set of vices that were considered to be essentially male vices, as for example, violence, drunkenness, ambition, and longing for grandeur, it was nonetheless the female sex that was considered to be more vulnerable to all temptations. Women more easily strayed from the path of virtue, and conversely, all who lapsed into vice risked their masculine reputation. This link between female vices, money, and influence was confirmed in the debate about excessive consumption, luxury, and extravagant life, and formed a key element of the eighteenth-century criticism against courtly life, both in Britain and in France.⁵⁴⁹ However, I will not discuss this further here, since section 3.7 is dedicated to the themes of luxury and corruption. At this point it is enough to note that avarice was a vice and a passion, and any occasion of succumbing to either went against masculine expectations of rationality.

In Britain, however, this claim of the king's avarice does not point as strongly in the direction of effeminacy as it does in the direction of injustice and exploitation. A little anecdote about George II and his meagre gift to his mistress Lady Deloraine conveys a sense of abusing a mistress in the form of insufficient recompense for her services. According to the anecdote, Sir Robert Walpole told Lord Hervey that George II had ordered them to buy a hundred lottery-tickets, and Sir Walpole assumed that they were meant for the "King's favourite"⁵⁵⁰, meaning Mme Walmoden, his mistress in Hanover. A fitting gift for a mistress, no doubt. However, Lord Hervey confused the German mistress, Mme Walmoden, with George II's British fancy, Lady Deloraine:

[...] to which Sir Robert, setting him right, replied, "No, I mean the Hanover woman. You are indeed in the right to imagine he does not go so deep to his lying fool here [Lady Deloraine]: he'll give her a couple of tickets, and thinking her generously used."⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 42. This theme will be discussed further in sections 3.7 and 3.8.

⁵⁵⁰ Hervey 1848b, 355.

⁵⁵¹ Hervey 1848b, 355.

If the king did not compensate the service – and damaged reputation – of his subject sufficiently, he could have appeared as an unjust and ungrateful exploiter: as taking the service offered by his subject and using his subjects as he wanted without paying due reward.

This kind of image could test not only the reputation of a personal king but the legitimation of an impersonal monarch as well. Traditionally, the legitimation of hereditary monarchy lay in the royal prerogatives over legislation and jurisdiction, and thus the pivotal element of the image of the king was that of the Fount of Justice.⁵⁵² Mistreatment of a subject could turn into an issue of fairness and equity, which could question the personal king's ability to distribute justice. Furthermore, when such a presentation included a personal lapse it could test also the impersonal monarch's assumed capacity to function as the source and protector of justice. This train of thought, however, was less essential in eighteenth-century Britain than in France. Again, the reason for this difference is located in the separation of powers. Since in Britain the king did not wield the powers of legislation and jurisprudence alone, the personal slights of the king did not necessarily transfer to the slights of the whole legal and judicial system. In other words, in Britain, the personal king might have been unjust to his mistress, but he would have been so in his private capacity, not as an impersonal legislator and distributor of justice.

In France, the king as the source of justice belongs inseparably to the eighteenth-century imaginations on monarchy and monarchical rule. Thus, there were occasions where the understanding of the French monarch as the personification of justice was present, and even narratives, where his judgement as the supreme distributor of law was brought up in questionable terms.⁵⁵³ For example, in Mairobert's anecdote about a feud between Mme du Barry and Mme la Marquise de Rozen the idea of the monarch as the supreme judge was presented and confirmed, and yet used, abused, and finally made fun of. According to the anecdote, Mme du Barry complained to Louis XV about the cooling friendship between herself and Mme de Rozen, to which the king jokingly answered: "[...] Bon, c'est un enfant propre à recevoir le fouet."⁵⁵⁴ Mme du Barry took the proposition seriously – or took the change – and with the help of her friends gave Mme de Rozen a spanking. Whereupon, Mme de Rozen took her injured pride to the monarch and demanded him to scold his mistress. However, the king could not row with his mistress because she reminded that

⁵⁵² See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 16, 37, 133, 151; van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Molas Ribalta 1996, 23; Shennan 2007, 5, 97. On the underlying medieval tradition, see, e.g. the king as "Image of Justice" who is at once the source and first servant of justice, Kantorowicz 1957, 94–97, 134; or, the king as legislator, in e.g. Kantorowicz 1957, 150–158.

⁵⁵³ Most notably on anecdotes and comments concerning the controversies about restrictions of open political debates and the debate about the role and rights of Parlements. Regarding Parlements, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 124–126; Fauques 1758b, 48–50; Mairobert 1775, 154, 160–161, 164; Bécu 1777a, 131–132, 141, 145. Regarding restrictions of speech, see, e.g. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 61–63, 181–182; Fauques 1758a, 77–80; Fauques 1758b, 133–135; Fauques 1766a, 86–90, 204–206; Fauques 1766b, 1–23; Anon. 1760, 216–217.

⁵⁵⁴ Mairobert 1775, 260. "Well, that child is fit to receive the whip." (Translation E.K.).

"[...] elle n'avoit fait qu'exécuter le jugement de S.M."⁵⁵⁵ Such anecdotes testify that the image and idea of the monarch as the source of justice was still alive, and it could not be fundamentally challenged even in such a ridiculing anecdote.

However, even if the idea and image of the monarch as the source or protector of justice was present in the debates on the royal mistresses, it was not explicitly present in the debates about their reimbursement. Yet, it could be implied. Especially in relation to the grand narrative of the memoirs of royal mistresses, reading the royal neglect of the mistress in terms of injustice is alluring. The interconnection of royal justice and royal compensation gained significantly more importance when it was connected to the legitimate claims of the mistress's husband, as will be discussed in section 3.6. Here, let us note the interconnection between the unrecompensed mistress and an unjust king as superficial. It was there, and yet it was not at the heart of the problem of presentations on the unrewarded mistresses.

There was also another alluded danger looming in the descriptions of the kings who did not compensate their servants – and one that was more essential in eighteenth-century political discourses than the more traditional representations of the king as the source of justice. If the king did not recompense for the services rendered and reimburse his servant for any damages that were partially owing to him, he could have been presented as using his subjects *at will*. There was a strong understanding even in the so-called absolutist⁵⁵⁶ regimes of the subjects' rights to their property that even the sovereign ruler could not violate without losing his(/her) legitimacy.⁵⁵⁷ Even in France, where the king was the only sovereign and the only political authority, the monarch's prerogatives did not extend to private law, which guaranteed individual rights of the subjects and private property. In theory, the monarch had no right to tamper with private property or traditional privileges of local communities, estates, or private individuals. Of course, in practice, these were all continually conferred and contested.⁵⁵⁸

There was a possibility to represent the royal mistresses' operations as a service offered to the king. It was also possible to perceive the reputation of the mistress as a property. Consequently, the mistress's willingness to enter into the publicly known extramarital relationship could be constructed as an act of i) offering a service or ii) selling the property of virtuous reputation. For example, this was the case with aforementioned Lady Deloraine who was presented as selling her surrender to George II; or Mrs. Howard and Miss Vane who were presented as changing their virtue for the mere prospect of making a fortune; or Mme de La Tournelle who was presented as bargaining with Louis XV for the best possible price for her services and virtue. If the mistresses' operations were

⁵⁵⁵ Mairobot 1775, 260. "[...] she had only executed the judgement of His Majesty." (Translation E.K.).

⁵⁵⁶ In a sense that the impersonal Crown did not recognise any institutionalised limits to its sovereign powers, as e.g. in France. Henshall 1992; Beales 2006, 513; Baker 1990, 228; Bell 1994, 83; Merrick 1986, 499.

⁵⁵⁷ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 176–198; Munck 2002, 163.

⁵⁵⁸ Henshall 1992, 7, 67, 135, 176–198; van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Drévilion 2000, 314–315, 339.

constructed as a service or her reputation as a property, then the king's frugality could be constructed as an act of leaving unpaid the service that was already carried out. That is, accusing the monarch of acting unlawfully and violating the subject's sacred right to her property. From such an accusation, it was a very short distance to the highly politicised equivocal concept of *despotism* that during the eighteenth century was constructed as a concept of illegitimate or abusive rule. In despotic rule, the ruler's use of power was not restricted by the laws (and thus, was arbitrary), and the ruler considered and used the property and lives of his subjects at his will.⁵⁵⁹

However, this link between a monarch misusing his mistress and despotic rule remains on the level of an allusion too. It can be constructed only if the mistress's service and virtue was presented as *property*. The obvious problem, thus, relates to the definitions of property and especially women's rights to own and use property. With sources that discuss royal mistresses it is impossible to enlarge on the debate about women's right to property – other than the blatant notions that married women could not own or use property themselves and were under the guardianship of their husband.⁵⁶⁰ Still, it is interesting that there was a possibility to conceptualise woman's virtue as a property that could be sold. Nevertheless, the conceptualisation did not always serve as a mean of legitimation but one of ridicule. In the case of mistresses bargaining over their virtue, the conceptualisation of virtue as property was actually a way to ridicule at least the loose morality of the mistress and possibly the morality of the court as a whole as well. If virtue could be made a property then it would lose its essential character as virtue, (and why not, its value as a property). Yet, the representations showed readers that in the practices of the royal court, virtuous reputations were habitually sold and bargained over.

Summa summarum, leaving the mistress without due reward for her services was a breach of expected royal conduct. The king ran the risk of allusions of meanness that, in turn, could lead to further allusions of injustice and misuse of his subject. More importantly, however, frugality in a royal person was a mark of a small man in stark contrast to the expectations of grandeur and *éclat* of hereditary monarchy. Thus, the monarchs were expected to use some amount of money on their mistresses – but not too much. However, since there was a cultural expectation of royal mistresses as rapacious, the main body of examples of the royal mistresses' use of money (or royal spending on the mistress) tended to highlight inappropriate excessive costs and spending. This much-emphasised extravaganza of the eighteenth-century royal mistress is the subject of the following inquiry: what comprised the total cost of a costly royal mistress?

⁵⁵⁹ See, e.g., Henshall 1992, 91; Tomaselli 2006, 26; Beales 2006, 512, 515.

⁵⁶⁰ See, e.g. "Ainsi la dissolution du Mariage de Madame Dubarri, qu'on prétendoit devoir précéder les acquisitions qu'elle alloit faire desormais, devint un acte absolument inutile. Elle n'eut ni terre, ni Hôtel; elle se contentoit d'embellir son Pavillon de Lucienne, [...]" Mairobert 1775, 231–232. "Thus the dissolution of the marriage of Madam Dubarrè, which, as it was pretended, must precede the purchases she should in future make, became absolute useless. She had neither lands nor house; she contented herself with adorning her lodge at Lucienne, [...]" Bécu 1777b, 232.

3.5 A costly mistress

As I have previously demonstrated, the royal mistresses were generally regarded as rapacious as well as expensive and costly. It is then important to classify the various aspects of this famed and reproached expensiveness of the royal mistresses. The first part of the inquiry into royal mistresses' cost consisted of (proper) compensation for their services and loss of honour, both in the form of a yearly or monthly allowance and royal gifts. This aspect of the royal mistresses' cost was only rarely questioned, even though it was occasionally made fun of, as was the case in anecdotes about mistresses bargaining for their honourable reputation.

The second part would then be the unspecified or assorted expenses into which the mistresses encouraged the king. This category comprised various forms of royal mistresses' costs that were regarded almost unanimously as reprehensible. In fact, it was just these miscellaneous expenses that made the mistresses into rapacious and costly figures. To understand the construction and political meaning and uses of the figure of a costly and expensive royal mistress, it is necessary to explore the objects of her (assumed or represented) consumption, and whether or not it was considered worth the expense. In addition, in order to understand the total cost of an expensive mistress, the other forms of wastefulness that were linked to her but that were not necessarily presented as she herself squandering fortunes, should be taken into consideration. This implied that the royal mistresses encouraged the king to spend money on certain objects – their own person being only one of many. Further, we are about to see how the figure of an expensive royal mistress was connected to the discussion about monarchy, its ideals, and its principles.

3.5.1 Worthless trinkets and real property

First and foremost, the royal mistresses' personal spending in France was connected to items of luxury and splendour. Jewellery⁵⁶¹, dress⁵⁶² and other ornaments of both a person of high rank and her household⁵⁶³ are the most reported objects of royal mistresses' consumption in France, fittingly aligning with the purchases they had necessarily made as part of the royal court and royal *éclat*. These objects of consumption correlated with the prevailing discourses about luxury and corruption, themes that will be discussed in section 3.7. At this point, however, it is worthwhile focussing on the royal mistresses' spending on such objects of frivolous luxury as, for example, clothing and accessories in the form of fashion, only inasmuch as they were defined as hollow, transitory, or

⁵⁶¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 97, 206; Bécu 1777b, 194–195; BL, Add MS 35445, News-letters, 202; BL, Add MS 35445, News-letters, 275.

⁵⁶² See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 224–225; Bécu 1777b, 220–221; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 11th Jan. 1769, 31.

⁵⁶³ On extravagant consumption on *décor*, see, e.g., Mairobert 1775, 212; Bécu 1777b, 203–204.

meaningless pomp and parade. Often the royal mistresses' expenditure was defined in vague terms of unspecified extravaganza, where importance was attached to the impression that the mistresses were costly and the money went on meaningless or empty splendour. For example, Mairobert highlighted the worthlessness of the objects of consumption when describing Mme du Barry decorating her apartment with trifles:

Elle n'eut ni terre, ni Hôtel; elle se contentoit d'embellir son Pavillon de Lucienne, [...] On ne peut calculer ce qu'a coûté ce colifichet, où tout est de fantaisie & n'a d'autre prix que la cupidité de l'Artiste & la folie du Propriétaire.⁵⁶⁴

In the most deprecatory representations, the object of royal mistresses' extravagant consumption was not even known: the money just vanished, leaving nothing of value to the king, his mistress, his court or his country – fortunes spent did not even add to the royal grandeur in the form of the royal mistresses' beauty and splendour.⁵⁶⁵

Such descriptions indicate that there were objects of status-consumption that were regarded as more valuable and more lasting. That is to say, possessions that generated something of value for their possessors, either in the form of lasting property or notable esteem and honour. If the main body of the royal mistresses' spending was represented as meaningless or worthless, then what were the objects of worthy consumption? This discussion had greater significance in France than in Britain. Since the Hanoverian kings were represented as frugal, their mistresses were consequently represented either as impecunious, as for example Mrs. Howard, or as money-loving as the king himself, and thus only striving to accumulate their fortunes instead of spending any, as for example, Mme Kielmansegg⁵⁶⁶.

The total cost of a royal mistress was comprised of miscellaneous expenses, of which their spending on frivolities was just one – although a very significant – category of many. Here, let us consider three of the most frequently mentioned aspects that formed the total cost of a royal mistress: 1) royal mistresses' spending on the apartments; 2) royal mistresses' system of entertainments; and 3) the royal spending into which the royal mistresses encouraged the king, or a royal mistress as a channel for distributing the money outside the royal court or courtly circles. These themes will be introduced in this chapter, and some of them will be enlarged further on. For example, the royal mistresses' function as a channel for the distribution of wealth was connected to the networks of influence

⁵⁶⁴ Mairobert 1775, 231–234. “She had neither lands nor house; she contented herself with adorning her lodge at Lucienne, [...] No calculation can be made of the cost of this bauble, where every thing is whim, and of no value, but in the avidity of the artist, and the folly of the proprietor.” Bécu 1777b, 232–235; On Mme Du Barry's spending on frivolity and trifling objects, see also, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 200; Bécu 1777a, 186–187; Mairobert 1775, 129; Bécu 1777a, 95.

⁵⁶⁵ See, e.g. “Madame Dubarri eut alors besoin d'un million pour quelque acquisition qu'elle vouloit faire. [...] On n'a jamais sù ce qu'étoit devenu ce million, [...]” Mairobert 1775, 231. “She had occasion for a million of livres on account of some purchase she was about to make, [...] It has never been known to what use this million has been applied; [...]” Bécu 1777b, 231–232; Mairobert 1775, 226; Bécu 1777b, 224.

⁵⁶⁶ See, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 119–120.

and power, which will be discussed in section 4.1, and the meaning of the royal mistresses' system of entertainments will be further addressed in section 4.2.3.3.

After meaningless ostentation, the most frequently discussed object of royal mistresses' spending was apartments and buildings – *real* property – or consumption aligning well with traditional noble dynastic consumption.⁵⁶⁷ This theme applied especially to Mme de Pompadour⁵⁶⁸, and it served very specific functions.

Mme de Pompadour was presented as having spent fortunes on buildings and apartments, on property that was evidently considered to have been a more lasting and worthy object of consumption than that of jewellery and especially dress and ornaments. Most famous of her possessions was the small château of Bellevue near Paris (built in 1750): "Every one that has heard my name [Mme de Pompadour] mentioned, knows that I obtained BELLE-VUE, [...]"⁵⁶⁹ The presentations of Mme de Pompadour's little palace had a dual function. It could be presented as a place where a royal mistress amused and diverted her royal lover, thus justifying the existence of the royal mistress: "[BELLE-VUE], where I had exhausted the refinements of art to make an agreeable receptacle for the King."⁵⁷⁰

But the story about the palaces of Mme de Pompadour could also be expressed in terms of the greatest oppression: royal despotism or tyranny. As already mentioned, in eighteenth-century Western European political discourses, the allusions to royal despotism were serious accusations against royal misuse of power – and they could even be construed as a disavowal of the legitimacy of royal sovereignty. Mme de Pompadour's Bellevue in Meudon, as well as her other residence, l'Hôtel d'Evraux (Hôtel d'Évreux, future Palais de l'Élysée), served for contemporary writers as a mean to exemplify the royal misuse of power in the form of a breach of the sanctity of private property. According to

⁵⁶⁷ Regarding changes in consumption and the wider scholarly discussion on old and new luxuries, see, e.g. Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simon-ton 2015; Stobart & Rathery 2015; Pajur 2017; Clemente 2017; Stobart 2017; Blondé & De Laet 2017; Coquery 2017; Simonton 2015.

⁵⁶⁸ In relation to Mme du Barry, her prospects were presented as having been limited by her being married to Count du Barry. According to the French property laws, the husband was the owner of her wife's purchases. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 231–232; Bécu 1777b, 232. This explanation seems to contain a significant internal conflict, since Mme de Pompadour herself was married to M. d'Étiolles. It may, however, have been the writer's attempt to rationalise the disparity between Mme de Pompadour's and Mme du Barry's habits of consumption. Also, in relation to the greater narrative of royal mistresses, it was important for, e.g. Mairobert, to represent Mme du Barry as a wanton woman of low origin, interested in and understanding only frivolities and trifling objects of consumption. In order to highlight this, she was denied investment to landed or real property. Nonetheless, Mme du Barry had her own place, as was the style of a woman of her position: Lucienne [Louveciennes]. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 111; Bécu 1777a, 67; Mairobert 1775, 231–234; Bécu 1777b, 232–235. Occasionally she was even presented as having purchased the château instead of it being a gift from her royal lover. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 320.

⁵⁶⁹ Poisson 1766d, 106–107. "Tout ceux qui ont entendu prononcer mon nom, savent que je m'étois donné BELLE-VUE, [...]" Poisson 1766b, 102–103. Also noted in, e.g. Fauques 1759, 43–44; Fauques 1758a, 53; Fauques 1766a, 61.

⁵⁷⁰ Poisson 1766d, 106–107. "[BELLE-VUE], où j'avois prodigué ce que l'art de plus recherché pour en faire un séjour agréable au Roi." Poisson 1766b, 103.

the anecdote conveyed by Fauques, Mme de Pompadour was not content with Bellevue as it was. She demolished the original palace and gardens and built new ones, much larger ones, that required more land. The way the needed land was acquired was the key to Fauques' conception of French monarchical rule.

Pour y faire des jardins, plusieurs propriétaires se virent tyranniquement forcés, de céder leurs terres au prix qu'on voulut y metre. Cette oppression dut necessairement mettre la comble à la sensibilité d'un peuple, qui déjà, ne voioit qu'avec le plus grand regret, les sommes terribles qui lui étoient prodiguées.⁵⁷¹

The English version was even more open in the accusation of misuse of royal power over private property, replacing the slightly less politicised French term *tyranniquement* with *despotically* and adding that when the sale was forced upon the landowners, it was done "much against their will"⁵⁷².

The concept *despotism* was, as previously mentioned, one of the key concepts of eighteenth-century political language and one of the most important terms in constructing the limits of legitimate (monarchical) power in France and in Britain alike. As is the case with all effective political concepts, despotism also had several parallel meanings in political languages, and during the eighteenth century, it became highly politicised and popularised, which only added to the ambiguity of the concept.

First of all, it was used in parallel with an older term *tyranny* that was already in use in the sixteenth-century when describing corrupted monarchy: a corrupt tyrant ruled with violence and according to his will, whereas a legitimate king ruled with benevolence and in accordance with the law.⁵⁷³ In this sense, *despotism* was used to describe abusive use of power or a corrupted monarchy. In eighteenth-century Western European political thought, there was a general political idea that there was only one legitimate form of kingship, monarchy, that had two negations into which an ill-managed monarchy could degenerate: 1) despotism(/tyranny), when it monopolised the powers it was supposed to distribute, and 2) republic, when it distributed the powers it was supposed to manage.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷¹ Fauques 1759, 43–44. "Here [Bellevue] too, in order to form the gardens, several proprietors of lands were despotically compelled to part with them, much against their will, and at the price fixed on them. An oppression that could not but aggravate the resentment of a public, already not overpleased with the sums wantonly squandered upon her." Fauques 1766a, 61–62. On Hôtel d'Evreux, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 42; Fauques 1758a, 50–51. The purchasing and renovations also mentioned in e.g. Fauques 1766a, 59; Poisson 1773, LETTRE XXXVIII. A la Comtesse de Brézé, 1748, 58; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVIII. To the countess of Brézé, 1748, 84.

⁵⁷² Fauques 1758a, 53; Fauques 1766a, 61–62.

⁵⁷³ See, e.g. Beales 2006, 512; Major 1994, 50, 52, 132. Especially early enlightenment writers mixed the use of these terms. See, e.g. Beales 2006, 512. Mixed use in this sense is evident also in the source materials.

⁵⁷⁴ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 144; Beales 2006, 503; Molas Ribalta 1996, 19. Even though there were known republics, e.g. Italian republics and the Republic of the United Netherlands, the definitive form of government was (hereditary) monarchy vis-à-vis all other forms of government were seen as anomalies. See, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER LIV. To the marquis de Saint-Contest, minister of state, 118–119; Poisson 1766a, 265–267; Poisson 1766b, 10–11; Poisson 1766c, 265–266; Poisson 1766d, 9–10; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE IV. A Mr. Berrier, 6–7; Poisson 1771c, LETTER IV. To mr. Berrier, 12–

Secondly, and especially after Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu's highly influential formulation of theories concerning forms of government in *De l'Esprit des Lois* (1748) and the debate related to his treatise, *despotism* was used as a form of government or political system and not merely as a description of abusive or corrupt use of power. Montesquieu offered a systematic model for forms of government where systems of government were divided into three forms with their respective characteristics and principles: i) republic, where sovereign power rested on either people (democracy) or certain families (aristocracy) with the principle of political virtue; ii) monarchy, where a single person used the sovereign power in accordance with the established laws with the principle of honour; and iii) despotism, where a single person used the sovereign power by his/her own will, without any acknowledged limits to his/her power, and with the principle of fear.⁵⁷⁵

Thirdly, in all Europe, and especially in France, the concept *despotism* grew to be the most significant *Other* against which legitimate rule was construed. Despotism became both a foreign (*Turkish despotism/Oriental despotism*) and a domestic threat that needed to be repudiated.⁵⁷⁶ The debate about legitimate rule in France was not so much a debate about the form of government, which, as even most enlightened political theorists during the reign of Louis XV agreed on, was a *pure and/or constitutional monarchy*.⁵⁷⁷ Instead, the debate about legitimate rule was a debate about the limits of the use of power. That is to say, the limits to the use of power made the monarch legitimate and distinguished it from illegitimate despotism (in both senses as a corrupted rule and a form of government).⁵⁷⁸

13; Hervey 1848b, 34; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCLXXXI. Strawberry Hill, 10th Nov. 1793, 512; Bailey 1759, "monarchy"; Chambaud 1761, "dégénérer"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "démocratie", "gouvernement".

⁵⁷⁵ See, e.g. Kaiser 2000, 14–15, 33; Tomaselli 2006, 26; van Kley 2006, 154–155; Richter 2006, 151–159; Beales 2006, 512.

⁵⁷⁶ See, e.g. Kaiser 2000; Fetscher 2006, 578; Richter 2006, 153–154; Tomaselli 2006, 31; Baker 1990, 117; Tzoref-Ashkenazi 2013, 280–285. Also used in Britain, see, e.g. Claydon 2007, 172–191; Tzoref-Ashkenazi 2013, 291–303.

⁵⁷⁷ See, e.g. Valensise 1987; Antoine 1987; Gruder 1987; Salmon 1995; Drévilion 2000, 284; Richter 2006, 164; Henshall 1992, 123, 148; Kelly 1981, 270; Chisick 1988, 505; Merrick 1986, 499; Leffler 1985; Graham 2000, 239; Tomaselli 2006; Beales 2006, 515. *Constitution* itself was an equivocal concept that was a subject of political debates. There were no written constitutions in the modern sense until after the mid-eighteenth century (Corsican Constitution 1775, Swedish Constitution 1772, United States Constitution 1787). Yet, there was an idea about a set of shared understandings, practices, and laws that were routinely referred to as *ancient constitution*, *fundamental constitution*, or *fundamental laws* that were regarded as immutable even though they were constantly negotiated. Hence, *constitution* was not a uniform document but included collections of written laws and documents dating from different times (e.g. in Britain Magna Carta (1215), Bill of Rights (1689), Act of Settlement (1701)) as well as non-written practices. It was, however, agreed that the *constitution* dictated the succession to the crown, included some notions about the subject's rights (mainly property rights and privileges), could not be modified without consent (of *nation*) and posed limits to the ruler's use of power. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 83; Spellman 1998, 68, 86–87; Baker 2006, 627; Baker 1990, 254; Merrick 1986, 499; Major 1994, 56; Beales 2006, 515; Black 2004a, 46.

⁵⁷⁸ Whereas in Britain, the eighteenth-century political theories and debates revolved around the separation of powers in *limited monarchy*. See, e.g. Lieberman 2006; Black

This debate consisted of the conceptual differentiation of *absolute* and *arbitrary* power.⁵⁷⁹ Conceptually, monarchical rule included a paradoxical element of being *absolute* – without any limits to its sovereign power – and yet the use of royal power was restricted by certain limits. These limits were defined vaguely as *established laws*, *laws of nature* and/or *laws of God*, usually consisting of positive laws protecting the property and life of the subjects (as well as local, provincial, or individual privileges or privileges of estates, that were regarded either as property or established laws – or both), positive laws enacted by the monarch himself or his legitimate predecessors, practices and laws concerning the succession of the crown, and the protection of the established church.⁵⁸⁰ An absolute monarchy functioning within the frame of laws of nature, laws of God, and established laws was constructed as a legitimate one. Whereas, a monarchy contravening this framework was no longer regarded as being restrained by any laws and was considered to be ruled according to the sovereign’s own will, *arbitrarily*.⁵⁸¹ By mid-century, and especially in France, the term *despotism* provided the most important framework through which the domestic government could be constructed as legitimate or through which the domestic government, or even the whole system of government, could be criticised as

2004a, 14–16, 46, 53, 213; Downie 1994, 46; Reitan 1966, 318; van Horn Melton 2009, 23.

⁵⁷⁹ See, e.g. “perfect, complete, without conditions: independent, without relation: without restraint or limitation.” Barclay 1774, “absolute”; “not restrained or determined by any law, or reason; capricious, positive, despotic, and dogmatic.” Barclay 1774, “arbitrary”; Bailey 1730, “absolute”, “despotic”, “emperor”, “arbitrarily”, “arbitrariness”, “arbitrary”; Bailey 1759, “despotic”, “arbitrariness”, “arbitrary”; Allen 1765, “absolute”, “despotic”, “arbitrary”; Barlow 1772a, “absoluteness”, “emperor”, “arbitrarily”, “arbitrariness”; Ash 1775a, “absoluteness”, “despotic”, “arbitrarily”, “arbitrarily”, “arbitrary”; Chambaud 1761, “arbitraire”, “arbitrairement”, “absolu”; Dyche 1756a, “arbitrairement”, “absolu”; Dyche 1756b, “monarchie”, “souverain”. This is not to be confused with *absolutism*. Absolutism was not an eighteenth-century concept, but largely a myth about the omnipotent ruler that was created by late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century writers. See, e.g. Wilson 2000, 2, 5, 11, 13; Henshall 1992; Spellman 1998, 34.

⁵⁸⁰ See, e.g. van Kley 2006, 154, 163; van Kley 1997, 754; Tomaselli 2006, 26; Spellman 1998, 50, 55, 58; van Horn Melton 2009, 45; Kaiser 2000, 12, 13, 22; Henshall 1992, 90, 125–126, 128–129; Fitzpatrick 2007, 136; Major 1994, 170; Beales 2006, 513; Bell 1992, 922.

⁵⁸¹ See, e.g. “In an arbitrary manner, according to the will or pleasure of the agents.” Ash 1775a, “arbitrarily”; “not restrained or determined by any law, capricious, positive, and dogmatic.” Allen 1765, “arbitrary”; Bailey 1730, “arbitrariness”, “arbitrary”, “despotic”; Bailey 1759, “despotic”; Barclay 1774, “arbitrarily”, “arbitrary”; Dyche 1756a, “arbitraire”; Chambaud 1761, “arbitraire”. In literature, see, e.g. Beales 2006, 512–513, 515; van Kley 1997, 754; van Kley 2006, 154, 163; Tomaselli 2006, 26; Richter 2006, 151–159; Kaiser 2000, 12, 13, 22; Henshall 1992, 90, 125, 128–129; Bell 1992, 922; Spellman 1998, 50; van Horn Melton 2009, 45.

corrupted.⁵⁸² In this sense, the term was strongly attached to the debates concerning Jansenism and the prerogatives of the Parlements.⁵⁸³

Fourthly, by the mid-eighteenth century, in both Britain and France, the term *despotism* had spread from theoretical debate and vocabulary of monarchy into popular use. All kinds of writers mobilised the term to their own advantage, and in the process, extended both the meanings and the uses of the term. The term became a prosaism in political language that could be applied to all accusations of misuse of power or corruption of the users of power, as for example, in *despotic sovereign*⁵⁸⁴, *ministerial despotism*⁵⁸⁵, *despotic government*⁵⁸⁶, *despotic parliament/parlements*⁵⁸⁷, *religious despotism/despotic church*⁵⁸⁸, *despotic mistress*⁵⁸⁹, or *despotic husband*⁵⁹⁰. The term could also be applied to certain *despotic policies*⁵⁹¹, *despotic tendencies/capacities*⁵⁹², or to a *despotic system*⁵⁹³ denoting usually a political

582 See, e.g. Beales 2006, 514; Kaiser 2000, 6, 12, 15, 22–23, 33; Henshall 1992, 91; Spellman 1998, 72; Graham 2000, 20, 127. This criticism against domestic *despotism* was made possible through both the Montesquieuan and the Aristotelian ideas that a legitimate form of government could be degenerated into an illegitimate form. In the Montesquieuan sense, each form of government could be degenerated or corrupted if its ruling principle was lost or distorted. According to the Aristotelian tradition of forms of legitimate government, monarchy could be degenerated into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy and polity into democracy. See, e.g. Spellman 1998, 72; Richter 2006, 155; Tomaselli 2006.

583 See, e.g. Beales 2006, 514; van Kley 2006, 112–113; Bell 1994, 17, 68, 77, 83, 87; van Horn Melton 2009, 50; Merrick 1986, 500, 518; Graham 2000, 215.

584 See, e.g. Shebbeare 1757, 55–56; Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 189; Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 199; Walpole 1822a, 383; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCXXXIV. Orford to Ossorou, Strawberry Hill, 9th Oct. Add. Tuesday night, 13th 1789, 399.

585 See, e.g. Pierre 1902b, 65; Poisson 1766c, 43, 136; Bécu 1777a, 122. See also, Henshall 1992, 88–89; Graham 2000, 235–236.

586 See, e.g. “administration despotique”, Mairobert 1775, 148; BL, Egerton MS 3416, Al-bemarle to Holdernesse, Paris, 15th/26th Sep. 1749, 70–71, on Swedish government.

587 See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 189.

588 See, e.g. “tyrannie du Clergé”, Fauques 1759, 121, 167; Fauques 1766a, 198; Fauques 1766b, 168. In this sense, the term was applied most commonly to the Catholic church and the Jesuits, linking the term to eighteenth-century controversies concerning the position of the French Protestants and the papal bull *Unigenitus*.

589 See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 129; “elle veut trancher du despote”, Fauques 1759, 178.

590 See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 131; Fauques 1758b, 57.

591 See, e.g. Walpole 1848a, Letter IX, to Ossorou, Strawberry Hill, Sunday Night, 23th June 1771, 24; LAD, P/12021, Silhouette; Fournier; Durand; Mirepoix, Caractere de quelques uns des hommes principaux en Angleterre, 66; Fauques 1759, 43–44; “pouvoir arbitraire”, Fauques 1759, 181; Fauques 1758a, 53; Fauques 1758b, 133; Fauques 1766a, 61; Fauques 1766b, 1, 10–11, 18–19; Poisson 1766a, 243; Poisson 1766c, 242; Mairobert 1775, 154 “la Séance despotique” (au Parlement le 3 Septembre); Bécu 1777a, 131.

592 See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 23; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCXCII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 17th Jan. 1757, 308; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 19th July 1769, 46–47.

593 See, e.g. Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCXXIX. Orford to Ossorou, Strawberry Hill, 4th Aug. 1789, 382; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCXLIX. Orford to Ossory, Berkeley Square, 30th Apr. 1791, 435; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCLXXIII. Orford to Ossorou, Strawberry Hill, 10th Sep. 1792, 492; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCLXXXI. Orford to Ossorou, Strawberry Hill, 10th Nov. 1793, 512; Pierre 1878, la dépêche à Choiseul, Versailles, 9 oct. 1758, 471; “pouvoir le plus despotique”, Fauques 1759, 118; “arbitraire”, Fauques 1759, 128; Fauques 1758b, 39, 52, 101–104; 1766a, 85–89, 193; Poisson 1766a, 39; Poisson 1766c, 39–40; “despotisme affreux”, Mairobert 1779a, preface, iv; Mairobert 1779b, preface, iv–v.

system that was misusing its political authority, but it could also be applied to the system of administration of individual ministers⁵⁹⁴. In the debates concerning royal mistresses, the term was generally applied in its negative meaning, usually describing the abusive use of power of the named agent and sometimes, but rather more rarely, explicitly the whole system of government.⁵⁹⁵

The concept *tyranny* has also been applied in all these senses, although there were some differences in their prevalence.⁵⁹⁶ For example, the wrongful rule of a husband could be described in terms of a despotic husband, but a husband's tyranny was a far more frequent – and traditional – way of expressing this.⁵⁹⁷ Usually the terms *tyranny* and *despotism* were applied with a parallel meaning.⁵⁹⁸ Most often, however, the term *tyranny* was used in the form of a *Tyrant*, a sovereign who exceeded the limits of the proper use of power, or abused his power in order to oppress his people.⁵⁹⁹ Overall, it seems that the most important difference between the uses of the terms *tyranny* and *despotism* was that despotism had slightly more different uses. Despotism could be used when

⁵⁹⁴ These popular senses has been noted, although not categorised, in various studies as well See, e.g. Beales 2006, 515; Henshall 1992, 88–89; Graham 2000, 82, 235–236.

⁵⁹⁵ See, e.g. the debate about censorship and restrictions to conversations about current political issues and political persons. Fauques 1759, 181; Fauques 1758b, 133; Fauques 1766b, 1, 10–11, 18–19.

⁵⁹⁶ On tyrannical ministers or government, see, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, Thursday, 19th Apr. 1770, 93; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 166; LAD, P/12020, [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette, agent à Londres], Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre, 27; Poisson 1766d, 9–10. On tyrannical acts or policies, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 32, 43–44, 61–63, 121, 181–182; Fauques 1758b, 43, 134; Fauques 1766a, 44, 87–89, 199; Fauques 1766b, 11–12; Poisson 1766a, 159; Poisson 1766c, 157; On tyrannical system, see, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVI. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 19th June 1771, 160–161; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCLXXIII. Orford to Ossoru, Strawberry Hill, 10th Sep. 1792, 492; Fauques 1758b, 101–104; Fauques 1766b, 85–89. On the religious tyranny or tyranny of the church, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 121, 162–163; Fauques 1758b, 43, 107; Fauques 1766a, 198–199; Fauques 1766b, 91–92.

⁵⁹⁷ Despotism/despotique was mentioned once in Fauques' writings concerning M. d'Étiolles. Fauques 1759, 131; Fauques 1758b, 57. Whereas husband's tyranny was mentioned in e.g. Shebbeare 1757, 55–56; Bécu 1777a, 246; Mairobert 1775, Lettre de Mme Murat à M. Dessain, Directeur des Fermes de Paris, 241; Mairobert 1779a, XVIII. LETTRE. A Mr. Radix de Ste. Foix, Trésorier Général de la Marine. 6 déc. 1767, 25–26; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVIII, To M. Radix de St. Foix, Treasurer General of the Navy, 6th Dec. 1767, 21. This relates to the longer tradition of seeking justified separation from unwanted and disagreeable husband during a time, when divorce was almost impossible. When the term *tyranny* was replaced by *despotism* in political language, the term *tyranny* retained its former meaning and use in describing an unhappy marriage and in justifying the separation of spouses. We meet this discourse in relation to royal mistresses in section 3.6.

⁵⁹⁸ For example, Fauques, and her translator, used both terms when describing the despotic/ tyrannical system in France. Fauques 1758b, 101–104; Fauques 1766b, 85–89.

⁵⁹⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 159; Poisson 1766c, 157; Mairobert 1775, 215; Also in Mairobert 1779b, footnote, 99. Furthermore, these uses had also a strong connotation to the past, betraying the writers' beliefs and hopes for progress, as well as the fact, that *tyrant* was historical concept whereas *despot* was a newer formulation. See, e.g. Walpole 1822b, Appendix, 525; Hervey 1848a, 296; Fauques 1766a, 87–89; Poisson 1766b, 138; Poisson 1766d, 143–144; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXV, To the marquis of Cursay, commander in Corsica, 1752, 171.

describing all sorts of different abusive powers and policies, as well as abusive tendencies and capacities – even latent ones.

Additionally, there was also a set of uses for the term *despotism* that had positive meanings. Most notably, the attempt of the French writers (e.g. the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Le Mercier de la Rivière, Guillaume Le Trosne, and François Quesnay) to establish the term *legal despotism* in political language.⁶⁰⁰ This was mainly a physiocratic undertaking, aiming to stabilise a conception of a strong monarch who could wield absolute and undivided power in order to be able to realise physiocrats' economic theories in practical political reforms.⁶⁰¹ In contrast, the term *tyranny* referred solely to a use of power that was repressive, that was used in order to subjugate all others, and that trampled over the rights of subjects and especially the laws of the realm.⁶⁰²

Consequently, by the mid-eighteenth century, the language of despotism/tyranny provided a multivocal vocabulary that was used to legitimate prevailing rule and to criticise monarchy (either the abusive use of power of personal monarchs or the whole monarchical system of government), but that was also used in a popular sense when referring to all kinds of misuses of power – even in the unpolitical and private domestic sphere.

In the case of Mme de Pompadour's buildings, Bellevue in Meudon and Hôtel d'Évreux in Paris, Fauques (and her translators) invoked the term *despotically/tyranniquement* in a very specific meaning. It is quite true, she employed a concept that had already fled from the field of political theories – popularised in a sense – but in this use had not lost its political implications. First of all, the anecdote about the compulsory purchases of landed property from their proprietors at fixed price gave eighteenth-century readers an example of *royal despotism*. This was a far more aggressive, effective, and potent way to criticise the political system and political decision-makers than by simply

⁶⁰⁰ The physiocrats were not able to form a uniform theory about *legal despotism*, although its essential premise was that the monarch should be an *enlightened* reformist. Theories faced strong objections from e.g. Rousseau, but they also had several notable sympathisers, e.g. Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul. They had a strong influence on the royal policies in the 1760s and 1780s, although the physiocrats and their economic theories encountered wide criticism in the 1760s when the highly unpopular attempt to reform the grain trade, led by Duc de Choiseul in accordance with physiocratic ideas, failed. The failure of the grain trade reform increased criticism against and mistrust in the royal economic policy. See, e.g. Beales 2006, 515; Hochstrasser 2006, 419–420, 425–426, 431–432; Sonenscher 2006, 466; Henshall 1992, 191–195; Scott 1990a, 4, 5, 34; Shennan 2007, 149; van Horn Melton 2009, 54; Rombouts 1993–1994, 271.

⁶⁰¹ See, e.g. Beales 2006, 515; Hochstrasser 2006, 419–420, 425–426, 431–432; Sonenscher 2006, 466; Henshall 1992, 191–195; Scott 1990a, 4, 5, 34; Shennan 2007, 149; van Horn Melton 2009, 54; Rombouts 1993–1994, 271.

⁶⁰² See, e.g. "In the mean time [sic.] the Chancellor [Maopéau] does as much hurt against all law, as any of his profession ever did by law. He is very able, very enterprizing, and after being the most servile flatterer, proves the most inhuman tyrant. Everybody is pillaged, and numbers ruined." Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 166; "L'administration de Cromwell quoyque tyrannique et contre les Loix [...]." LAD, P/12020, Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette, agent à Londres, Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre, 27. "The administration of Cromwell, though tyrannical and against the Laws [...]." (Translation E.K.).

accusing individual ministers, the king, or institutions of unspecified despotism. In the anecdote, not only the despotism of the action was well-defined, but the agent was named as well, and furthermore, the nature of the despotism was particularised. The anecdote was neither a mere rumour nor a joke. It was related to the known purchases of the royal mistress, and the tone indicated that there was no reason to be amused about this incident. Quite the contrary, the reader should be appalled by the scene revealed by the writer. Thus, through the anecdote, Fauques sought to persuade the reader with rational speech and examples to believe that there existed despotic actions taken on behalf of those ruling against the ruled.

Secondly, in the anecdote Fauques connected despotic activity to the most abhorrent nuance of the concept despotism. She construed it as an offence against the most fundamental of all the rights of a subject under a legitimate monarchy: the right to private property. This means, then, that she conceptualised the presented *despotic/tyrannique* actions as *arbitrary* or as actions that were not limited by the *established laws, laws of nature* and/or *laws of God*.

Thirdly, Fauques made her accusations of despotical actions against the king himself instead of his mistress. The royal mistress might have been boundlessly greedy in her want of land and property, but in the anecdote, she was not necessarily presented as the intentional usurper. Instead, the orders for the expropriation came from the king, who, more than anyone in the kingdom, should have known the principles of legitimate monarchy and the bounds of the legitimate use of royal power. In this instance, Fauques abandoned the idea of a loyal or *fidèle* subject claiming to be writing about the wrongs and worries of the realm in order to inform the king of some injustice that he did not know about.⁶⁰³ However, here, the king was no longer displayed in terms of unawareness or ignorance as an unknowing – and thus still potentially good and benevolent – king. Instead, the king was displayed in terms of indifference or negligence concerning his subjects' rights to private property, implying that he considered their property almost as his own. Furthermore, the anecdote exemplified that the monarch as a person as well as the monarchy as a form of government had a latent capacity for or tendency to despotism. The royal mistress was represented as a simple trigger for the despotic capacity. She lured the king into using his royal will wrongfully, in violation of private property, without bounds – that is, despotically.

The example of Mme de Pompadour's spending on the buildings thus served a dual function. First, it was presented as a meaningful and respectful use of money, in contrast to the indifferent meaninglessness of empty parade, pomp, and luxury. This aspect, although strongly connected to Mme de Pompadour, continued to serve a purpose in the future, when Mme du Barry's use of money was disapprovingly described:

⁶⁰³ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 21–23; Graham 2006, 146.

Tout cela [argent] s'écoule comme l'eau entre les mains de cette Comtesse magnifique, qui ne connoît l'usage de ce métal que pour le prodiguer noblement.⁶⁰⁴

In Mme du Barry's case, the presentations concerning the money wasted on worthless objects were a means to stress her lower rank and status.⁶⁰⁵ Certainly, the origins of the royal mistress were a huge issue during the eighteenth century, when social stratification carried social as well as political implications. In fact, the rank of the mistress was among the most debated themes in the discourse on the royal mistress.⁶⁰⁶ As the king was without peer, he could never take a mistress whose birth matched his own. Yet, Louis XV heavily breached the accustomed practice of choosing the official mistress from the ranks of high nobility, first when taking Mme de Pompadour, wife of a financier, and after her, Mme du Barry, whose origin was low and obscure.

Second, and more importantly, the anecdote about the royal mistress's spending offered a way to exemplify royal misuse of power and to raise questions concerning the legitimacy of the monarchical system of government through the potential capacity for despotism. Thus, in the latter function, the royal mistress did not cost fortunes merely in the form of money (which she did too), but also in royal integrity and the most sacred principles of monarchy.

3.5.2 Accumulating costs and expenses

The second reprimand against the costly royal mistress was expressed in terms of her function as the hostess of royal entertainments, which, as discussed in the previous section 2.2, was the most important and recurrent functional justification for a legitimate royal mistress. The royal mistress's role was to produce entertainments and diversions for the king. In this capacity, she was regarded as indispensable for the physical and mental well-being of the king, and therefore was regarded as functioning for the well-being and good government

⁶⁰⁴ Mairobert 1775, 226. "All this [money] melts away like snow through the hands of the magnificent Countess, who is a stranger to any other use of gold, but that of spending it nobly." Bécu 1777b, 224.

⁶⁰⁵ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 224, 232–234, 273; Bécu 1777b, 220–221, 231–235, 290. Certainly, this theme was present in the debates on Mme de Pompadour as well. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 122–123, 143–144; Fauques 1766b, 58–59.

⁶⁰⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 46–47, 57–58, 72, 122; Fauques 1758a, 59, 82, 93–94; Fauques 1766a, 1–4, 67, 100; Fauques 1766b, 29–30; Anon. 1760, 94, 221; Poisson 1766a, 5–6; Poisson 1766c, 6; Mairobert 1775, 5–9, 27–28, 65, 69–70, 74–75, 90, 102–106, 206–208, 221, 228; Bécu 1777a, 12–13, 27, 38, 52, 54–56, 59–60; Bécu 1777b, 196–198, 217, 227; Mairobert 1779a, PREMIERE LETTRE. A Mr. Billard Du Monceau, De la Communauté de Ste. Aure, 10 Juin 1758, 1–2; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER I. To Monasieur Billard du Monceau, Convent of St. Aure, 10th June 1758, 1–2; Mairobert 1779a, IIe. LETTRE. De l'Abbé de Bonnac, De Vitri, 5 Avril 1759, 3–4; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER II. From the Abbé de Bonnac, Vitri, 5th Apr. 1759, 3; Mairobert 1779a, IVe. LETTRE. A sa Mere, 5; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER IV. To her mother, 5; Mairobert 1779a, VIIIe. LETTRE. A Mr. Duval, 6 févr. 1761, 11–12; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER VIII. To Mr. Duval, 6th Feb. 1761, 10; Mairobert 1779a, XIe. LETTRE. A Lamet, vivant à Londres, Paris, 30 août 1761, 15–16; LETTER XI. To Lamet, residing in London, Paris, 30th Aug. 1761, 13–14; BL, Stowe MS 88, 2–4; Walpole 1822a, 292; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21; Walpole 1822a, LETTER CCXXXIII. Strawberry Hill, 7th May 1775, 318.

of the whole realm. However, the entertainments befitting the king were by no means cheap. As for example in the case of Mme de Pompadour, the beneficial and supportive capacity of a hostess was shown in a different light as wasting of royal wealth and time. It was rather a dissipation that evidently caused commotion at home and abroad. Horace Walpole wrote about the extravagant entertainments and journeys organised by Mme de Pompadour for Louis XV, and the bruit they caused in France:

She perpetually varied his pleasures, and carried him from one palace and hunting-seat to another, - journeys which cost immense sums, and made the people join in clamour [...].⁶⁰⁷

The entertainments that Mme de Pompadour organised for the pleasure of her royal lover were various, ranging from the little bon mots of private conversation to the great public spectacles.⁶⁰⁸ Nevertheless, in the debates about the royal entertainments, one form of amusement took precedence: the king's journeys to royal palaces and lodges in Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Germain's, Choisy, Compiègne, et cetera.

In previous studies, scholars, as for example Danie Roche, have approached the royal journeys to provincial estates as significant spectacles and symbols of royal power. During the journeys, the monarch was concretely present, he personally affirmed the ties with his provincial nobility, elites, and subjects, and the royal éclat, glory, and magnificence (as an embodiment of the éclat, glory, and magnificence of the realm) was visible to the audiences watching the royal spectacle. After the construction of Versailles in the seventeenth century, the royal journeys decreased, and alongside them, the visibility of the monarch as well as all the éclat that the journeys presented to the majesty of the king.⁶⁰⁹ Certainly, as stated, Louis XV and Louis XVI stood down from other public ceremonies as well, as for example in discontinuing the tradition of touching the sick.⁶¹⁰ As Hours (2002) has proposed, it was not necessarily about the royal wish for fewer spectacles and ceremony. Especially Louis XV's turning towards private and intimate space can be understood as a political move that aimed at

⁶⁰⁷ Walpole 1822a, 188–189.

⁶⁰⁸ Fauques 1759, 36–38, 175; Fauques 1758a, 43–44; Fauques 1758b, 124; Fauques 1766a, 52; Fauques 1766b, 7, 107, 115–116; Anon. 1760, 45; Poisson 1766a, 25; Poisson 1766b, 104–105; Poisson 1766c, 25; Poisson 1766d, 108–109; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXV. To the dutchess d'Étrées, 1751, 147; Mairobert 1775, 206–208; Bécu 1777b, 195–196. Especially Mme de Pompadour's passion for theatre was well-known in eighteenth century. See, e.g. Kaiser 1996. As explained in the previous section, the essential function of a royal mistress was to procure entertainments and amusements to the king. The English royal mistresses were not an exemption of this, and they also were represented to have persuaded the king to give orders of festivities. See, e.g., Walpole 1833b, LETTER CC. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 3rd May 1749, 76–77, where Horace Walpole describes the masquerade which Lady Yarmouth persuaded George II to order.

⁶⁰⁹ Roche 1999, 16–18.

⁶¹⁰ See, e.g. Darnton 1995a, 237; Graham 2000, 19, 117; Roche 1999, 238–240; Drévilion 2000, 286, 296.

the control of his court.⁶¹¹ However, in previous studies, the royal retreat from public spectacles has been understood as distancing the subjects from their king, disintegrating the sacred or majestic aura of the king, and creating an opportunity for criticism against the monarch as a person and monarchy as a political system.⁶¹²

The discourses on the royal mistresses, however, demonstrate another perspective on the royal journeys that did not concur with the results of the earlier studies and theories. Instead of being universally appreciated as an opportunity to approach the king, to see, or even participate in the royal *éclat* or as a mean to reinforce the mutual love between the ruler and ruled, the royal journeys were criticised as too frequent and too expensive.⁶¹³ The cost of the journeys was attributed to the royal mistress, Mme de Pompadour, who was presented as having accustomed the king to the expensive entertainments:

Elle est de toutes les parties de plaisir : elle y ordonne tout. C'est elle qui est l'ame de ces fréquents & dispendieux voyages que le Roi fait à Fontainebleau, à Marly, à St. Germain, à Choisi, à la Meute &c. Dans les voyages qui exigent des sommes immenses & auxquelles on ne peut fournir, qu'en engageant les revenus de la Couronne, ou en les tirant par avance; [...].⁶¹⁴

In addition, Fauques added the expenses of the journeys to the total cost of a royal mistress. The journeys were represented as the royal mistress's rapacity and malevolence:

Elle ne s'est pas contentée d'avoir donné occasion à des prodigalités sans bornes, dont elle a retiré tout le fruit; elle le porte encore à faire les dépenses les plus excessives en jeux, en plaisirs & en divertissement. Quoique souverainement avare des biens qu'elle possède, elle ne se refuse pas à l'honneur d'en proposer, d'en inventer & de régler tous ceux auxquels le Roi est naturellement porté.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹¹ Hours 2002. We will return to this point in chapter 4.

⁶¹² See, e.g. Roche 1999, 16–18, 239–240; Graham 2000, 19, 64, 117; Darnton 1995a, 236–237; Vovelle 1987, 82.

⁶¹³ Especially Fauques criticised the royal journeys. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 41, 174–175; Fauques 1758a, 49–50; Fauques 1758b, 124; Fauques 1766b, 114, 115–116. Horace Walpole's comments also indicate that there were wider debates concerning the royal journeys where the tone was critical. See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 188–189; Walpole 1822a, 292.

⁶¹⁴ Fauques 1759, 175. "She attends and presides over all those parties of pleasure in his [Louis XV] frequent journeys to Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Germain's, Choisi, La Meute, which are not only so ruinously expensive to himself, that the Revenue of the Crown stands mortgaged or anticipated for several years in advance, [...]." Fauques 1758b, 124.

⁶¹⁵ Fauques 1759, 174. "She was not content with draining from him an unconscionable profusion of grants and gifts, and often making the most pernicious advantages of his favor, but, though saving enough of her own, kept collaterally urging him the most exorbitant expences, in those pleasures and amusements she suggested to him, or to which she encouraged his natural inclination, instead of exerting her effectual influence and control to restrain them, [...]." Fauques 1766b, 114. The same co-ordination of royal mistresses' rapacity and malevolence in relation to ruining the king with her personal costs and additional costs of entertainments was repeated in other Fauques' works. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 174–175; Fauques 1758b, 124; Fauques 1766b, 114, 115–116.

Here, Mme de Pompadour was not only presented as an archetypal rapacious mistress accumulating fortunes for herself, but also as a malefactor that imposed an additional strain on the Crown's revenues by inducing the king to extravagant consumption on entertainments.

Neither were Mme de Pompadour's royal journeys presented as mere pleasure trips or little excursions. They were presented as a part of a royal mistress's system of entertainments, which in turn was an important part of the discourse about a royal mistress's influence and power. This theme will be discussed further in section 4.2.3.4. The presentations of Mme de Pompadour's journeys also included an element relating to the eighteenth-century debates about luxury, aristocratic lifestyle, corruption, and degeneration of morals and manners, which we will further meet in section 3.7.5. Here, however, I wish to note the journeys organised by a royal mistress only insofar as they were considered a great expense that was attributed to the royal mistress and thus added to her total cost.

The journeys and entertainments that the royal mistresses encouraged the king into are bound up with the last point to be discussed here that made up the total cost of an expensive royal mistress. When presenting the royal mistresses' excessive cost to the personal king, to the impersonal crown – and maybe even to the collective body of the people – there were additional costs that consisted of the money that the mistresses channeled out. As previously discussed, the royal mistresses encouraged the king to spend on his own royal person and comfort and on entertainments. The mistresses were presented as channeling money in other directions as well. Certainly, they pushed their friends' and family's agenda, just like everybody else in the court, except that the mistresses were assumed to have a better opportunity to succeed because of their close and personal relationship with the king. For example, in the case of Mme du Barry, the greatest of her faults was to open up a way for her brother-in-law, Count John du Barry, into the royal treasury:

La Favorite [Mme du Barry] scandalisoit sans doute beaucoup le Public par son luxe: mais le Beau-frere devenoit d'une insolence révoltante.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁶ Mairobert 1775, 234. "The public was, no doubt, greatly scandalised at the luxury and extravagance of the favourite [Mme du Barry]; but the insolence of her brother-in-law was still more intolerable." Bécu 1777b, 236. This accusation was a recurring theme in the various memoirs of Mme du Barry. See, e.g. "Mais cet attachement de Madame Dubarri à sa famille étoit une charge de plus pour l'Etat, que son luxe immodéré ruinoit déjà excessivement." Mairobert 1775, 272-273; "But this attachment of Madam Dubarrè to her family was an additional tax upon the state, which her own luxury already oppressed severely." Bécu 1777b, 289-290; Mairobert 1775, 48-49, 94-95, 199-200, 279; Bécu 1777b, 300-301; Bécu 1777a, 185; Mairobert 1779a, LVIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, 23 mai 1771, 81-82; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LVIII. From the Count du Barry, 23rd May, 1771, 67-68; Mairobert 1779a, LXXXVIIe. LETTRE, Au Comte Du Barry, 116-118; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LXXXVII. To the Count Du Barry, 94-95; Mairobert 1779a, CIVE. LETTRE, Du Duc d'Aiguillon, 145-147; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CIV. From the Duke d'Aiguillon, 117-118.

All assumed sums of money that the mistresses were presented to have diverted to family, friends, protégé(e)s, and creatures were added into the total cost of a mistress.

In addition, the royal mistresses were accredited with numerous unpopular policies that were presented as expensive. Fauques, as well as other eighteenth-century critics, accused Mme de Pompadour of establishing a branch of police in Paris that policed the public debate and moeurs.⁶¹⁷ An essential element of this policing was the collection of information through informants – or spies, to use the critics' phrase. This policy was regarded as costly, at least in the sense that the money should have been used for a more worthy subject:

[...] this branch of the police [spies and informers] costs the government annually incredible sums, which might be so much better employed than in infamous cherishment of that virmin, [...].⁶¹⁸

Another common accusation of expensive policies was the sale of positions, offices, and posts – also at the expense of the proper courtly hierarchy, merits, and functional daily administration. For example, both Mme Kielmansegg and Lady Yarmouth were presented as having increased their fortune through the sale of peerages and positions.⁶¹⁹ However, neither of the aforementioned ladies reached the level of Mme de Pompadour, who was presented as having introduced venal offices as a way to set up the whole kingdom for sale:

Mais un des plus grands reproches qu'on eut à lui faire, étoit le trafic inoui qu'elle fesoit des charges & dont tout le profit étoit pour elle. Ce trafic tendoit visiblement à la ruine de la nation, qui dès lors, n'étoit plus desservie que par des sujets uniquement occupés à retirer tout le profit possible de leur achat. Il sembloit qu'elle eut exposé tout le royaume en vente & qu'elle fut prête à le donner au dernier enchérisseur.⁶²⁰

But more than anything, the sale of the advancements, posts, offices, and places was presented as a royal mistress selling her ability to persuade the king: “the unbounded traffic she made of her favor and influence”⁶²¹. In this sense, the debate about royal mistresses selling their influence belongs to section 4.1, where networks of power, influence, and favour are discussed further.

So far, I have introduced numerous ways and examples through which the image of a costly – or rather *too costly* – mistress was constructed. Some of the expenses were more or less approved, as for example, a proper compensation of the mistress for her service and for the loss of honour, or little tokens of love from

⁶¹⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 181–182; Fauques 1758b, 133–135; Anon. 1760, 216–217; Fauques 1766b, 1–23.

⁶¹⁸ Fauques 1766b, 16.

⁶¹⁹ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 154–155; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 119–120.

⁶²⁰ Fauques 1759, 132. “Nor was it amongst the least of her reproaches, that prodigious venality of offices she had introduced wholly to her own profit, and to the apparent ruin of the interest of the nation, which could not but be ill – served by persons, who having bought their employs, thought of nothing but how to make the most of their bargains. France itself seemed to be put up by her at auction to the best bidder.” Fauques 1758b, 59. On the sale of positions and posts, see also, e.g. Fauques 1759, 41; Fauques 1758a, 49–50; Fauques 1766a, 58, 183; Fauques 1766b, 30.

⁶²¹ Fauques 1766a, 58. “[...] la vente de sa protection, [...].” Fauques 1759, 41.

the king. Some of the costs were directly related to the royal mistresses, such as their personal wasting on consumables. Whereas some of the costs were presented as costs related to mistress indirectly, as, for example, when a mistress was presented to have mediated money. The eighteenth-century writers' attitude towards the two last mentioned elements of a costly mistress were quite ambivalent. These elements could be and were censured by contemporary writers, and in this sense, it was the last two elements that really contributed to the image of a royal mistress as *too costly*. These descriptions served to point out the lack of legitimacy of certain unpopular royal mistresses. For example, in the case of Mme de Pompadour all the costs that she caused were examples of her rapacity. As previously discussed, a rapacious nature made any mistress invalid and threatened to imply that the king was not able to distinguish between a good mistress and a bad one. A *too costly mistress* was then a public mark of the king's incapacity to tell the difference between good and evil.

However, this debate was not solely about the rapacious mistresses or foolish kings. The *too expensive* mistress was also *ruinously expensive*⁶²². Yet, the question remains: to whom? The final element of the presentation of a costly royal mistress was the presentation of the payer of her expenses. Even though many of the royal mistresses had their own money, as for example an inherited fortune, justified and accepted royal pensions, and/or wealth of the family and supporters, it was only rarely presented that the ladies used their *own* money in their own luxe. Instead, if a mistress ever took her own purse out, it was an event that was emphasised in order to highlight something else than her expenses. For example, Mme du Barry was presented as having paid for the repairs of a royal garden out of her own purse when the royal treasury no longer had sufficient funds for the refit.⁶²³ Such an anecdote was an example of a royal mistress's generosity, and yet, still more it accentuated the pitiful state of the royal treasury.

Such examples of royal mistresses resorting to their own purses were a rarity. And as a rarity, they served also to accent the royal mistresses' expense as a cost to someone else. In other words, all the money that a royal mistress used, accumulated, squandered, mediated, or encouraged the king to spend were presented as money spent on the royal mistresses' person from someone else's pocket. There was a significant change during the eighteenth century in the conceptualisation of the payer of the expense that the royal mistresses formed. In the 1750s and 1760s, the royal mistresses were represented as an expense to the king in a very personal and private sense. For example, Fauques emphasised this when describing Mme de Pompadour "draining from him [Louis XV] an unconscionable profusion of grants and gifts, [...]"⁶²⁴ or concluding that "His

⁶²² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 175; Fauques 1758b, 124; Fauques 1766b, 115; Mairobert 1775, 272; Bécu 1777b, 289.

⁶²³ Mairobert 1775, 184; Bécu 1777a, 167.

⁶²⁴ Fauques 1766b, 114. "Elle ne s'est pas contentée d'avoir donné occasion à des prodigalités sans bornes, dont elle a retiré tout le fruit; elle le porte encore à faire les dépenses les plus excessives en jeux, en plaisirs & en divertissement." Fauques 1759, 174.

[Louis XV's] privy-purse was entirely at her command, of which she profited without measure or mercy."⁶²⁵

However, in the 1770s there seems to have been a change in the conceptualisation of the *king's* money, and in this sense also of the ultimate payer of the expense of a royal mistress. In Mairobert's presentation of Mme du Barry the expense of the royal mistress was given to fall upon the impersonal *royal treasury* and *royal coffers* instead of the personal *king's purse*.⁶²⁶ Neither was the money that the royal mistress spent presented as having come from the king. Instead, the royal mistress was presented as running pecuniary issues with the Abbé de Terray, Controller-General of Finances, who was the officer in charge of the impersonal royal treasury.⁶²⁷ Thus, in these presentations, the king's link with the treasury was conceptually severed.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the conceptual separation of the personal *king's purse* and impersonal *royal treasury* made way for another change in understanding the wealth of the realm. Since the royal treasury was dissociated from the personal king, it was possible to reassert its association with the people of the kingdom. This was the aspect of the cost of the expensive royal mistress that gained momentum during the latter half of the century. The royal treasury as well as the royal use of money were increasingly defined in terms of the inhabitants of the realm. The people of the realm were conceptualised as the payers of the royal treasury, and in that sense, the ultimate payers of the royal expenses, including the luxurious mistresses and their extravagant amusements. That is to say, the royal mistresses were no longer a great expense to the king and his purse, but they were reconstructed as an intolerable expense and burden to the impersonal royal treasury, and further, to the government, the state, the nation or to the people.⁶²⁸

I do not intend to say that the king's purse was detached from the people before the 1770s. Quite the contrary, it was well-known and understood that the royal treasury or royal purse was first and foremost a fiscal revenue, comprised of various incomes from the subjects, most importantly taxes and tolls. In the criticism against Mme de Pompadour, taxation and especially the *vingtièmes* were frequently brought up. The Abbé de Bernis's comment "mistresses do not diminish taxes"⁶²⁹ referred to the debates about taxation during the Seven Years' War, especially the last years of the 1750s and early 1760s, when the levying of the taxes was presented in terms of excessive squandering on the royal mistress

⁶²⁵ Fauques 1758a, 49. "Elle pouvoit, à son gré, disposer de sa bourse; & elle en dispoit impitoïablement." Fauques 1759, 41.

⁶²⁶ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 212, 237–238; Mairobert 1779a, Cie. LETTRE, De l'Abbé Terray, Paris, 18 Avril 1773, 137; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CI. From the Abbé Terray, Paris, 18th Apr. 1773, 111–112; Bécu 1777b, 203–204.

⁶²⁷ See, e.g. Mairobert 1779a, Cie. LETTRE. De l'Abbé Terray. Paris, 18 Avril 1773, 137–138; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CI. From the Abbé Terray, Paris, 18th Apr. 1773, 111–112;; Bécu 1777b, 240–242.

⁶²⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 199–200, 211, 272, 279; Bécu 1777a, 185; Bécu 1777b, 203, 289–290, 300. Certainly, mentioned earlier as well, though not as often. Fauques 1766b, 16, 115; Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'Editeur, vi; Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, vii.

⁶²⁹ Pierre 1902a, 139. "jamais les maîtresses n'ont fait diminuer les impôts", Pierre 1903, 90.

(instead of war or peacemaking) and thus criticised.⁶³⁰ However, when writing in the 1750s and 1760s, Fauques still most often presented the royal mistress as an expense to the king, and the personal royal purse as the source of the money that was spent on the royal mistress. In this sense, the cost of a royal mistress was a private matter – or as private as the rest of the matters concerning the royal household. Whereas, Mairobert was careful to eradicate the king's personal presence as the payer of the royal mistress, and was thus able to reconstruct the royal treasury first and foremost as a public fund consisting of the nation's or people's wealth. In his representation, the royal mistress was then reconstructed as a public cost.

The British commentators were eager to comment on the financial situation of France, especially during times when the relationships between the countries were taking a warlike turn. From these comments, it is easy to deduce that in Britain the revenue of the realm was indeed not understood in terms of the king's money but the nation's. For example, Horace St Paul, envoy in Paris 1772–1775, wrote about the Abbé de Terray paying the expenses of the royal mistress:

At all Events L'abbé Terray is safe as long as Mad. du Barri can dispose of his purse, or rather of the Nation's; [...].⁶³¹

In eighteenth-century Britain, however, the domestic royal mistresses were not as strongly connected to the royal use of impersonal revenues of the Crown. This was, as already stated, due to the understanding that the king did not control *all* the revenues of the Crown. When it comes to the Privy Purse or the personal expenses of the kings, the expenses of their household, which included the royal residences, their staff and the entertainments, were connected to the Civil List. In this sense, the king or his mistresses did not form similar direct threat to the wealth of the nation or the whole revenue of the kingdom.

3.6 The eternal triangle: royal mistress and husband's prerogative

There is one essential element of a costly mistress left to explore, an element that caused not only a dilemma about money but about morality as well. Almost in every royal mistress's narrative contains a description of the moment when someone's wife became the king's mistress. In this transaction, money was involved in a peculiar manner. If the royal mistress was expected to be recompensed, then so was her husband as well, for his loss of honour, property, and right.

A great number of the eighteenth-century royal mistresses were married women, both in Britain and in France. Mme de Pompadour was married to Charles Guillaume Le Normant d'Étiolles, nephew of her legal guardian fermier général Le Normant de Tournehem; Mme du Barry was married to Comte

⁶³⁰ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 99, 102–103, 107; Kaiser 1997, 377.

⁶³¹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/286, Horace St. Paul to Rochford, Paris 18th Nov. 1772, 175.

Guillaume du Barry, brother of her supporter/patron/procurer Jean-Baptiste du Barry (or John du Barry); Henrietta Howard was married to Charles Howard, future 9th Earl of Suffolk –to name just a few. Marriage made things somewhat more complicated, since the sacred institution of matrimony and violations against it introduced the themes of crime (adultery/fornication), moral, honour, and property into the debate about costly royal mistresses.

As I have already stated, the relationship between the king and his mistress was in some degree considered morally reprehensible since it was after all a *criminal*⁶³² relationship. In early modern legislation, both secular and ecclesiastical, and in Protestant, Anglican, and Catholic regimes alike, extramarital sexual commerce was considered illicit. In the case of the criminal relationship between the king and his (married) mistress, it was regarded as adultery (or double-adultery).⁶³³ However, the crime of an adulterer and that of an adulteress was not equally grave, which had very concrete and meaningful effects on the royal mistress's figure and narrative as well. Thus, the narrative had two sides: the meaning of an adulterous royal mistress and the meaning of an adulterous king. Both sides were constructed against the lawful spouse, most importantly the lawful husband of the royal mistress. And both sides were used to stressing different aspects relating to property, rights, honour, morality, compensation, and legitimate rule.

3.6.1 Adulterous mistress

First and foremost, the adulterous crime was reconstructed as the royal mistress's offence, as *her* criminal commerce with the king.⁶³⁴ As stated in the introduction, during the early modern period adultery could be denounced on religious and secular moralist premises alike, although in the debates about the royal mistresses the criminality of the adulterous relationship was not primarily a

⁶³² Sometimes the relationship between the king and his mistress was termed as *criminal commerce*, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 69, 75, 170; Fauques 1758a, 97; Fauques 1758b, 89–90, 118; Fauques 1766a, 121, 129; Fauques 1766b, 100; Hervey 1848b, 20. Whereas sometimes sexual relationships outside the lawful marriage (the king's amours as well as other's) were referred to more ambiguously, nonetheless, in terms of *crime* or *criminality*. See, e.g. Walpole 1845a, 66; Poisson 1766a, 197–199; Poisson 1766c, 196–197; Mairobert 1775, 10; Mairobert 1779a, LXIe. LETTRE. Du Duc d'Aiguillon, 30 Juin 1771, note de bas de page de l'editeur, 87; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LXI, From the Duke d'Aiguillon, 30th June 1771, footnote, 71–72.

⁶³³ Illicit extramarital sexual commerce was divided in two categories. It was considered *fornication* if the delinquents were unmarried; and adultery if one or both parties were married respectively. See, e.g. Bailey 1730, "fornication"; Allen 1765, "fornication", "adulterate"; Barclay 1774, "fornication", "adulterate"; Barlow 1772a, "adulterate"; Dyche 1756a, "fornication", "adultere"; Chambaud 1761, "concubinage", "fornication"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "adultere"; Hufton 1998, 303.

⁶³⁴ See, e.g. "On alléqua qu'il n'y avoit plus rien de criminel dans son comerce avec le Roi; [...]" Fauques 1759, 69; "[...] she[Mme de Pompadour] no longer kept up any criminal commerce with the King [Louis XV], [...]" Fauques 1758a, 89–90. See also, e.g. Fauques 1759, 170; Fauques 1758b, 118; Fauques 1766a, 121; Fauques 1766b, 100. In British debate, the adulterous sexual crime was represented as a crime *between* the king and his mistress, as for example in Hervey's memoirs: "[...] nothing criminal had ever passed between her [Mrs. Howard] and the King; [...]" Hervey 1848b, 20.

religio-moralist question. In the case of royal mistresses, the most important aspect of early modern understanding of adultery was that female infidelity was conceptualised as a violation against the lawful husband. All the following four points carried specific meanings in the discourses about a royal mistress. First of all, it was reconstructed as a crime against male property: “his [M d’Étiolles’] property violated in the most sacred and tender point.”⁶³⁵ Second, it was a crime against the husband’s right: “[...] in defiance of his [M d’Étiolles’] right; a right ever accounted sacred.”⁶³⁶ Certainly, the first two points were partly overlapping. Third, it was a crime against the husband’s honour.⁶³⁷ And fourth, it was a crime against the love or affection of a husband for her wife: “As he [M d’Étiolles] loved his wife too ardently to share her with any one, [...] still distractedly fond of his wife, [...]”⁶³⁸

Besides being a very important institution within which the family was managed, matrimony had an important symbolic meaning in the eighteenth-century view of the world. Here, the institution of marriage and the model of a family served to reflect and reassert the wider social relation and hierarchies of the prevailing society. In a sense, marriage was both a power-relationship, within which the prevailing relations of power were continually reproduced and legitimated, and simultaneously a metaphor of a power-relationship that represented and affirmed the wider prevailing hierarchical social relations of power and the political system in which the highest power was used. In this sense, the monogamous marriage was at the centre of social and political order in all early modern Europe. Matrimony and family were institutions that thus had a dual function in relation to the state: i) they were considered to be the sine qua non of a prosperous, progressive, and powerful nation that required regeneration and growth in population⁶³⁹; ii) they were institutions through which social order was articulated, and consequently, through which social order could be enforced.

In the latter sense, marriage and family were inseparably intertwined in the imagination of social stratification that conceptualised hierarchical society, relationships between people of different ranks as well as the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and submission and obedience. That is, the image of family as a model or microcosm for organisation of the state that, in turn, reflected the even wider universal order of God, or of nature, or of them both if natural order was considered divine ordination.⁶⁴⁰ On this, most secular moralist writers, moral philosophers, medical doctrines, religious moralising and law, and Common, civil and other secular laws joined in order to support the father’s

⁶³⁵ Fauques 1758b, 101. Also in Fauques 1766b, 85.

⁶³⁶ Fauques 1758b, 57. “[...] en dépit d’un droit qui fut toujours regardé comme sacré.” Fauques 1759, 131. See also, Fauques 1766b, 28, 89–90.

⁶³⁷ See, e.g. “[...] he [Mr. Howard] sold his own noisy honour and the possession of his wife.” Walpole 1818, 78.

⁶³⁸ Fauques 1758a, 36–37. “Comme il aimoit trop sa femme pour vouloir la partager avec un autre, [...] toujours éperdument amoureux de sa femme, [...]” Fauques 1759, 31–32.

⁶³⁹ See, e.g. Hanley 1989, 12; Winston 2005, 263.

⁶⁴⁰ See, e.g. Farr 1991; Merrick 1992; Munck 2002, 163, 193, 195–196; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 5; Henshall 1992, 143; Spellman 1998, 45, 64; Merrick 1986, 498.

rule as the foundation of social order: husband ruled his wife, father ruled his children, and head of the household ruled his domestic.⁶⁴¹

Women's subjugation to the rule of men, to their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons, tied together at least three different discourses relevant to the conceptualisation of matrimony and adultery. Firstly, it manifested the idea of women as the weaker sex, mentally and physically, in need of protection and control that were ideally fulfilled in marriage.⁶⁴² Secondly, it linked patriarchal power relations to ideas about (male) honour.⁶⁴³ Women's respectability and decency were interconnected with obedience to her husband, which in turn was associated not only with her own honour but with the honour of her husband as well. The wife's obedience and husband's rule in matrimony were strongly socially regulated and disobedience in a married woman could expose her husband to the ridicule of the society.⁶⁴⁴ Both the *unruly* wife and *cuckold* husband were common figures in popular culture. Both ridiculed disobedient wives and their unmanly husbands, and consequently participated in the affirmation and regulation of the cultural norm of the husband's rule. Certainly, the royal mistresses made their husbands cuckolds when entering into the relationship with kings. Furthermore, as the extramarital relationship was not secret, the husbands were made cuckolds publicly. Thirdly, women's obedience in marriage was tied to secular laws concerning property. Here, marriage was a contract in which the woman's right to use the property of the family and her dowry was regulated (and limited) through the letter of the law, lawful inheritance was ensured to the husband's legitimate children, and on certain occasions, the wife was perceived as a husband's property.⁶⁴⁵

The eighteenth-century writers stressed that the power-relationship that was manifested in matrimony was indeed counted as a fundamental and

⁶⁴¹ See, e.g. Farr 1991; Munck 2002, 163, 193, 195–196; Timm & Sanborn 2007, 2–3, 5; Shoemaker 1998, 16–17; Hufton 1998, 40; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 22, 31–34.

⁶⁴² This could be explained in terms of religious beliefs (especially the creation of woman from man's rib, the Fall of Man due to the Temptation of Adam by Eve and St. Peter's letters), medical theories (both one- and two-sex models, humoral pathology, and theories about nerves regarded women mentally and physically as the weaker and more vulnerable sex), and moral philosophy (which strived to present a normative relation of sexes as natural). See, e.g. Offen 2000, 37, 66; Shoemaker 1998, 20–21. On one one-sex model and two-sex -model, see, e.g. Shoemaker 1998, 59, 61–62; Winston 2005, 271; Hufton 1998, 43; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 21–22, 38, 60. On Biblical theories concerning sexes, see, e.g. Shoemaker 1998, 16; Hufton 1998, 29–32; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 19–20, 23; Capp 2003, 3–5; Norrhem 2010, 9–10.

⁶⁴³ In literature, see, e.g. Capp 2003, 12–13, 20–21, 193–195, 210; Maza 1993, 268, 284; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 48, 285; Hufton 1998, 48–52. As expressed in the sources, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 22–24, 31–32; Fauques 1758a, 36–37; Fauques 1758b, 101–102; Fauques 1766a, 27–28; Fauques 1766b, 83–84; Poisson 1766a, 139–141; Poisson 1766c, 138–140; Anon. 1760, 76–77, 131–134.

⁶⁴⁴ As the foolish figure of a husband that was ruled by his *unruly* wife, or a husband that was *cuckolded* by her wife. See, e.g. Farr 1991; Capp 2003, 12–13, 21; Merrick 1992, 179; Hufton 1998, 40, 48–53. This train of thought did not end with the French Revolution or with the end of the eighteenth century. For example in republican France, women's essential republican virtue was morality and decency in marriage. Outram 1989, 126.

⁶⁴⁵ Hardwick 1998, 157–158, 160–162, 175; Hanley 1989, 14–15, 21; Capp 2003, 5–6, 29; Hesse 1989, 476; Norrhem 2010, 9–10; Hufton 1998, 240, 292–293.

inviolable order of things by employing the term *sacred*⁶⁴⁶ when describing the right and claim of the royal mistresses' husbands to their lawfully wedded wives. The eighteenth-century commentators writing about the royal mistresses utilised the representations of the mistresses' husbands primarily in two ways. Presenting the feelings of affection of the offended husband was a way to legitimate the husband's claims over and right to his wife. When stressing the love, affection, and tenderness of the husband for his wife, the commentators presented the husband in terms of a normatively good husband, a husband that was fulfilling his duty as a husband, and a husband that had done nothing reprehensible that would justify his wife's leaving him or being taken from him. This was an important detail in the narrative. There was also a possibility to construct the husband as a tyrant, in which case his wife's departure from his side and to the safety of the royal court was more excusable and understandable. Furthermore, in these latter narratives, the king could be presented as a benevolent protector of his subject, the defenseless victim of the husband's tyranny.

The narrative of the tyrannical husband was evidently well-known in Britain and France alike, since it was used on various occasions and in various ways. Firstly, on some occasions, the husband's tyranny was reconstructed as a justified reason for his wife's absconding. In this sense, the wife's service as the royal mistress was justified, as for example in the case of Mrs. Howard. In various sources, Mrs. Howard was presented as having been afraid of her violent husband, who even caused public clamour when demanding his wife:

Mr. Howard, who, far from ceding his wife quietly, went one night into the quadrangle of St. James's, and vociferously demanding her to be restored to him before the guards and other audience. [...] Such intemperate proceedings by no mean invited the new mistress to leave the asylum of St. James's. She was safe under the royal roof: [...].⁶⁴⁷

Furthermore, Mr. Howard's violent temper was accentuated in other anecdotes and sources as well. For example, John Hervey conveyed a description of a conversation between Queen Caroline and Mr. Howard, where the Queen was presented as having been

"[...] horribly afraid of him [...]. What added to my fear upon this occasion," said the Queen, "was that, I knew him to be so brutal, as well as a little mad, and seldom quite sober, so I did not think it impossible but that he might throw me out of that window, [...]."⁶⁴⁸

In this anecdote then, Mr. Howard was presented as the epitome of a bad husband: violent, hot-tempered, and prone to drunkenness. All these were well-known and commonly used justifiable reasons when seeking a formal separation from an unwanted husband in a judicial court.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ Fauques 1759, 131; Fauques 1758b, 57, 101; Fauques 1766b, 28, 85.

⁶⁴⁷ Walpole 1818, 76–77.

⁶⁴⁸ Hervey 1848b, 22.

⁶⁴⁹ Formal separation was not divorce. During the eighteenth century, severing the bond of marriage and getting a divorce was nearly impossible. Thus, often eloping from an

Count Jean-Baptiste du Barry was presented in a similar manner as a bad husband, although he was not Mme du Barry's husband. Count Jean-Baptiste du Barry was Mme du Barry's former lover and keeper, and was occasionally also presented as her pimp as well.⁶⁵⁰ But since he was the man with whom Mme du Barry was presented as having lived before entering the court, he was the man to whom she was contrasted instead of to her sham husband Count Guillaume du Barry. Count Jean-Baptiste du Barry was also presented as violent and hot-tempered in his relation to Mme du Barry as well as to his other mistresses, especially Mme Murat. Usually, the relationship was presented in terms of tyranny that connected violence and uncontrollable passion, both in the sense of lust as well as anger:

Je [Mme Murat] ne l'ai [Comte Jean-Baptiste du Barry] jamais aimé, & il n'a jamais été que mon tyran. [...] Sa violence, ses emportemens [...] En un mot, c'est un monstre que j'ai en horreur.⁶⁵¹

Mme Murat's case served as an example that reflected the idea of justifiable escape from the subordination of a husband, even though her keeper was not her husband. Yet, as her keeper and lover, he should have shown at least some regard and protection for a woman who had surrendered herself to his care. The main function of presenting such a narrative as Mme Murat's was to stress the nature of Jean-Baptiste du Barry as a violent brute. In Mairobert's narrative about the

unwanted spouse, and, especially in the case of wives who were afraid of their husbands, applying for refuge from relatives, friends, new lovers, or even influential local authorities was the last remedy. See, e.g. Hardwick 1998; Winston 2005, 263; Hanley 1989, 13; Taque 2001, 97, 99; Capp 2003, 106–107, 114, 117; Hufton 1998, 262, 285–288.

⁶⁵⁰ Especially in Mairobert's writings. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 56, 62; Mairobert 1779a, XVIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 20 Juin 1767, 20–23; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVI. From the Count du Barry, Paris, 20th June 1767, 19; Mairobert 1779a, XXIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 9 sep. 1768, 29–31; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXI. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 9th Sep. 1768, 25–26.

⁶⁵¹ Mairobert 1775, Lettre de Mme Murat à M. Dessain, Directeur des Fermes de Paris, 241. "I [Mme Murat] never loved him [Jean-Baptiste du Barry], or considered him in any other light but that of a tyrant. [...] His violence, and his passion, [...] In a word, he is to me a monster of the most horrible kind", Bécu 1777b, 246–247. The same theme of the husband's tyranny in relation to the violent and hot temper of Jean-Baptiste du Barry was presented also in relation to Mme du Barry, in Mme du Barry's letter to M. Radix: "Je suis, mon cher Ste. Foix, dans le plus grand désespoir; vous n'imaginerez jamais jusqu'où Du Barry pousse les mauvais procédés à mon égard. Je suis lasse d'être en butte à ses emportemens & même à sa brutalité. Si j'ai trouvé chez lui quelques agréments, ils sont si fort éclipsés par les caprices dont je suis la victime, que je suis totalement desidée à my soustraire & à rompre avec lui. [...] vous aurez le plaisir de posséder exclusivement une maîtresse qui peut passer pour agréable, & que j'aurai de mon côté la satisfaction de n'être plus l'esclave de mon tyran." Mairobert 1779a, XVIII. LETTRE. A Mr. Radix de Ste. Foix, Trésorier Général de la Marine, 6 déc. 1767, 25. "I am, my dear St. Foix, extremely unhappy. You cannot possibly imagine how ill Du Barry behaves to me. I am tired of being exposed to the brutality, and caprices of his temper. If my situation has had its sweets, they are now quite embittered by his tyranny, and I am determined to break with him and leave his house. [...] You will have the entire possession of a woman who has some pretensions to beauty, and I shall have the satisfaction to be no longer within the power of a tyrant." Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVIII, To M. Radix de St. Foix, Treasurer General of the Navy, 6th Dec. 1767, 21–22.

life of Mme du Barry, Jean-Baptiste du Barry was presented as the ambitious pimp who wanted to elevate his former mistress Mme du Barry in order to reap the benefits, and as an intemperate and worthless guardian of his mistresses. Since he was constructed as the wrongdoer of the story, the king could be constructed as the true guardian and even as the saviour of Mme du Barry.

Naturally, there was another side and possibility in this story. The narrative of the husband's right and care could be used against the mistress and the king. In the case of Mme de Pompadour and her husband, M. d'Étiolles, the wife's elopement was far more problematic than in the narratives of other royal mistresses. Furthermore, Mme de Pompadour's case testifies to the cultural narrative of the *tyrannical husband* and its various possible uses in a complex and aware manner. The other royal mistresses' narratives tended merely to affirm the justifiable flight of a wife into the safety of her new and royal lover.

The key element in the case of Mme de Pompadour and her husband was M. d'Étiolles' presented love for his wife. He loved "his wife too ardently to share her with any one, [...]"⁶⁵². He was so fond of his wife that when he was forced into separation from her, "his violent agitations threw him into a fever, that made his life be despaired of."⁶⁵³ In Fauques' presentation, the husband was reconstructed as a good husband, whose claim over his wife was validated through his fondness towards his wife. In this representation, the question was not about the justifiableness of Mme d'Étiolles' leaving her husband's side. That was unjustifiable. Instead, the greater question was about the guilty party of the crime. Under these circumstances where the lawful husband had not wronged his wife, the adultery was then a crime against the husband. It was reconstructed either as a wife's transgression against the rights and honour of her husband, or as a new male lover's violation against the lawful husband's property, right, and honour. But who dared to accuse the king of violating his laws and his subjects?

3.6.2 Adulterous king?

In relation to the kings, the charges of adultery had different meanings and, most importantly, offered a variety of means to discuss the legitimacy of the prevailing rule. More than anything, it tested the image of the king as the source of law and justice.

In Britain and France alike, adultery was an offence against the law (both civil, common, and canon – and thus an offence against secular authority), against the general sense of decency and morality (as taught and enforced by Christian churches), and most importantly, a crime against God (both in a very concrete sense, as adultery was forbidden as a mortal sin in the Ten Commandments, as well as in a more abstract sense, if God and his law was

⁶⁵² Fauques 1758a, 36. "Comme il aimoit trop sa femme pour vouloir la partager avec un autre, [...]", Fauques 1759, 31.

⁶⁵³ Fauques 1758a, 37. "[...] il se livra à des transports si violens, qu'il en eut une fièvre, qui fit craindre pour ses jours." Fauques 1759, 32.

considered the most fundamental of all orders).⁶⁵⁴ The king could not be openly charged with such a crime that transgressed the laws of God, of nature, and of his kingdom without some remarks concerning the legitimacy of his rule.

Ideally, the king was the Fount of Justice, or the source of law and justice in his realm. He was the image of the rational decision-maker who upheld the common good of the state. And figuratively, he was the beloved benevolent father of his great family of the nation. On the first point, the adulterous king would have been a lawbreaker instead of a lawgiver. As previously discussed, traditionally the legitimation of monarchical authority rested upon the royal prerogatives of temporal jurisdiction and legislation, and consequently, upon the imagined capacity of the king as the giver of justice and protector of law. Of course, this posed a problem concerning the monarch's position regarding the law. The king's position with regard to the laws of the realm was debated throughout the early modern period. On the other hand, the king was the source of Law and Justice. Therefore, to be able to make the law and distribute justice, the king ought to have been above the law himself. On the other hand, in order to be a legitimate ruler instead of an arbitrary despot or a tyrant, the king was expected to submit (at least voluntarily) to the positive laws of the realm.⁶⁵⁵

Neither were the crimes against matrimony a matter concerning solely secular law, but divine as well. The debates about royal mistresses that form the corpus of this study were not religious in the sense that the writers had been compelled to reprimand the practice of keeping royal mistresses on religio-moralistic grounds. Thus, the idea of the king breaking a divine law was not often mentioned.⁶⁵⁶ Without entering too deeply into the religious justifications of monarchical rule and the wider eighteenth-century debate about the source of power and authority of the king (let alone the wide range of modern interpretations about the secularisation and desacralisation of monarchy during

⁶⁵⁴ On the traditional moral control of the Christian churches over sexuality, see, e.g. Winston 2005, 264; Merrick 1992, 172; Offen 2000, 35; Boone, de Hemptienne & Prevenier 2003, 31; Rendall 1985, 10; Hufton 1998, 41, 336; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 31–33, 61. The entanglement of secular and religious ethics becomes concrete when normative ethics are translated into laws of a kingdom. On the interconnection of religious moralism and secular law in relation to marriage, see, e.g. Farr 1991; Winston 2005, 263; Hanley 1989; Hufton 1998, 55–58, 62–63, 137–138, 262, 292–293, 336; Boone, de Hemptienne & Prevenier 2003, 31; Offen 2000, 35; Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 285. It has been argued that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the centralising states sought to take control of the institution of marriage and thus bring the regulation of (licit and illicit) sexuality under secular jurisdiction. See, e.g. Offen 2000, 35; Hufton 1998, 18–20, 63, 137–138; Hardwick 1998, on the secularisation of separation in early modern France; Hanley 1989, on secularisation of family formation and marriage laws in seventeenth-century France; Hufton 1998, 310, on prostitution laws in eighteenth-century France; Hufton 1998, 311, on prostitution in eighteenth-century Britain.

⁶⁵⁵ See, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 321, 325; Wilson 2000, 58–59; Beales 2006, 515; Baker 2006, 627; Henshall 1992, 126, 129, 131, 133, 151; Spellman 1998, 32, 41, 51–52, 58, 69, 86; Downie 1994, 20; Antoine 1987, 4–5; Kantorowicz 1957, 95–162; Major 1994, 169–170; Merrick 1987, 48–49; Richet 1987, 29–30; Baczkowski 1987, 502; Roche 1999, 23.

⁶⁵⁶ Yet, the religious discourse was not unheard of. For example, in an anecdote about an unnamed Jesuit's gift of an allegorical painting to Louis XV it was explicitly expressed that when keeping a mistress the king was committing a crime of the most serious nature and would be punished by God with damnation and eternal sufferings. Poisson 1766a, 198–199; Poisson 1766c, 196–197

the eighteenth century⁶⁵⁷), I content myself to note that even if the monarch's submission to the secular laws generated heated and controversial debate, the king's submission to the laws of God was not a similar question in these debates on royal mistresses. If ever even mentioned, the argument was rather about the question if God would punish the monarch for his crimes in this life or the next.⁶⁵⁸

The religio-moralist discourse, however, leads us to the second point: the figurative representation of the monarch as a benevolent father. As I previously pointed out, adultery was constructed either as a wife's transgression against the rights and honour of her husband, or as a man's violation against the lawful husband's property, right, and honour. However, in these texts about royal mistresses adultery was never constructed as a crime of an adulterous man against his wife. Thus, the king was never presented as a criminal husband with regard to his wife.

This was an important detail that contributed to the image of the king as a father of his personal family as well as that of his metaphorical family of the realm. Instead, even the most censorious critics of royal mistresses, Louis XV, or the monarchy were careful not to present the king as infringing the queen in his capacity as a husband. Quite the contrary, the reader was repeatedly reminded about the conjugal affection and respect that the king showed towards his lawful wife even when openly keeping a mistress.⁶⁵⁹ Such a presentation ensured that even though the king might have been accused of some despotic/tyrannical action regarding one singular subject of his, he was still, in essence, a good father of the family that was manifested in his reverence for his wedded wife. Thus, the traditional family-state metaphor that was used to legitimate the rule of the

⁶⁵⁷ See, e.g. Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997; Baecque 1997; Vovelle 1987; Giesey 1987; Roche 1999; Richet 1987; Deploige & Deneckere 2006; Jacobs 2006; Darnton 1995a; Popkin 1987; Drévilion 2000.

⁶⁵⁸ As, e.g. in the case with the Jesuits' intimidation of Louis XV with purgatory. Poisson 1766a, 198–199; Poisson 1766c, 196–197. See section 3.7.6.

⁶⁵⁹ For example, in Fauques' story about Mme de Pompadour there is an important chapter about the relationship between Louis XV and his spouse. In the description of their early marriage, she highlighted the mutual conjugal affection between the king and the queen that lasted over ten years. Later on, she stressed the queen's wishes to quit the sexual relation with the king. As discussed in the previous section, by this she actually reconstructed the king as a considerate husband, who quitted the lawful wife's bed of her own wish. What is more, further on she repeatedly reminded the reader that the king continued to respect and show respect and affection for his wife. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 14–17; Fauques 1758a, 14–17; Fauques 1766a, 15–18. The texts that were more favourable towards the royal mistress and understanding towards the humane character of the king, e.g. *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766) or various collections of letters of Mme de Pompadour, were more explicit in their description of Louis XV as a good husband. See, e.g. "He [Louis XV] pays remarkable attention to all those who belong to him. Whenever the Queen is the least indisposed, he flies to her apartment, and never leaves her till she is better." Poisson 1766d, 106; "Le Roi vit toujours avec elle, comme un honnête homme vit avec une femme qu'il estime; il est pénétré de sa vertu, & je crois que, s'il lui survit, il la regrettera sincèrement: [...]." Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXXII. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 124; "The king [Louis XV] lives always with her [Queen Marie], as an honest man lives with the wife he values; he is deeply touched with her virtue, and I believe that, if he survives her, he will sincerely regret her." Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXII, To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 97.

Bourbon monarchy was left unchallenged in the presentations of the matrimonial relationship of the King and the Queen.

By contrast, in Britain the relationship between George II and Queen Caroline was also continually presented in terms of a husband's unbounded love and affection for his wife.⁶⁶⁰ Although the family-state metaphor was not nearly as important in Britain as it was in eighteenth-century France, it was still important to maintain the idea of the king as a proper husband who did not violate his wife with his practice of keeping mistresses. Besides the continual descriptions of George II's affection for his wife, he was also presented as having acted openly and in concert with his queen when having, removing, and acquiring a mistress, as for example, in Horace Walpole's description:

after the death of the queen, lady Yarmouth came over, who had been the king's mistress at Hanover during his latter journeys – and with the queen's privity, for he always made her the confidante of his amours; [...].⁶⁶¹

3.6.3 Tyrannical husband or Tyrant king

Direct accusations of the king's criminality in adultery cases were weighty charges that tested the most fundamental and traditional aspects of the legitimation of monarchical rule. As such, they were seldom made in a direct and blunt manner. Nonetheless, they were made – mostly indirectly when describing the violation committed by a royal mistress against her husband. The case of Mme de Pompadour and her husband demonstrate this tension in a more detailed manner than any other royal mistresses' narrative.

When Fauques began her narrative about the elopement of Mme d'Étiolles, she deliberately accused the wife of adultery. But more than that, she accused her of deception as well. Mme d'Étiolles was presented as having used the generally known justification for leaving a husband – namely the motif of a *tyrant husband* – and deceiving the king with a skillful performance. Mme d'Étiolles arrived at Versailles in a dramatic manner:

Fière d'une protection qui lui étoit assurée, elle leva hardiment le masque, & après avoir arboré le pavillon ennemi, elle ne craignit point d'aller chercher un asile à Versailles.⁶⁶²

She created a spectacle in order to demonstrate the violence of her husband and her fear for her life. Thus, when pleading for asylum at the foot of the throne, she forced the king to grant protection.⁶⁶³ With such a presentation as this, Fauques could present the flight of Mme d'Étiolles as unjustified and thus as a crime against the husband's prerogatives, rights, honour, property, and affection in a

⁶⁶⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 84; Hervey 1848a, 95, 355.

⁶⁶¹ Walpole 1818, 95–96. Similar presentation also in e.g. Hervey 1848a, 407; Hervey 1848b, 142.

⁶⁶² Fauques 1759, 31. “[...] in a studied disorder of dress and countenance [meaning: she tore her clothes in order to demonstrate her husband's violence], she flew to Versailles, [...] and, with all the pathos she could muster, threw herself at his majesty's feet, and implored his protection” Fauques 1766a, 42–43.

⁶⁶³ Fauques 1766a, 43.

manner that did not incriminate the king. The king was deceived into protecting his subject, and in doing so, he was in fact committing an act that was expected of him: he was acting the part of a protector and a just king.

However, since the elopement of Mme d'Étiolles was unjustified, Fauques left open the possibility of accusing the king of tyranny/despotism directly on behalf of M. d'Étiolles. Since the wronged husband was not aware of his wife's cunning scheme with him reconstructed as the tyrant and his claim to his wife denied, he was presented as having accused the king of violating his right, property, and honour. M. d'Étiolles did not renounce his claim humbly and without struggle. Furthermore, his struggle was presented as not his right but as his justification for claiming his wife as a husband.⁶⁶⁴ M. d'Étiolles' was depicted to have written a (public) letter, where he

naturally exhaled his resentment in the bitterest invectives against her baseness, her infidelity, her ingratitude, and made the world resound with his complaints.⁶⁶⁵

However, what sealed his fate was that he used "expressions rather disrespectful to the king, whom he treated as guilty of an act of tyranny."⁶⁶⁶ After being publicly affronted and accused of acting unlawfully against the rights of a lawful husband, the king was forced to issue a *lettre de cachet* with which M. d'Étiolles was banished from Versailles and Paris to Avignon.⁶⁶⁷

It seems that the violated husband indeed caused some bruit, since the anecdote was redressed in *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766), which gives a far more understanding and far less critical representation of the royal mistress. The writer stressed the (public) letter that M. d'Étiolles had written to his unfaithful wife, its inconsiderate phrasing, and especially the hasty accusations of tyranny against the king – just as Fauques had described the unhappy husband's letter in her memoirs.⁶⁶⁸ In the Fauques narrative, the poor M. d'Étiolles fell victim to the royal misuse of power twice (first when losing his wife, second when receiving the *lettre de cache*). By contrast, in *The Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* the king was presented as having been the violated party. M. d'Étiolles transgressed against the king when accusing him of tyranny, that is, of acting unlawfully and against his rights and property. Instead of severe punishment, which was indeed presented as an appropriate response to M. d'Étiolles' impertinence, the king was described as having acted in the manner of a noble and benevolent master, denying the opportunity for due punishment, and resorting to mercy and pardon:

⁶⁶⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 31–32; Fauques 1758a, 37.

⁶⁶⁵ Fauques 1766a, 44. "[...] jetta les hauts cris & remplit le monde de ses plaintes." Fauques 1759, 31–32.

⁶⁶⁶ Fauques 1766a, 44. The first versions of Fauques' book, the French one of 1759 and the English of 1758, are both lacking this critical tone.

⁶⁶⁷ Fauques 1759, 32; Fauques 1766a, 44–45.

⁶⁶⁸ Poisson 1766c, 157.

*Non, Madame: me dit-il avec cet air de bonté qui lui est si naturel; votre mari est malheureux, il faut le plaindre. L'histoire ne parle point d'un pareil trait de modération dans un Roi offensé.*⁶⁶⁹

The justness of the decision of the king was further emphasised by describing M. d'Étiolles' reaction to the royal mercy: "My spouse, on being informed of it, left the kingdom to travel."⁶⁷⁰ Thus, in *The Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* the narrative of the violated husband was rephrased as a narrative about the merciful, benevolent, and just king.

In Fauques' narrative, the king did not start as a despot who had robbed his subject of his right and property. Instead, the defrauded king was pictured as a just king protecting the abused wife of a tyrant. However, after the first crisis of Mme d'Étiolles leaving her husband and establishing her residence in the royal court, Fauques presented the adulterous relationship more consistently as a criminal activity against M. d'Étiolles in terms of tyranny or despotism, and very specifically, as an unlawful and illegal usurpation of a subject's property and right.⁶⁷¹ Fauques very carefully framed the presentations of the unlawful mistreatment of M. d'Étiolles rather passively or as the criminality of a wife against her lawful husband. Thus, she dispelled the direct accusations against the monarch. Yet, the passive formulations left open the alluring possibility of reading the crime explicitly as the king's crime against M. d'Étiolles. In fact, the reader was brought to this kind of reading, since in her texts the royal despotism was very specifically conceptualised as a violation against subjects' right to private property, as for example, in the examples of Mme de Pompadour's forcible purchases of land. Thus, the presentations of forcible purchases and stealing a subject's wife (alongside other scandalous and exciting examples) reinforced Fauques' point about royal despotism as a latent threat in the political system or as a capacity in a monarchical ruler that could be activated in certain situations.

3.6.4 Proper compensation of a husband

Fauques' representation of Mme de Pompadour's real estate businesses and usurpation of M. d'Étiolles' wife shared another point of resemblance: pecuniary compensation, and what is more, a forced pecuniary compensation. Compensation of the violated husband's right, property, and honour was an important element that could not be left out even in the cases where the elopement of the wife was justified through the disqualification of the husband, and consequently, his claim on his wife.

⁶⁶⁹ Poisson 1766a, 159–160. "No, Madam, said he [Louis XV] to me [Mme de Pompadour], with air of goodness which is so natural to him, *your husband is unhappy, and should rather be pitied* [than punished]. History does not afford a like passage of moderation in an injured King." Poisson 1766c, 158.

⁶⁷⁰ Poisson 1766c, 158. "Mon Epoux qui en fut informé prit le parti de voïager." Poisson 1766a, 160.

⁶⁷¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 73–75, 131; Fauques 1758a, 95; Fauques 1758b, 57, 101–102; Fauques 1766a, 127; Fauques 1766b, 28, 85.

In the examples of Mme du Barry and her keeper, and Mrs. Howard and her husband, the narrators agreed that the king was acting as a rescuer, fulfilling his role as a protector of his subjects. There were, nonetheless, always interests, ideals, and ideas about rights that collided when the king took a married mistress. On the one hand, the king violated the husband's prerogative and his rights to his private property, thus being an arbitrary ruler, a despot, whose rule was illegitimate because of his unlawful actions. On the other, he was protecting his most vulnerable subject who had suffered under the oppressive – tyrannical, that is – rule of her husband. When balancing these two opposite images of a legitimate and just king and an illegitimate tyrant, the image of the husband and the justification of his claim on his wife was a crucial point. Yet, even when the royal mistress's flight from her husband was justified and understandable, the wrong done against her husband had to be redressed. Otherwise, it would have left a stain on the king's reputation and offered contemporary audiences an opening for criticism against the monarch, and in the worst case, against monarchy as a system.

More than anything, the compensation of the royal mistress's husband was related to the idea of justice and equity, and the conceptualisation of a *just* king. As I have previously argued, justice was a traditional element of the authorisation of monarchical rule. It maintained its importance and essential meaning in the imaginations of rightful rule even in the eighteenth century when in both countries the daily distribution of justice had been transferred to other institutions. In Britain and France alike, the king had long since ceased to perform his role as the Justice in the sense that he no longer distributed justice personally in his court. Instead, the courts of justice functioned in his name. In Britain, the judicial function was assigned to professional judges, whose actions were controlled by law and whose dismissal was in the hands of Parliament.⁶⁷² The beauty of the English system of separation of powers was that all the branches of the government were in some respect independent. Thus, they had their own authority and legitimation. And yet, they all were related to one another, making each reliant on each other's legitimation and authority. In every branch and institution, there was a mixture of independent authority, authority of the others, and especially authority of the monarch. In relation to the judicial courts, the monarch was considered to have delegated his judicial power to the judges of the courts. In this sense, the judicial courts were the extension of royal authority.⁶⁷³ Even though the judicial courts were independent, thus having authority of their own, monarchical authority was always present in the judicial courts: "His majesty, in the eye of the law, is always present in all his courts, though he cannot personally distribute justice."⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² Act of Settlement, 1701, An Act for the further limitation of the Crown and better securing the rights and liberties of the subject, (12 & 13 Gul. III, cap. 2). Douglas 1953, 134; Spellman 1998, 39; Lieberman 2006, 334, 337–338; Blackstone 1765, 230–270; Campbell 1964.

⁶⁷³ Blackstone 1765, 230–270; Spellman 1998, 39; Downie 1994, 46; van Horn Melton 2009, 45; Campbell 1964; Lieberman 2006, 325.

⁶⁷⁴ Blackstone 1765, 260.

In France, daily justice was administered by the judicial courts, Parlements that functioned in the name of the king. In other words, they were institutions that were directly linked to the royal administration, and consequently, did not have authority independent of the authority of the monarch – although they strove for independent authority in heated debates during the eighteenth century.⁶⁷⁵ That is to say, monarchical authority was inseparably present in the French judicial courts as well. Also in France, unlike in Britain, the monarch was more personally present in the judicial function and occasionally even participated personally in the proceedings.

Mairobert relayed an anecdotal recollection of a case where the monarch, or rather his mistress, was applauded for interfering in the judicial proceedings. The anecdote featured a young girl who had given birth to a stillborn bastard child. As the young mother had concealed the pregnancy, she was charged with infanticide and was facing a death sentence. However, the story of the young girl touched a travelling musketeer named Mandeville. He turned the case into a petition and delivered it to Mme Du Barry, who in turn used her persuasion and delivered a mitigation of the sentence.⁶⁷⁶ This anecdote demonstrates that it was still common to appeal to the monarch (via his closest circles) in judicial cases, even very personal ones.

On the other hand, the monarch's personal participation in judicial proceedings at times caused fierce political agitation. As, for example, when Louis XV terminated the court proceedings regarding Emmanuel-Armand de Vignerot du Plessis-Richelieu, Duc d'Aiguillon in 1768. Prior to the cessation, Duc d'Aiguillon was accused of having illegally suppressed the Parlement of Brittany, which led to a crisis that continued for three years. Certainly, this was a case in which the magistrates of provincial Parlements united in protest against the royal authority and the right to levy new taxes on behalf of the rights of local Parlements and traditional privileges.⁶⁷⁷ Mairobert's presentation, however, focused only on the cessation of the proceedings in the Parlement of Paris. Royal interference in the judicial proceedings caused agitated debates and outrage even though in France the monarch had the right to intervene in all proceedings of his Parlements and even impose registration of royal edicts in *lit de justice*.⁶⁷⁸

Thus, in France as well as in Britain the king was regarded as having been present in the distribution of justice even though he did not necessarily distribute it personally. And in the same sense, justice continued to be an essential part of majesty and royal authority.

⁶⁷⁵ See, e.g. Bell 1994; Merrick 1986; van Horn Melton 2009, 47–48, 53–55; Bell 1992, 919–920; Shennan 2007, 16, 62, 153; Baker 1990, 31–122, 228–235; Salmon 1995; Merrick 1987, 54; Major 1994, 170; Doyle 1987, 157–158; Antoine 1987, 5–6; van Kley 1987; Baker 1987b, 472–477; Roche 1999, 194–195, 279, 422; Mettam 2007, 129; Zysberg 2002, 159, 167, 302–303.

⁶⁷⁶ Mairobert 1775, 116–118; Bécu 1777a, 74–78.

⁶⁷⁷ See, e.g. Drévuillon 2000, 338–340; Maza 1993, 26–27.

⁶⁷⁸ See, e.g. Neely 2008, 33; Mairobert 1775, 154; Bécu 1777a, 131–132; Mairobert 1779a, XLVIe. LETTRE. Au Duc d'Aiguillon, 30 Août 1770, 62; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XLVI. To the Duke d'Aiguillon, 30th Aug. 1770, 51.

When it comes to the married royal mistresses, there was an internal conflict in the cases of mistresses that were presented as having fled from their abusive husbands into the asylum of the royal household. In such cases, the king could have been regarded as a supreme judge. On the one hand, there was the husband's prerogatives over his wife. On the other, there was the wife's rights over her life. Thus, the king was presented with a case in which his subjects' rights clashed. In a case where the subjects' rights were in discordance, it was the king's prerogative to determine the case. And the king, as the supreme judge, was demanded to be *just*. This example demonstrates the eighteenth-century understanding of justice and the king. Whereas *justice* was more directly linked to the formal institutions of courts of justice and law, *justness* was related to a general sense of judgements being *right* and *equitable*. That is to say, it was mainly a moral question.⁶⁷⁹ In the case of a royal decision, the king could, and was expected to, pass judgement *justly*, even if it meant infringing the subject's right and property. In a sense, it was the king's prerogative to pass judgement even against the law in order to ensure justness. In the case of royal mistresses pleading for royal protection for their life, the king's judgement in favour of the harassed and abused wife was just in moral sense even though it violated the lawful husband's *inviolable* or *sacred* right to his wife.

Thus, royal justice, in the sense that the judgement was just, related to moral capacities, but it was also a capacity that related to reason as well. In the early eighteenth-century dictionaries, *reason* was defined first and foremost as

a Faculty or Power of the Soul, whereby it distinguisheth [sic.] Good from Evil, Truth from Falshood [sic.]; or that Faculty of the Soul whereby we judge of Things; [...].⁶⁸⁰

In the latter half of the century, the aspects of *right justice*⁶⁸¹, and *a just account*⁶⁸² were added to the previous definition. This kind of conceptualisation defined reason as a moral capacity as well. Furthermore, it was this kind of reason that the king was expected to use when distributing *just* judgements. Bailey (1759) concretely connected ideas of "equitableness, justice, or rational quality"⁶⁸³ in his definition of "reasonableness". Thus, it connoted that when the king passed a *just* judgement, he was simultaneously passing a reasonable and rational judgement. As I have previously discussed, rationality and reason were essential elements of legitimate monarchical rule as well as inseparable elements of the idea of *Secret du Roi*. Without reason the king could not have been rational. And without the ability of rational decision-making, the king could not have been able to function

⁶⁷⁹ See, e.g. Bailey 1759, "Justice"; Dyche 1756a, "juste"; Dyche 1756b, "légitime"; Chambaud 1761, "juste", "légitime"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "justesse".

⁶⁸⁰ Bailey 1730, "Reason". See also, e.g. Dyche 1756b, "raison"; Chambaud 1761, "raison"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "raison", "raisonnement", "opinion".

⁶⁸¹ Ash 1775b, "Reason"; Barclay 1774, "Reason"; Dyche 1756a, "déraisonnable", "justice"; Chambaud 1761, "équité", "juste".

⁶⁸² Barlow 1772b, "Reason"; Barclay 1774, "Reason"; Ash 1775b, "Reason"; Dyche 1756b, "raisonnement".

⁶⁸³ Bailey 1759, "Reasonableness". See also, e.g. Dyche 1756a, "juste", "déraisonnablement"; Dyche 1756b, "légitime", "raisonnable", "raisonnement"; Chambaud 1761, "droit", "juste", "légitime", "raisonnable", "raisonnement".

as the head of state deciding and ruling in favour of the common good or for the best of the totality of his realm.

In relation to monarchs, the link between moral and reasonable justness was emphasised with the conceptual differentiation between a monarch (who ought to be reasonable and just) and *reason of state* or *raison d'état*, which was defined as principles or maxims that were appropriate and functional in relation to the interest of the state but that were "but contrary to moral Honesty and Justice"⁶⁸⁴. In this sense, the humanity and benevolence of the ruler, on most occasions understood in the light of *mercy* and *pardon*, which were important elements of the royal justice, became the essential parts of the legitimate sovereign. By displaying *just judgement* and *equity*, the king displayed his prerogative as the supreme judge and foundation of justice, whereas by displaying *mercy* he displayed royal *benevolence*, *humanity*, and *magnanimity*. In both cases, he was to be considered reasonable, both in a moral and rational sense. Furthermore, *justness* that incorporated the idea of *clemency* was conceptualised as the premise of legitimate rule. A legitimate sovereign was "a just and merciful prince"⁶⁸⁵ whereas an illegitimate tyrant was connected to "the idea of an unjust and cruel prince"⁶⁸⁶. Furthermore, *inclemency*⁶⁸⁷ was explicitly attributed as the pivotal characteristic of tyrannical, that is, absolute and oppressive, rule.

Additionally, the idea of *just* incorporated ideas of *honour* and *honesty*, which in turn had a meaning in relation to rank. First of all, *honesty* was defined in relation to moral goodness as well as justice. An honest person was one that was "good, just, virtuous."⁶⁸⁸ or "performing every act of justice"⁶⁸⁹. Consequently, "honestly" was defined in terms of consistency "with justice"⁶⁹⁰ and honesty as "a principle of justice between man and man"⁶⁹¹. In the latter half of the century, the definition of honesty was collapsed into a near-synonym for justice.⁶⁹² The idea of honour or honourableness did not explicitly include *justness* or *justice* until the latter half of the century⁶⁹³, but it implicitly retained both terms, since honourableness was defined in terms of *equitability* and *honesty*.⁶⁹⁴ Furthermore, the idea of honour and *honourable* reputation was connected to a

⁶⁸⁴ Bailey 1730, "Reason of State". Also in Bailey 1759, "Reason of State".

⁶⁸⁵ Barclay 1774, "George I".

⁶⁸⁶ Barclay 1774, "Tyrant". See also, e.g. Dyche 1756b, "tyrannie", "violence"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "tyrannie"; Chambaud 1761, "tirannie".

⁶⁸⁷ Bailey 1759, "Tyranny"; Barclay 1774, "Tyranny"; Ash 1775b, "Tyranny"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "tyrannie".

⁶⁸⁸ Bailey 1730, "Honest". Also in Ash 1775a, "Honest"; Dyche 1756a, "honnête"; Chambaud 1761, "honnête", "honnêteté".

⁶⁸⁹ Allen 1765, "Honest". Also in Barlow 1772b, "Honest"; Barclay 1774, "Honest".

⁶⁹⁰ Allen 1765, "Honestly"; Barlow 1772b, "Honestly"; Barclay 1774, "Honestly".

⁶⁹¹ Bailey 1759, "Honesty". Also in Bailey 1730, "Honesty".

⁶⁹² "Justice, truth, purity, virtue." Ash 1775a, "Honesty".

⁶⁹³ Ash 1775a, "Honourable".

⁶⁹⁴ Barlow 1772b, "Honourable"; Barclay 1774, "Honourable"; Ash 1775a, "Honourable".

person's dignity – especially to nobleness and greatness,⁶⁹⁵ which both were also connected to generosity⁶⁹⁶.

The interconnection between *justice* (in the sense of *justness*), *honesty*, *honourableness*, and *generosity* that was conceptualised in relation to a person's social status and rank demanded that the king needed to recompense the husband who had lost his wife due to the king's judgement or actions. Moreover, the kings were not expected to merely recompense the husband for their loss of wife, but they were expected to be generous. Even when recompensing husbands who had transgressed against their wives, the king was given to manifest royal *justice* as well as royal *benevolence* and *generosity* – all being qualities that furthermore enhanced royal *dignity*, *humanity*, *honourableness*, and *magnanimity*.

It was for this reason, then, that all royal mistresses' husbands were recompensed and rewarded, and the amount and manner of their compensation was keenly observed and commented on in the discourses about royal mistresses. Both Hervey and Walpole presented Mr. Howard as having "sold his own noisy honour and the possession of his wife"⁶⁹⁷ for a pension of 1200–2000£, roughly twice the annuity that his wife enjoyed at the court.⁶⁹⁸ M. d'Étiolles was not left without his compensation even in the critical presentations of Fauques:

Les emplois dont il fut revêtu, lui raportoient plus de quatre cens mille Livres par an, outre qu'on lui accorderoit tout ce qu'il demandoit pour ses amis.⁶⁹⁹

Thus, he gained not only pecuniary compensation but also networks that would continue to produce wealth and power. Mme du Barry, who was presented in her relationship with Comte Guillaume du Barry (her sham-husband) and his brother Jean-Baptiste du Barry (her keeper), obtained royal compensation for both. The husband, Guillaume, was recompensed with ready cash and a pension⁷⁰⁰, and her previous keeper Jean-Baptiste was complimented with a marquisate with a pension and was presented as having received what sums he desired from the royal treasury⁷⁰¹.

However, even though the husbands' royal compensation served as a mean to demonstrate royal generosity and royal justness, it could also serve as a mark

⁶⁹⁵ Barlow 1772b, "Honourable"; Barclay 1774, "Honourable"; Ash 1775a, "Honourable"; Chambaud 1761, "bassesse", "grandeur", "honorable".

⁶⁹⁶ Barclay 1774, "Honourable"; Ash 1775a, "Honourable"; Chambaud 1761, "générausement", "royal"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "libéralité".

⁶⁹⁷ Walpole 1818, 78.

⁶⁹⁸ Hervey 1848b, 23; Walpole 1822a, 512; Walpole 1818, 78.

⁶⁹⁹ Fauques 1759, 33. "He had places and employments to the amount of more than four hundred thousand livres a year, besides gratifications for favors he should ask for others, which were sure to be granted him." Fauques 1766a, 47. The recompensation of M. d'Étiolles was affirmed in the anonymous *History of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1760) as well, although the annual income was presented slightly more modestly as 200 000 livres/annum. Anon. 1760, 115–116.

⁷⁰⁰ Mairobert 1775, 67, 236–237; Bécu 1777a, 15; Bécu 1777b, 239–241; Mairobert 1779a, LXXXIVe. LETTRE. Au Comte Guillaume Du Barry, 113–114; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LXXXIV. To Count William Du Barry, 91.

⁷⁰¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 236–237; Bécu 1777b, 239–241; Mairobert 1779a, XXXVe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, 20 Juillet 1769, 50; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXXV. To the Count Du Barry, 20th July, 1769, 42.

of royal weakness or despotism as well. In the case of Mr. Howard, it was in some accounts implied that he caused so much commotion in order to gain as much profit as possible from the selling of his wife – after all, the couple had left for Hanover in order to prosper financially.⁷⁰² In such a case, royal reimbursement was hardly coloured by generosity or pity, but it could be understood as weakness and yielding to the bullying of a subject. In the case of Mme du Barry and the brothers du Barry, the royal reimbursement was usually presented as unreasonably substantial, especially considering their low rank and the mistresses' even lower origin. The presentation of the compensation of the men of Mme du Barry did not continue to serve as a demonstration of royal magnanimity, generosity, or justness but was reconstructed as an unreasonable squandering on the royal mistress – on her and hers, so to speak. On the other hand, in Fauques' presentation of Mme de Pompadour and M. d'Étiolles, compensation was presented as a forcible measure, just as the land purchased for her houses. Instead, the profits that M. d'Étiolles gained from selling his wife (or rather, his right and honour) were understood in terms of "oppression of despotism"⁷⁰³, which referred to the peremptory nature of royal reimbursement, and in terms of "his meanness"⁷⁰⁴, which in turn referred to the fact that he did not turn down the royal compensation, thus literally losing his honour when selling it to the king.

The compensation of the mistress's husband was not only a matter of money – which it also was, since the amount of reimbursement was expected to be generous, yet not excessive. It contributed to reflecting and defining the ideals of the monarchical system and the image of the king. When discussing the nature of the criminality in the adulterous relationship between the king and his mistress, the eighteenth-century writers were actually discussing the limits and prerogatives of monarchical rule by testing the credibility of the norms, ideals, and values behind them. Much of this debate was discussed in terms of tension between a tyrannical husband and a tyrannical king. In the debate, the ideals concerning kingship, especially in relation to royal protection and royal justice, were used in order to support or to criticise the prevailing rule. Thus, the discourse about the royal mistress and the money showered on her and hers was not actually about money at all. It tied together conceptions about those moral and rational capacities that were expected from the highest royal decision-maker. The cost of a royal mistress as a moral and rational question leads us further to the entanglement of legitimate rule and moral capacities in the theme of luxury and corruption.

⁷⁰² Walpole 1804a, 86; Hervey 1848a, 94; Walpole 1818, 72.

⁷⁰³ Fauques 1758b, 57. "l'abus d'un pouvoir despotique", Fauques 1759, 131.

⁷⁰⁴ Fauques 1758b, 57. "sa propre lacheté", Fauques 1759, 131.

3.7 Luxury and corruption

As discussed in section 3.5, the amount of money that the royal mistresses spent was not alone the cause of general scandal and indignation, although the sums when mentioned were described as high. The real climax of the presentations of costly royal mistresses were the portrayals of the objects on which they wasted fortunes: dress, ornaments, trinkets, and other splendour with no real value. Especially Mme du Barry was reprehended for her extravagant splendour, in France⁷⁰⁵ as well in Britain⁷⁰⁶. Thus, most of the royal mistresses' spending was defined as frivolity, hollow and meaningless pomp and parade⁷⁰⁷ that was connected to their vanity and thoughtlessness:

Legere & frivole, tout son [Mme du Barry] attrait se tournoit vers les objets qui avoient toujours attiré son goût. Les parures, les bijoux, le luxe, étoient ce qui l'occupoit le plus.⁷⁰⁸

As such, the presentations of frivolous ostentation and objects of plain vanity belonged and contributed to the contemporary debate about *luxury*. As previous scholars have pointed out, during the eighteenth century consumption patterns changed and luxury goods became available more widely to consumers outside the aristocratic elites. This development changed the conceptualisation of luxury, semi-luxury, and necessity as well as central concepts used in the debate. For example, instead of *luxury*, also *taste* was used to define proper and ideal consumption and style of elites.⁷⁰⁹ Taste played a role in the discourse on the royal mistresses as well, especially in connection with the presented rank and status of the royal mistress, as for example, in the previous case of Mme du Barry. However, the consumption of the royal mistresses was still more connected to the more traditional discourse on luxury, excessiveness, and complications relating to them, namely *corruption* and *degeneration*.

During the eighteenth century, there was at times a heated debate over luxury and excessive consumption where the conception of femininity and masculinity especially had a crucial part to play. Luxury and excessiveness were multifaceted concepts that had not only religious and moralistic dimensions but social and political ones as well, since at times the debate about extravagance was

⁷⁰⁵ As e.g. "Le Roi [Louis XV] consolait Madame Dubarri par les choses qui pouvoient flatter la vanité & le luxe de cette Favorite. Depuis longtems, il étoit question d'une toilette d'or qu'elle faisoit faire. [...]" Mairobert 1775, 205–206. "The King comforted Madam Dubarrè by what flattered the vanity and pride of the favourite. People had talked a long while of a toilet of gold that she had ordered to be made: [...]" Bécu 1777b, 194–195.

⁷⁰⁶ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/283, Blaquiere to Rochford, Paris, 11th Sep. 1771, Private, 106.

⁷⁰⁷ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 129, 224, 232–234; Fauques 1759, 143–144; Fauques 1766b, 58–59; Bécu 1777b, 220–221, 231–235.

⁷⁰⁸ Mairobert 1775, 224. "Vain and thoughtless as she [Mme du Barry] was, her sole ambition centered in objects that she had constantly a passion for. Dress, jewels and pomp entirely engrossed her mind." Bécu 1777b, 221.

⁷⁰⁹ See, e.g. Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015; Pajur 2017; Clemente 2017; Blondé & De Laet 2017.

politicised as criticism against the aristocratic lifestyle and courtly life. This was the case with the presentations of royal mistresses' lavish living as well. Both British and French eighteenth-century writers and thinkers in the fields of moral, religious, political, and economic thought sought to define the concepts of luxury and the limits of excessive consumption.⁷¹⁰ In both countries, there were uncompromising writers who defined all unnecessary consumption as reprehensible and possibly corrupting luxury as well as those who promoted consumption as a source of progress, population growth, civility, and strengthening of the kingdom.⁷¹¹ The debate about luxury was further complicated by the introduction of new ideals regarding royal or noble consumption that highlighted moderation, as well as by the growing consumption of wealthy commoners that changed the meanings of luxury as a mark of noble distinction.⁷¹² Overall, the concept of *luxury* was easily used, highly politicised, rarely defined, and thus remained equivocal throughout the eighteenth century.

In addition, both in Britain and in France, the link between luxury, taste, and femininity was well-known, continually reproduced, and strongly politicised when connected to avarice and *corruption*. However, this interconnection is more apparent in the materials describing the French court. For example, the Abbé de Bernis wrote in his memoirs about the court of the Regent Duc d'Orléans in familiar terms of female influence, irreligion, luxury, avarice, and corruption:

Les femmes, qui ont toujours eu l'ambition de gouverner les États, espèrent tour à tour de prendre les rênes de l'Empire sous un prince qui ne pouvait se passer de maîtresses, et qui avait des raisons pour en changer souvent; mais elles n'eurent auprès de lui que le crédit de s'enrichir aux dépens de l'État, et de faire souvent nommer aux emplois des

⁷¹⁰ See, e.g. Hont 2006. On French, and especially Rousseauian, luxury-debates, see, e.g. Jones 1994; Furniss 2007; On British luxury-debates, especially on Country Whig criticism, see, e.g. Black 1987, 266, 268; Claydon 2007, 274; Spellman 1998, 104.

⁷¹¹ Especially Christian writers, and in Britain the republicans and Country Whigs in particular, attacked luxury and excessive consumption as the main reason for political corruption, for corrupting the honour and love for one's country, for impoverishing the countryside and for decreasing the population. See, e.g. Hont 2006, 380; Spellman 1998, 104; Claydon 2007, 274. While e.g. Montesquieu (*Persian Letters*, 1721) linked luxury to progress and civilisation, and the sympathisers of consumption, e.g. those who worked in the newly emerged fashion-industry or belonged to the higher order that lived by the traditional standard of showing one's rank, emphasised the link between luxury and delight, taste, and good manners. Hont 2006, 380, 390, 395, 405–407, 412; Jones 1994, 943. Of course, there were trains of thought that contrasted true beauty and luxury (Rousseau) or luxury and taste. See, e.g. Jones 1994, 944–945, 959–960. On the Rousseauian conception of luxury as corruptive, see Furniss 2007, 600. Certainly, there currents of thought that emphasised luxury as necessary, inevitable, and even beneficial for the state. See, e.g. Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017, 2; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 3, 5; Clemente 2017, 63–64. For example, in Mandevillean understanding luxury originated from the petty passions and private vices of people, but as consumption on items of luxury enlivened the trade and commerce, these private passions actually promoted public good. See, e.g. Hont 2006, 387–395; Downie 1994, 107–109; Peltonen 2003, 299–301.

⁷¹² See, e.g. Hours 2002, 127–131; Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017, 2–3, 7–8; Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 1–2; Marraud 2014, 346; Clemente 2017, 64.

gens incapables de les remplir. On peut dire que la dissolution fut à son comble pendant la Régence. Les femmes s'accoutumèrent à l'incrédulité, à l'indécence, à l'amour de l'argent et à la fantaisie de gouverner les gens en place; il ne manquait pour achever l'ouvrage de la corruption que de pousser le luxe à son comble.⁷¹³

Conceptually the interconnection of luxury, corruption, éclat of the royal court, aristocratic or courtly lifestyle, and gender was multifaceted. Even though in the debate on the royal mistresses, the discourse of luxury looked like a never-ending list of examples of dissipation on items of luxury for the pleasure of the royal mistress, it was only the surface level of a more complex and politically significant discourse. To understand the political meaning of the discourse of luxury, the first step would be to understand that *luxury* itself was not merely an issue concerning outward appearance. It was also connected to the inner capacities, abilities, and facilities of any given person who was presented in terms of living a luxurious life – that is, any given person in courtly or high society. Thus, the discourse on luxury seeped down from the field of style, fashion, and manners into the sphere of morals.

Furthermore, the correlation of inward facilities and outward appearance gained political significance when it was connected to the concept of *corruption*. There was a significant dual sense in eighteenth-century definitions of *corruption*. Firstly, corruption was understood in terms of bribery or venality. This is still familiar in its political use in modern debates too, as it referred to the essentially illegitimate purchase of a person's services, favours, power, or influence. Secondly, the concept *corruption* referred to moral corruption as well, or more specifically, to the shift from virtue to vice and loss of right and proper principles.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ Pierre 1903, 42. "Women, who have always had the ambition to govern, hoped to lay hold of the reins of empire under a prince who could not do without mistresses, and who had reasons to change them often. But they never had with him any other influence than that of enriching themselves at the cost of the State, and of sometimes appointing to offices men who were incapable of filling them. It may be said that dissolution reached its height during the Regency. The women grew accustomed to unbelief, indecency, love of money, and the notion of governing men in power; nothing was lacking to complete the work of corruption but to push luxury to extremes."

Pierre 1902a, 114. This citation certainly reveals conceptions of women's use of power or female influence. These themes will be explored further in section 4.2.3.

⁷¹⁴ See, e.g. "corrupt: to mar or spoil, to destroy or waste; to debauch or defile; to infect or taint; to pervert or bribe; also to become corrupt, to putrefy." Bailey 1730, "corrupt"; "[...] Figuratively, to engage a person to do something contrary to his inclination or conscience by bribes or money; [...]" Barclay 1774, "corrupt"; "lost to piety, or morality; biased by [bribes]; [...]" Barlow 1772a, "corrupt"; "vicious; void of moral goodness; lost to piety; biased by bribes. [...]" Barclay 1774, "corrupt"; "[...] void of good principles." Ash 1775a, "corrupt"; Allen 1765, "corrupter"; Barlow 1772a, "corrupter"; Barclay 1774, "corrupter". "Corruption: a corrupting, marring, &c. of morals or manner; [...]" Bailey 1730, "corruption". Especially Allen's (1765) and Barlow's (1772) definition of corruption connotes that even though corruption was understood as losing one's good principles and moral virtue, in the British context political corruption was first and foremost *bribery*. "a change from virtue to vice. In Politics, a state wherein persons are bought by bribes, or act only from lucrative motives. [...]", Allen 1765, "corruption"; "[...]" Barlow 1772a, "corruption"; Barclay 1774, "corruption". In contrast, in France political corruption was primarily corruption of morals and manners—or *moeurs*—as I demonstrate in this section. Chambaud 1761, "corruption".

In this section, we peruse the interconnection of *luxury* and *corruption* as they were understood and used in the debate on the royal mistresses. The debate on the royal mistresses simultaneously served the wider debate about luxury and corruption in various ways. On the one hand, in the debate about the royal mistresses, the eighteenth-century writers and debaters were able to convey their conceptions of the courtiers or of the totality of courtly or aristocratic society. Thus, they participated in the debates about luxury, corruption, and courtly or aristocratic culture – most often by creating imagies about courtly decadence. On the other hand, the writers were able to connect certain kinds of luxury or corruption to the royal mistresses themselves. In this, they participated in more minute debates about the prevailing policies and gave more detailed presentations of the king. Furthermore, both ways of discussing courtly society contributed to the debates concerning the political decision makers, their facilities, capacities, functions, and abilities which were further used when discussing the political system, form of government, and the legitimacy of the prevailing rule.

In relation to royal mistresses, the debate about luxury and corruption consisted of four partly overlapping and mutually supporting discourses and themes: i) luxury as corruptive, ii) luxurious lifestyle as a proof of corruption, iii) luxuriousness and corruption of the court in the form of affectation and falsity, and iv) integration of corruptive luxury and femininity. By processing these themes and discourses, this section aspires to uncover the interdependence of the concepts *luxury* and *corruption* and demonstrate their various meanings and uses in eighteenth-century British and French political debates. This section also distinguishes certain instances when the royal mistresses were represented as the source of corruption or as corrupting agents, as well as some national differences in the meanings and uses of the *luxury* and *corruption*.

3.7.1 Luxury as corruptive

First of all, luxury was regarded as degenerative or corruptive, or at least benumbing, in itself. For example, in the story about Mme du Barry's rise to power there was a recurring anecdote about her occupations before she entered the court where the interconnection of luxury and corruption of morals and manners was reproduced. Mme du Barry, as a young woman under the name L'Ange, was related to have been employed by M. Labille in his clothing store as a *filles de mode*.⁷¹⁵ In Labille's store, she was continually exposed to fashionable dress and accessories that she could not but covet, thus arousing vanity and love for luxury in her young heart.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁵ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 14–17; Mairobert 1779a, IVe. LETTRE. A sa Mere, 5; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER IV. To her mother, 5.

⁷¹⁶ “[...] Une boutique de modes ne peut que flatter infiniment les goûts d’une fille qui entre dans le monde, & qui n’a encore rien vû. C’est véritablement le Temple de la Coquetterie. On lui fait passer tour-à-tour en revue les étoffes les plus riches & les plus précieuses, les parures les plus élégantes & les plus recherchées, les fanfreluches, les pompons, les ajustemens, les ornemens si délicieux pour une femme, tout ce que l’aiguille ou le fuseau peuvent produire d’exquis. Comment une jeune

Comment une jeune Nymphé résisteroit-elle à tant de charmes? C'est Achille entouré d'armes pour la première fois. D'ailleurs, si ce spectacle doit nécessairement éveiller la vanité dans un cœur novice, y faire naître l'amour du luxe & de la frivolité; on verra par le détail des occupations journalières d'une fille de modes, qu'elle ne peut à la longue échapper à la corruption des mœurs de ses semblables. [...]⁷¹⁷.

After her heart was thus corrupted into the passion for luxury and her morals twisted by her want for fineries, she was approached by Mme Gourdan, a famed Madam – a procuress or a governess of a brothel. Mme Gourdan seduced young Mlle L'Ange into prostitution by displaying her all that luxury that a successful courtesan could afford and showing her the means to attain the ostentation she longed for.⁷¹⁸ Finally, it fell to Count Jean-Baptiste (John) du Barry to delude Mlle L'Ange with not only dresses, ornaments, and jewelries but also apartments and the style of a fine lady into becoming his kept woman and to engage herself in his various intrigues and frauds that eventually led to her becoming the king's mistress.⁷¹⁹

Nymphé résisteroit-elle à tant de charmes? C'est Achille entouré d'armes pour la première fois. D'ailleurs, si ce spectacle doit nécessairement éveiller la vanité dans un cœur novice, y faire naître l'amour du luxe & la frivolité; on verra par le détail des occupations journalières d'une fille de modes, qu'elle ne peut à la longue échapper à la corruption des mœurs de ses semblables. [...] A ces séductions, qui entrent par tous les sens dans le cœur d'une fille de modes, qu'on ajoute les efforts plus actifs de ces Duegnes, émissaires du libertinage, qui, la regardant déjà comme une victime dévouée au plaisir, lui font sourdement les offres le plus flatteuses, soit par elles-mêmes, soit en faveur d'un Cavalier galant, dont les yeux de concupiscence seront tombés sur la jeune enfant; & l'on conclura, qu'il est moralement impossible que celle-ci ne succombe à l'exemple général." Mairobert 1775, 14-17. "A store of fashion can not but flatter infinitely the taste of a girl who just enters the world, & has not seen anything yet. It is truly the Temple of Coquetry. One after another, the most rich and precious cloths, the most elegant and desired decorations, the trinkets, the pom-poms, the accessories, the ornaments so delicious for a woman, all that the needle or the spindle can make exquisite are passed to her. How could a young Nymph resist such charms? It is Achilles surrounded by weapons for the first time. Besides, if this spectacle must necessarily awaken vanity in a novice Heart, kindle there the love of luxury & frivolity; it will be seen that a fille de modes in her daily occupations can not long escape the corruption of morals of similar people [...] To these seductions, which enter through all the senses in the Heart of a fille de modes, we add the more active efforts of those Duennas, emissaries of libertinage, who, already looking at her like a victim devoted to Pleasure, make her dully the most flattering offers, either for themselves, or in favour of a gallant Cavalier, whose concupiscent eyes falls upon the young child; & concluding, that it is morally impossible that she would not succumb to the general example." (Translation E.K.). Also in, e.g. Mairobert 1779b, LETTER IV. To her mother, 5; Mairobert 1779a, IVe. LETTRE. A sa Mere, 5.

⁷¹⁷ Mairobert 1775, 14 -16. "How could a young Nymph resist such charms? It is Achilles surrounded by weapons for the first time. Besides, as this spectacle must necessarily awaken vanity in a novice Heart, kindle there the love of luxury & frivolity; it will be seen that a fille de modes in her daily occupations can not long escape the corruption of morals of similar people." (Translation E.K.)

⁷¹⁸ Mairobert 1775, 17-23; Mairobert 1779a, IVe. LETTRE. A sa Mere, 5-6; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER IV. To her mother, 5.

⁷¹⁹ "Vous serez d'abord la maîtresse de mon cœur, & en cette qualité la souveraine de mon hôtel, où vous commanderez à tous mes gens, qui seront désormais les vôtres. Comme je suis répandu dans tout ce qu'il y a de mieux, tant à la cour, qu'à la ville, vous ne serez pas étonnée de voir chez moi, ou plutôt chez vous, des Marquis, des Ducs, des Princes même, qui se feront honneur de vous présenter leurs hommages. Vous paroîtrez sur un ton imposant, & pour cet effet, vous ne manquerez ni de robes, ni de diamants, ni de tout ce qui pourra vous égaler aux femmes du premier rang."

It is noteworthy that this description of the corruption or degeneration of a young damsel's morals with beautiful frivolities and fineries was an essential part of a popular narrative about a prostitute's life. The key element in the story of a prostitute was the gradual corruption of a young girl's morals, usually through luxury or passion, until she entered into extramarital sexual relations, either in order to gain money to purchase the coveted dress and jewelry or giving in to her uncontrollable lust for sex.⁷²⁰ Here as well, we confront a strong connection between the rank and status of the girl and her corruptibility by trinkets and splendour. Evidently, with the example of young Mlle L'Ange, luxury was regarded as having the power to corrupt the hearts of young women of the lowering sort. The same idea about young ladies without high birth being tempted and corrupted by the dazzling ostentations of the royal court was presented in various other anecdotes and on other occasions as well, as for example in Mlle O'Muprhy's story.⁷²¹ Such example stressed that persons belonging to the middling and lowering sort were unfamiliar with *éclat* and pomp, and thus vulnerable to the corruptive temptations of luxury.

A tempting interpretation would be that persons of noble birth would have been understood as having been out of reach of the corruptive capacity of items of luxury because they had been accustomed to the pomp and splendour of the court. However, quite the contrary, the nobility was also presented as having been at risk of this same corruption of morals and manners since they lived their daily lives amidst ostentation and temptations. The courtly lifestyle was presented as encouraging ever-increasing levels of ostentation, luxury, and pomp, since luxury was defined not only as degenerative and corruptive but also numbing. The following example was given in the name of Mme de Pompadour, thus giving her the credit of perceiving and understanding the meaninglessness and emptiness of the pomp of the royal court and raising her above the rest of the court that was corrupted by, and into, hollow luxury:

Il y avoit des moments où tout me devenoit insipide. J'éprouvai souvent, ce qu'avoit dit une fois Madame de Maintenon, que dans tous les états de la vie il y a un vuide affreux. [...] Ceux qui aspirent à un rang plus élevé que celui où la vertu les a fait naître,

Mairobert 1779a, XVIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 20 juin 1767, 22-23. "You will be immediately installed sovereign of my heart; in right of which you become mistress of my house, and govern my servants, who from thenceforth will be yours. As I see all the best company, you must not be surprised to find dukes, marquises, and even princes of the blood coming to visit at my house, or rather your's [sic.]. They will be proud of paying their respects to you, because you will appear in the highest stile [sic.], as you will have diamonds, and every ornament befitting a woman of the first rank." Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVI, From the Count du Barry, Paris, 20th June 1767, 19-20; Mairobert 1775, 58, 62-64; Bécu 1777a, 5-10; Mairobert 1779a, XXIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 9 sept. 1768, 29-31; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXI. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 9th Sep. 1768, 25-26.

⁷²⁰ On prostitutes' narratives, see, e.g. Cheek 1994-1995, 201-205; Hufton 1998, 312-314, 318-320.

⁷²¹ Fauques 1759, 93-105; Fauques 1758b, 8-23; Fauques 1766a, 156-171.

s'imaginent que les richesses, les rangs, les titres & les grandeurs contribuent à la félicité; & que c'est dans ces prétendus avantages qu'est le bonheur. C'est une idée trompeuse, on s'accoutume dans toutes ces choses, dans peu elles ne touchent plus.⁷²²

But what is more, the corruptive power of the luxurious ostentation and pomp of the royal court, courtiers, and nobility was not solely a matter of the corruption of morals and manners of private subjects but a matter of state, as is evident in the censure of Mme de Pompadour for the lack of capable officers in French government:

On m'a chargé en même tems d'avoir employé des gens dans le ministère, dont le génie mince & superficiel n'étoit point propre aux affaires. Mais où en prendre d'autres en France? On diroit que l'esprit humain s'est retréci chez nous. [...] Elle [noblesse Française] passe sa vie dans l'oisiveté, la molesse, & la dissipation. La politique lui est aussi inconnue que les finances & l'économie. Un gentilhomme chasse toute sa vie dans ses terres, ou il vient à Paris se ruiner avec une fille de l'opéra. Ceux qui ont assez d'ambition pour percer dans le ministère, n'ont d'autre mérite que celui de l'intrigue & de la cabale [sic].⁷²³

Here, the luxurious life of nobility was presented as causing the degeneration of noblemen, which in turn resulted in the degeneration of the government.

Luxury, as fashionable and meaningless items of outward appearance, was thus reconstructed as inwardly corruptive. That is to say, luxury was represented as a *temptation* to which especially persons who were not accustomed to it were vulnerable. Yet, since it was furthermore inseparably intertwined with courtly society in the form of ostentation, splendour, and pomp, it could be reconstructed as the source of degeneration of noblemen as well. The higher rank and status that had accustomed the nobility and courtiers to higher levels of ostentation did not protect their senses against the temptations and corruptive capacities of luxury. Instead, courtly luxury was redefined as numbing luxury that necessitated ever-increasing levels of ostentation, and in this sense, also ever greater dangers of taint and corruption of morals and manners.

In this manner, the eighteenth-century writers of the French royal mistresses' biographies could criticise the courtly and aristocratic lifestyle in its

⁷²² Poisson 1766b, 113–114. "At certain moments every thing was insipid to me. I was convinced of the propriety of what Madam de Maintenon once said, that in every state of life there is a dreadful vacuum. [...] Those who aspire to a more elevated sphere than that wherein virtue has placed them, fancy that riches, rank, grandeur and titles, contribute to happiness, and that in these imaginary advantages felicity centers. This is a fallacious opinion; when once we are accustomed to these things, they seldom afford us any gratification. The idea which we frame of them, pleases us more than possession itself." Poisson 1766d, 117–119. On the emptiness and hollowness of courtly splendor, see also, e.g. Poisson 1771a, LETTRE III. A Madame La Maréchale D'Étrées, 1754, 4; Poisson 1772, LETTER XL, To the duchess d'Étrées, 87; Poisson 1771c, LETTER III. To the lady of the marshal d'Étrées, 1754, 7.

⁷²³ Poisson 1766a, 41. "I have been likewise accused of introducing into the ministry persons of no turn for business, ignorant, shallow, and superficial fellows; but where shall I find any other in France? The human mind seems to have been degenerated among us. The French nobility [...]; their life is a round of indolence, luxury, and dissipation. They know as little of politics as of finances and oeconomy. A gentleman that spends his life at his seat in rural sports, or comes to Paris to ruin himself with an opera girl. They who have an ambition to figure in the ministry, have no other merit than intrigue and cabal." Poisson 1766c, 41.

entirety and imply that the poor state of the government was due to the degeneration of the nobility and high society that filled the places of the royal government. However, such a suggestion did not threaten the whole monarchical system, and in fact such a criticism still left the prevailing political system quite intact. Critics stated that the corrupted courtiers indeed transferred their degeneration and corrupted morals and manners into government when they were made ministers. And indeed, they stated that there was not much choice left since the aristocratic lifestyle had a tendency to spoil the morals and manners of their young. But in relation to the corruptive tendency of ostentation, the writers did not consider the system of choosing ministers and building the government to be corrupted in itself. Thus, on this first point, the criticism was directed mainly at the high aristocracy's traditional way of living and the education and recreation of the young noblemen, who were presented as having done better in their places in court and government if they had studied profitable arts, such as politics and finances⁷²⁴, instead of fashionable manners and dress. In this sense, as the eighteenth-century writers started to define and redefine the proper pastimes and occupation of a public office-holder, the focus of the debate about the problems relating to luxury was shifted from the field of *moral* or *private* vices and virtues to *political* or *public* ones.

This was also a point that could be utilised against the old aristocratic families with their traditional legitimation as well as against the royal tradition of choosing the ministers of state from the ranks of ancient families (mainly from sword-nobles, *noblesse d'épée*). Thus, an argument defining proper/improper education and pastimes and their connection to corruption could be used in favour of the newer nobilities, especially the rapidly expanding bureaucratic nobility (*robe-nobles*, *noblesse de robe*).⁷²⁵ This was a struggle fought with the concept *merit*. Here, it is sufficient to note that the delegitimation of traditional courtly elites through their early education and chosen pastime could be used in denying their merit, and consequently, their right of participation in the government of the realm. We will return to the conflict within the nobility and elites about legitimate influence and position in the government in section 4.2.

3.7.2 Luxury as a mark of corruption: avarice and bribery

Ostentation and excessive luxury was not only corruptive in itself but was presented as the (highest) mark of corruptness and venality of the royal court, courtiers and all kinds of officers of state and church, as is evident in the Abbé de Bernis' presentation of the court of the Regent Duc d'Orléans:

⁷²⁴ Poisson 1766a, 41. Poisson 1766c, 41.

⁷²⁵ Regarding the conflict between *noblesse d'épée* and *noblesse de robe*, see, e.g. Poussou 2014; Marraud 2014, 346-349; Dréville 2000, 317-333; Baecque 1997, 173-174; Mettam 2007, 131-132; Roche 1999, 199-201, 279, 363-365, 373-376, 378; Landes 1988, 24-25; Maza 1993, 76, 147-148; Maćzak 1996, 199-200.

On peut dire que la dissolution fut à son comble pendant la Régence. Les femmes s'accoutumèrent à l'incrédulité, à l'indécence, à l'amour de l'argent et à la fantaisie de gouverner les gens en place; il ne manquait pour achever l'ouvrage de la corruption que de pousser le luxe à son comble.⁷²⁶

Thus, the state of extravagance served as a sign or distinctive feature of a corrupt or degenerated person. Anyone that was described as wallowing in luxury and splendour could be understood as corrupted, either in the sense that they were to be bought or that they had lost their sense in relation to morals, manners, and taste.⁷²⁷ Furthermore, through the use of such examples, it was possible to combine – or demonstrate the link between – outward and inward attributes.⁷²⁸ In this sense, the inward characteristics such as morality and virtue could be transferred as outward qualities (or manners), which included beauty and pomp, or luxurious fashions of apparel and conduct. Criticising someone's outward appearance was then at the same time criticism against that person's assumed inward failings and vices.

The interconnection of avarice and corruption produced a significant national difference between the French and the English meanings and uses of the term *corruption*. Even though in both political cultures and languages the term could be applied to distortion of morals and manners (thus linked to sin, debauchery, libertinism, etc.) and to dishonesty in the use of power, as for example bribery, the latter use was more significant in English political culture. The *English corruption* was not in its primary sense degeneration or degradation of morals and manners as in the French discourse about political corruption, but venality and bribery, fraudulent political decision-making resulting from avariciousness and love for money. For example, after returning from his trip to France, Horace Walpole wrote about the current political disputes in the French government and parliaments:

For the misery of his people, and for the danger of his successors (if he escapes himself) the King, I think, will triumph over his country: a victory most Kings prefer, not only to peace, but to foreign laurels. The Princes of the Blood are firm, without spirit or sense: the nobility have as little of either; the vigour of parliamentary remonstrances

⁷²⁶ Pierre 1903, 42. "It may be said that dissolution reached its height during the Regency. The women grew accustomed to unbelief, indecency, love of money, and the notion of governing men in power; nothing was lacking to complete the work of corruption but to push luxury to extremes." Pierre 1902a, 114.

⁷²⁷ As, e.g. "Lady Sundon was bribed with a pair of diamond ear-rings, and procured the donor a good place at court. Though the matter was notoriously known, she was so imprudent as to wear them constantly in public. This being blamed in a company, Lady Wortley Montague, like Mrs. Candour, undertook Lady Sundon's defence. "And pray," says she, "where is the harm? I, for my part, think Lady Sundon acts wisely—for does not the push shew where the wine is sold?" Walpole 1804a, 132-133; Walpole 1833a, LETTER XVIII. From Orford to Mann, London, 7th Jan. 1741-2, 86-87; Fauques 1759, 67-68; Fauques 1758a, 86-87. On the scandalous luxury of the clergy, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 170; Poisson 1766c, 168; Poisson 1766a, 171; Poisson 1766c, 169.

⁷²⁸ Peltonen 2003, 1-2, 18, 22-23, 30, 32-33, 123, 235-236, 253; Farr 1991, 394-395; Klein 2002; Elias 2006, 70, 103-105, 109-110, 121, 146.

are hushed by the English remedy – bribery; and the people curse the King, the Chancellor, the mistress; and starve.⁷²⁹

Walpole's use of term *English remedy* suggests that even though bribery was not unfamiliar in the French government, it was essentially the English way of dealing with political discord.

The same conception of the English ministers and members of parliament being corruptible was reinforced in French political discourses as well.⁷³⁰ For example, Mme de Pompadour was presented as instructing the French Ambassador Gaston Pierre de Lévis, Duc de Lévis-Mirepoix, in the arts of dealing with English ministers:

La France fait depuis long-temps, que ce précieux métal est tout-puissant en Angle-terre; & que tout y est à vendre, la paix, la guerre, la justice & la vertu.⁷³¹

In this context, the avariciousness of the British king that was mentioned earlier in section 3.4 becomes even more significant. If the principal characteristic of the king was love and lust after money, then the highest authority in the kingdom was constructed as essentially corruptible, open to bribery and possibly influenced by any agent with money.

Of course, there were political arguments, especially ones that rested upon an understanding of republican political thought or Country whig language, where the idea of moral corruption was a key element.⁷³² These arguments were used mainly in debates that sought to sustain parliamentary independence against the traditional prerogatives and means of influence of the king (for example, in arguments against placemen, system of royal pensions, and the traditional Civil List that was independent of parliamentary control). However, I claim that even in these British debates corruption was essentially interconnected with money and pecuniary advantages, necessities, and seductions. Moral corruption was connected to ideas about independence that

⁷²⁹ Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII, From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 164–165.

⁷³⁰ See, e.g. “*L’or est un métal ici qui adoucit le sang trop belliqueux. Il n’y a point de guerrier fougueux dans le parlement, qu’une pension de deux mille livres ne rende très pacifique.*” Poisson 1766a, 59. This is a citation about Sir Robert Walpole’s alleged letter to Cardinal Fleury where he asks for money to buy the British Parliament into peace during the War of the Austrian Succession: “*Gold is a metal which here corrects all qualities in the blood. A pension of two thousand pounds a year will make the most impetuous warrior in parliament as tame as a lamb.*” Poisson 1766c, 58–59. The previous was also noted in Almon’s recollection of William Pitt, in a footnote to a chapter concerning an anecdote about the bribery in House of Commons, Almon 1792a, footnote, 137–138. See also, Poisson 1771a, LÉTTRE LXV. Au Duc de Nivernois, oct. 1762, 104–106; Poisson 1771b, LETTER LXV, To the duke of Nivernois [duc de Nevers], Oct. 1762, 54–56; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLIX. A Mr. de Bussi, 78; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLIX, To mr. de Bussi, [1761], 167–168; Almon 1792a, 254–257, an anecdote about the English trying to buy peace from Mme de Pompadour.

⁷³¹ Poisson 1771a, Au Duc de Mirepoix, 1753, 2. “France has long known that precious metal to be almighty in England, and that there every thing has its price; peace, war, justice, and virtue.” Poisson 1771c, LETTER I. To the duke of Mirepoix, 1753, 3.

⁷³² See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 68; Lieberman 2006, 327–328; McCormack 2005, 57, 63–67, 75, 90; Hicks 2005; van Horn Melton 2009, 27–28; Downie 1994, 111–145; Sparling 2013, 627–628; Black 1987, 153; Spellman 1998, 103–104; Peltonen 2003, 242–243, 256.

was further conceptualised as the indispensable prerequisite for political participation since it was defined as guaranteeing that the political decision-makers did not function for their own private interest. The pivotal element of moral corruption (corruption of principles of common good, and consequently, the corruption of a person's political or civil virtues and a person's legitimate right to political participation) revolved around the concept of political independence (and dependence) that was substantially understood in terms of financial independence. In this logic, the corruption of morals (as political virtues) would occur in the moment of offering a gift or bribe, and it would have a corrupting effect on both the person to whom the gift/bribe was offered and the person who was offering it. Essentially, temptation was enough to corrupt a person's morals and manners or political virtue, but temptation itself was inextricably linked with financial interests.⁷³³ By contrast, in the French debates the corruption of morals and manners was first and foremost the degradation of taste and distortion of principles that could – but did not necessarily – include pecuniary interests and benefits.

3.7.3 Luxury, corruption and affectation

Furthermore, luxury and corruption were linked to the royal court where it took the form of affectation, falsity, and unnaturalness in nobles' and courtiers' morals, manners, and taste. Horace Walpole wrote to Henry Seymour Conway when the latter was visiting gold and silver mines in Kremnica, then part of the Kingdom of Hungary⁷³⁴:

I did not think you had been so like the rest of the world, as, when you pretended to be visiting armies, to go in search of gold and silver mines! The favours of courts and the smiles of emperors and kings, I see, have corrupted even you, and perverted you to a nabob.⁷³⁵

Although Walpole wrote jokingly to his friend, his jest was based on a general notion that there was something in the courts and in the company of the great that corrupted men. And that something was luxury, avarice, ambition (for distinction and honour), and private interest that all the courtiers were expected or represented to be striving for.⁷³⁶

⁷³³ See, e.g. Sparling 2013, 622–627; McCormack 2005, 67; Peltonen 2003, 183–184, 242–243; Reitan 1966, 321, 324–325, 329–330.

⁷³⁴ At present, in Slovakia.

⁷³⁵ Walpole 1820c, Orford to the Hon. H. S. Conway, Strawberry-Hill, 7th Sep. 1774, 457.

⁷³⁶ Regarding the French debate, see, e.g. portrayal of Abbé de Bernis : “Je me trompois: cet Abbé étoit dévoré du désir de se distinguer à la cour. Sous un désintéressement simulé, il cachoit une ambition démesurée.” Poisson 1766a, 92. “But I was mistaken; this Abbe was eaten up with a desire of court distinction, concealing an unbounded ambition under a hypocritical disinterestedness. [...]” Poisson 1766c, 91–92. Portrayal of Regent Duc de Orléans' court: Pierre 1903, 40–42; Pierre 1902a, 112–114. Regarding British sentiments, see, e.g. Lady Betty Germaine's feelings about the avaricious and corrupt British court, Howard 1824b, from Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732–3, 54–57.

I have already mentioned that the pomp and parade of the royal courts were constructed as empty, meaningless, and possibly tedious, especially for persons who were described as being morally above the degeneration of ostentation, as for example Mme de Pompadour in *The Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766). Such positive presentations of royal mistresses were a rarity that usually conducted to a greater narrative of the false refinements of courtly luxury and the nobility's degeneration of morals and taste. For example, in an anecdote about Marie-Louise O'Murphy, *petite-maîtresse* of Louis XV, the beauty of the young Mlle O'Murphy was purposely constructed as the counterpoint to the corruption, degeneration, and degradation of the morals and taste of the royal court – the deterioration and perversion that further affected even the king himself.

First of all, Mlle O'Murphy was described as having been “a feast of pure nature”⁷³⁷ against which all the refinements, pleasures, and beauty in the royal court and especially of the king's official mistress, Mme de Pompadour, were reconstructed as false.⁷³⁸ The idealisation of *naturalness* and idea of true beauty being *natural* was an avowed eighteenth-century notion, known in Britain and France alike, since it constituted an important part of, for example, Rousseauian criticism of luxury.⁷³⁹

Idealisation of *naturalness* in this instance was not principally admiration of nature as in the romanticism of the latter half of the eighteenth century. Instead, it was mainly a normative argument. Normative language operates through undetermined and fluctuating concepts such as *natural*, *good*, *right*, and *proper*, which do not mean anything without their context. What is judged to be good and proper varies in different uses. In this sense, normative language can be applied (and is indeed easily applied) whenever justifying or criticising any political or cultural phenomenon. However, what makes normative language interesting is its political use in certain and definite contexts or speech-acts where its meanings can be deduced. Furthermore, normative language operates in polar opposites, even though the opposite is not necessarily named or defined. Whenever *proper* is defined, it is easy to understand also the *improper* – and vice versa. In other words, the application of normative language is an act of defining that which should be considered justifiable and legitimate as well as defining and condemning that which should be regarded as unjustifiable and illegitimate.

Along these lines, the juxtaposition in the anecdote about the young Mlle O'Murphy stated that there existed *true* and *natural* beauty that was conspicuous by its absence in the royal court. Naturalness⁷⁴⁰, pureness⁷⁴¹, simplicity⁷⁴²,

⁷³⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 9; Fauques 1766a, 158. “Un repas apprêté des mains de la nature, [...]” Fauques 1759, 94.

⁷³⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 94, 103–105; Fauques 1758b, 9, 20–22; Fauques 1766a, 158, 170.

⁷³⁹ See, e.g. Jones 1994, 944–945. On luxury and taste as contrasting ideals, see, e.g. Jones 1994, 959–960.

⁷⁴⁰ Fauques 1759, 94–95; Fauques 1758b, 9–10; Fauques 1766a, 158.

⁷⁴¹ Fauques 1759, 94–95; Fauques 1758b, 9–10; Fauques 1766a, 158–159.

⁷⁴² Fauques 1766a, 159 ; Fauques 1759, 96.

innocence⁷⁴³, beauty⁷⁴⁴, enjoyment⁷⁴⁵, happiness⁷⁴⁶, unadulteratedness,⁷⁴⁷ and good taste⁷⁴⁸ connected to Mlle O'Murphy were contrasted with "non-naturals"⁷⁴⁹, "false refinements"⁷⁵⁰ or "faded attractions"⁷⁵¹, falsity⁷⁵², artifice⁷⁵³, "nauseous affected airs"⁷⁵⁴, spoiled taste⁷⁵⁵, unhappiness,⁷⁵⁶ and pomp⁷⁵⁷ offered by Mme de Pompadour and the royal court. Thus, the language of *naturalness* (as the opposite of for example affectation, masks, and acting) was connected to traditional discourses about courtiers that generally opposed the culture and manners of the royal court and high society.⁷⁵⁸

Still, it was not enough to construct true and valuable beauty, taste, and enjoyment normatively as the opposite of courtly splendour and luxury – this was achieved by reconstructing Mlle O'Murphy's character as *natural*. The genuine, natural, and truly worthy property captured in the description of Mlle O'Murphy was also constructed as *vulnerable* to the corrupting capacities attributed to the royal court and courtiers. As the anecdote continued, Louis XV took Mlle O'Murphy as his *petite-maîtresse* but was reluctant to introduce her into his court, since he was well aware of the danger that the splendour of his court and the affectation of his courtiers posed to her idealised natural character:

Il craignoit avec raison, que son peu d'expérience dans le monde, trop de rudesse dans ses manières, trop de simplicité dans ses réponses [...]; de l'exposât aux railleries & aux huées des courtisans. D'ailleurs on ne pouvoit guères s'attendre que [...] la plus grande au comble du lustre & de la splendeur, ne la fraperoit pas d'éblouissement. Dans les Cours on trouve bien des objets propres à faire tourner la tête : on en rencontre peu qui touchent le cœur.⁷⁵⁹

In this description the king was presented as the protector of young and innocent Mlle O'Murphy from the bad influence of courtly splendour and from the

743 Fauques 1759, 105; Fauques 1758b, 22.
744 Fauques 1759, 94–95, 105; Fauques 1758b, 10, 22; Fauques 1766a, 159.
745 Fauques 1759, 94; Fauques 1758b, 9, 21; Fauques 1766a, 158, 169.
746 Fauques 1758b, 21; Fauques 1766a, 169; Fauques 1759, 104.
747 Fauques 1758b, 22–23; Fauques 1766a, 171.
748 Fauques 1759, 94–95, 104, 105; Fauques 1758b, 9, 21–22; Fauques 1766a, 158, 169–170.
749 Fauques 1758b, 10; Fauques 1766a, 159; "dénature", Fauques 1759, 95.
750 Fauques 1758b, 10; Fauques 1766a, 158; "les faux refinements de la Cour", Fauques 1759, 94.
751 Fauques 1758b, 22; Fauques 1766a, 170.
752 Fauques 1758b, 10; Fauques 1759, 95.
753 Fauques 1758b, 22; Fauques 1766a, 170; Fauques 1759, 105.
754 Fauques 1758b, 10; Fauques 1766a, 158; "l'affectation ennuiante", Fauques 1759, 95.
755 Fauques 1758b, 21; Fauques 1766a, 169; Fauques 1759, 104.
756 Fauques 1759, 95; Fauques 1766a, 158; Fauques 1758b, 10.
757 Fauques 1766a, 160; "splendeur", Fauques 1759, 96.
758 See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 2, 33, 123–124, 164–165, 196, 224, 227–236, 240, 243–244; Klein 2002, 879; McCormack 2005, 83, 109–119, 149, 151; Cohen 2005; Clark 1998, 20, 26; Hours 2002, 21–22, 25; Elias 2006, 121, 230–232.
759 Fauques 1759, 96. "He [Louis XV] was not unaware of, nor perhaps above fearing, the raillery and sneers, to which an air unpolished, the natural simplicity of her answers, [...], would probably expose her. Neither could it be expected, that she herself would not be unpleasingly dazzled with [...] the strongest glare of pomp and magnificence. At courts there are many things to giddy the head, and but few to touch the heart." Fauques 1766a, 159–160; See also, Fauques 1758b, 11.

corrupted or degenerated influence of his courtiers: "The privacy in which he proposed to keep his little novice, was rather a kindness to her; [...]"⁷⁶⁰.

However, in the next turn of the narrative, the king himself fell prey to the same corruption and degeneration of false pomp, affectedness, and spoiled taste as the rest of his court. He was described as unable and incompetent to distinguish natural and true values from falsity and false refinements. This incapacity originated from the long-term exposure to the artifice of the court and influence of his mistress Mme de Pompadour:

A l'ombre d'une vie privée qui ajoutoit infiniment aux charmes de la jouissance, il [Louis XV] y passa des momens qu'il auroit pu nommer, avec raison, les plus voluptueux de sa vie, s'il avoit été en état de connoître tout le prix de son bonheur. Mais, un trop long usage de mots appretés à la Pompadour avoit tellement émoussés ses organes qu'il ne trouvoit plus de gout à un repas [Mlle O'Murphy] si simple, si sain & si capable de flater les sens.⁷⁶¹

The previous anecdote demonstrates the interconnection of falsity, affectation, unnaturalness, and corruption of the morals, manners, taste, and character of the French royal court. In relation to the French court, this interconnection was also constructed as a repetitive and self-fulfilling circle of affectation arising from the private interest and ambition that compelled the agents in the royal court to hide their true motives and assume factitious characters.⁷⁶² In the discourses on the royal mistresses, the factitiousness was presented as the condition of the royal court and a malady that unavoidably affected both the king himself and the daily administration of the kingdom. Every person in the court was described as having concealed his/her true character and motives behind an amiable and virtuous front.⁷⁶³ Mme de Pompadour was given to lament to her sister-in-law

⁷⁶⁰ Fauques 1766a, 160. "La vie privée dans laquelle il vouloit retenir sa nouvelle maîtresse, étoit pour cette jeune beauté une faveur de plus." Fauques 1759, 96. See also, Fauques 1758b, 11.

⁷⁶¹ Fauques 1759, 103-104. "Here under the shade of privacy, adding yet a poignancy to enjoyment, he [Louis XV] passed minutes, he might have justly called the most voluptuous of his life, if he had had the taste to set the just value on his happiness. But long use of the feverish high diet of made sauces, à la Pompadour, had furred his palate and spoiled his relish for this plain, more wholesome, and infinitely better tasted dish [Mlle O'Murphy]." Fauques 1758b, 20-21.

⁷⁶² See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 11-12; Poisson 1766c, 11-12; Walpole 1820c, 142-143; Poisson 1772, LETTER VIII, To the marchioness de Fontenailles, 15-16.

⁷⁶³ As for example, when describing the astonishment of Mme de Pompadour when visiting the royal court for the first time and comparing the court with Paris: "Chaque courtisan, outre son caractère particulier, en a un autre qu'il se forme, à la faveur duquel il joue tous ses rôles. A la ville les vertus & les vices n'y ont qu'un petit espace, ici les uns & les autres occupent un vaste terrain. Les passions y sont d'autant plus vives qu'elles sont à la source des moyens qui servent à les satisfaire. L'intérêt, d'où elles tirent toute leur activité, est là dans son centre." Poisson 1766a, 11-12; "Every courtier, besides his personal character, frames to himself another, under which he acts his several parts. In town, virtue and vice are streightened; here both range at large. The passions are stronger, as they happen to be at the source of the means of gratifying them. Private interest, from whence they derive all their activity, is there in its centre. [...]" Poisson 1766c, 11-12. See also, e.g. Horace Walpole's character of "false, artful, and insinuating" Mme de Mirepoix, Walpole 1820c, 142-143.

Comtesse de Baschi this tedious affectation of character that all the persons belonging to the royal court were supposed to maintain:

One of the peculiar joys of my situation, is to be obliged to show politeness and put kind looks to persons whom I hate, or who hate me.⁷⁶⁴

This falsity of character and concealment of the true motives and opinions were further regarded as the cause of several kinds of problems. First, it was explicitly expressed that the most important ability in the political world was the ability to lie well: "You know better than I that the whole secret of politics consists in lying properly, [...]"⁷⁶⁵. Secondly, falsity and affectation made it impossible for the royal mistress to distinguish friends from foes:

My situation is highly unfortunate. I can neither know my friends nor my enemies: they have all the same show of regard, the same politeness and the same language. Ah! how I hate this mean and flattering world!⁷⁶⁶

Thus, affectation of character made the royal court a world of back-stabbing where the most contemptible and endemic vice was ingratitude and treachery:

Je me suis souvent plaint, depuis mon séjour à Versailles, de cette scélératesse, qui est comme concentrée dans le cœur humain. On n'a pas plutôt placé un mortel au faite des grandeurs, qu'il cherche à blesser la main qui l'a élevé.⁷⁶⁷

The euphemism for court, "Grand Theatre"⁷⁶⁸, signifies in a more jesting manner the artificiality of the court: the false fronts that the courtiers set up, roles they assume or play, intrigues, plots, deceit, and insincerity.

⁷⁶⁴ Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXXIII. To the countess of Baschi, 142.

⁷⁶⁵ Poisson 1771c, LETTER VIII. To the duke of Mirepoix, 1755, 28. "Vous savez mieux que moi que tout le secret de la politique consiste à mentir à propos, [...]", Poisson 1771a, LETTRE VIII. Au Duc de Mirepoix, 1755, 14; See also an estimation of the Duke of Bedford's abilities as a British ambassador in France: "La première qualité d'un Ministre public est de savoir bien mentir pour l'avantage de son pays." Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXVIII. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 113. "The first quality of a public minister is that of lying well for the good of his country." Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXVIII. To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 71-72.

⁷⁶⁶ Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXXIV. To the countess of Baschi, 145. See also, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIX. To the countess of Noailles, 1748, 63-64.

⁷⁶⁷ Poisson 1766a, 226. "Since my [Mme de Pompadour] living at Versailles, I have often lamented this flagitiousness, which is, as it were, innate in the human mind. No sooner is a man invested with honour and power, than he studies to cut off the hand which raised him." Poisson 1766c, 224. On treacherous opportunists, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 259; Poisson 1766c, 258-259. On the breach of Mme de Pompadour and her former creature or friend, the ungrateful Abbé de Bernis, see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 92; Poisson 1766c, 92; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLVIII. Au Cardinal de Bernis, 75-77; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLVIII. To the cardinal de Bernis, 162-163. On the same breach, representing Mme de Pompadour's deceitfulness from Abbé de Bernis' point of view, see, e.g. Pierre 1902b, 58.

⁷⁶⁸ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 11; Poisson 1766c, 11. The analogy between theatre and court was commonly known and is present in such expressions as e.g., "masks" or "various faces", (see, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 11-12; Poisson 1766c, 11; Anon. 1760, 19; Pierre 1903, 40, 101; Pierre 1902a, 112, 147; Pierre 1902b, 87; Fauques 1759, 31; Fauques 1758a, 37; Fauques 1766b, 86; Walpole 1820c, To the Hon. H. S. Conway, Paris, 30th July 1771, 374; Walpole 1818, 62.), "roles" or "acting the part/parts" (see, e.g. Poisson

Thirdly, and most importantly, the royal mistresses' memoirs presented the sovereign as surrounded by deceitful and false persons, who sought to push their private interest at any cost:

The king of Monomotapa is said to have five hundred buffoons that everywhere attend him, in order to make him laugh. Lewis XV. has five hundred monkeys that daily beset his levee; but they seldom make him laugh: [...]. How I pity those gods of the earth, who are believed so happy! Friendship alone, rather than love, might solace them. But kings have no friends; [...]: they have only slaves and flatterers.⁷⁶⁹

Furthermore, it was revealed to the readers that the king was not able to determine his true sympathisers any better than his royal mistresses. Consequently, he was not able to employ the truly virtuous men as ministers of state or recognise good advisers from evil ones in this environment of false advice, private interest, avarice, ambition, pretension, and vice. In the *Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* Louis XV was admitted his regret at his situation as the head of a court afflicted by falsity that is caused by private interest:

Lorsque j'ai un choix à faire, & que je me suis décidé pour un de mes sujets, il semble que toute la France soit d'accord pour me tromper: on me vante ses talents, son mérite & sa vertu. [...] car on a peur de déplaire à celui qui vient d'obtenir ma faveur; & c'est à cette crainte qu'on me sacrifie avec l'état.⁷⁷⁰

This, of course, was a reiteration of the well-known theme of evil advisors. As the lamentation of Louis XV continued, the crime of ill government was transplanted fully into the ministries instead of the king himself:

Un Roi patriote est le plus malheureux mortel qui existe sous la voute du ciel. Il voudroit rendre son peuple heureux, & il trouve partout des gens qui l'en empêchent. Les Ministres sont les premiers à abimer l'état, il leur faudroit emploïer trop de peines & de soins, pour corriger les abus : ils ont plutôt fait de laisser les choses comme elles sont; cependant les désordres se perpétuent, & lorsque le Monarque, ami de ses sujets, veut y remédier, il y trouve des obstacles invincibles; car l'habitude d'une malheureuse & longue administration prend à la fin la place des loix & des coutumes, [...].⁷⁷¹

1766a, 11–12; Poisson 1766c, 11; Mairobert 1779a, XIXe. LETTRE. A mde. Rançon, 3 Juin 1763, 27; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XIX. To Madame Rançon, 3rd June 1768, 23; Hervey 1931, 746–747; Howard 1824a, Character of the Hon. Mrs. Howard, written and given to her by Dr. Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, xliii; London Evening Post, London, Sat. 28th Feb. 1756, iss 4417.). In literature, see, e.g. van horn Melton 2009, 167.

⁷⁶⁹ Poisson 1772, LETTER VIII, To the marchioness de Fontenailles, 16–17. The same was reaffirmed in Mme de Pompadour's other letters. See, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVII, To the marchioness of Fontenailles, 1748, 81; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVI. To the duchess of Duras, 1748, 79; Poisson 1766a, 251–254; Poisson 1766c, 249–255.

⁷⁷⁰ Poisson 1766a, 252–253. "When some important choice is to be made, and I [Louis XV] have pitched on the person, all France seems to lay their heads together to deceive me. His talents, his merit and virtue, are cried up to me; [...] they are afraid of incurring the displeasure of him whom I have so recently distinguished by my favour; and to this mean spirited fear they sacrifice both me and the state." Poisson 1766c, 251–253.

⁷⁷¹ Poisson 1766a, 254. "A patriot King is the most unhappy mortal under the sun; he has his country's happiness at heart, and is beset by people who cross his good intentions. The ministers are the first in ruining a state, to save themselves the labour of reforming abuses: to leave things as they are, is soonest done; in the mean time, the

In itself, such a statement did not suggest that the king had lost his understanding of the good administration of his kingdom or his function as the head of administration who had the ability and capacity to rise above private or partial interests in order to support the common good. These kinds of statements only demonstrated that if the king made bad decisions he did so because he was deceived by his unworthy and corrupt advisors. Thus, he was still represented as being *benevolent* even when making unpopular or even harmful political decisions.

Significant, however, was that the descriptions of the king being defrauded by his subjects were constantly repeated alongside the anecdotes about the negative and corruptive effects of a luxurious and lavish lifestyle on a person's character, taste, motives, and ambitions. In fact, it was given that it was the very nature of luxury to corrupt, or of a luxurious court to create ambition and want for distinction in the form of grandeur, splendour, and elevation – especially in the form of luxury, which was the outward manifestation of elevation and dignity. In the most daring representations, as for example in Fauques' anecdote about Mlle O'Murphy, even the king's integrity or immunity to the effects of his court's ostentation was questioned or challenged. Through such representations, eighteenth-century writers implied that the luxury and affectation of the court spoiled *everyone* in this venomous environment, including the king himself. Thus it was implied that such a corruption of taste, manners, and morals that clouded the perception of the corrupt courtiers, could and did affect the king's judgement as well.

The meaning of this discourse interconnecting luxury, avarice, affectation, artifice, unnaturalness, and corruption together was then to prove the depth (or height, if you will) of the depravity of the administration of the state, either by presenting certain individuals that were corrupted or corruptible, or presenting the whole royal court and government as functioning on the premise of corruption, venality, and immorality. Of course, the latter was the more serious of the two. It implied that the abuses of power did not arise from an individual and single person's deviance from the right principles of administering the affairs of the kingdom, but from the whole system of government in itself, where the corruption was rooted in the principles and processes of government.

Obviously, not all eighteenth-century writers intended to challenge the premises of the whole political system or principles of government. Rather, most likely none of the writers commenting on the royal mistresses was intending to do just that. Instead, it was here that the impact of accumulation and reiteration enabled by expanding print culture became significant. The eighteenth-century writers were well aware that, especially in public debate, the accusations of corruption were connected to party-politics or court factions, and were thus

evils continue, and when a Monarch, tender of the welfare of his subjects, would remedy them, he meets unsurmountable impediments; for the habit of a long and bad administration at length comes to supersede the laws and usages, &c. &c." Poisson 1766c, 253.

reprimands against individual ministers (or mistresses) and their policies.⁷⁷² However, in the contests of rival political factions or parties, the reciprocal public slander made all parties lose their integrity, resulting in the imagination of the whole political world being morally and politically corrupted. Thus, in relation to the imageries of luxury and corruption, the connection to the corruption of the whole political system was only implied. However, the suggestion was reasserted when it was connected to presentations about the process and practices that led to making a royal decision, as we will see in section 4.2.

Furthermore, when hinting that the king's judgment was affected by the corruption of morals, manners, and taste, the moral corruption immediately became political corruption as well. Especially in France, as I have already mentioned when discussing the idea of *secret du Roi*, the form of government ideally functioned on the basis of a fundamentally rational king. The king was constructed as the only agent in the realm who was able to rise above the private interests that were the main motive for all other agents. Through this capacity, he was then able to push the common good or strive for the interest of the country. This is to say, the king could not have private interest, or his interest was always the nation's. In this sense, the king needed to be incorruptible. His ministers and advisors might have been affected by the luxury and ambition and become corrupt, but the majesty necessarily needed to remain uncorrupted and incorruptible in order to retain his function as the protector of the common good and his capacity as the only agent above the private interests that was able to fulfil the task of governing according to the principle of the good of the whole realm.

3.7.4 Luxury and gender

Lastly, luxury and the ensuing corruption of morals, manners, and taste were inextricably linked to gender, or more precisely, to the conceptions of the attributes that men and women were *naturally* considered to have, as for example gender-specific virtues and vices, characteristics, ambitions, and motives. As noticed by numerous researchers before me, in the eighteenth century matters relating to luxury in the form of outward appearance (for example dress, jewelry,

⁷⁷² See, e.g. "[...] As to your greed in politics, I will heartily and sincerely subscribe to it; that I detest avarice in courts – corruption in ministers – schisms in religion – illiterate fawning betrayers of the church in mitres; but at the same time, I prodigiously want an infallible judge to determine when it is really so; for, as I have lived long in the world, and seen many changes, I know those out of power and place always see the faults of those who are in, with dreadful large spectacles; [...] But the strongest in my memory is Sir Robert Walpole being first pulled to pieces in the year 1720, because the South Sea did not rise high enough; and since that he has been to the full as well banged about because it did rise too high. So experience has taught me how wrong, unjust, and senseless party factions are; therefore I am determined never wholly to believe any side or party against the other: [...]" Howard 1824b, from Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732–3, 54–57.

and other ornaments), that is to say *fashion*, were easily connected to the female sex and feminine qualities⁷⁷³:

Si elle [Mme de Pompadour] soutint les arts dont la réalité marche à l'égal de leur beauté, elle fut toujours disposée à favoriser ceux qu'une élégance *feminine* ou une vaine curiosité retiennent à leurs gages. Colifichets, nouvelles inventions de modes, bimblotage, bijoux, décorations de chambres pour les différentes saisons de l'année, meubles dans un goût nouveau, en un mot toutes les coûteuses babioles d'une prodigalité fertile en inventions, partageoient son approbation & sa faveur avec les nobles productions des talents.⁷⁷⁴

Since, as I have already noted, all luxury could be constructed as i) corruptive, ii) a mark of corruption, and iii) affectation, all these were linked to the female sex through luxury in dress, fashion, and want for fineries, as for example in the anecdote about the corruption of Mlle L'Ange.⁷⁷⁵ Thus, gender functioned as a tool in connecting and solidifying conceptual pairs and interconnections between semantic fields surrounding luxury and corruption. The proclivity for luxury was constructed as rising from the women's *natural* characteristics and *natural* feminine weaknesses, tendencies, and vices, most notably from the feminine vices of *vanity* and *self-love*:

Je ne connais aux femmes qu'une misère commune à tout leur sexe, qui ne soit pas également l'attribut de tous les hommes, c'est l'amour-propre de la figure. Cet amour est dans les femmes le premier de tous les amours, [...]. On voit donc que cette frénésie d'amour-propre est une faiblesse distinctive du sexe, à laquelle il faut attribuer principalement la caractèrè d'enfance qui n'abandonne presque jamais les femmes. On peut même regarder cette misère comme la racine de toutes les autres faiblesses.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷³ For literature, see, e.g. Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 3–4. On the French debate concerning fashion, taste, luxury, and Rousseauian criticism of luxury, see Jones 1994.

⁷⁷⁴ Fauques 1759, 142. "If the liberal and solid arts were countenanced by her [Mme de Pompadour], she did not less favor those frivolous ones, that are in the pay of effeminate nicety or vain curiosity. Studied ornaments of dress, new inventions of fashions toys, trinkets change of apartments for every season, quaint devices in furniture, in short, all the precious trifling of fanciful luxury, seemed to divide her favor with the nobler objects of talents and genius, [...]." Fauques 1758b, 73. On this occasion, there is also a meaningful difference in translation between the French *feminine* luxurious trinkets and the English *effeminate* luxurious trinkets. In this section, it is enough to note that both versions made the same point about luxurious and outward excessiveness and fashionableness being considered essentially female characteristics. However, the difference was also the translator's statement concerning the difference in national character or characteristics that will be further discussed in section 3.8.

⁷⁷⁵ Mairobert 1775, 14–23; Mairobert 1779a, IVe. LETTRE. A sa Mere, 5–6; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER IV, To her mother, 5; Mairobert 1779a, XVIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 20 juin 1767, 20–23; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVI, From the Count du Barry, Paris, 20th June 1767, 19–20.

⁷⁷⁶ Pierre 1903, 99. "I know in women but one evil common to their sex which is not equally the attribute of men: I mean self-love, vanity of their persons. This love in women is the first of all their loves; [...] We see that this frenzy of vanity is a distinctive weakness of the sex, to which we must chiefly attribute the childish character which scarcely ever abandons women wholly. We may even regard this weakness as the root of all other weaknesses." Pierre 1902a, 145. See also, e.g. Pierre 1903, 101; Pierre 1902a, 147.

Combined with the feminine weakness in resisting the temptations and passions and in surrendering to the seductions of the court and courtiers⁷⁷⁷ the eighteenth-century writers confirmed the conception of women as the *mentally* weaker sex that was the breeding ground for corruption of morals and manners.

Women were not only liable to be corrupted by the temptations of luxury but they were constructed as a corruptive agent as well. As the previous section 2.3, discussed the feminine influence as potentially beneficial in social life. In this, women were regarded as civilising and pacifying agents. Here, in turn, the simultaneous counter-discourse becomes more significant: feminine influence as a threat to the taste, morals, and manners of courtly society. This discourse was known both in Britain and in France. A man's socialising with women could be construed as a mark of weakness. In this sense, the Hanoverian kings, for example, were connected to *female society*:

The late King [George I] was reiled for the affection he had shewn to his native country, for his love of female society, and for his attachment to the Whigs.⁷⁷⁸

In this example, the writer certainly took advantage of female society's negative associations with feminine weaknesses. When conjoining Hanover and Whigs together with female society he was, of course, advocating British and Tory interests, and most certainly, the Stuart monarchy against Hanoverians.

In addition, the merits and distinctions that men could achieve in this *female society* or *female world* were largely rendered as trifling, as for example in Horace Walpole's portrayal of Duc de Richelieu:

Ruling the female world, he at last thought of reposing himself on the lesser care of the French monarchy: and making himself necessary to the pleasures of the mistresses, the Duchesse de Chateauroux and Madame Pompadour, he attained considerable weight in a government where trifling qualities are no disrecommendation.⁷⁷⁹

Thus, frivolity and idleness were connected to femininity, and further implicitly contrasted to reasonableness and business that were attached to masculinity.

The latter quote also reveals the dreaded aspect of feminine influence and the impact of female presence in the court society: women's presence in the court

⁷⁷⁷ See, e.g. the foreword to *The fair concubine*, an amatory or political fiction about Anne Vane, mistress of Frederick, Prince of Wales: "I am ready to acknowledge, that Vanella's [Anne Vane] indiscretion was great: but then consider, fair ladies, that your sex is naturally weak. The Falling Sickness [not referring to epilepsy, but to the feminine aptitude to *fall* or lapse from virtue, here specifically to consent to extramarital sex], you know, is an hereditary distemper in most families; it was the first disease that crept into the world, and Mother Eve was the first person whom it seized. [...] Vanella was not the first nor will she be the last, young creature that has given a loose to love: court ladies, who have had a larger share of understanding, and more advanced in years, which should have taught them wisdom, have been seduced, and I need not go out of this Kingdom for examples." Anon. 1732, *To five Hon. Maids*, vii-x.

⁷⁷⁸ Almon 1792a, 201. On George II, see, e.g. Mary Wortley Montagu's recollections: "And the poor man [George II] was in peril of coming hither without knowing where to pass his evenings; which he was accustomed to do in the apartments of women, free from business." Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112-113.

⁷⁷⁹ Walpole 1822b, 52-53.

not only affected their own sex but threatened to corrupt the whole court and distort the principles on which the government functioned. The influence of the corrupted women in the court corrupted the morals of the men as well⁷⁸⁰. This corruption functioned at two levels. First, the women were constructed as deceitful and unreliable in their friendship due to their *natural* inclination to self-love, self-interest, and vanity that lead them to the vices of *jealousy* and *revenge*, as for example in Abbé de Bernis' analysis of female friendship and his recollections of his friendship with Mme de Pompadour:

On demande quelquefois si les femmes sont plus capables d'amitié que les hommes. [...] il est rare qu'une femme, quelque vertueuse qu'elle soit, n'aime pas dans son ami l'homme aimable à qui elle s' imagine plaire de préférence. C'est pour cela que l'amitié des femmes est toujours jalouse; mais il faut convenir aussi qu'elle est plus tendre, plus délicate, plus essentielle, plus généreuse et souvent plus fidèle que celle des hommes. [...] Il faut convenir, à la honte des mœurs, que les femmes qui ont uniquement pour objet le plaisir d'aimer et d'être aimées, ont de moins grands vices que les autres femmes. [...] celles [femmes] qui ont l'âme froide ont toutes les autres passions bien vives; l'orgueil, l'intérêt, l'ambition, la vengeance, règnent sur elles au défaut de l'amour; et ces passions sont d'autant plus dangereuses, qu'elles se cachent presque toujours sous le voile de la fausseté ou sous le masque de l'hypocrisie.⁷⁸¹

Unreliable female friends might have affected the position of individual courtiers or even the political careers of ministers, and in the worst case, distorted the administration through supporting evil advisers. Yet, this kind of influence was still limited to the individual person's fortunes and misfortunes.

The greater threat of female influence stretched over the totality of the high society. Socialising or mixing with women, as was the ideal in the concept of *sociability*, was then reconstructed as the source of the corruption of the morals of men.

Je pense affirmativement que le commerce des femmes a changé les mœurs des Français. Autrefois on n'était admis chez elles au plus tôt qu'à l'âge de trente ans; jusqu'à cette époque les hommes vivaient avec les hommes, leur esprit en était plus mâle, et

⁷⁸⁰ As, e.g. in Horace Walpole's portrayal of Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Comte de Maurepas: "As the women who had most sway were Freethinkers, a fashionable clergyman was by consequence an infidel." Walpole 1845b, 254.

⁷⁸¹ Pierre 1903, 100–101. "It is asked sometimes whether women are more capable of friendship than men. [...]; it is rare that a woman, however virtuous she may be, does not love in her friend the charming man whom she believes she pleases to the exclusion of others. That is why the friendship of women is always jealous; but it must be allowed that it is more tender, more delicate, more spiritual, more generous, and often more faithful than that of men. [...] It must be owned, to the shame of our era, that women whose sole object is the pleasure of loving and being loved have less of the great vices than other women. [...] women of cold natures have all the other passions very keenly; pride, self-interest, ambition, revenge, reign within them in default of love; and these passions are all the more dangerous because they are nearly always hidden behind a veil of falseness or a mask of hypocrisy." Pierre 1902a, 146–147. Specifically on the bitterly ended friendship between Mme de Pompadour and Abbé de Bernis, see, e.g. "Une seule tracasserie avec madame de Pompadour pouvait me perdre sans ressource : je savais combien il est aisé, en matière de crédit, de se brouiller avec ses amis, et surtout avec ses amies." Pierre 1903, 197. "A single misunderstanding with Mme. de Pompadour might ruin me hopelessly; I knew how easy it is, in matters of influence, to get embroiled with friends, especially female friends." Pierre 1902a, 191–192.

leurs principes de conduite plus fermes. Aujourd'hui ce sont les femmes qui apprennent à penser aux hommes; à dix-sept ans, et quelquefois plus tôt, on est reçu dans le monde; il est naturel à cet âge de regarder comme le point le plus important de plaire aux femmes; on s'accoutume de bonne heure à la mollesse, à la frivolité, et l'on arrive aux emplois la tête vide et le cœur rempli de faux principes.⁷⁸²

Once again, feminine triflingness and false principles were contrasted with masculine business and public employment, and feminine softness and unstableness with masculine firmness. However, here we see a transition. It was not just the women in the court that distorted the morals and manners of the good administration. Now it was the *effeminated* men. It was the men who had been corrupted by the company of women since their youth, who had lost their *manly* virtues of firmness and right principles (whatever they might be), and who used their depraved grounds, ethics, criteria, and morals when administering the affairs of the state. The women were, of course, the original source of the vice, weakness, and corruption, but the wickedness had moved beyond their immediate influence to the men, who had become like women – effeminate. Thus, political corruption was produced by the corruption of morals and manners that was initially the result of female weakness.

The final blow to the lifestyle of the high society, aristocracy, and especially of the courtly nobility was presented in terms of the complete corruption of the morals and manners and degeneration of the noble body and mind. The interconnection of outward and inward attributes and characteristics, yet again, was the medium through which the statements gained meanings. The representation of a courtier as an effeminate man did not mean merely the distortion of mind and morals, although it was a common theme in, for example, the Abbé de Bernis' and Mairobert's writings.⁷⁸³ The corruption extended to the body of the nobility as well.

⁷⁸² Pierre 1903, 100. "I think that the present intercourse with women has changed the morals of Frenchmen. Formerly men were not admitted among them until they were at least thirty years old. Up to that time men lived with men, their minds were more manly, their principles of conduct more firm. To-day it is the women who are teaching men to think; at seventeen years of age, and sometimes earlier, they are received in society; it is natural at that age to regard pleasing women as the most important point of all; they are early accustomed to effeminacy, to frivolity, and they enter public employments with empty heads, and their hearts filled with false principles." Pierre 1902a, 146. See also Pierre 1903, 96–97; Pierre 1902a, 143.

⁷⁸³ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 42, 100–101; Pierre 1902a, 114, 146–147. Mairobert's example of a circulating poem *L'Apothéose du Roi Pétaut* links together effeminate men and corruption of the court and implies that there was a contrast between the effeminate courtiers and sound men: "C'étoit un bon humain que le grand Roi Pétaut [Louis XV]!/ Vous vous rappelez tous la rare obéissance/ Qu'il eut plus de trente ans pour la vieille Eminence [Le Cardinal de Fleuri]/ Aussi tous les Auteurs l'élogent-ils tout haut:/ Ils disent de lui tous, dans leur mâle éloquence,/ Qu'il eut mille vertus, & pas un seul défaut [...]." Mairobert 1775, 81–82. "He was a good man, that great King Disorder* [Louis XV]/ You remember yourself the rare obedience/ That he paid to old Eminence [Cardinal de Fleury] for more than thirty years/ So all the authors praised him high:/ They all tell about him, in their manly eloquence/ That he had a thousand virtues, and not a single fault. [...]" (Translation E.K.) *la Cour du Roi Pétaut is an idiom for a court without a master characterised by disorder. Obviously, it refers to a weak ruler who can not master his court.

On the other hand, luxury produced effeminacy in men. For example, when recalling the reasons for war in Germany in 1756, Horace Walpole portrayed Heinrich, Count von Brühl, favourite of Augustus III of Poland, and Wenzel Anton, Prince von Kaunitz-Rietberg (usually referred to as Count von Kaunitz) in terms of luxurious effeminacy of apparel and conduct, or appearance:

This man [Count von Brühl], [...], reigned in Saxony, for the prince, who hated pomp, and divided his time between his priests and his forests, chose that Bruhl should be his proxy to display that grandeur, which Germans take for empire – and he could not have made a properer choice. As elector, Bruhl magnificent, expensive, tawdry, vain – as minister, weak and false. Has two or three suits of cloaths for every day in the year: – strangers were even carried to see his magazine of shoes! [...] At the same time the councils of Vienna were directed by Count Kaunitz, a man lately returned from an embassy to Paris, where he had pushed all the luxurious effeminacy of dress and affectation to an excess common to imitators, and of all imitators most common to Germans. [...]⁷⁸⁴

The interconnection of outward luxury (clothes, shoes) and inward abilities and characteristics (vanity, weakness, falsity) was then manifested in terms of *luxurious effeminacy*. This was furthermore extended very explicitly to wrongful rule by a favourite minister instead of a lawful king.

On the other hand, however, in women the noble life of luxury, corruption, and affectation produced something quite different: restraint and deviousness of behaviour, uncertainty, guardedness, coldness, affectedness, and rigidity even in the most intimate and passionate moments. That is to say, luxury produced *unnaturalness* as the opposite of, for example, Mlle O'Murphy's *naturalness*. In a light-hearted anecdote in Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* (1775) Mme du Barry was presented as having captivated the king's heart by showing her talents in "libidous pleasures"⁷⁸⁵ that the courtly women were ignorant of. After all, Mme du Barry herself was of a lower descent and thus was a novice in the court and in the courtly behaviour, but she had also not yet lost her connection to *naturalness*. In the king's bed, she was portrayed as free, open, resolute and confident, spirited, experienced, and candid: an epitome of a talented lover. Against this picture, the courtly women and especially the previous royal mistresses were construed as cold, dispassionate, and tense – that is to say, frigid. As for the king, since he was accustomed to and knew nothing else but the joyless enjoyments provided by his affected courtly women, he was presented as having been immediately taken by the natural (unaffected) talents of Mme du Barry.⁷⁸⁶

Thus the court and nobility of Louis XV was presented as corrupted and degenerated in every aspect. The courtly luxury and splendour corrupted everyone. Commoners straying into the court were corrupted by the splendour and magnificence because they were unaccustomed to such spectacles. The nobility at court was corrupted because they were accustomed to it: their morals

⁷⁸⁴ Walpole 1822b, 72–73.

⁷⁸⁵ Bécu 1777a, 11. The French original uses the more vague term "libertinage", Mairobert 1775, 64.

⁷⁸⁶ Mairobert 1775, 64–65; Bécu 1777a, 11–12.

and manners were corrupted by their luxurious lifestyle, by the benumbing extravaganza that compelled ever-increasing ostentation. In the royal court, the women sank into the feminine vices of vanity, self-love, revengefulness, and want for luxury, as well as into the masculine vices of avarice and ambition. The men were corrupted into effeminacy, into softness, weakness, and want for luxury by their luxurious lifestyle and through the corruptive fashion of socialising with women.

Luxury and ambition were the source of distorted morals, manners, and taste in the court. But they were also the source of misgovernment as well. As the corruptness of morals, manners, and taste gave rise to affectation, false principles, and false advice to the king, the government and administration of the realm was filled with corrupted, fraudulent, and effeminate ministers, who had lost their principles, were full of private interest, and consequently, could not but fail in the proper management of the state, the political body, and the common good.

Finally, the king himself was presented as having lost his comprehension of matters relating to *true* taste, beauty, and enjoyment, and was presented as surrendering to the luxurious decadence of his court. Hence, readers were given to understand that the principles on which the government was founded were corrupted and distorted, the common good was no longer the guiding principle of the government, and the king could no longer fulfil his ideal role as the ruler with an ability to rise above the affectation and private interests of his court.

As demonstrated in this section, luxury, femininity, and corruption or degeneration were conceptually interconnected in such a way that their complete separation from each other was nearly impossible. The inseparability of the concepts also resulted in an overlapping in their meaning and use, and what is more, when used in reprimands, the terms referred to each other over the meanings and significations of single and separate concepts. In other words, to accuse, for example, a minister of being effeminate, was not only to allege that he was *like a woman*, in the sense that women were (assumably) prone to fashionable luxury of dress and manners, and interested in outward appearance, splendour, and elevation. It was simultaneously a suggestion that he had other female weaknesses, such as vulnerability to the temptations of the royal court, weakness of mind and rationality against the passions that lead to vices, and/or feminine aversion to business and occupation as well as a proclivity to idle and trifling amusements. In this last sense, to accuse a minister of effeminacy was also to accuse him of losing one's *right principles* that were to be understood in terms of oppositions of business/idleness and public/private. That is to say, he was accused of functioning on the basis of the wrong principles of private interest (pursuing only his own comfort) instead of the right principle of common or public good.

These were, of course, all inner failings of a corrupted or degenerated person, who, if given a position of power (of a minister, advisor of the king or other important and influential office or place in the court or in the government) would transfer his own inadequacies and corruptive qualities to the administration of the realm. However, since luxury was inseparably intertwined

in the definitions and conceptualisation of corruption and degeneration – it was, in essence, degenerative, corruptive, and feminine – the inward shortcomings and vices could be regarded as something that was detectable from a person’s outward appearance. The boundaries of a person’s inward and outward attributes and qualities were obscured and transcended. Luxurious appearance and fashionable manners would then be a mark or demonstration of the person’s inward (essentially feminine) tendencies, lack of self-control, and corruption, both as venality and wrong principles and morals.

Notable, however, is that in these discourses about luxury and corruption the king himself was never directly accused of private interests, falsity, or intentional misgovernment and oppression. He was accused only of a very human condition of succumbing to the omnipresent corrupted deceits of his court and falling prey to the corruption of taste through excessive luxury and ostentation. Certainly, since the corruption of morals, manners, and taste (as in the effects of luxury), and political and moral corruption (as in the corruption of principles) were interconnected, the falsity of taste of the king could be used as suggestive of the corruptness of his morals and principles as well.

3.7.5 Royal mistress as corruptor: a question of intentional desecration

We have discussed at length how eighteenth-century writers, in and through the discourses on royal mistresses, contributed to or exploited the eighteenth-century interconnection of luxury, court, and corruption in challenging the aristocratic lifestyle or courtly splendour. Yet it remains to explicate how the royal mistresses themselves were presented as having contributed to the courtly luxury and corruption. Mainly and most commonly, the royal mistresses’ extravagant spending and luxury was used as the prime example of the ostentation and decadence of the royal court. In numerous anecdotes, the royal mistresses’ spending or the king’s spending on his mistress was contrasted with the general economic distress of the kingdom. Thus, the commentators stressed the impression that the court was somewhat separated from the rest of society and continued to live in its own bubble, by its own perverted ideals and caprices, and in complete ignorance of and indifference to the outside world with its changing and troubled realities.⁷⁸⁷ For example, John, 1st Baron de Blaquiere wrote as a clerk in the British embassy in Paris to William Nassau de Zuylestein, 4th Earl of Rochford, then Secretary of State for the Southern Department, about this disparity between the wealth of the royal mistress and the misery of the rest of the country:

You will have had from my Lord Harcourt, my Lord, such an exact State of the misery of this Country, of the wretched poverty that characterizes the present moment, that any thing I could say, would be superfluous, but the following anecdote I must add,

⁷⁸⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 204–205; Pierre 1902a, 193–194; Fauques 1759, 181–182; Fauques 1758b, 133–135.

that within these few days, a memorial has been presented to the Count de Provence⁷⁸⁸, purporting the distresses of his ménage to be such, that unless 30,000 livres were laid down on the 2d. october, he would be on the 3d. without a dinner – Yet, on the other hand, Mad. Barri's, [serial] of plate and China, that was sent home last week, tho peradventure not yet paid for, cost Seventy thousand pound Sterling.⁷⁸⁹

Here, the squalor of the realm was emphasised by presenting it as concerning even the aristocracy – but not the royal mistress. The royal mistresses' extravagance, in this case Mme du Barry's, functioned as a demonstration of ignorance and indifference. However, several illustrations actuated the royal mistresses' active contribution to the degradation of morals, manners, and taste, and of course, political corruption too. First of all, the royal mistresses as a phenomenon and practice could be constructed as a manifestation of a moral turpitude, the height of which was considered the open marriage between the king and his mistress. Usually, this was denoted through the marriage of Louis XIV and his mistress Mme de Maintenon, as for example in *The memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766):

La veuve du Pöete Scaron poussa la hauteur & le faste plus loin: elle se fit épouser du Roi; & de maîtresse elle devint Reine, indignation qui fletrira à jamais la mémoire de ce Prince.⁷⁹⁰

Here, the king's marriage to his mistress was presented in terms of ostentation and pride, both terms closely related to feminine qualities of vanity and want for luxury or splendid appearance. The connection with corruption was not explicitly expressed, but due to the close interconnection of the terms and their customary use on such occasions, it is evident that the writer was actually talking about corruption of morals and manners, and more specifically, corruption and degeneration that resulted from the gratification of a desire for the luxurious pomposity of outward appearances.

Another mark of continuous moral turpitude and scandal was the illegitimate royal issue and the perversion that royal bastards, especially legitimated ones, induced in the hierarchy of the royal court.

De ce commerce clandestin [le mariage avec le Roi Louis XIV et Mme de Maintenon] naissoit à la cour un déshonneur qu'on ne peut point reprocher à Madame de Pompadour. Toutes ces concubines, qui donnoient des enfants a la France, avoient la vanité de les faire légitimer: & ensuite celle de marier ces fils ou filles de l'amour à des Princes du sang roïal, ce qui avilissoit les maisons alliées à la couronne. Car un Souverain peut bien légitimer un batard: mais il n'est pas en son pouvoir d'ôter l'infamie attachée à la batardise; il s'en suivoit de-là que les descendants de ce fruit clandestin aspiroient au

⁷⁸⁸ Refers to Louis Stanislas Xavier. He was the grandson of Louis XV, son of Dauphin Louis, brother to the future Louis XVI and the future Louis XVIII "le Déciré".

⁷⁸⁹ TNA, SP 78/283, Blaquiére to Rochford, Paris, 11th Sep. 1771, Private, 106.

⁷⁹⁰ Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, vi. "Scarron's widow carried her pride and ostentation still further; she drew the King in to marry her, and this mistress came to be the queen, an elevation which will be an eternal blot on the Prince's memory." Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, viii.

trône, & que les amours scandaleuses du Roi pouvoient donner au vice l'éclat qui n'est dû qu'à la vertu.⁷⁹¹

The royal bastards posed a serious question in the eighteenth-century courts and publics within, between, and outside the royal courts. On a very practical level, between the two national royal courts of France and Britain, the ambassadors and embassy clerks sought to resolve questions relating, for example, to the matters of inheritance of the sons and daughters of royal mistresses,⁷⁹² or the ambassadors sought advice from their superiors on how to properly address the persons in the court that had obscure descent⁷⁹³.

For example, William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, Secretary of State for the Southern Department and William Nassau de Zuylestein, 4th Earl of Rochford, the British ambassador to France, discussed the question of the legitimation of the illegitimate children of Louis XIV, and the former asked for further information on whether Duc de Penthièvre was of legitimated birth at all. The status of Duc de Penthièvre as an illegitimate or legitimated Prince of the Blood was not a mere question of social status but it changed his position in the court and other political institutions. In this case, even his rank and position in the succession to the crown, since Louis XIV sought to make his illegitimate sons eligible to succeed to the crown or at least to function in the role of regent during the minority of Louis XV (1715–1723).⁷⁹⁴ Certainly, this arrangement caused rivalries within the French court after the death of Louis XIV and during the

⁷⁹¹ Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'editeur, vii. "This clandestine commerce [king Louis XIV's marriage with Mme de Maintenon] gave rise to an infamous practice at court, [...]. All these concubines having children, to gratify their vanity, they must be legitimated; and, afterwards, they found means to marry these sons, or daughters, of prostitution, to the branches of the royal blood; a flagrant debasement of the house which were in kin to the crown: for though a Sovereign can legitimate a bastard, to efface the stain of bastardy is beyond his power. The consequence was, that the descendants of that clandestine issue aspired to the throne; and, through the King's scandalous amours, that lustre which is due only to virtue, fell to the portion of vice." Poisson 1766c, Editor's preface, viii–ix.

⁷⁹² See, e.g. LAD, P/12020, Mémoire, [Chavigny; Cambris; Silhouette, agent à Londres], 1736, 202–209.

⁷⁹³ As e.g. in the case of the children of Mme Mailly. On this case, it is notable that the address chosen meant also a statement about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the child. If the ambassador was to address the young boy as a *Prince* he was also legitimating his mother's claim that the child was the heritor of her late husband's estate and title. The correspondence also reveals that there was no consensus on the matter of the legitimacy of the child in the French court. Instead, it seems that there was a heated debate, and Cardinal Fleury asked the British court not to get involved in the debate and encourage the mother's claims by addressing the boy as *Prince*. See, TNA, SP 78/213, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 31st Oct. 1736, Apart, 144; TNA, SP 78/213, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 18th Dec. 1736, Apart, 257–256; TNA, SP 78/213, Waldegrave to the Price of Orange, Paris, 22 déc. 1736, Copie, 278–280; TNA, SP 78/220, Newcastle to Waldegrave, Whitehall, 2nd Apr. 1739, 108; TNA, SP 78/220, Extract of a Letter from His most Serene Highness the Prince of Orange to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, Groningen, 28th Mar. 1739, 110; TNA, SP 78/220, Newcastle to Waldegrave, Whitehall, 8th May 1739, 167; TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 5th June 1739, 205; TNA, SP 78/221, Newcastle to Waldegrave, Whitehall, 27th July 1739, 47.

⁷⁹⁴ See, e.g. Gerber 2012, 73–74, 82–83; Sternberg 2013, 257; Shennan 2007, 129; Richet 1987, 32; Adams 2015, 177; Zysberg 2002, 15.

minority of Louis XV. But even after that, during the rule of Louis XV, the position and honours of Duc de Penthièvre posed questions, such as in the discussions between the Earls of Shelburne and of Rochford about the rank and related honours, ceremonies, and rights of Duc de Penthièvre in relation to other Princes of the Blood. In this, they mainly discussed his rights to function within and between the political institutions, both domestic and foreign.⁷⁹⁵

Within the royal courts, illegitimate royal offspring were rather commonplace. In every court, there were always persons present who were of royal bastardy extraction. Famous eighteenth-century examples were, for example, Lady Catherine Darnley, Duchess of Buckingham, the daughter of James II and VII and his mistress Catherine Sedley, Countess of Dorchester and Countess of Portmore; Charles Lennox, 2nd Duke of Richmond and his famous daughters (the Lennox-sisters, one of whom was Lady Sarah Lennox, an assumed mistress to George, Prince of Wales, future George III), who were descendants of Charles II and his mistress Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth; James Waldegrave, 1st Earl Waldegrave, the British ambassador to France, whose mother Henrietta FitzJames was an illegitimate daughter of James II and Arabella Churchill; Monsieur le Duc, Louis Henri de Bourbon, Duc de Bourbon and Prince de Condé, who was the eldest son of Louis, Prince de Condé and Louise Françoise de Bourbon, legitimated daughter of Louis XIV and his mistress Mme de Montespan; and Louis Jean Marie de Bourbon, Duc de Penthièvre, admiral of France, who was the son of Louis Alexandre, Comte de Toulouse, who was also a legitimated child of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan – just to name a few.

All the adult descendants of royal adultery had their own part to play in the dynamics and intrigues of the royal court, usually had an established position, and generally, they were tolerated as long as they remained *in their place*. Their illegitimate birth got the attention of the courtiers only when they were considered to have exceeded propriety or were making claims based on their royal blood that the rest of the court did not consider fitting to their illegitimate origin.⁷⁹⁶ For example, Horace Walpole often recollected reprovingly Lady

⁷⁹⁵ TNA, SP 78/272, Shelburne to Rochford, Whitehall, 30th Jan. 1767, 51; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 18th Feb. 1767, 99. The legitimation of the illegitimate children of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan was discussed also in 1738 when the question was about the entitlement of Duc de Penthièvre to certain addresses and honours in the French and Spanish courts and from the British ambassadors. TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16.

⁷⁹⁶ See, e.g. James Waldegrave, 1st Earl Waldegrave, British ambassador to the French court (and also of illegitimate royal birth himself from his mother's side) described the rivalries over the honours granted to a person of illegitimate descent: "A Compliment M. de la Mina [Jaime de Guzmán y Spinola, II Marquis of la Mina, then Spanish ambassador to France] is thought to have paid to M. le Duc [Duc de Bourbon-Condé] some days ago, has set Mademoiselle [Pauline Félicité, Mademoiselle de Nesle] and the whole Toulouse Family and their Dependents very much against him. The King of Spain had sent M. de Penthièvre [Louis Jean Marie de Bourbon, Duke of Penthièvre], Son to the late Count de Toulouse [Louis Alexandre de Bourbon, legitimated son of Louis XIV and Marquise de Montespan], the Order of the Golden Fleece, and La Mina was to have received [?] in the usual Forms; but as there are some Distinction in the Reception of the Princes of the Blood, which La Mina intended to have shewn to M. de Penthièvre, who is generally looked upon and treated

Catherine Darnley, Duchess of Buckingham, who prided herself on her royal blood:

[duchess of Buckingham], proud of royal though illegitimate birth, was from the vanity of that birth so zealously attached to her expelled brother, the pretender, that she never ceased laboring to effect his restoration: [...].⁷⁹⁷

Walpole's epigrammatic remark about the Duchess's pride reveals two points about the eighteenth-century understanding of the royal bastards. Firstly, the attitude towards royal bastardy was ambivalent. On the one hand, royal blood, even in illegitimate offspring, was considered ennobling. And on the other, the illegitimacy of the birth of a royal bastard was never forgotten. Thus, illegitimate royal blood was simultaneously a boast and a shame.

Secondly, the way Walpole connected the Duchess of Buckingham's sentiments for her (half-) brother, James Francis Edward, "the Old Pretender", son and heir of the deposed King James II and VII, was an allusion to high treason. Even though Walpole wrote in good humour, his presentation revealed the early eighteenth-century political tension relating to the consolidation of Hanoverian rule and the endeavours of the Stuart restoration. His representations also betrayed the danger that the illegitimate royal offspring were considered to pose to political tranquility and the ruling dynasty. In certain moments, there was a danger of constituting a rival branch of the royal family who sought to legitimate its claim to the throne or, as in this case of the Duchess of Buckingham, to reinforce the claims of a rival dynasty that already existed. Most certainly, both possibilities were known to have happened previously in history.⁷⁹⁸ It is possible that the historical memory of the threat that the royal bastards could pose to the legitimation of the prevailing dynasty, the ruling family, and to the unity of the political body, was not forgotten even during the less tumultuous rules. It was also certain that the first half of the eighteenth century was not that tranquil. The contesting claims of the Hanoverians and Stuarts were far from forgotten, and

here as such, M. le Duc sent to M. de la Mina, and protested against M. de Penthièvre's being received in that manner; upon which M. de la Mina, out of Complaisance for M. le Duc putt [sic.] off the Ceremony and sent a Courier to Madrid to know the King of Spains Intentions in this Case. Madame de Toulouse is highly incensed at this, and Mademoiselle, who cannot endure her Brother takes the Countess of Toulouse [Marie Victoire Sophie de Noailles, married to Louis Alexandre de Bourbon, Comte de Toulouse, legitimised son of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan] part in railing at him and at La Mina. M. le Duc has in all Occasions [strenuously] opposed the Honours due to the Princes of the Blood being paid to Lewis the 14th Legitimate Children notwithstanding his Mother is one of them; and therefore his Conduct in this Case is less remarkable." TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16.

⁷⁹⁷ Walpole 1818, 106–107. On Lady Buckingham's excessive pride over her royal descent, see also, Walpole 1818, 112–114. On the respect towards the royal blood, even in illegitimate veins, see, e.g. the discussion concerning the plans to marry Mlle de St. André, Louis XV's natural daughter, to Viscount Adolphus, son of Count John du Barry. The match was rejected because the groom-to-be was considered of too low origin for the royal blood of the girl. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 122, 282–283; Bécu 1777b, 306.

⁷⁹⁸ See, e.g. Gerber 2012, 72–88. Also, regarding the tradition of "consealed princes" and other royal impostors, see, e.g. Lecuppre 2006.

the illegitimacy of the royal blood was still an issue, even though the Jacobite opposition to the Hanoverian dynasty focused its accusations of illegitimacy on the children of Sophia Dorothea of Cell and George I.⁷⁹⁹

When observing the posts, honours, and offices that the illegitimate royal posterity were granted and the careers and marriages that they made, it is quite obvious that the *royal blood* was regarded as something to be proud of, or at least that illegitimate birth was not a matter of shame that ruled out advancement if the child was *legitimated*. The most important factor for the fortunes of the illegitimate royal offspring seems to have been the background of the child's mother. If she was of an illustrious family, the child was entitled to some elevation and rank also from her side and the illegitimate child could not be easily ignored. This was the case with the most famous royal bastards of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan (for example, Louis Auguste de Bourbon, Duc de Maine; Louise Françoise de Bourbon, Duchesse de Bourbon, later Princesse de Condé; Françoise Marie de Bourbon; and Louis Alexandre de Bourbon, Comte de Toulouse), who all were legitimated children and married into the distinguished and ancient families.⁸⁰⁰

The case was quite different with those royal bastards whose mother was of a more humble origin. In this, the British and French sources alike reveal an important instrument of family planning that did not go without political implication. For the unlucky mistress a suitable fiancé, most preferably of noble but impoverished origin, was arranged, who agreed to marry the king's mistress and take the illegitimate royal child as his own.⁸⁰¹ Thus was provided a proper living and style for the mother of the royal bastard, so as to ensure that she was to remain quiet about the origin and father of her child and did not make further claims. What is more the arrangement also ensured a proper lifestyle for the child that befitted the royal blood in his/her veins. In addition, the mistress's own marriage could be used as a depository for the illegitimate children. Possibly for this reason, Louis XV demanded that his official mistress had to be a married woman, as demonstrated in an anecdote about Mme du Barry's sudden marriage arrangement with Comte Guillaume du Barry before she could have her formal presentation as *maîtresse-en-titre*.⁸⁰² As for in Britain, Horace Walpole among others wrote in his *Reminiscences* about the children of Amalie Sophie Marianne von Wallmoden, Countess of Yarmouth, mistress of George II:

⁷⁹⁹ See, e.g. LAD, P/11452, [Traduction de la Lettre de M. Mist], 31 déc. 1728, 389; Shebbeare 1757, 55–56.

⁸⁰⁰ See, e.g. Gerber 2012, 73, 82–83; Sternberg 2013, 255–261; Mettam 2007, 140–141; Shennan 2007, 133, 139; Adams 2015, 173–174, 177; Zysberg 2002, 15, 21–24.

⁸⁰¹ See, e.g. Fauques' account on the fate of Mlle O'Murphy, who was sent from the court and into marriage after having Louis XV's child. Fauques 1759, 109–110; Fauques 1758b, 27; Fauques 1766a, 177.

⁸⁰² Mairobert 1775, 66–67; Bécu 1777a, 13–16; Mairobert 1779a, XXe. LETTRE. A Lamet, à Londres, Compiègne, 3 sept. 1768, 28–29; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XX. To Lamet, in London, Compiègne, 3rd Sep. 1763, 24.

She had two sons, who both bore her husband's name; but the younger, though never acknowledged, was supposed the king's, and consequently did not miss additional homage of the courtiers.⁸⁰³

Another ordinary way to handle the unwanted fruits of royal adultery, especially if the mistress was not married, was to give the child to some married relative to raise as their own. For example, Melusine von der Schulenburg, Countess of Walsingham, was generally rumoured to have been the child of Melusine von der Schulenburg, Duchess of Kendal, and George I. However, she was usually referred as "niece to the Duchess of Kendal"⁸⁰⁴ because officially she was announced as the daughter of Frederick Achatz de [von der] Schulenburg and his wife, Margaret Gertrude.⁸⁰⁵ This was a transparent pretence, but the style of addressing her as the niece of the royal mistress was applied nonetheless:

The younger mademoiselle Schulemberg, who came over with her [Duchess of Kendal] and was created countess of Walsingham, passed for her niece; but was so like the king, that it is not very credible that the duchess, who had affected to pass for the cruel, had waited for the left-handed marriage.⁸⁰⁶

In the various eighteenth-century discussions about royal mistresses, the royal bastards could be regarded as a practice that caused (political) corruption or as a mark of (political and moral) corruption. Even though the illegitimate royal children, especially legitimated ones, were more or less tolerated, they nonetheless caused anxieties within the royal court. The discussion and debates about how to address illegitimate or legitimated royal offspring were not mere questions about empty ceremony but also about the rank and hierarchy within the royal court that produced positions of power in the form of formal rights⁸⁰⁷ or more informal access to the king. The themes of positions, power, and influence will be discussed further in section 4.1. At this point, however, it must be noted that the known royal bastards, legitimated or not, formed an intervening category in the courtly hierarchy that caused all kinds of tensions, ranging from the proper order of people in the royal ceremonies to the question concerning the succession of the crown. Thus, they were an element of instability in the royal court, causing uncertainty in the distribution of royal offices, posts, and favours. In a political system aiming for stability and harmony – ideally, at least – the practice of including the royal bastards in the royal court could be regarded as harmful for the *political virtue* of the royal court since it would compound the

⁸⁰³ Walpole 1818, 96.

⁸⁰⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 6–7, 30, 67; Stanhope 1779a, 133–134; Walpole 1822a, 46; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 120–121; Walpole 1833a, from Orford to Mann, LETTER LXXIII. Arlington-Street, 12th May 1743, 227–228.

⁸⁰⁵ See, e.g. Stanhope 1779a, 133–134.

⁸⁰⁶ Walpole 1818, 30; See also, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 46. In France, there circulated a rumour about the illegitimate daughter of Mme du Barry. This little girl was mentioned in anecdotes, but she was not named nor described as having received any favours. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 234.

⁸⁰⁷ As, e.g. Duc de Penthièvre's right to correspond with the kings and queens of Europe in the discussion between the Earls of Shelburne and Rochford in 1767: TNA, SP 78/272, Shelburne to Rochford, Whitehall, 30th Jan. 1767, 51; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 18th Feb. 1767, 99.

scheming of the already intriguing and factitious court. Certainly, worry about morality referred in this case to the established and traditional inner hierarchy of the royal court, especially in relation to the old aristocratic families who were accustomed to holding the most important position in the court.⁸⁰⁸

However, in the discussion outside the royal court, the royal bastards were more clearly a matter of *moral virtue*, which of course does not exclude political meanings. The discussion, however, was not limited to the illegitimate royal offspring but concerned the whole aristocracy, the king included. The debate focused not so much on the position of the royal bastards but on the scandalous practices of the aristocracy in dealing with their illegitimate children. For example, Fauques elaborated her perception of the moral abjection of nobility through an anecdote about Mme de Pompadour procuring legitimation for her husband's, M. d'Étiolles', bastard by creating a suitable family for the child. The anecdote begins with a disapproving presentation on the laws and customs of France regarding the troubled position of children born out of wedlock, with an emphasis on the especially unfavourable position of M d'Étiolles' bastard, who had none of the advantages of birth.⁸⁰⁹ Then, Fauques gives her readers a very detailed representation of Mme de Pompadour's measures for arranging a proper family for the poor bastard. She was presented as having sought out an impoverished nobleman of respectable family, who was ready to sell his dignity in service to Mme de Pompadour. The nobleman was then to choose a wife for himself, the couple was to be married, and the bastard child of M. d'Étiolles was to be taken under the name of the newlyweds and as their legitimate child.⁸¹⁰

La condition fut acceptée: la cérémonie eut lieu & l'enfant de Mr. d'Estiolles se vit constituée dans tous les droits d'une naissance légitime & noble. [...] Au reste, il ne faut pas oublier de dire que bien des gens rirent & qu'un plus grand nombre se scandalisèrent, d'une cérémonie qui tenoit si fort à la profanation. Mais le doigt d'une Marquise de Pompadour en couvroit toute l'irrégularité.⁸¹¹

In this, the royal mistress was reprehensible for her immoral and cunning use of the church ceremony, even for disrespecting the sanctity of marriage. Still, the greatest censure was directed at the whole system of concealing the fruits of sexual vices, which was presented as being a known and established practice among the nobility.⁸¹² In this particular case of Mme de Pompadour's husband,

⁸⁰⁸ Regarding aristocratic sentiments concerning their right to position in the royal court, see, e.g. Hours 2002, 93, 147–148, 153–155, 167–168, 277; Drévilion 2000, 302.

⁸⁰⁹ Fauques 1859, 148–152; Fauques 1758b, 83–88; Also in Fauques 1766b, 68–72.

⁸¹⁰ Fauques 1759, 150–152; Fauques 1758b, 83–88; Also in Fauques 1766b, 68–72.

⁸¹¹ Fauques 1759, 151–152. "The condition was accepted, executed and the child of d'Estiolles thus covered, entered at once into possession of all the honors and privileges of lawfull and noble birth. [...] Many laughed, and more were scandalised at an abuse of a church-ceremony, that was even a kind of forgery, but all discovered the finger of a La Pompadour in this piece of management." Fauques 1758b, 83–88; Also in Fauques 1766b, 70–73.

⁸¹² The hypocrisy of the nobility and other wealthy persons of the court was also expressed in Mairobert's little anecdote about Mme du Barry's adventure when she was still young Mlle L'Ange. According to the rumour, the godfather of Mlle L'Ange, M. Dumouceau, asked Madame Gourdan for a young escort. The damsel arrived,

the scandal was further increased by the notion that the practice that, defined as a *noble* way to deal with one's bastards, was now applied, due to the improper intrusion of a royal mistress, to a man of no noble or remarkable birth, not one of the rabble but a commoner or *bourgeois*.

Thus, in the discourses on and about royal mistresses the illegitimate royal and aristocratic offspring served a dual function. They were presented as a practice that continually created distortions in the hierarchy of the royal court as well as a demonstration of continual corruption of the morals and manners of nobility. Bastards were thus constructed as a corrupted custom of noble society that furthermore started to spread from the circles of high society to the customs of commoners because of the involvement and actions of the royal mistress.

In the case of Louis XV, his royal bastards did not cause as wide scandals or ruptures in the courtly hierarchy. Not because he did not have illegitimate children with his mistresses. Quite the contrary, he did, and they were discussed occasionally. For example, Count Jean-Baptiste du Barry wished to marry his son Viscount Adolphus to Mlle de St. André, natural daughter of Louis XV⁸¹³. Instead, as Fauques explained in her anecdote about the downfall of Mlle O'Murphy, Louis XV did not recognise all his extramarital children, much less continue his great-grandfather's practice of legitimising his children with his mistresses because he was aware of the danger that the bastards posed to the tranquility of the court:

[...] l'aversion qu'a le Roi pour des enfans naturels qui, de ce droit de naissance, ne manquent jamais de vouloit tirer & leurs noms & leurs rangs. Cette aversion venoit des troubles qu'avoient excités, sous sa minorité, les prétensions des enfans naturels de Louis XIV. Pour en prévenir le renouvellement & se dégager d'une Maitresse qui lui étoit devenue indifferente, il lui chercha un mari. [...] Une des conditions du mariage fut, dit-on qu'il auroit soin de retenir toujours son épouse à la campagne & qu'il ne lui permettroit point de venir à la Cour.⁸¹⁴

That is to say, some of Louis XV's illegitimate children were known to be his *natural* children but not legitimated ones. The illegitimate children did not cause similar tensions and anxieties during the reign of Louis XV as they did during his predecessor's because Louis XV intentionally sought to avoid the problems

and the godfather was shocked to see his goddaughter in such an immoral occupation. Mairobert 1775, 23–26. The anecdote is presented in form of letters in Mairobert 1779b, LETTER VI, To Mr. Billard du Monceau, her Godfather, Paris, 30th Dec. 1760 and editor's footnote, 7–8; Mairobert 1779a, VIe. LETTRE. A Mr. Billiard Du Monceau, son Parrain, Paris, 30 déc. 1760, note de bas de page de l'editeur, 7–8.

⁸¹³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 282–283; Bécu 1777b, 306; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CIX, To the Duke d'Aiguillon, 122.

⁸¹⁴ Fauques 1759, 109–110. "[...] his [Louis XV] dislike of having natural children, that should take name and rank from that claim of birth. This aversion was founded on what he knew of the troubles which, in his minority, had been excited on occasion of the pretensions of the natural sons of Lewis the fourteenth. In the view of preventing the like, and of dis-embarrassing himself of a mistress grown indifferent to him, he procured a husband for her [...] One of the conditions of the match was, it seems, that he should keep her in the country and not suffer her to come near the Court." Fauques 1758b, 27–28; Also in, Fauques 1766a, 177.

that arose from the legitimization of the illegitimate children of Louis XIV at the end of his reign.

Yet, the royal bastards continued to play an important role as indicators of corruption of morals and manners. The difference was only that in the discourse about Louis XV's royal mistresses reference was made through the image of the mistresses of the former king. All the scandal – the continual political and moral uneasiness caused by the legitimated royal children and the moral corruption of which the marriage of the king and his mistress was the mark – was conceptualised in the notion of *the part of Maintenon*⁸¹⁵, or simply, *a Maintenon*⁸¹⁶ in various anecdotes. Even though it seems that the term was used simply as a synonym for a mistress, it implied in every use more than just a mistress. It connoted an established position or even a possible secret or left-handed marriage, influence and artifice, and in the latter sense, also corruption of at least morals and manners, and possibly political corruption as well, since the corruption of morals, manners, taste, and political corruption were interconnected. By choosing to utilise a term that had a temporal dimension eighteenth-century writers also emphasised that the decadence and corruption that was connected to the royal mistresses already had a long history – which the declension of the royal court and royalty devolved from generation to generation.

Most of the aforementioned forms and modes of corruption were presented as unintentional, by which I mean that they were regarded as arising from the *practice* of the keeping of mistresses rather than the active and calculated corruptive operations of the royal mistresses themselves. However, some royal mistresses were also given an intentionally corruptive character. In Britain, the Hanoverian mistresses were presented in some debates as functioning solely in the interest of their home country or for their own private interest⁸¹⁷, thus implying that they intentionally hindered rather than promoted British interests.

Another example of an intentionally evil mistress was Mme de Pompadour, whose motives for the corrupting of the French court, king, and political system were presented in the vague terms of *ambition*⁸¹⁸ and *vanity*⁸¹⁹. Here, the motives

⁸¹⁵ See, e.g. "Le Rôle de Maintenon, que la Favorite commençoit à jouer, avoit aussi ses dégoûts." Mairobert 1775, 213; "The part of a Maintenon, which the favourite began to play, had likewise its bitter and sour." Bécu 1777b, 205.

⁸¹⁶ For example, when describing the court of George I, Mary Wortley Montagu used the term *Maintenon* as a synonym for an established mistress: "In one respect his [George I's] court, if court it could be called, bore some resemblance to the old establishment of Versailles. There was a Madame de Maintenon. Two ladies had accompanied him from Hanover, Mademoiselle de Schulenberg, and Madame Kilmansegge, née Platen. The former, whom he created Duchess of Kendal, was lodged in St. James's Palace, and had such respect paid her as very much confirmed the rumour of a left-hand marriage." Wortley Montagu 1837a, 37.

⁸¹⁷ See, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 109, 113–114, 119–121; Shebbeare 1757, 42–43, 55; Walpole 1822a, 154–155; Walpole 1822b, 246.

⁸¹⁸ Fauques 1759, 128, 134; Fauques 1758a, 111–112; Fauques 1758b, 53, 62; Fauques 1766a, 145, 211; Fauques 1766b, 33, 83. Regarding women in general, see, e.g. "L'ambition de gouverner est proper à tout le sexe; [...]." Pierre 1903, 101. "The ambition to govern belongs to the sex [women];" Pierre 1902a, 146.

⁸¹⁹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 84, 131–132, 147, 156, 173; Fauques 1758b, 57–59, 95, 122; Fauques 1766a, 145; Fauques 1766b, 66–67, 113; Anon. 1760, 122–123.

of the evil mistress are not the main point, even though it is significant that they were connected to essentially feminine characters, vices, and nature. Noteworthy, however, was the extent of the corruption she was presented as having induced.

In the previous chapters, we have seen the royal mistresses in their tolerated and even applauded function as the hostesses of royal diversions as well as the various and ambivalent attitudes to these entertainments. Again, we encounter a discourse where the benign and supportive function of the royal mistress as the hostess of royal entertainments was turned against her, both personally as a singular royal mistress and impersonally as an example of the phenomenon or practice of royal mistresses. In this, Mme de Pompadour was presented as having orchestrated a *system*⁸²⁰ of entertainments in order to ruin France in various senses.

First of all, her system of entertainments, usually specified as organising numerous journeys to different royal chateaux, was costly to the king and crown, as explained previously in section 3.5.2:

Elle est de toutes les parties de plaisir : elle y ordonne tout. C'est elle qui est l'ame de ces fréquentes & dispendieux voïages que le Roi fait à Fontainebleau, à Marly, à St. Germain, à Choiseu, à la Meute &c. Dans ces voïages qui exigent des sommes immenses & auxquelles on ne peut fournir, qu'en engageant les revenus de la Couronne, ou en les tirant par avance; [...].⁸²¹

Secondly, her system of expensive entertainments not only ruined the king but the nobility as well:

Elle est de toutes les parties de plaisir : elle y ordonne tout. C'est elle qui est l'ame de ces fréquentes & dispendieux voïages que le Roi fait à Fontainebleau, à Marly, à St. Germain, à Choiseu, à la Meute &c. Dans ces voïages qui exigent des sommes immenses & auxquelles on ne peut fournir, qu'en engageant les revenus de la Couronne, ou en les tirant par avance; où la noblesse qui l'accompagne est forcée de faire des dépenses qui la ruinent, ce qui n'est peut être pas sans dessein, puisque le dérangement de sa fortune privée, la met en une plus grande dépendance de la Cour; [...].⁸²²

Noteworthy in this anecdote is the tone defending the aristocracy, or more precisely, the traditional ideal of the courtly nobility. In the various memoirs of Mme de Pompadour, her relationship with the traditional (sword) nobility was presented in mixed terms, indicating that occasionally she promoted policies that limited the influence of the traditional nobility, and occasionally she protected

⁸²⁰ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 104–105; Fauques 1758b, 22–23; Fauques 1766a, 170.

⁸²¹ Fauques 1759, 175. “She attended and presided over all those parties of pleasure in his frequent journies to Fonatianebleau, Marly, St. Germain’s, Choisi, La Meute, which are [...] ruinously expensive to himself [Louis XV], that the revenue of the crown stands mortgaged or anticipated for several years in advance, [...]”. Fauques 1766b, 115.

⁸²² Fauques 1759, 175. “She attended and presided over all those parties of pleasure in his frequent journies to Fonatianebleau, Marly, St. Germain’s, Choisi, La Meute, which are not only so ruinously expensive to himself, that the revenue of the crown stands mortgaged or anticipated for several years in advance, but to the nobility that accompanies him. A circumstance very little minded, especially as the disorder of their private fortune makes them more dependent on the court.[...]” Fauques 1766b, 115–116.

the privileges of the aristocratic society.⁸²³ In this instance, I believe, Fauques' anecdote rested on the traditional notion of courtly nobility functioning as the king's advisers.⁸²⁴

By ruining the wealth of the aristocracy, Mme de Pompadour was presented as having made them *dependent*. Various historians have already pointed out that the monarchs might have had an interest in promoting the normative calls of ceremony, lifestyle, and the splendour of proper courtly life and courtiers. By these means, the monarch would make his most powerful, and potentially dangerous, aristocracy dependent on the royal support. Thus, enforcing a costly lifestyle on the nobility was how kings gained supremacy in the power struggle between the monarchy and nobility.⁸²⁵ Also, as previously discussed, manly independence was considered to be the prerequisite of all political participation. This was also connected to the idea of private interest. It would then connote that all those who were dependent had private interest, in this case to get the needed royal support for their expensive lifestyle. Furthermore, everyone with private interest could be corrupted and would be unctuous, false, and misleading. Thus, they would be conveying false or evil advice to the king, resulting in misrule and misgovernment. In this sense, Mme de Pompadour was represented as the corruptor that forced the nobility into private interest, and consequently, risked the good government of the realm.

But this was not enough, since thirdly, the greatest malediction of Mme de Pompadour's system was to lull the king and his administrative nobility into frivolous idleness, inactivity, and inertness:

Elle est de toutes les parties de plaisir : elle y ordonne tout. C'est elle qui est l'ame de ces fréquentes & dispendieux voyages que le Roi fait à Fontainebleau, à Marly, à St. Germain, à Choiseu, à la Meute &c. [...] Mais qu'y fait-on ? On joue gros jeu; on chasse; on rit. On perd dans un dédale de distractions, le gout & la faculté de penser à des choses sérieuses. On néglige les affaires, qui ne figurent plus qu'en second; & on les prive de l'attention qu'elles exigent, pour la donner toute entière à ce qui ne la mérite jamais.⁸²⁶

⁸²³ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 90–93; Poisson 1766a, 205–206, 227–228; Poisson 1766c, 203–204, 225–226; Poisson 1772, LETTER LIV. To the marquis de Saint-Contest, minister of state, 117.

⁸²⁴ Even though the French monarch did not to distribute his sovereign authority to other political institutions, he was ideally supposed to receive and accept advice. When advised by his loyal nobility, the king was regarded as representing the whole realm in his person and was considered to use *absolute* but not *arbitrary* power. The tradition of royal advisors and related ideals descended from the medieval royal councils. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 16, 65, 148; Baker 1990, 169; Molas Ribalta 1996, 20–22, 36; Hours 2002, 33–34; Bell 1992, 922; Descimon 1996, 103–104; Graham 2000, 222.

⁸²⁵ See, e.g. Elias 2006, 58–59, 78–80; Wilson 2000, 64, 76–77; Roche 1999, 266, 362; Hours 2002, 26, 37, 78–92, 276–277; Mettam 2007, 147; Swann 2007, 162, 170, 183–184.

⁸²⁶ Fauques 1759, 175. "She attended and presided over all those parties of pleasure in his frequent journies to Fontainebleau, Marly, St. Germain's, Choisi, La Meute, [...] Deep play, hunting and trifling form the whole circle of dissipation in those jaunts, and stunning all serious thought, greatly take off the attention due to the business of the state, which becomes therefore at the most a second and subordinate consideration." Fauques 1766b, 115–116.

The same theme can be found in the British debates as well. For example, in his *Memoirs of the last ten years of the reign of George the Second*, Horace Walpole described the situation in France in 1756, before entering the Seven Years' War, in similar terms:

In France the prosecution of the war was by no means an unanimous measure. D'Argenson, the promoter of it, was on ill terms with Madame Pompadour, whose interest was to lull the king and the nation in pleasures and inactivity, not to blow from another quarter.⁸²⁷

The most important justification for the practice of keeping a royal mistress was thus turned upside down. Instead of restoring the king, weary from his industrious work for the good government of his realm, she was represented as having fed the royal want for and need of diversions, encouraged the king in entertainments excessive in their costs and amount, and diverted him from the *business* or the diligent fulfilling of his duty of administering the affairs of his realm.

Furthermore, such degeneration, degradation, and corruption was presented in terms of an established and intentional programme of a royal mistress. The term *system* was chosen to describe the combination of Mme de Pompadour's entertainments, but it also suggested an analogy to a system in the political sense. In the latter sense, the system meant orderliness in the planning of administration, as well as implying that there were fixed rules and principles in the royal government.⁸²⁸ On this last point, the term *system* connoted the permanence and peremptory nature of Mme de Pompadour's plan of entertainments. Further, it also suggested that, due to the planning and power of a royal mistress, such a devious system was established as an irremovable part of the culture and system of court and government. This meant that Mme de Pompadour's actions had already distorted the fundamental principles on which monarchical rule was founded and on which premise it functioned properly – in this case, specifically principles of strong nobility and ideals of industrious government.

3.7.6 The changing ideals of royal example

The corruptive influence of the royal mistresses was not limited to the courtly circumstances or even the government, as demonstrated in the arguments about royal example. Through the idea of royal example, the king's private affairs, amours, and morality were reconstructed as a public affair: as something that affected and guided the nation's mores and manners, and morality as well. For example, Abbé de Bernis emphasised the meaning of the king and his royal court

⁸²⁷ Walpole 1822b, 23–24.

⁸²⁸ As, e.g. "For some years before the Death of the late King [Louis XV], there was no regular System followed, in the administration of either foreign or domestic Affairs." TNA, BL Stowe MS 89, A continuation of the Account of the Affairs of France, VOL II, A Memorial on the Affairs of France, 25th Oct. 1775, 48.

as a model of behaviour for all subjects: "The Court and capital decide the national manners and morals, as they do the fashions."⁸²⁹

This group of argumentation worrying about the bad and debauched example set by the monarch himself, rested on the prevailing discourses about *moeurs* as well as the changing ideals concerning kingship – not forgetting the changes in the media of debating and discoursing. As stated, there was especially in eighteenth-century France a sense of general anxiety about the degeneration of morals and manners. In this debate, the role of the monarch as an exemplary human being and a model for his subjects was accentuated.⁸³⁰ However, this was not a uniform wish nor without some inconsistencies. For example, Abbé de Bernis wrote in his memoirs: "The people, corrupt as they are, desire their kings to love their wives; [...]"⁸³¹. In this formulation, the king, his mistress, and his court were not reconstructed as the main source of moral corruption of the morally corrupted realm. Instead, it indicated that the people wished to see their king manifest virtues that were ideal but that they themselves could not uphold. As such, the example serves to highlight the general worry about the deterioration of morals and manners peculiar to eighteenth-century British and French political cultures.

But to return to the idea and ideal of the king functioning as an example of virtuous, moral, and rational behaviour. It was not an eighteenth-century innovation but based on renaissance ideals, where the reputation of the king was paralleled with the respect and obedience of his subjects.⁸³² Neither was it solely a French political ideal. For example, in German areas, the ruling Prince was regarded more like a first servant of the state. His most important function was to ensure and increase the happiness of his subjects. This principle was enacted through the Christian and moral way of life that also set an example of behaviour for his subjects.⁸³³ The idea was also central in the political writings of James I, who defined a true Christian monarch as one functioning in an exemplary manner.⁸³⁴

In Britain and France during the latter half of the eighteenth century, there reigned nearly simultaneously two kings, George III and Louis XVI, whose public (and in this sense, political) image was designed – and I believe intentionally and knowingly designed – to answer the earlier eighteenth-century worries concerning the degeneration of morals and manners (including the link between moral corruption and political corruption) and the general, or even popular, desire to see their king as an example of good behaviour, Christian

⁸²⁹ Pierre 1902a, 112. "La cour et la capitale decide des mœurs nationales comme des modes;" Bernis 40. His complaint, of course, was about the court and example set by the previous heads of the state and administration, Louis XIV and Regent Duc d'Orléans and their mistresses.

⁸³⁰ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 238–240, 244.

⁸³¹ Pierre 1902a, 139. "Le peuple, tout corrompu qu'il est, veut que les princes aiment leurs femmes; [...]" Pierre 1903, 90.

⁸³² On the renaissance ideal and its interpretation in supposedly Cardinal Duc de Richelieu's *Testament Politique*, (possibly written in the late 1630s, published in the latter half of the seventeenth century), see, e.g. Graham 2006, 142–143.

⁸³³ Ingraio 1990, 228; Wilson 2000, 50.

⁸³⁴ Spellman 1998, 58.

values, and rational decision-making. That is to say, monarchs, who answered the popular call to see the prevailing moral and political ideals personalised in their sovereign.⁸³⁵ Since there was already an established idea of the monarch as an exemplary model for subjects in early eighteenth-century political cultures, the eighteenth-century debates were not necessarily about the exemplary nature and condition of a king as much as about the power to control the definitions of *ideal* or normative behaviour. In these debates, the prolific printing, writing, and reading – or, widening of the debating and conversing – provided a means and a possibility to participate in the defining of *ideal* in a *model monarch*.

In relation to the royal mistresses, the general worry about the degeneration of the morals and manners of the whole realm and the demand for the king to function as an example to his subjects was linked to religious discourses and to the action of agents of the established Church in the court. After all, the practice of keeping a mistress was a crime against the sense of (both Catholic and Protestant) Christian marriage, morality, and virtuous life. However, as explained in the introduction, the religio-moralist condemnation of royal mistresses was not conspicuous in the debates about the royal mistresses that I have chosen to analyse. They did not directly contribute much to the religious discourse about the immorality of the royal mistresses or religious denunciation of the practice of keeping a mistress.

Yet, there were occasions when the prevailing religio-moralist discourse exuded from the debate on the royal mistresses. One of the most important occasions was the wish that the French king should function as an example of Christian (Catholic) values to his subjects. This desire was expressed through anecdotal recollections of the actions of religious agents in the royal court or through citing the contents of the sermons preached to the king.⁸³⁶ The anecdotes bear witness to the existence of religiously oriented discourse about the royal mistresses, even though the purely Catholic arguments in condemning the royal mistresses were not necessarily important to the writers.

Especially the memoirs of the French royal mistresses conveyed some of the disapproving arguments of the agents of the Catholic Church. The main argument of the ecclesiastics was that, by his own example, the king encouraged his subjects to behave immorally and irreligiously. By the king's bad example,

⁸³⁵ On the image of George III, see, e.g. Black 2004a, 18–19, 124. Black has noted that the emphasis on homely virtues in George III's public image gained more meaning in 1780s.

⁸³⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 20–21, 114, 165–171; Fauques 1758a, 22–23; Fauques 1758b, 107–119; Fauques 1766a, 23–24, 188; Fauques 1766b, 91–105; Poisson 1766a, 197–199; Poisson 1766b, 19–22, 137–138; Poisson 1766c, 195–197; Poisson 1766d, 20–23, 142–144; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXIII. A mr. l'Archevêque de Paris, 112–115; Poisson 1771d, LETTRE LXXIII. To the archbishop of Paris, 101–104; Poisson 1772, LETTRE XXXVIII. To the countess of Brézé, 1748, 82–84; Bécu 1777b, 281–283, 356; Mairobert 1779b, LETTRE CXXXIV. From M. de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, 15th Jan. 1774, 149–150; Mairobert 1779a, CXXXIVe. LETTRE. De Mr. de Beaumont, Archevêque de Paris. 15 janv. 1774, 183–185; Mairobert 1779b, LETTRE CXXXVIII. To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senes, Holy Thursday at Night, 1744, 157–158.

they explicitly meant Louis XV's habit of not receiving Holy Communion at Eastertide.⁸³⁷

Ces habiles théologiens établirent pour principe "Que le scandale dans un Roi étoit le plus grand mal qu'il pût commettre: qu'il est le miroir où chacun se regarde; que son exemple entraîne celui de l'état: que, depuis que le Roi ne communioit point, il y avoit plus d'un million de sujets en France qui ne participoient plus aux sacrements, que la désertion de la sainte table étoit générale," &c. &c.⁸³⁸

The anxiety about the abandoning of Communion correlated with the topical debates about the degeneration and corruption of morals and manners. But the worry about the meaning of a pious and Christian way of life seems to have correlated also with the fact that it was rather common among the urban male population to lack the prerequisites for Communion, as for example Thomas Munck (2002) has pointed out.⁸³⁹ As for the king himself, he was prevented from receiving communion due to the habit of keeping a mistress. That is to say, he knew that he was committing a crime against the laws of God, and was not showing repentance by not sending his mistress away.⁸⁴⁰

The most important reason for the agents of the Catholic Church to categorically condemn the royal mistresses seems to have been the argument that the king was supposed to function as an example to his subjects. If he were to show a bad example, as when openly keeping mistresses, he was promoting debauchery – sinful and immoral manners – in all parts of his kingdom and among all ranks of his subjects, as indicated by an anecdote about a gift of a

⁸³⁷ On the debates about the Communion and Easter duties, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 267–268, 317; Bécu 1777b, 281–283, 354–355; Mairobert 1779a, CXXXVIIIe. LETRRE. A Mr. l'Abbé de Beauvais, alors Chanoine de Noyon, Prédicateur du Roi, actuellement Evêque de Senes, du Jeudi Saint au soir, 1774, 193–194; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVIII, To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senes, Holy Thursday at Night, 1744, 157–158.

⁸³⁸ Poisson 1766b, 20–21. "These able theologians settled it as a principle, "That scandal in a king was the greatest evil he could be guilty of: that he is the mirror [sic.], where every one looks to see himself: that his example carries with it that of the state: that from the time the King did not commune, there were upwards of a million of subjects in France, who no longer partook of the sacraments: that the desertion from the holy table was become general," &c. &c." Poisson 1766d, 21–22.

⁸³⁹ Munck 2002, 31.

⁸⁴⁰ The king could not receive communion because he could not fulfil the prerequisite of confession and absolution of his sins. The reconciliation required repentance and correction of sinful actions and habits. As long as the king continued to attend his mistress, he was not considered to have regretted and mended his depraved, immoral and sinful ways. See, e.g. Farr 1991, 406; Darnton 1995a, 236; Graham 2000, 117, 238. Various studies speculate on the meaning of the king being unable to perform his Easter duties. For example Lisa Jane Graham, Thomas Kaiser and Robert Darnton have noted and contemplated the meanings of a king being unable to fulfil his duties as a Catholic, where also the meaning of the practice of keeping a royal mistress is noted as the main reason for not receiving communion. The aforementioned scholars discussed especially the link between the king being unable to take communion and ceasing the ceremony of *royal touch*, both of which contributed to distancing and alienating the monarch from his subjects. The incapacity of the king also tested the authority of a Catholic king, or *The Most Christian King*, that was traditionally enforced by and in liaison with the Church, resulting in the desacralisation of the French monarchy – the monarch lost his sacred or sanctified status. Darnton 1995a, 236–367; Graham 2000, 19, 117, 202, 238, 240; Kaiser 1996, 1030; Drévilion 2000, 286–288, 296–297.

painting from an unnamed Jesuit to Louis XV.⁸⁴¹ The intentionally allegorical painting depicted four crowned princes suffering in Purgatory, each more severely according to their respective vices as ruling princes: the first being ambitious (indicating willingness to wage war at the expense of his subjects' lives); the second avaricious (indicating over-taxation and oppression of the subjects' rights to private property); the third negligent or remiss (indicating irresoluteness and dependence); and the fourth, the greatest wrongdoer of them all, a voluptuous monarch, referring directly to the practice of keeping a mistress:

Ce quatrieme qui souffre plus que les autres, parceque son crime est plus grand, étoit un Roi voluptueux qui entretenoit publiquement une concubine à sa cour; & par cet exemple scandaleux avoit rempli son royaume d'amours illicites, [...].⁸⁴²

This fear of the destruction of the morals and manners of the whole realm through the royal example of keeping mistresses also had a temporal trajectory. In his Easter sermon for the king and court in 1773, the Abbé Jean Baptiste de Beauvais projected the fear about the continuous gradual deterioration of *moeurs* into the future in a metaphor about Solomon.⁸⁴³ The allegory was a well-chosen one.⁸⁴⁴ On the other hand, by drawing an analogy with King Louis XV and King Solomon, Abbé de Beauvais seemed to flatter the king with a well-known reference to a famed wisdom of Solomon.⁸⁴⁵ Yet, as indicated by the debate that the sermon caused and the way it was remembered and used afterwards (as for example in the memoirs of Mme du Barry), the Abbé de Beauvais extended the allegory further beyond the simple reference to kingly wisdom. He chose to provoke the now lesser-known part of the story of King Solomon – his immoral

⁸⁴¹ Poisson 1766a, 197–199; Poisson 1766c, 195–197.

⁸⁴² Poisson 1766a, 199. “This fourth, whose sufferings exceed those of the others, his crime being greater, was a voluptuous King, openly keeping a concubine at his court; and by this scandalous example had filled his kingdom with debauchery, &c.” Poisson 1766c, 196–197.

⁸⁴³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 267–268; Bécu 1777b, 281–282; Mairobert 1779a, CXXXVIIIe. LETTRE. A Mr. l'Abbé de Beauvais, alors Chanoine de Noyon, Prédicateur du Roi, actuellement Evêque de Senes, du Jeudi Saint au soir 1774, 193–194; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVIII. To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senes, Holy Thursday at Night, 1774, 157–158; Mairobert 1779a, CXLIe. LETTRE. A la Marquise de Montrable, 200; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXLI. To the Marchioness de Montrable, 163; Abbé de Beauvais came to the fore after his Pentecost sermon in 1761, after which he was asked to give a sermon before the king in Advent 1768 and later in Lent 1773. See, e.g. Anon. 1829, notice biographique, xviii.

⁸⁴⁴ For example, Horace Walpole enthusiastically applied *Solomon* as a euphemism for Louis XV in his correspondence with Horace Mann in early 1769. The frequency of the allusion indicates that it is possible that Abbé de Beauvais applied the parallel as early as in his Advent sermon in 1768. However, it is quite obvious that at least Walpole thought the analogy fitting and amusing, *i.e.* a bon mot. See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXVII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, Feb. 28, 1769, 26; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXL. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th May 1769, 36–37.

⁸⁴⁵ During seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, King Solomon allegory was very popular in positive sense, as referring to wisdom and justice. See, e.g. Vovelle 1987, 80.

ways, the ostentation of his court, and his polygamy⁸⁴⁶ – as a way to reproach the lifestyle of Louis XV:

Enfin, disoit-il [abbé de Beauvais], ce Monarque [Solomon], rassasié de voluptés, las d'avoir épuisé, pour réveiller ses sens flétris, tous les genres de plaisirs qui entourent le trône, finit par en chercher d'une espèce publique.⁸⁴⁷

By choosing to remind the audience of the wicked ways of the wise Solomon, the Abbé de Beauvais also hinted in the direction of the fate of King Solomon and his kingdom: the righteous revenge of God by breaking the kingdom that Solomon built, not during Solomon's reign but before his successor's, Jeroboam's, ascent to the throne.⁸⁴⁸ Thus, the preacher reminded the king that the moral example that he showed to his subjects during his own reign would continue to affect the reign of his successor as well. In such a manner, the morality or immorality, virtues or vices of a personal king were removed from the private sphere of the king and reconstructed as public, as an immorality and vice that endangered public morals, the common good, and even the future of the whole dynasty. Additionally, the use of allegorical language further blurred the boundaries of the private/public and personal/impersonal monarch as it confirmed the connection between the immorality of a personal king and the impersonal and undying majesty.

The wish that the king would function as an example to his subjects extended beyond the direct religio-moralist discourses on the royal mistresses as well. Usually the notions were imprecise or vague wishes, such as for example for the king to love his wife⁸⁴⁹ (instead of keeping a mistress). However, when it came to the luxury, ostentation, and splendour of the royal court, or to *royal spending*, the criticism became more poignant. As I have previously explained, there was an idea of the *dignity* of the king: that the magnificence of the realm should be visible in the royal splendour. However, exhibitions of wealth in the form of ostentation were not the only existing model for demonstrating royal dignity and majesty. There were parallel ideals even among the nobility that highlighted *modesty* and *moderation*.⁸⁵⁰ Especially during times of economic distress or anxiety the meaning of and discourse about royal splendour became more inconsistent. On the one hand, the king manifested his realm in his person, as well as his highest dignity, rank, and status among the aristocracy, which both

⁸⁴⁶ 1. Kun. 11:1-12.

⁸⁴⁷ Mairobert 1775, 267-268. "'In fine,' said he [abbé de Beauvais], 'this monarch [Solomon], satiated with voluptuous enjoyments, tired with having exhausted, in order to revive his withered appetites, every species of pleasure that surrounds the throne, concluded with seeking a new kind in the vile dregs of public corruption.'" Bécu 1777b, 281-282. The sermon was quoted as well in Mairobert 1779a, CXXXVIII. LETTRE. A Mr. l'Abbé de Beauvais, alors Chanoine de Noyon, Prédicateur du Roi, actuellement Evêque de Senez, Du Jeudi Saint au soir 1774, note de bas de page de l'éditeur, 194; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVIII, To the Abbé de Beauvais, at that time Canon of Noyon, and Preacher to the King, now Bishop of Senez, Holy Thursday at Night, 1774, 157-158.

⁸⁴⁸ 1. Kun. 11:11-13, 31-39.

⁸⁴⁹ As in, e.g. Pierre 1903, 90; Pierre 1902a, 139.

⁸⁵⁰ See, e.g. Hours 2002, 127-133.

encouraged and obligated broad living – and this show of prosperity was something that subjects also wished to see in the person of their monarch and his court.⁸⁵¹

On the other hand, however, during times that were difficult or economically turbulent, for example due to the costly wars or continual debates and controversies regarding taxation, which were particularly strong in 1750s and 1760s,⁸⁵² royal splendour could and did acquire new and contradictory meanings. The royal mistresses' role in this debate was then, as already mentioned, to accentuate the improper or excess spending of the crown. The changing ideals in France regarding to royal magnificence were captured in a little *bon mot* about the concept *royal* in the latter half of the eighteenth century. First, it must be noted that the term was generally applied to anything that was *suitable for the king*, especially with the connotations of *authority, dignity, power, grandeur, loftiness, and elevation*.⁸⁵³ It was, however, also applied with a signification of *generous or liberal* regarding the use of money, as for example in “rewarding royally”⁸⁵⁴. Normatively speaking, it was usually used with positive connotations, as something that was desirable and respectable. This interconnection of generous use of money, *éclat* of the state as personified in the king and royal benevolence was previously discussed in section 3.4.

In *Anecdotes sur M. La Comtesse Du Barri* (1775) Mairobert presented a play on the word *royally* that reveals (and participated) the topical debate about royal and courtly spending:

Le mot *Royalement* jadis étoit louange,
Tout ce qu'on faisoit bien étoit *fait comme un Roi*.
On disoit: Comme un Dieu, comme un Roi, comme un Ange.
Mais aujourd'hui ce mot est d'un tout autre aloy:
[...]
Payer Royalement, c'est faire banqueroute;
Vivre Royalement, c'est être Putassier.⁸⁵⁵

In this witty sarcasm, the anxieties about the excessive royal spending (as indicated by *bankruptcy*) were linked to discontent with the royal lifestyle (as indicated by the vulgar expression of having a relationship with prostitutes). The term *putassier* (*whoremonger*) accented the interconnection of the royal mistresses as paid women (and possibly expensive ones as well), their lower rank and status,

⁸⁵¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759 130; Fauques 1766b, 27–28.

⁸⁵² See, e.g., Richter 2006, 163; Baker 2006, 628; van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Munck 2002, 166, 197 Merrick 1986, 500; Henshall 1992, 188; Shennan 2007, 7, 9, 11; Graham 2000, 100, 185; Darnton 1995a, 148; Scott 1990a, 33; Swann 2007, 185–186, 190; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 51, 129; Rombouts 1993–1994, 271.

⁸⁵³ See the explanations for “royal”, “king”, “kingly”, “majesty” and “majestically” in Bailey 1730; Allen 1765; Barclay 1774; Ash 1775b; Ash 1775a.

⁸⁵⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1758a, 45; Fauques 1766a, 53–54; “recompenser en Roi”, Fauques 1759, 38.

⁸⁵⁵ Mairobert 1775, 181. “The word Royally was formerly praised/ All that was done well was done like a King/ They said: It was Divine, Royal, Angelic/ But today it is of a completely different nature: [...] To pay royally, is to become bankrupt/ To live royally, to be a whoremonger.” (Translation E.K.)

and their corruptive influence on morals and manners (*prostitutes* being already corrupted women).

The excessive expenditure was evidently a burning topic. More than anything, the debate about royal spending was actually about the changes in the ideals of propriety: the debate was a struggle for the control of the definition of *excessiveness*. In this debate about *excessive royal consumption* the royal mistresses were defined as *excessive*, something to be cut out in order to economise, to fill the crown's coffers again, to pay debts and restore the public credit, and most importantly, to be able to reduce taxes.⁸⁵⁶

The discussion about the excessiveness in the expensive royal lifestyle was not only the complaint of the audiences outside the royal court. The worry about the realm's economic situation was discussed within and between the royal courts as well. In the diplomatic correspondence, the ambassadors and envoys related reports about the financial and economic situation of the foreign court, country, and crown, usually with the pleasure of seeing the rivaling or enemy nation in the state of economic distress.⁸⁵⁷ The royal policies aimed to respond to the financial difficulties and general economic anxieties, not only by finding new ways to raise the money for the expenses of the Crown (as for example, during a war) or revoking unpopular taxes⁸⁵⁸, but also by endeavouring to show a *royal example*.

Louis XV. qui ne pouvoit commencer la guerre sans fouler ses peuples, voulut être le premier à leur donner l'exemple en diminuant une partie de sa maison. Il réforma plusieurs de ses équipages de chasse, & un grand nombre de chevaux de course des deux écuries. Il y eut aussi des réglemens sur les petits voïages pour les rendre moins dispendieux. Il fut décidé qu'à la cour il n'y auroit point de spectacles cette année & on suspendit les ouvrages du Louvre, &c.⁸⁵⁹

Leading by example could be understood as a way to encourage the wealthy nobility (or wealthy higher middling sorts) to participate financially in the costs of wars:

The King has sent all his Plate and that of the Royal Family to the Mint, to be coined into Money; and his Majesty has ordered, that that of his Subjects who will bring their Plate in the same manner, for the Benefit of the State in the present Exigences, shall have the Duty they paid thereon repaid them, and be paid at the Rate of livres a Mark

⁸⁵⁶ As indicated by statements, such as e.g. "[...] il sait d'ailleurs que jamais les maistresses n'ont diminuer les impôts." Pierre 1903, 90. "[...] they [the people] know, moreover, that mistresses do not diminish taxes." Pierre 1902a, 139.

⁸⁵⁷ See, e.g. BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 23rd May 1753, Private, 91-92; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 256; TNA, SP 78/278, 58, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769; LAD, P/11452, [Broglie, ambassadeur; Chammorel, ch.e. d'affaires], Memoire sur l'Etat present de la Grande Bretagne, 395-406; LAD, 7md19, 13.

⁸⁵⁸ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 175, 217; Poisson 1766c, 173, 214-215.

⁸⁵⁹ Poisson 1766b, 215. "Lewis XV. who could not begin the war [The Seven Years' War] without oppressing his people, was willing to set them an example of oeconomy, by diminishing his houshold expences. He reduced his hunting equipages, and the number of his hunting horses in both stables. The expences [sic.] of his little journies were regulated and diminished: it was resolved that there should be no diversions this year at court, and the works of the Louvre were suspended, &c." Poisson 1766d, 225.

for all Plate that has the Pris Mark on it. The Princes and Princesses of the Blood, Madame de Pompadour, and great Numbers of the Nobility and others have already sent in their Plate.⁸⁶⁰

The royal example was not only a reaction to the financial needs of the realm but also to the general feeling of insecurity concerning the economic situation, and to the discourses and complaints that this insecurity generated. If it was an attempt to increase the popularity of the monarchy, by showing that the sovereign shared the burdens of war along with his subjects, then it did not gain a unanimously approving reception. As the royal example was generally regarded as venerable, the royal economy was ridiculed. For example, in *Letters of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1771) the royal economy was presented as turned upside down – not as a noble example but as pettiness, parsimony, and miserliness – by a new and overly zealous minister⁸⁶¹, who wished to economise on the expenses of the royal household by petty savings on the king's breeches and on the princesses' gloves.⁸⁶²

In Britain, however, the royal living standard was probably slightly more moderate, which manifested itself in the conception of the British court as being dull, English courtiers as melancholic, and the Hanoverian kings as parsimonious.⁸⁶³ There was also an ideal of frugality or even royal austerity, although it could be applied only to a royal prince living in a camp during a military campaign that he was leading, which belongs to the imaginations of a warrior-king.⁸⁶⁴

3.8 Discussion: The meanings of French splendour and British dullness

In Britain, the most interesting dimension of the eighteenth-century luxury-debates is the link between femininity, corruption, and luxury, which was discussed in section 3.7.4. This interconnection was present in British political culture in a dual meaning. Firstly, the British writers and translators used various

⁸⁶⁰ Public Advertiser-London, Mon. 19th Nov. 1759, iss 7811, "Paris, Nov. 9". The sale of the silver plates was remembered long, see, e.g. General Evening Post, London, 21.–23. June 1774, iss. 6346, "Memoirs of the life of the late king of France, continued".

⁸⁶¹ Most likely Jean Moreau de Séchelles, who served as Contrôleur Général des Finances between 1754–1756. Also Horace Walpole noted his project of saving in the king's household in his letter to Mann in 1755: "Monsieur de Seychelles, who grows into power, is labouring at their [France] finances and marine: they have struck off their sous-fermieres, and by a reform in what they call the King's pleasures, have already saved 1200,00l. sterling a year." Walpole 1833b, from Orford to Mann, LETTER CCLXVII. Arlington-Street, 29th Sep. 1755, 256–257.

⁸⁶² Poisson 1771a, LXXVII. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 132–133; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXVII, To the countess of Baschi, 116–118.

⁸⁶³ See, e.g. Poisson 1771c, LETTER I, To the duke of Mirepoix, 1753, 1; Poisson 1766a, 157–158; Poisson 1766b, 134; Poisson 1766c, 156; Poisson 1766d, 139–140; Wortley Montagu 1837b, Letter to Lady Pomfret, 1738, 246–247.

⁸⁶⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1822b, 73, on the frugal life of Augustus III, king of Poland, when highlighting the immoderate ostentation of his favourite Count Brühl.

negative meanings linked to luxury, such as corruption, in their criticism against the courtly and aristocratic lifestyle, much in the same style as in French political culture and courtly criticism. This part of the debate dealt with concepts such as politeness and civility, which were considered an essential and yet very controversial part of the life of high society, gentlefolk, and courtiers. As Peltonen (2003) among others has demonstrated, discussions on the definition of politeness and civility and struggles for the control of the meaning of the concepts ran high from the seventeenth century onwards. Much of this debate functioned through the construction of an antithesis of right and wrong kinds of politeness, usually concerning outward appearance, in which case the arguments about *natural* behaviour and *affectation* were reconstructed as the means to legitimate writer's understanding of true politeness and civility.⁸⁶⁵

Secondly, in British political culture the representation of extravaganza also played an important role when defining and validating the prevailing British political system, courtly culture, and especially British masculinity, or the masculine capacities and virtues that functioned as the premise for legitimate political action. In this project, the representations of the French royal court and courtiers in general (as conveyed through the French royal mistresses' memoirs), and the French royal mistresses in particular, were pivotal, as the mistresses were portrayed in translated memoirs as well as in correspondence and British memoirs as epitomes of French political culture, French character, courtly life, and royal political decision-making.

In the eighteenth century, the relationship between Britain and France was ambivalent, politically as well as culturally. Modern historians have studied the relationship between Britain and France from many perspectives: the diplomatic and political relations and rivalries, noting the rapprochements and contestations on the European and colonial stages⁸⁶⁶ as well as cultural and intellectual fluxes and influencing, emphasizing mutual hostility as well as admiration, especially in the form of *francomania*/*-phobia* or *anglomania* *-phobia*⁸⁶⁷. Mutual hostilities and rivalries as well as genuine curiosity and admiration created ambivalent discourses concerning the characteristics of the other nation, which furthermore gained ambivalent meanings when they were put into the service of divergent political discourses.

As discussed in the Introduction, section 1.3.3, France and Britain have been set as comparisons and counterpoints to each other. The British commentators defined Britain, the British nation and culture by comparing them to the French ones. In the same manner, the French debaters used images of Britain and British culture, character, and its political system when defining their own cultural and political system and arguing for the validation of their understanding and interpretation. However, there were a few distinct preferences in the

⁸⁶⁵ See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 163–166, 180–181, 224–225, 227–236, 238, 246–251, 253, 257–261, 304; Klein 2002, 879; Cohen 2005; Clark 1998, 20; Hours 2002, 21–22, 25.

⁸⁶⁶ See, e.g. Black 2002; Zysberg 2002; Tombs & Tombs 2007; Shovlin 2010; Kaiser 1997; Multamäki 2002.

⁸⁶⁷ See, e.g. Haikala 2002; Conway 2009; Munck 2002; Simonutti 2007; Murdoch 2007; Peltonen 2003; Clark 1998; Pieretti 2002.

comparisons in British and French debates on royal mistresses. In the British debates on royal mistresses, the French royal mistresses were a topic that was above all linked to luxury and masculinity. Whereas in the French debates, the model or stereotype offered by Britain was more often used in comparisons of political systems. Or, more precisely, the stereotypical image of the British system was used in the differentiation between an ideal harmonious political system and a quarrelsome one⁸⁶⁸.

Since, as already stated, the relationship between the two nations was highly ambivalent in the eighteenth century, the parallels drawn between British and French cultural and political phenomena had various and often contradictory meanings and significances. On this occasion, let's examine the contradictory and yet simultaneous uses of the meanings given to the antithesis of Britain and France in relation to courtly splendour, luxury, and femininity. As previous scholars interested in luxury, consumption, and taste have noticed, there existed interesting tensions regarding especially French luxury, which was simultaneously admired and deprecated. Further, the ambiguous French fashion and luxury were utilised by the British audiences when defining their specifically British social values.⁸⁶⁹ This study too explores the meanings attached to specifically French and British luxury, and further asks how the presentations of the French royal mistresses served the discourses in British political culture. However, in what follows, the focus is shifted from purely social values in order to highlight the political ones. There are two binary oppositions that were peculiar, simultaneously in use, and yet, that were utterly contradictory in their appreciation of the French (or the British) political or courtly culture. First, one would be the opposition of dullness and splendour, and the second, the opposition of masculinity and femininity or effeminacy. Both debates were constructed on the one hand through the understandings of luxury, splendour, and courtly culture; and on the other, through the binary opposition of France and Britain.

I. British dullness vs. French splendour: aristocratic aspirations

The difference and the relation between the British and French political system, national character, or culture was far from being a simple polarisation. Instead, there were various conceptions and discourses functioning simultaneously that affected the conceptualisation of the French aristocratic or courtly culture or the

⁸⁶⁸ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 138; Poisson 1766b, 123–125, 137–138, 233; Poisson 1766c, 137; Poisson 1766d, 128–129, 142–144, 244; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE X. Au Duc de Mirepoix, Juin, 1755, 16–17; Poisson 1771c, LETTER X. To the duke of Mirepoix, June, 1755, 34–36; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLI. Au Comte D' Afri, 6 nov. 1760, 63–64; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLI. To the count d' Afri, 6th Nov. 1760, 136–137; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XLIX. A Mr. de Bussi, 78–79; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XLIX. To mr. de Bussi, 167–168; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXV. Au Duc de Nivernois, oct. 1762, 61–65; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXV. To the duke of Nivernois, Oct. 1762, 54–56; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXI. A la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 101–105; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXI. To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 91–94. In literature, see, e.g. Baker 1990, 173, 181; Gruder 1987, 367; Graham 2000, 80–81.

⁸⁶⁹ See, e.g. Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 5; Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017, 4, 10.

ways the stereotypical French character was used in the British debates. The ambivalence of the relationship was nowhere as obvious as in the attitudes towards fashionableness, or the importance of outward appearance in high society. For Horace Walpole the Parisian culture and fashion – and Versailles, of course – were a model that was simultaneously ridiculed and mimicked. In his wry manner, Walpole wrote in various letters to his friends about his expectations for his journeys to Paris and about his hopes of seeing and adopting the latest fashions:

When I return from Paris I shall have some novelty, and you shall see me as modernized as possible. If Marshal Richelieu has a cask of pink and sable plumes, I will have one too.⁸⁷⁰

Obviously, he was being ironic. Yet, his attitude towards the fashions and whims of French high society reveal the awkward relationship of the British to French culture. The French novelties of appearance might have been regarded as amusing, trifling, or even ridiculous,⁸⁷¹ but they were nonetheless eagerly learned and in some extent accepted, at least by the persons who were expected to function within high society and especially within the royal court. In his letter in 1771, Walpole conveyed his disappointment with the situation in Paris, due to which he was unable to see the expected novelties of fashion:

Paris suffers grievously; the ruin of so many fortunes has introduced the severest economy. [...] Even fashion and whim are out of fashion.⁸⁷²

In her letter to Lady Pomfret at France, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu longed much in the same manner for the style of the French court:

Amidst the shining gallantries of the French court, I know not how you will receive a stupid letter from these regions of dulness, [...].⁸⁷³

In this sense, French high society served as a counterpoint to British high society. The French cultural model was represented as the model of splendour and fashion, whereas British high society was presented in terms of dullness. As discussed in section 2.5, the subjects, and especially the aristocracy who attended the royal court, wanted to see the royal court manifest the glory and splendour of majesty and the wealth and *éclat* of the realm. They themselves wanted to

⁸⁷⁰ Walpole 1848a, Letter LXIII, Orford to Ossoru, Strawberry Hill, 3rd Aug. 1775, 177.

⁸⁷¹ See, e.g. Walpole's description about Lady Caroline Petersham's and Lady Coventry's journey to Paris: "My sister was exceedingly shocked with their indecorums: [...]. She amused me with twenty other new fashions, which I should be ashamed to set down, if a letter was at all upon a higher or wiser foot than a newspaper. Such is having a knotting-bag made of the same stuff with every gown; their footmen carrying their lady's own goblet wherever they dine; the King carrying his own bread in his pocket to-dinner: the etiquette of the Queen and the mesdames not speaking to one another cross him at table, and twenty other such nothings; [...]." Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCXL. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 28th Oct. 1752, 196–197

⁸⁷² Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 168.

⁸⁷³ Wortley Montagu 1837b, Letter to Lady Pomfret, 1738, 246–247.

participate in this splendour and the prospects attached to it (e.g. as an opportunity to demonstrate their own rank, status, and wealth, or create networks and contacts in order to support their interests). The splendour and éclat of the royal court had thus very significant meanings to the aristocracy as well as to the political elites who had prepared for and aspired to a career as a courtier or who sought to establish their political career through the channel of the court.⁸⁷⁴ The presentation of the splendid and fashionable French court and culture as the counterpoint to the dull and modest British court was then used to support the wishes for grandeur of the British domestic elites.

Neither was the binary opposition of French splendour and British dullness a solely British conceptualisation. For example, in *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766) the writer made use of this opposition. When describing the English ambassador Albemarle, the writer extended the parsimoniousness of one, singular ambassador into a pivotal characteristic of the English nobility and constructed it as an un-noblemanlike way of living and spending:

Il amoit [sic.] la dépense & vivoit en Grand Seigneur: mais je lui trouvois un deffaut qui est commun à tous les Anglois, c'est que ses prodigalités-mêmes avoient un air d'avarice.⁸⁷⁵

The dichotomy between British dullness and French splendour was then a transnational idea – a stereotype – that could be used to justify royal, noble, or courtly consumption (or, consumption consistent with one's rank and station) in France and Britain alike. And yet, judging by its uses, it was not a symmetrical transnational idea about national stereotypes.

The ambivalence as evidenced by Horace Walpole's letters about the fashion of Paris and Versailles – the manners and fashions of French high society being simultaneously envied, mimicked, ridiculed, and deplored – was also a matter relating to the cultural hegemony of France and the British efforts to break away from it. As for example, Markku Peltonen and Lawrence Klein have demonstrated, the British debate about courtly culture, and especially politeness and civility from the late seventeenth century onward, was largely fueled by a differentiation between French and the British manners. The French version and understanding of politeness and civility were reconstructed as an antithesis of the *proper* politeness that was furthermore defined as British politeness and civility.⁸⁷⁶ In this debate, then, the stereotype of a fashionable French courtier was no longer an object of admiration nor was it used as an argument for the justification of royal or courtly splendour.⁸⁷⁷ Instead, it was reconstructed as a negative opposite against which the ideals of British political agents could be

⁸⁷⁴ The meanings of courtly sociability and networks will be further discussed in section 4.1.

⁸⁷⁵ Poisson 1766a, 158. "He loved expence, and lived noblemanlike; but he appeared to me to have one fault, though indeed it is common to all the English; his very prodigalities had something of parsimony in them." Poisson 1766c, 155.

⁸⁷⁶ See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 183–189, 195–196, 239–240, 245, 248; Cohen 2005. See also Gidal 2003, on English civil melancholy as the opposite of the French lively and sensual character.

⁸⁷⁷ See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 184, 248.

construed. A French courtier, or a British courtier that resembled a French one, was then more clearly a figure that was used when taking a stand on domestic policies, criticising the prevailing political agents (especially in the court or the ministers in royal favour), and legitimating the political agents and action outside the royal court.⁸⁷⁸

Certainly, the use of cultural stereotypes in the debate about domestic ideals used rather vague notions when arguing for and legitimating the normative interpretations of *proper*, *true*, or *right* kinds of character, virtue, and interest of political agents and construing these as essentially *British* characteristics and capacities. Yet, since the cultural stereotype of a *Fop*⁸⁷⁹, a reviled French courtier, was defined in demeaning terms it is possible to discover the ideals attached to the British courtier and politician who were – after all – defined as its polar opposite.

There were two notable points in the reconstruction of *proper* British character through the images of the French court, courtiers, and royal mistresses. Firstly, the interconnection of extravaganza, luxury, outward appearance, and affectation. This point correlated with the English debates about the meaning of politeness and the struggles over the control of the meaning of politeness and civility, as noted by Peltonen. In this discourse, there was a strong tension between the opposite ideals of politeness: either as an external attribute (visible mainly in outward appearance and especially in conversation) or as the countering ideal that underlined inner virtues and constructed mere outward politeness as an illegitimate form of politeness.⁸⁸⁰ For example, Horace Walpole's letter to George Montagu in 1737, evidences that eighteenth-century courtiers indeed felt the tension caused by the clash of two contradictory and rivaling definitions of politeness, civility, and the proper behaviour and appearance of a gentleman. In this example, politeness was closely connected to socialising, and especially sociability, with women:

'Tis no little inducement to make me wish myself in France, that I hear gallantry is not left off there; that you may be polite, and not be thought awkward for it. [...].⁸⁸¹

In the strife of contradictory conceptions of politeness and civility, the terms *natural* character and *affectation* were constructed as opposites. *Natural* was then referring, as explained in section 3.7.3, to sincerity, openness, and candour, whereas *affectation* was connected to the concealing of one's true motives, striving for one's private interests, and consequently, to corruption (of morals and manners as well as to political corruption). *Affectation* was then primarily an outward appearance or a mask that hid the true character and ambitions. As such, it was not conceptually separated from other matters of external display of one's self, such as affected and false conversation (especially empty flattery) and

⁸⁷⁸ See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 184–189, 225, 304.

⁸⁷⁹ See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 73; Fauques 1766b, 59. The French term in used in this occasion was *fat*. Fauques 1759, 142–143.

⁸⁸⁰ See, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 163–166, 180–181, 224–225, 227–236, 238, 246–251, 253, 257–261; Farr 1991, 395; Cohen 2005, on the differences between politeness and chivalry.

⁸⁸¹ Walpole 1820a, To George Montagu, Esq., King's College, 20th Mar. 1737, 16.

luxurious and fashionable apparel.⁸⁸² In a sense, fashion and fashionableness blended in the idea of luxury (excessiveness) was then not only a question relating to the latest novelties in the field of garments and accessories, but referred to fashionable manners, speech, and behaviour as well. Fashion, especially luxurious fashion, was then constructed as something illegitimizing and something that had no true value, and further, something thoroughly French and utterly un-English.

The importance of the image of the French court and courtiers as extravagantly luxurious and vainly pompous is evident when comparing the French and the English translations of the memoirs of the French royal mistresses. For example, in the description of the Mme du Barry's *luxe*, the English translator underlined the excess of splendour by adding "luxury and extravagance" instead of mere "luxury" as in the French original.⁸⁸³ The construction of the *Other* through the debate about the French royal mistresses was then an active process, in which the translators participated significantly.

When defining the French court, courtiers, and royal mistresses in these terms of excessive extravagance, want of the trifling fineries of outward appearance, and deceptive affected politeness, the British writers and translators were constructing or asserting a model of an illegitimate, corrupted, or distorted court - or, the centre of political decision making. Hence, they were at the same time defining and legitimizing certain domestic trends in political culture, courtly culture, and political decision making in positive terms of unaffectedness, honesty, and moderation.

II. British masculinity vs. French effeminacy: constructing the basis for legitimate political action

The debate about the French royal mistresses and the French courtiers correlated as well with the prevailing British debates about British courtly and aristocratic culture on the point of the interconnection of luxury and femininity. After all, luxury and fashion, especially in relation to outward appearance, apparel, and decorations, were considered essentially feminine. Yet, a courtier and a member of high society was expected (and, if we follow Walpole's and Wortley Montagu's enthusiasm, also wanted) to follow such trends to some extent. In these discourses and debates, the figures of the French royal mistresses were reconstructed and used as an example and evidence of the corruption of French courtly society: their idleness and empty luxury, and especially the *effeminacy* of the French courtiers and ministers. As such, the figures of the French royal mistresses and descriptions of the French royal court and courtiers were used in

⁸⁸² See section 3.7. In literature, see, e.g. Peltonen 2003, 2, 33, 123-124, 164-165, 196, 224, 227-236, 240, 243-244; Klein 2002, 879; McCormack 2005, 83, 109-119, 149, 151; Cohen 2005; Clark 1998, 20, 26; Elias 2006, 121, 230-232.

⁸⁸³ "La Favorite [Mme du Barry] scandalisoit sans doute beaucoup le Public par son luxe: [...]." Mairobert 1775, 234; "The public was, no doubt, greatly scandalized at the luxury and extravagance of the favourite [Mme du Barry]; [...]", Bécu 1777b, 236.

the conceptualisation of a legitimate political agent and agency through masculine capacities.

In the British writers' memoirs and correspondence, the French character (especially that of a courtier, the royal mistress, and the king) was defined in partly overlapping terms of vanity, passions, idleness, self-indulgence, fashion, and whim.⁸⁸⁴ All these were also, as explained in section 3.7.4, linked to femininity and especially to feminine vices and weaknesses. In other words, the French courtiers, ministers – and why not, the whole character of the nation – was reconstructed as *effeminate*, in the sense that the men had lost their manly capacities and virtues and become like women. The binary opposition was then constructed in terms of masculine British character and effeminate French character, which was transferred in the field of political legitimation through the prerequisite of manliness and masculinity for political agents.

On this occasion, I would like to point out yet another significant difference between the French and English translations. In section 3.7.4, I introduced a citation from the Fauques' memoirs of Mme de Pompadour where the luxurious and fashionable apparel and ornaments were defined as both feminine and trifling or meaningless. Here, however, the little difference between the translations in expressing the link between femininity and worthless fashionable luxury gains in importance. As the paragraph begins, both Fauques and her English translator agreed that the want for false and trifling fineries was essentially a French national passion⁸⁸⁵, thus asserting the French (excessive) splendour/British dullness (or moderation) dichotomy. As the description of the arts that Mme de Pompadour embraced proceeded, "the liberal and solid arts"⁸⁸⁶ or "les arts dont la réalité marche à l'égal de leur beauté"⁸⁸⁷ were contrasted with false refinements and worthless fashion. In the French version, these were defined in terms of "élégance *feminine* ou une vaine curiosité"⁸⁸⁸. Whereas in the English version, the translator chose to use the term "effeminate nicety or vain curiosity"⁸⁸⁹. Even though both versions emphasise the connection between feminine qualities and fashionable luxury as well as connect trifling and worthless fashions in the French character, the English translator did something else as well. He/she reconstructed the French fashionable luxury as something that was not connected solely to the female world or confined to the passions of women. Instead, the effeminacy in this context referred to something that could, and obviously did, affect men as well. Effeminacy was, after all, a state where a person – a man – had lost his masculine capacities if not the entirety of his

⁸⁸⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1804a, CXL. French character, 118–119; Hervey 1848a, 114; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 168; Walpole 1845b, 238–243.

⁸⁸⁵ "Elle [Mme de Pompadour] ne put résister au torrent du génie François qui l'entraînoit vers les bagatelles & les faux raffinemens du gout." Fauques 1759, 142. "She [Mme de Pompadour] could not help falling into the current of the national passion of the French for baubles and false refinements of taste." Fauques 1758b, 72–73. Also in Fauques 1766b, 59.

⁸⁸⁶ Fauques 1758b, 73; Fauques 1766b, 59; Fauques 1759, 143.

⁸⁸⁷ Fauques 1759, 142.

⁸⁸⁸ Fauques 1759, 142.

⁸⁸⁹ Fauques 1758b, 73. Also in Fauques 1766b, 59.

manliness.⁸⁹⁰ A woman could not be effeminate – she was feminine and could participate in effeminate nicety – but in essence, effeminacy always required an object that had had masculine capacities that were lost due to effeminacy, specifically in this case, through effeminising want of, tendency to, and inclination towards excessive luxury and fashion.

The opposition of British masculinity and French effeminacy was comprised of two elements. In this the idealised *masculine capacities* or *manly virtues* were defined against the counterpoint of French effeminacy. The counterpoint was created in two parallel ways. Firstly, through the representations of effeminate French ministers and courtiers presenting them as having *lost* proper manly capacities. The capacities *manqué* were then understood as the capacities that *British* gentlemen and courtiers (and why not unspoiled French gentlemen as well) were considered to embody. Secondly, through the representation of the *feminine* characteristics of French effeminate political agents. Here the understanding of the sexes as binary opposites (where the capacities, characteristics, and attributes of the two sexes were considered mutually complementary) would guide the reader to understand the idealised or normative characteristics of British political agents. Consequently, these characteristics were features of a legitimate political agent that was essentially *British* and *male* or *masculine*.

The first of the elements would then be the binary opposition, where luxurious fashionableness (as a solely external quality that interconnected with affectation and concealing one's true self and motives) was counterpointed with *sense*, in the meaning of good understanding and rationality. As the previous example about the arts that Mme de Pompadour supported continued, the royal mistress – who was patronising both valuable and worthy arts as well as worthless fashions – was constructed as foolish or irrational in both French and English versions: “[...] a woman sharing her smiles so equally between a man of sense and a fop, [...]”⁸⁹¹ As stated, during the eighteenth century, outward appearance was not only an external feature. Appearance was an important element of distinction and living honourably according to one's rank and status, but it was also an inner or moral feature. Foppery – as manifested in the readiness to follow the latest fashions of apparel and manners – was then connected to the inner characteristics of vanity and vaingloriousness.⁸⁹² Furthermore, vanity and vaingloriousness were regarded as characteristics of a foolish or irrational person, a person who had ambition or who had succumbed to her/his passions and

⁸⁹⁰ See, e.g. Barlow 1772a, “effeminacy”; “effeminate”, “effemination”, “emasculate”; Barclay 1774, “effeminacy”, “effeminacte”; Ash 1775a, “effeminacy”, “emasculate”; Barlow 1772a, “effeminate”; Dyche 1756a, “efféminer”; Chambaud 1761, “efféminer”.

⁸⁹¹ Fauques 1758b, 73. “[...] une femme, qui sourit également à un homme d’esprit & à un fat, [...]” Fauques 1759, 142. Also in Fauques 1766b, 59.

⁸⁹² See, e.g. Dyche 1756a, “faste”; Dyche 1756b, “ostentation”; Chambaud 1761, “vanité”, “faste”, “gloire”; Barlow 1772b, “vanity”; Fauques 1759, 143; Fauques 1758b, 73; Fauques 1766b, 59; Walpole 1822b, 73; Peltonen 2003, 183–187, 233, 281.

essentially female vices.⁸⁹³ It follows that anyone accused of being a fop was simultaneously accused of being womanish and irrational in the sense that the accused had discarded both their rationality and self-control when surrendering to passions. And rationality and self-control were the key features of a legitimate and independent political agent.

The second element was the opposition of idealised *activity* and *idleness*, or *fainéantise*. Though the interconnection between effeminacy and irrationality was not insignificant, the interconnection between the feminine characteristics of idleness, and effeminacy was the more serious in relation to the government of the realm.

In the discourse on the royal mistresses and the national characteristics of French men and women (mostly nobility and courtiers), splendour, vanity, and want of luxury were inseparably interconnected to femininity, softness, and idleness, and further understood as aversion to proper masculine pursuits, business, and industry. As we saw in the previous section 3.7.5, the royal mistresses, especially Mme de Pompadour, were given to encouraging the king, nobility, and courtly elite to engage in trifling amusements instead of serious business:

On joue gros jeu; on chasse; on rit. On perd dans un dédale de distractions, le gout & la faculté de penser à des choses sérieuses. On néglige les affaires, qui ne figurent plus qu'en second; & on les prive de l'attention qu'elles exigent, pour la donner tout entière à ce qui ne la mérita jamais.⁸⁹⁴

This inclination to indulge in amusements and trifling occupations was further presented as characteristic of Frenchmen, as for example in Fauques' presentations of Mme de Pompadour: "She could not help falling into the current of the national passion of the French for baubles and false refinements of taste."⁸⁹⁵ Fauques explicitly defined the mentioned baubles and refinements as something that "a man of sense"⁸⁹⁶ took no notice of.

The preference for amusements instead of serious work was constructed as i) a French characteristic, ii) proof of effeminacy, and iii) idleness. Where the French character was considered prone to luxurious idleness, the British character was understood as dull, joyless, melancholic even, as for example Mme de Pompadour was presented to state:

⁸⁹³ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 99; Pierre 1902a, 145; Mairobert 1775, 224, 349–350; Bécu 1777b, 221, 401; Fauques 1759, 132, 143, 156; Fauques 1766b, 30, 59, 80; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "femme. homme", "amour", "passion"; Barlow 1772b, "vanity"; Anon. 1760, 40; Fauques 1758b, 59, 73; Walpole 1822b, 73.

⁸⁹⁴ Fauques 1759, 175. "Deep play, hunting and trifling form the whole circle of dissipation in those jaunts [royal journeys], and stunning all serious thought, greatly take off the attention due to the business of the state, which becomes therefore at the most a second and subordinate consideration." Fauques 1766b, 116.

⁸⁹⁵ Fauques 1758b, 72–73. "Elle ne put résister au torrent du génie François qui l'entraînoit vers les bagatelles & les faux raffinemens du gout." Fauques 1759, 142. Also in Fauques 1766b, 59. See also, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 114; Poisson 1766d, 139. Both writers were affirming the stereotype of the French being cheerful, lighthearted, and eager to celebrate abundantly.

⁸⁹⁶ Fauques 1758b, 73. "un homme d'esprit", Fauques 1759, 142. Also in Fauques 1766b, 59.

[...] le caractere réfléchi des Anglois, qui leur donne une tristesse dont aucune cause seconde ne peut les faire sortir. Un Ambassadeur d'Espagne me disoit que *les François ont quelques moments de vie, mais que les Bretons sont dans un état continuel de mort.*⁸⁹⁷

However, the English melancholic disposition was still the one more suitable for governing the realm sensibly.

The combination of characteristics, conditions, or inclinations of French idleness and effeminacy was nowhere as dangerous as in the person of the ruling monarch. For example, in his *Memoirs of the reign of King George the Third* (1845) Horace Orford described young Louis XV and conveyed an anecdotal recollection of a conversation between Louis XV and his first minister André-Hercule de Fleury, the Bishop of Fréjus and the Archbishop of Aix. A confidant of Cardinal Fleury scolded him for allowing the king to indulge in amusements and pleasures and “[...] not making the King apply to business.”⁸⁹⁸ The Cardinal replied that he had told Louis XV, “[...] that there had been kings dethroned in France for their *fainéantise*.”⁸⁹⁹ To which the king had replied, “[...] when the nation deposed them, were they allotted large pensions?”⁹⁰⁰ Thus, the anecdote demonstrates the interconnection of proclivity to amusements, idleness, and the king’s constitutional unwillingness to attend to the needs of government. Consequently, the Cardinal allegedly stated that this was the moment when he “saw it was in vain to labour at making him a great King.”⁹⁰¹

The character of the British certainly made them seem dull compared to the French. However, their cheerless and gloomy condition was the more prone to serious business and proper occupations. At least, their government was not dictated to by effeminate men wallowing in luxurious idleness. Or was it?

The effeminacy that resulted in surrender to the tendency of idleness was presented as having resulted mainly from improper and excessive sociability with women, or the *female world*. This did not refer solely to mixed company consisting of men and women, but to company that was dictated by feminine characteristics, preferences, values, and customs.⁹⁰² In this, the British debates reproachfully stressed the connection of female company and idleness, as for example in Lady Montagu’s interpretation of George I:

And the poor man [George I] was in peril of coming hither without knowing where to pass his evenings; which he was accustomed to do in the apartments of women, free from business.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁷ Poisson 1766b, 134. “[...] pensive disposition of the English, which inspires them with a melancholy, from which no secondary cause can retrieve them. A Spanish Ambassador said to me, that the French have some moments of existence, but that the English are in continual state of mortality.” Poisson 1766d, 139–140. See also, e.g. “The english [sic.] can neither eat, nor live, nor work with taste. I sincerely pity you for being doomed to live in the country of roast-beef and insolence.” Poisson 1771c, LETTER I. To the duke of Mirepoix, 1753, 1.

⁸⁹⁸ Walpole 1845b, 240.

⁸⁹⁹ Walpole 1845b, 240.

⁹⁰⁰ Walpole 1845b, 240.

⁹⁰¹ Walpole 1845b, 240.

⁹⁰² See, e.g. Almon 1792a, 201; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112–113.

⁹⁰³ Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112–113.

The interconnection of female presence, socialising with women, and effeminacy was discussed in the previous section 3.7.4. However, at this point we should take notice that when Lady Montagu was describing the potential effeminacy of George I, she was not talking about an English king, but a German one. Effeminate idleness, socialising with women, trifling amusements, and aversion to serious business were all inclinations and characteristics that were essentially un-English. Lord Hervey recollected (and not entirely approvingly) that Frederick, Prince of Wales, prided himself on keeping his wife, Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha out of politics:

[...] the Prince kept this gilded piece of royal conjugality in such profound ignorance of all his political affairs that, [...]. His Royal Highness looked upon this conduct towards his wife as a piece of manly grandeur, and used always to say a Prince should never talk to any woman of politics, or make any use of a wife but to breed; [...].⁹⁰⁴

This would hint that some circles considered that idle amusements and conversation with women posed a danger to the government of the realm. Thus, the crown prince separated the management of serious affairs and socialising with his wife. He was not the only prince to do so. Even though the representation of Lady Montagu stated otherwise, the French envoys and ambassadors noted that George I was reluctant to discuss political matters or business with women during social events, such as dinners.⁹⁰⁵

Presentations of monarchs and occasions when the kings made a clear distinction between female company and political affairs reveal to us that in Britain and France there were divergent ideals and norms regarding such sociability that included female company. Further, as especially the case of Frederick, Prince of Wales, indicates, this was probably also a temporal change. As such, it was a countering reaction to the sort of sociability that was regarded, or constructed, as characteristically French. This further authenticated the stereotypes of the French courtiers as effeminate (idle, vain, and womanish).

To conclude, in France, the discourses on royal mistresses and spending were interconnected to the courtly or aristocratic lifestyle and especially to the splendour that was expected of the king as part of his *dignity*. However, during the eighteenth century, the courtly and aristocratic luxurious lifestyle was under attack and especially royal consumption faced challenges from various directions. On the one hand, there were wider trends to criticise courtly luxury as morally, and thus politically, corruptive. This criticism was connected to general anxieties relating to the economic situation of the realm, insecurities concerning living conditions, and more than anything, to the burdens and disappointments of the costly Seven Years War. Further, the changing meanings of royal example as well as parallel ideals of royal consumption tested the credibility of splendour and luxury as the demonstration of royal grandeur. On the other hand, the debates

⁹⁰⁴ Hervey 1848b, 301. Also in Hervey 1931a, 792–793.

⁹⁰⁵ See, e.g. LAD, P/10903 M. d'Iberville, a Londres, 4 août 1714, 165; LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, A Londres, 9 sept. 1714, 147–148. In both cases, George I brushed aside Lady Cowper's attempts to discuss topical political events and news by prompting her to drop the politics.

about royal, courtly, and/or aristocratic luxury, as we have witnessed in the discourse on the royal mistresses, also tied together criticism that originated from within the royal court. For example, the criticism against expensive royal journeys, the criticism against the rise and advancement of royal illegitimate children, and especially the description of the king wasting money on an improper mistress, most likely derived from the internal struggles of the royal court. In this respect, the discourse on the royal mistresses was also a discussion that strived to control the definitions of appropriate/inappropriate royal consumption, spending, and compensation, and consequently, to bind the monarch to certain kinds or manners of spending and/or directing the pecuniary royal favours in a certain direction defined as *appropriate* (usually, in the direction of aristocratic or traditional courtly elites).

In the midst of all these anxieties, tensions, and criticism from both within and outside the court, the royal mistresses were constructed as an excessive cost, or as an unnecessary and dangerous luxury that was used to demonstrate the royal ignorance of or indifference to the state, the needs and problems of the kingdom and its subjects. In relation to the interplay between inappropriately excessive rewarding of the mistress (or excessive royal spending on the mistress) and the excessive consumption and squandering by the royal mistress (either as her personal consumption or spending and passing on wealth to persons connected to her) we witnessed the construction of the rather impersonal figure of the *too expensive mistress*. Further, we saw how this impersonal *too expensive mistress* was constructed as a too expensive cost to the realm and its future. By the 1770s the French royal mistress was no longer a too expensive cost, not only i) to a personal king, both concretely (in relation to the financial problems of the Crown) and in relation to his immortal and immaterial honour and reputation, but also ii) to the imaginary collective, either realm, nation, or people (especially in the form of unnecessary taxes and expensive policies), and iii) to the whole political system as the mistress formed an untenable danger to the credibility, legitimacy, and proper function of the government. The first of these three different understandings of the cost and danger that the too expensive mistress formed was a rather traditional presentation. It could be understood as the least threatening of the presentations as it mainly touched the image of the king himself and could impact on the banalisation of the image of the monarch. The second understanding contributed to and supported the development of the imagined and politically meaningful collective that was separated from the person of the monarch. However, the most threatening construction was the third one, because it implied that there was something fundamentally wrong with the prevailing political system, and this fault related explicitly to the political decision-making in the personal monarch located in the royal court. Further, by the 1770s these three different presentations of the royal mistresses' costs were already intertwined and reaffirmed each other.

On the other hand, in Britain, the debate on the French royal mistresses served the important point of reaffirming and authenticating *French effeminacy*, or a stereotype against which British masculinity was constructed. In this debate,

luxury, corruption, degeneration of morals and manners as well as integrity, and feminine capacities were intertwined in order to construct an opposite to the proper British gentleman. The construction of normative British aristocratic masculinity was the more important, since it was also a debate about the nature of legitimate political participation. The debates about the royal mistresses were not only debates about excessive consumption, luxury, and amusements. They were simultaneously debates about the capacities, abilities, inclinations, and characteristics that were essential in political decision-making, or features that were the prerequisites for legitimate political participation. Thus, the debate about the effeminating influence of the French royal mistresses on the king and on his court was essentially a debate about proper British political decision-making. This being the case, let us move on to the conceptualisation of power, influence, and the practices of royal decision-making.

4 THE MISTRESS IN POLITICS

4.1 The mistress, the royal court, and the networks of power

This chapter is devoted to the conceptualisations of legitimate royal decision-making centred in the person of the monarch located in the royal court and the related imaginations of royal mistresses' power, rule, and influence. In the previous chapter, we saw the royal court discussed as a corrupted and corrupting system. This chapter further analyses the presentations of the practices and functions of the royal court, of political decision-making in the court, and especially of the formation of political will in the person of the monarch inseparable from his court. This was achieved by examining the concepts, discourses, and imageries related to the presentations on the royal mistresses' power, rule, and influence.

It must be emphasised that the royal mistresses could and did not use any formal political power. Neither was the debate about the royal mistresses ever a debate advocating women's right to formal or public power. Virtually all scholars interested in eighteenth-century history are aware that, especially in France, the attitudes toward women publicly wielding political power were traditionally disapproving. As e.g. Joan Landes (1988) and Sarah Maza (1993) have demonstrated, especially in France there was a growing hostility towards public women during the last decades of the ancient régime that was an essential part of the revolutionary political culture.⁹⁰⁶ This is not primarily a study about whether the royal mistresses' use of power or influence as women was approved of or not. Rather, the understanding about the informality and privacy of the mistresses' use of power was an important element of the discursive legitimation and delegitimation of the highest decision-making and rule. The royal mistresses' potential power and influence was always based on their proximity to the ruling

⁹⁰⁶ Landes 1988; Maza 1993.

monarch. Thus, the depiction of the extent of their power was always related to the ideas about the function of the monarch as the centre and locus of political authority.

The salience of the ruling monarch that was an essential element of the early modern monarchy as a political system was enforced by various means, practical, symbolical, as well as theoretical. The means used ranged from official to unofficial, ceremonial and formal to informal, and thus eroded the boundary of private and public in the person of the king. The most important elements of reasserting the monarch as the centre of the political, social, and cultural life of the realm were i) the idea about politics and political decision-making as the secret art of the kings, *Mystère du Roi*; ii) the exclusive right of the monarch to distribute royal patronage – a mechanism that was essential in the British balanced political system as well, since it was the most important means to consolidate the independence of the Crown⁹⁰⁷; and iii) the multiple roles of the court that was composed around the personal and individual king to function as the governmental seat and a private household. Thus, the personal networks, the salience of the king in the political system, the meanings of royal favour and closeness, and the entanglements of the public and private comprise the key elements in understanding the representation of the royal mistresses' power and influence.

In this chapter, we start by displaying the court as a political centre consisting of the networks of power surrounding the personally ruling monarch and his mistress. In what follows, we see the meanings of networking in the court and the discourses through which the networks were forged and maintained. In the second part of the chapter, the focus is on the political power or influence of the royal mistresses. Here, we explore the limits of the justified use of power of the royal mistresses as well as see evidence of how the representations of the legitimate use of power were discursively constructed through the descriptions of the royal mistresses' power and influence.

4.1.1 Court as the centre of the realm

When discussing the royal mistresses and their rule, power, or influence, eighteenth-century writers were in fact discussing the ideals relating to the administration of public and political affairs of the kingdom in the sphere of the royal court, and especially the kind of sovereign authority, government, and decision-making that was located in the person of the monarch. Of course, there were other centres of political decision-making and authority besides the king and his court – either legitimated by the prevailing political theories and practices or those that sought to legitimate their position. In Britain, there were three legitimate centres of political power and authority: the Monarch, the Lords, and

⁹⁰⁷ Also visible in the debate concerning the Crown's patronage and protection of politicians, officers, ministers, and members of parliament, and consequently, regarding the Crown's influence in the Parliament. See, e.g. Reitan 1966; Henshall 1992, 106, 152, 154; Lieberman 2006, 328; van Horn Melton 2009, 27.

the Commons, with their respective prerogatives.⁹⁰⁸ While in France, the endeavours of the judicial courts (Parlements) to legitimate their authority and right in the political decision-making characterise the political debates and controversies of the century.⁹⁰⁹ Neither were these other potential sites of political authority absent from the debate about the power of the royal mistresses. Quite the contrary. In Britain, the king was presented as having negotiated with or even having been limited by Parliament.⁹¹⁰ In the French debate, the parliamentary discourses that sought to legitimate the Parlements' political power were discussed on several occasions.⁹¹¹ One could even say that one of the important aspects of the royal mistresses' memoirs in France was to review and explain the strife between the Crown, Church, and Parlements (though, mostly the Parlement of Paris), distribute information about this topical political contest, and occasionally even take a stand for one or other of the rivalling quarters.

Most commonly, however, the debate about the royal mistresses' use of power highlighted the centrality of the monarch in a way that stressed decision-making solely by the king. Even in the British sources that were produced in the political system based on limited, mixed, or balanced monarchy – with its understanding about the separation of powers that produced more than one locus of legitimate political authority – eighteenth-century writers tended to depict the king as the sole source and locus of political decision-making. The reasons for this peculiarity of presenting the monarch as the sole heart of decision are as follows. Firstly, as already mentioned, the royal mistresses' potentials for use of power were inseparable from the ruling monarch. In fact, a royal mistress could not be separated from her royal lover in any way: her position in the court was conditional on the king, and she was the object of curiosity and debate due to her connection with the king. Consequently, the images of her person and

⁹⁰⁸ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 15. The Parliament held the legislative power and the king the executive, at least in theory. Certainly, the rights and powers were debated throughout the century. See, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 321, 337–338, 346; Reitan 1966, 318, 336–337; Henshall 1992, 153; Black 2004a, 15. The House of Commons controlled the fiscal matters of the realm. See, e.g. Cannon 2007, 76; Lieberman 2006, 321, 325; Henshall 1992, 103, 105. And the House of Lords was the locus of judiciary power. See, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 325. Furthermore, Parliament controlled the succession of the crown. See, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 321–322.

⁹⁰⁹ The controversies between the Crown, Parlements, and Church that grew into a constitutional altercation by the mid-century have been one of the key subjects of studies of eighteenth-century political thought and political culture, and a focal element especially in the studies that hunt the origins of the French Revolution and revolutionary political thought. See, e.g. Bell 1994; Merrick 1987; Merrick 1986; van Kley 1997; van Kley 1987; van Horn Melton 2009, 48–61; Roche 1999, 330–339, 417–424; Drévilion 2000, 288–290, 315–317, 340.

⁹¹⁰ For example, the Parlement and ministers were unwilling to allow George II to journey to Hanover. See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 383; Hervey 1848a, 405–406.

⁹¹¹ The debate that started with the bull *Unigenitus*, and grew into constitutional crisis, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 119–127, 128–129; Fauques 1758b, 42–50, 53; Fauques 1766a, 195–209; Poisson 1766a, 160, 167–173, 240–242, 265–267; Poisson 1766b, 69–101, 144–145, 149–151; Poisson 1766c, 158–159, 164–169, 238–239, 265–266; Poisson 1766d, 72–105, 107, 111–115, 121, 124–131, 139, 145–146, 150, 155–158; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE III. A Madame La Maréchale D'Etrées, 1754. 1754, 4–5; Poisson 1771c, LETTER III. To the lady of the marshal d'Etrées. 1754, 9.

power always represented and mirrored the person and power of the monarch as well.

Secondly, the debates about the royal mistresses' power were, due to the physical location of the mistress, debates about courtly politics. They described and participated in the debates about the politics of the court that circled around the king. The royal court itself was formed around the ruling prince, and in its every function the court itself was contingent on the king. There was no other centre in the court but the monarch,⁹¹² and there was no royal court without the ruling prince. It is no surprise then that when we look into the courtly debates about the meaning of the court in political decision-making we find a pronounced role for the monarch and his court.⁹¹³

Thirdly, and lastly, in the scope of the debate on the royal mistresses, when eighteenth-century writers wrote about power, authority, and rule, they tended to discuss matters that were – at least presumably – under the royal will and power. The most common royal prerogatives related to the control of foreign policy and armed forces; to the nominations of envoys, ministers, and the highest officials of government and administration; to the convening and dissolving of diets or assemblies of the estates; to giving proclamations and edicts; to the creation of new bodies of government and administration; to collecting revenues; to the regulation of commerce, production, manufacture, and monetary policy; to granting privileges and ennoblements; to judicial grace, most notably, to the royal pardon; and to the distribution of royal patronage.⁹¹⁴ Furthermore, in Britain the Crown wielded executive power.⁹¹⁵ In contrast, in France the instigation of legislation was a royal prerogative.⁹¹⁶ The matters under the royal prerogative were regarded as matters in which the royal power was absolute.⁹¹⁷ Whenever eighteenth-century writers discussed matters that included royal mistresses' use of power or influence, they discussed affairs that were under the royal prerogative – most commonly foreign policies, nominations of ministers, and distribution of posts and offices in the royal government, administration, and households. Thus, the debaters stood up for the limits of royal authority and outlined the limits of the royal prerogatives, even without explicitly doing so.

Thus, when eighteenth-century commentators described the royal mistresses' power or influence, they addressed issues and hopes relating to the

⁹¹² Certainly, in practice the court can be understood as polycentric, since the royal court incorporated the households of the king, queen, and the members of royal family with their own networks of power. See, e.g. Orr 2002, 33. Yet, it must be admitted that the ruling monarch was always at the top of the hierarchy and he formed a political centre more important than any other – not the least because the right to make the political decision were his (/her) royal prerogative.

⁹¹³ Contrariwise, if we were to look into the parliamentary debate, it would offer a deviating interpretation of the use of power that would highlight the meaning and role of parliament instead of the monarch.

⁹¹⁴ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 17, 37, 111, 152, 154; Spellman 1998, 39, 41; Wilson 2000, 99; van Horn Melton 2009, 23; Black 2004a, 15, 17, 23, 41, 47; Black 2004b; Black 2002, 9, 55; Lieberman 2006, 325; Scott & Storrs 2007, 15; Graham 2000, 204; Major 1994, 335, 357; Drévilion 2000, 302; Molas Ribalta 1996, 38; Reitan 1966.

⁹¹⁵ See, e.g. Lieberman 2006, 337–338, 346; Reitan 1966, 318, 336–337.

⁹¹⁶ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 37, 152.

⁹¹⁷ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 152.

monarch and the social, cultural, and political heart that was formed around him. The royal court was so much more than a mere centre of political government: it was the symbolical and practical centre of the monarchical system itself. The court of the ruling Prince served multiple purposes and functions simultaneously. It was the seat of government, the source of patronage, the royal household, the place for distinction and show for people wishing to be notable, the capital of political contests as well as the point of soothing the rivalries and controlling the ambitions of the wealthy and/or powerful nobility, the cultural heart of and model for the kingdom, the military parade ground from which the ruling prince could choose his highest military officers, and finally, it was the symbol of the royal power and will for domestic and foreign audiences where the *éclat* of the realm was inseparable from the *éclat* of the personal monarch.⁹¹⁸

This, however, did not mean that the royal court was the sole and uncontested centre of the political, social, and cultural life of the realm. In its various functions and roles, the royal seat had equally various contestants. As cultural and social centres, the royal courts were challenged by academies, salons and societies, and the personal courts of charismatic aristocrats.⁹¹⁹ When it came to cultural hegemony, the royal court was not the sole dictator of taste and fashions. During the eighteenth century, even the vague and equivocal *public opinion* or *taste of the public* (as the majority of the people but not of lowering sorts⁹²⁰) came to challenge the command of the royal court in relation to fashionable manners, behaviour, entertainment, décor, and attire.⁹²¹ In Britain, as mentioned, there were three separate and legitimated centres of political authority and power, with their respective political rivalries and intrigues: the two Houses of the Parliament and the royal court. Furthermore, during the personal breach between George I and his son and heir to the throne, George August, Prince of Wales, established his own court at Leicester House that functioned as the rival to the royal court of George I in almost every aspect. The

⁹¹⁸ The numerous functions of the royal court have been diligently noticed in various studies. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 17, 39–40, 63–65, 75; Wilson 2000, 69, 76–77; Elias 2006, 3, 45, 77–78, 88, 130–131; Mettam 2007, 134; Molas Ribalta 1996, 19–20, 37–38; Shennan 2007, 107–108; Hours 2002, 25–26, 32, 36, 52, 81, 143–155, 276; Major 1994, 335.

⁹¹⁹ Goodman 1989; van Horn Melton 2009, 197, 206, 208, 234, 241–243; Gordon 1989, 318–319; Drévilion 2000, 297–298, 344–350; Hours 2002, 37; Elias 2006, 86–87; Zysberg 2002, 18–21; Spongberg 2002, 87.

⁹²⁰ Usually with a more precise reference to people of the large cities (mainly Paris and London), and excluding the lowering sorts (no money, no education, no means to participate). As discussed in Introduction, the term *public* had various meanings that have been duly noted in previous studies concerning especially public opinion as a politically legitimising tribunal. Regarding the expansion of consumption, production, and markets, see, e.g. Kaartinen, Montenach & Simonton 2015, 1–2; Simonton 2015; Ilmakunnas & Stobart 2017, 2, 7–8; Blondé & De Laet 2017; Clemente 2017, 64, 67; Coquery 2017.

⁹²¹ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 115–116, 160–161; Ozouf 1987, 428–429. Although, as was discussed in the previous section, the influence of the court was not surmounted. The courtly modes for appearance and lifestyle continued to carry a significant meaning among the domestic nobility, and the model of the French court gained significant meanings in relation to the English debate about the court – both as a model to be imitated and a significant Other against which to construct proper English ideals for appearance and lifestyle.

Prince of Wales's court attracted especially those hopeful and ambitious courtiers and politicians who positioned themselves against the policies of George I and who strived to reassert their future in the government by aligning themselves with the Crown Prince. But, the more lively court of the Prince of Wales allured also courtiers and nobility that sought the animated courtly life, sociability, and splendour that was the expected lifestyle of the grand king and his courtly nobility.⁹²²

4.1.2 Royal favour

In spite of the various challenges against the royal courts' cultural, social, and political hegemony, the court of the ruling prince was the most important point where all these various functions and roles came together. Consequently, the people living, serving, and operating within the royal court played various and often overlapping roles. The royal court itself was a hierarchical system of personal networks that was formed around the equally personal ruling prince. As the court functioned both as the centre of political government as well as the royal household(s), it offered roles, positions, and offices of various sorts. Some of the courtiers contented themselves with a role of a more private function, as for example, serving as a valet or an attendant in one of the royal households (the court encompassed the household of the king as well as those of the Queen, the Dauphine or Prince of Wales, the Dauphiness or Princess of Wales and the Princes and Princesses of the Blood or Royal Princes and Princesses). Some aspired to official and political functions of a minister of state or other governmental offices. Though, the courtiers could operate in a double role, holding private offices of the royal household or honorary offices without any formal power or income – that is to say, a ceremonial position – and simultaneously filled some considerable official post in the government.⁹²³

Furthermore, in a centre that united the functions of the king's household and the political decision-making that was located in the person of the monarch, a courtier did not necessarily need to hold a formal position in the government to be able to influence the political decision-making: closeness to the ruling monarch, to the heart of the political will that made the decision, was enough to enable a courtier to use *influence* in political affairs.⁹²⁴ In fact, in both countries,

⁹²² See, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 111–112. In literature, e.g. Gold 2012, 198; Borman 2010, 63–64, 75, 85–88; Black 2004a, 62–63, 65. The strife between the Hanoverian kings and their eldest sons and heritors was too much of a characteristic of the Hanoverian royal house. George I had a quarrelsome relationship with his son, the future George II. And George II followed in his father's footsteps with his relationship with his eldest son, Frederick. See, e.g. Black 2004a, 48; 105–106 Gold 2012, 156; Borman 2010, 237–238.

⁹²³ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 85; Black 2004a, 42; Shennan 2007, 109–110; Mettam 2007, 144–145, 181–183; Kleinman 1990, 518–522; Elias 2006, 40; Hours 2002, 33, 87, 143–149, 155; Dré villon 2000, 302–303; Molas Ribalta 1996; Sternberg 2013, 241–242.

⁹²⁴ Indeed, in both the British and French royal court many of its members sought to use their influence in political matters even without holding ministerial or other governmental positions. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 85; Mettam 2007, 144–145; Shennan 2007, 110; Hours 2002, 43–45, 157; Dré villon 2000, 302; Black 2004a, 42.

the personal relationship with the king in positive terms was the surest route to political influencing⁹²⁵ and could function as the first step for soliciting one's position in formal government as well. The route to political power through personal contact with the king was not a covert strategy for the eighteenth-century elites. It was a well-known and well-established practice for elevation that contemporaries within the royal court and outside of it understood well. For example, in 1775 in his *Anecdotes sur M. la Comtesse Du Barri* Mairobert wrote about the enterprise of Duc d'Aiguillon to rise in government through the post of the Colonel of the Light Horse belonging to the military household of the king:

Ce poste important, indépendamment de la distinction, étoit plus essentiel à ce Seigneur en ce qu'il lui donnoit une intimité particulière avec le Monarque, & lui procuroit l'honneur de déployer ses talens aux yeux de S. M., en travaillant avec Elle. Il jettoit ainsi sourdement les fondemens de son élévation future au Ministère, [...].⁹²⁶

The eighteenth-century courtiers and courtly commentators both understood that even the offices that included no formal political power (or even places that were not formal at all) could have political significance. Consequently, the distribution of even the apolitical offices became a matter of political significance. Thus, the separation of private (household)/public (government and administration) that had been much used in traditional political history does not serve as a meaningful analytical tool. Although, as is the case with other fluid and equivocal concepts, the conceptual separation of public/private with its entanglements with understandings of gender came to carry a significant meaning in the process of legitimation/delegitimation of the use of power and influence in political decision-making, but that will be further discussed in the following sections.

At this point, it is sufficient to note that in such a centre as the royal court, the formal and informal became inseparable, functions of the official administration entangled with unofficial networks, and public matters intertwined with private interests. And it all came together in the person of the majesty, who was theoretically, symbolically, and usually practically the heart of his court. Theoretically, the centrality of the king in the monarchical system was stressed by the theories concerning the government as the *Mystère du Roi*; symbolically it was demonstrated through the ceremonies and rituals of majesty, most of which were located in the court that itself was an important symbol of

⁹²⁵ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 110; Cannon 2007, 80; Hours 2002, 43–45, 157; Dréville 2000, 302; Black 2004a, 15, 42; Molas Ribalta 1996, 27–28.

⁹²⁶ Mairobert 1775, 133. "This post, exclusive of its rank and importance, was still more essential to the interests of that nobleman, as it procured him a particular intimacy with the sovereign, and gave him an opportunity of frequently displaying his talents under the immediate eyes of his Majesty. It was by this means he insensibly laid the foundation of his future advancement to the place of Minister, [...]", Bécu 1777a, 100–101. Mairobert's comment on Duc d'Aiguillon receiving the favour of being allowed to purchase the post of Colonel of the Light Horse was not a neutral one. However, his critique was not aimed at the practice and possibility of rising in the courtly hierarchy through the household positions. He was criticizing the influence of the royal mistress on the matter. This will be discussed further in section 4.2.3.2.

sovereign power in the person of the king⁹²⁷; and most practically it was accentuated by the means of *royal favour*, both in a material and immaterial sense.

In his court, the ruling Prince was considered to be the source of everything the courtiers aspired to – even in Britain. He was the source of all royal *favours*. It was his prerogative to distribute the positions of royal households, choose his ministers, and make his generals.⁹²⁸ He, as the Royal Majesty, was the source of all patronage, for the arts, sciences, and politically as well, since it was in his power to order public constructions, spectacles etc. and grant pension and other pecuniary advantages.⁹²⁹ He was the “Fountain of Honour”⁹³⁰, the sole source of “Titles and Dignities”⁹³¹, that is to say, the repository of ennoblements.⁹³² In his court the monarch was the magnificent centre, and whether it was because of the interests that courtiers strived for or the mystical aura of royal dignity, he was considered and constructed as the heart of all splendour and vivacity as well: the cause of and reason for the whole courtly life that animated the lives of courtly nobility and represented the royal dignity and magnificence to domestic and foreign audiences.

La faveur du prince donne la vie & le mouvement à l’ame du courtisan; il ne reçoit d’autre lumiere que celle qui lui vient du trône.⁹³³

More than anyone else’s, the royal mistress’s potential power was understood in terms of *royal favour*. Firstly, the royal mistress’s position in the court was based on the royal favour. The royal favour could function as a fast lane to the top of the courtly hierarchy. The royal favour was a way to bypass traditional hierarchies based on birth and rank, and it even safeguarded its possessor against

⁹²⁷ See, e.g. Elias 2006; Roche 1999, 231, 236; Wilson 2000, 64, 69, 77–78; Molas Ribalta 1996, 37–38; van Horn Melton 2009, 167; Henshall 1992, 17; Bucholz 1991; Chaouche 2008; Giesey 1987.

⁹²⁸ Henshall 1992, 111, 152; Black 2004a, 47; Lieberman 2006, 325; Spellman 1998, 39; Hours 2002, 153.

⁹²⁹ Henshall 1992, 17, 154; Spellman 1998, 41; Major 1994, 335, 357; van Horn Melton 2009, 23; Molas Ribalta 1996, 38; Reitan 1966. In Britain, royal patronage was the source of wide debate about the separation of powers and an important part of parliamentary argumentation against the royal use of power and influence. The contest between the Crown and Parliament (or more precisely, the House of Commons) over the control of public finance condensed into debates about the Civil List and into worry about a parliament that was controlled by royal patronage. Especially the parliamentary commentators utilised the language of bribery, corruption, and private interest in their efforts to legitimate parliamentary control over public finance. See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 42, 64, 68–69; Lieberman 2006, 327–328; McCormack 2005, 18; van Horn Melton 2009, 23, 27; Claydon 2007, 271–273; Reitan 1966; Wood 2006, 605.

⁹³⁰ Bailey 1730, “Honour”. See also, Bailey 1759, “Honour”, “Nobleman”; Barlow 1772b, “King”; Barclay 1774, “King”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “dignité”.

⁹³¹ Bailey 1730, “Honour”.

⁹³² See, e.g. Scott & Storrs 2007, 15.

⁹³³ Poisson 1766a, 12. “The Prince’s favour gives life and motion to the courtier’s soul: without a beam from the throne, it is all a horrid gloom.” Poisson 1766c, 12. The same expectation of the monarch’s presence and enjoyable brilliance of life was expressed in Lord Allen Bathurst’s letter to Mrs. Howard on the occasion of her departure from the court of George II. Lord Bathurst predicted a lonely and melancholic retreat for the former royal mistress without the beau-monde of the court. Howard 1824b, Lord Bathurst to Lady Suffolk, the Peak of Derbyshire, 26th Nov. 121.

the aggressions of traditional elites.⁹³⁴ But a position that was based solely on the notice and call of a personal king was not without its vulnerabilities, as will be discussed in next section 4.1.3.

Secondly, the practices of distributing the royal favours was in the hands of the monarch alone. Even though the term *royal favour* was generally discussed in terms of advantages (usually pensions, posts, and offices) distributed by king, it was after all about the notice and preference of the king. It was understood in terms of intimacy, friendship, and trust, of which elevation and royal gifts were the mark and consequence.⁹³⁵ The royal favour functioned on the premise of personal preference, and thus, it was inseparably connected to the access to the presence of the majesty as well. That is to say, to the intimate and private side of the king.

Access to the royal favours presumed access to the royal presence, which was restricted by courtly practices, ceremonies, and rituals. Requests for royal favours, whether from within the royal court and especially from outside, needed to be mediated. In addition, this was the element of monarchical rule that created the place for the royal mistresses' use of power and influence. That is also why it was with a keen eye that eighteenth-century courtiers followed everyone that accompanied the king, the reception that new figures in the court received from the king, and even every person that conversed with the king.⁹³⁶ Every person entering into the royal presence could be a new *favourite*, a person who had constant access to the royal ear, and a new medium for the royal will and royal favours. These discussions and speculations fed the image of the king, his will, and his favour as the source of highest decision-making – and thus, confirmed the idea of the monarch as the highest political decision-maker and the centre of the court.

As Bernard Hours (2002) has presented, the monarchs were not oblivious of the meanings of their private favour. Instead, Louis XV exploited his royal favour and privacy in a new way when inventing and utilising new and more private and intimate rituals, e.g. *petits soupers*, in order to control his court and to create a way of producing distinction and distance, both among the courtiers and between himself and his court. According to Hours, Louis XV used his intimacy and privacy as a means to bypass the rigid traditions, ceremonies, and rituals of the court that had the potential to bind both the courtiers and the monarch

⁹³⁴ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 110–111; Elias 2006, 99; Hours 2002, 36, 38–39; Black 2004a, 15, 42; Cannon 2007, 80; Mettam 2007, 144.

⁹³⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 38–41, 46; Fauques 1758a, 45–46, 56–57; Fauques 1766a, 54, 57–58, 65; Mairobert 1775, 84, 107, 111, 231; Bécu 1777a, 28–29, 62, 67; Bécu 1777b, 231; Poisson 1766a, 38–39; Poisson 1766c, 34, 39.

⁹³⁶ Especially the private and diplomatic correspondence is littered with lists of person with whom the king has been in touch. It may seem anecdotal, but it served an important purpose of informing the writer's circles about the possible changes in the king's favour. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313–315; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 58–64; LAD, P/10903, Londres, 16 août 1714, M. d'Iberville, 89–90; LAD, P/11483, Londres, 30 juil 1737, M. de Cambis, 223–225; Mairobert 1775, 108–110, 158–159; Bécu 1777a, 64–66, 138; Walpole 1833a, LETTER LII. From Orford to Mann, Houghton, 8th Oct. 1742, 185.

himself.⁹³⁷ Thus, royal favour and privacy was not only something that was understood to bring advancement for courtiers. It simultaneously provided the monarch means to control his court. In this study, however, we are not examining the royal use of his privacy as much as the reactions of contemporary audiences to the new trends of utilising it.

4.1.3 Politics of networks

The courtiers joined forces with each other in order to obtain royal notice and royal favours. The pursuit of royal favours created networks of power in the court that entwined the formal networks of government, the traditional networks of hierarchical courtly society, and personal networks. The networks and alliances functioned on two purposes that were partly overlapping. On the first point, the courtiers formed alliances and networks in order to access the royal person, or the *royal ear*, with their particular interests and hopes. The second point was then to strengthen the position of the power-group, alliance, or network of power by securing ever more important positions around the king for the members of the alliance, and simultaneously, blocking the access of rivals to the king, as the expression of *controlling the royal ear*⁹³⁸ indicates.

The discourse about the royal mistresses' use of power and influence was then a discourse about the system and process of royal decision-making. Especially the published memoirs unveiled the courtly system of networks that worked beside the royal resolution.⁹³⁹ It was not necessarily a delegitimising discourse. The existence of networks of influence and power were not a great revelation to the eighteenth-century reading audiences, and as such did not necessarily test the legitimacy of monarchical rule. The audiences already knew that since the royal will was the source of everything that a private subject could aspire to, they needed to present their appeals to him. Furthermore, since access to the royal presence was limited, supplicants were required to use the channels that the personal networks offered in order to access the royal will. That is to say, they needed to get to know someone, who knew someone, who had access to the presence of the monarch:

[...] and, being assured that a *word of mine* [Dean Swift] to you [Mrs. Howard] would do any thing, desire my interest to speak to you to speak to the speaker [Sir Spencer Compton] to Sir R. Walpole to speak to the king, &c. [...]⁹⁴⁰

The debate on the royal mistresses that revealed the networks of power simultaneously asserted the rule by one, highlighted the condition of the monarch as the one and only decision-maker in the court, and stressed the

⁹³⁷ Hours 2002, 89–93, 112, 114–127, 156–158, 277–279.

⁹³⁸ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 8th Dec. 1738, Most Secret, 225; Hervey 1848a, 114, 134–135; Fauques 1759, 176; Fauques 1758b, 126; Fauques 1766b, 116–117.

⁹³⁹ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 65–66, 99; Poisson 1766a, 15–22; Poisson 1766c, 15–22; Mairobert 1775, 107–108, 161; Bécu 1777a, 62, 140; Fauques 1759, 176, 180; Fauques 1758b, 126, 132.

⁹⁴⁰ Howard 1824a, Dean Swift to Mrs. Howard, Twickenham, 9th July 1727, 249–250.

potential power and influence of the persons that were assumed closest to him, as for example, royal family, most intimate servants (such as Gentlemen of the King's Chambers), his favourite ministers and intimate friends, and of course, the royal mistresses. The delegitimising elements entered the debate only when the discussion was moved into the ways and means that the persons closest to the monarch used in order to influence royal decision-making – as well as into their motives for influencing.⁹⁴¹

The networks of power were not only channels used to access the royal presence. They were also alliances, either fuelled by reciprocal trust and/or reliance or motivated by common interests and/or political agenda, that strived to influence political decision-making through the control of the distribution of royal favours. That is to say, they sought to channel the important positions and wealth to their own supporters, as well as to restrict the distribution of favours to their rivals and rivalling alliances.⁹⁴² Access to the royal presence was the premise of power and influence of an alliance, but the real power and influence was acquired only after gaining control over the distribution of the important positions in the presence of the majesty, meaning both the positions of the household and the government.

The eighteenth-century courtly commentators that kept a close eye on the persons entering the royal favour indeed believed and hoped that the persons closest to the monarch had the greatest opportunities of persuading him. The narrative of a rising mistress highlighted this. For example, in the accounts of the ascension of Mme du Barry, her formal presentation as *maîtresse-en-titre* formed a turning point. Before her presentation, she was in the state of social and political nonentity: she participated in the courtly events *incognito* or *privately*⁹⁴³. After receiving a formal presentation, which was a great mark of the king's favour and a proof of her stable and possibly long-standing position in his favour, the people both from the courtly circles and outside the court started to crowd around her and court her favour.⁹⁴⁴ Not long after "All orders now successively bowed to the shrine of the new dignity, and acknowledged her power."⁹⁴⁵ This was the starting point of any royal mistress's power: people gathering around her, asking after her favour in conveying their hopes to the royal ear, and offering their assistance in exchange. That is to say, loyalty, networks, wealth, support etc.⁹⁴⁶ usually

⁹⁴¹ This will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.

⁹⁴² See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 153; Bécu 1777a, 130; Mairobert 1775, 219–220; Bécu 1777b, 214–215; Fauques 1766b, 151–154; Walpole 1818, 62.

⁹⁴³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 65, 105, 126; Bécu 1777a, 12, 59, 90.

⁹⁴⁴ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 113–114, 132–133; Bécu 1777a, 71–73, 100–101.

⁹⁴⁵ Bécu 1777a, 96. "Tout, successivement, rendoit hommage à la nouvelle Divinité, & reconnoissoit son pouvoir" Mairobert 1775, 130.

⁹⁴⁶ For example, Hon. Walter Molesworth wrote to Mrs. Howard in order to seek her assistance in his wishes to obtain a place in the Household of the Prince of Wales, generously leaving open the royal mistress's demands for reward: "For the rest, whatever conditions or provisions you may annex to this favour, they should with all cheerfulness be obeyed by." Howard 1824a, The Hon. Walter Molesworth to Mrs. Howard, York-buildings, Wednesday, [1727], 245–246.

expressed in terms of *friendship* or *gratitude*⁹⁴⁷. This was the point when the royal mistress's networks of power started to expand and produce significance.

However, the networks, alliances, and relationships that functioned on the premise of mutual assistance needed to be consolidated before they could turn into real assets of power or influence. No eighteenth-century example is more suited to demonstrate the dynamics of the royal favour, networks, and power than the case of Henrietta Howard. Even as a mistress of the Prince of Wales, namely the future king, the courtiers, ministers, and seekers of royal favours (and especially those who opposed Walpole⁹⁴⁸), attached their hopes to the mistress due to the common understanding that intimacy would bring opportunities and power to influence and persuade the royal will:

However, these quotidian visits which his Majesty when Prince was known to bestow upon her [Mrs. Howard], of so many hours in the four-and-twenty, and for so many years together, had made many superficial courtiers conclude that one who possessed so large a portion of his time must have some share in his heart. This way of reasoning induced many to make their court to her, and choose that channel to recommend themselves to the Prince.⁹⁴⁹

Her access to the royal presence brought the courtiers and ministers to Mrs. Howard, and yet she fell into political insignificance. She could not consolidate her networks that were understood as reciprocal because she could not mediate royal favours for her supporters. The courtiers that pinned their hopes on Mrs. Howard were disappointed.⁹⁵⁰ Instead, Mrs. Howard became famous for her powerlessness, for her inability to impact on the royal will: "But what good have

⁹⁴⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER XL. To the duchess d'Étrées, 87; Mairobert 1779a, LVIIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, 23 mai 1771, 81; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LVIII. From the Count du Barry, 23rd May 1771, 66–67; Pierre 1902a, XXXVI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Versailles, 31st Mar. 1758, 162; Pierre 1902a, CVII. To Monsieur le Duc de Choiseul, Vic-sur-Aisne, 17th Dec. 1758, 302; Pierre 1902a, XV. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 22nd Nov. 1757, 113; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXIII. To the count of Maurepas, minister of marine, 1751, 142; Mairobert 1779a, XVIII. LETTRE. A Mr. Radix de Ste. Foix, Trésorier Général de la Marine, 6 déc. 1767, 25–26; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVIII. To M. Radix de St. Foix, Treasurer General of the Navy, 6th Dec. 1767, 21–22; Russell 1843, The Duke of Bedford to Mr. Yorke, Whitehall, 4th Apr. 1749, 22–23; Walpole 1820c, To the Rev. Mr. Cole, Arlington-street, 9th Jan. 1775, 506; Walpole 1843a, LETTER LXXXVII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th July 1766, 298; Poisson 1766a, 31, 258; Poisson 1766c, 31, 257; Poisson 1766b, 183; Poisson 1766d, 191; Mairobert 1775, 143; Bécu 1777a, 116. Regarding the language of friendship and gratitude in literature, see, e.g. Lind 1996, 123–124; Hours 2002, 34, 45; Hakanen 2011.

⁹⁴⁸ See, e.g. Black 2004a, 62; Borman 2010, 86–88; Gold 2012, 198.

⁹⁴⁹ Hervey 1848a, 98. Examples of the hopes of the courtiers and ministers for Mrs. Howard's power and influence are numerous. See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 61–62; Walpole 1804a, CXLVIII. Bolingbroke's gratitude, 129; Walpole 1818, 70; Walpole 1804a, CII. Orford to Countess of Suffolk, 87

⁹⁵⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 61–62, 70; Howard 1824b, From Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732–3, 54–55; Walpole 1844a, LETTER CCCXXI. From Orford to Mann, Berkeley Square, 13th Jan. 1780, 209; Walpole 1804a, CII. Orford to Countess of Suffolk, 87; Hervey 1848a, 98.

you done to any body?"⁹⁵¹ asked Lord Bathurst of her when she decided to leave the court.⁹⁵²

Both of these examples, that of a mistress without a formal position (as Mme du Barry before her official representation) and that of a mistress without the ability to channel the royal favour to her potential supporters (Mrs. Howard), stressed the necessity of networks of power in the court. The royal favour was not enough. Even though it was presented as essential in the court – as the motivator and mover of the court – and it highlighted the royal will as the sole source of power, it was still not enough. The networks, connections, and alliances were paramount as well. For the courtiers, the royal favour was not enough to guarantee a stable position in the court, as was the case with, for example, Louis François, Marquis de Monteynard, who lost his place as Secrétaire d'État à la Guerre in the power-struggles of the court even though he was favoured by Louis XV: "'He must fall,' said he [Louis XV], 'for he has no friend or protector but me.'"⁹⁵³ As for the mistress, she had a place in the court as long as she had the king's favour, but she might not have any real power or social or political existence in the court without networks, as the two previous examples demonstrated.

This indicates that the royal will, even though usually presented as such, was not the sole arbiter that had no restraints on his decisions. Presentations of the royal favour as the sole mover of the court supported the idea of the political system in which the king was expected to have the last word. In practice, however, the monarch needed to negotiate – on his policies, and especially on the distribution of the places of his government and his household that had political significance. In both countries, the king needed to consider a great variety of factors before deciding on his servants (for example, rank, status, wealth, reputation, honour, merits and accomplishments, personal suitability, traditions and customs relating to the given position, family ties and existing networks, and political opinions and possible associations with rival political interest groups, factions, or parties), and often the claims and interests conflicted.⁹⁵⁴ Even though in the case of conflicting interests the royal decision, his will and preference, was

⁹⁵¹ Howard 1824b, Lord Bathurst to Lady Suffolk. From the Peak of Derbyshire, 26th Nov. 1734, 121.

⁹⁵² On the famous powerlessness of Mrs. Howard, see also, e.g. Howard 1824a, Character of the Hon. Mrs. Howard, June 12, 1727, written and given to her by Dr. Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, xliii–xliv; Hervey 1848a, 93–94; Walpole 1818, 61; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." George the Second, by Chesterfield, 6–7; Walpole 1804a, CXLVIII. Bolingbroke's gratitude, 129; Hervey 1848a, 94; LAD, P/11452, [Broglie, ambassadeur; Chammorel, ch.e. d'affaires?], *Memoire sur l'Etat present de la Grande Bretagne*, 405.

⁹⁵³ Bécu 1777b, 328–329. "*Il faudra bien qu'il succombe*, dit-Elle [Louis XV], en parlant du Marquis de Monteynard, *il n'y a que moi que le soutienne*." Mairobert 1775, 298.

⁹⁵⁴ See, e.g. Spellman 1998, 12, 20; van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Mettam 2007, 136, 140; Swann 2007, 182–183; Elias 2006, 99, 109–220; Reinhard 1996, 13; Hours 2002, 87, 93, 147, 153–155, 166–168; Drévilion 2000, 302; Fitzpatrick 2007, 140. In the discourse on the royal mistresses, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 175–176, 203–204, 208, 310–311; Bécu 1777a, 154–155; Bécu 1777b, 192–193, 199–200, 346–347; Fauques 1759, 72; Fauques 1758a, 93.

the last call, the king was not completely free to choose his servants as he wished and desired. He was obliged to maintain the existing order and hierarchy, or *harmony*, in the court in order to win the support and assistance of his ruling elites.⁹⁵⁵ This was also a question of stability versus change, as will be discussed in section 4.2.3.3.

The rival alliances, networks, and interest groups that struggled for the offices, positions, influence, and royal favours, were a constituent feature of courtly life. In historical accounts and narratives, especially the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI have been characterised by a quarrelsome and disunited court.⁹⁵⁶ On the other hand, the rival factions of the court offered the king traditional means to control his nobility and elites.⁹⁵⁷ On the other hand, Louis XV and Louis XVI have been remembered as kings who lost the control of their courts and courtly factions.⁹⁵⁸

The composition of the networks of power and political alliances of the French court has been an established tradition of political history.⁹⁵⁹ The personal and political networks, at least as far as the prominent persons and relatively established power groups are concerned, have been studied in great detail. I do not intend to say that there is no more work to be done in the field of mapping the networks, alliances, rivalries, relationships, and dynamics of political influencing. Quite the contrary, especially in the context of the French court the *partis* still offer an intriguingly elusive and multifaceted subject of historical enquiries. However, that is not the subject of this study. Here, let us content ourselves with agreeing with the previous studies that political influencing through interest groups, either called parties, factions, or cliques, was an important element of eighteenth-century political life, political decision making, and political culture – and, thanks to the changing ways and means of

⁹⁵⁵ The cooperation of the nobility in the government of the realm was essential for monarchical rule. The monarch needed his/her nobility to fill the offices of government and administration, he/she needed their support on the occasions of war, he/she needed the nobility in the rituals of majesty, and he/she resorted to their support in local government. Thus, the monarch was not altogether free to decide his/her servants, for he/she was forced to consider the claims of his/her nobility in order to ensure their continuous support. See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 75, 92–98; Scott & Storrs 2007, 34–38, 95; Swann 2007, 181; Hours 2002, 25–26, 33, 37, 86–87, 275–276; Major 1994, 172–173.

⁹⁵⁶ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 39–40, 63–65, 75; Fitzpatrick 2007, 140; Wilson 2000, 76–77; Elias 2006, 25, 113, 130–131; Elias 1978, 41; Drévilion 2000, 300–301.

⁹⁵⁷ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 17, 39–40, 75; Molas Ribalta 1996, 19–20, 37–38; Mettam 2007, 134; Wilson 2000, 69, 76; Shennan 2007, 107–108; Major 1994, 335; Fitzpatrick 2007, 140; Major 1994, 335; Elias 2006, 3, 45, 77–78, 88. The monarch could use his prerogative of distributing offices, positions, ennoblements, and pensions in order to tie the wealthy and powerful nobility to the court under his eye, especially after the requirements and ideals of noble lifestyle increased to such an extent that the royal pensions and other pecuniary favours became a necessity for the upkeep of the required level of splendour. Ideally the monarch distributed the favours relatively equally among the rivaling factions, alliances, and interest groups, thus preventing the rise of one of the groups to a dominant position. See, e.g. Mettam 2007, 134, 147; Scott & Storrs 2007, 23; Swann 2007, 166–167; Major 1994, 126, 364; Elias 2006, 79, 168.

⁹⁵⁸ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 62, 97; Shennan 2007, 150; Graham 2006, 150.

⁹⁵⁹ See, e.g. Ravel 2004; Hours 2002; Major 1994; Shennan 2007; Henshall 1992; Elias 2006; Zysberg 2002.

communication, also an element that was not confined to the narrow boundaries of courtly society. The composition of the most eminent power groups has been duly noted in the previous studies and the sources used in this study offer no significant contradictory evidence. I briefly note the composition of the most famous power-blocks, not because their composition has analytical value in this research, but because it shows some of the hottest political topics of the day and the positions of the most eminent personas of the court (especially ministers and members of the royal family) and the mistresses in relation to these political questions.

During the reign of Louis XV and with special reference to the royal mistresses, the strongest interest groups were as follows:

- i. Group composed of, for example, the Queen; Princesses of the Blood (especially Mme Henriette and Mme Adélaïde); Dauphin (Louis, Dauphin of France, father of future Louis XVI); Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, Comte de Maurepas; Marc-Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy, Comte d'Argenson; Charles-Jean-François Hénault; Emmanuel-Armand de Vignerot du Plessis-Richelieu, Duc d'Aiguillon. This group has been also called *parti dévot* due to their support for the interests of the Catholic Church and the Jesuits. This group was also generally and categorically opposed to the royal mistresses.⁹⁶⁰
- ii. Group composed of, for example, Louis-François de Bourbon-Conti (usually referred to as Prince de Conti); Comte de Maurepas; Comte d'Argenson; and the Jansenist advocates of the Parlement of Paris.⁹⁶¹
- iii. Group composed of, for example, Mme de Pompadour; Étienne-François, Comte de Stainville, Duc de Choiseul; François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis (usually referred to as the Abbé de Bernis); Henri Léonard Jean Baptiste Bertin; Abel-François Poisson de Vandières, Marquis de Marigny; Jean-Baptiste de Machault d'Arnouville, Comte d'Arnouville; Maurice de Saxe, comte de la Rautte (usually referred to as maréchal de Saxe); Jean Pâris de Monmartel; Joseph Pâris Duverney. This group supported the idea of the Parlements as an important part of the royal administration.⁹⁶²
- iv. Group composed of, for example, Mme du Barry; Joseph Marie Terray (usually referred to as the Abbé de Terray); Louis François Armand de Vignerot du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu (usually referred to as Maréchal de Richelieu); René

⁹⁶⁰ See, e.g. Hours 2002, 110–111, 211, 230, 234–235; van Kley 1997, 759, 760; Kaiser 1997, 370; Kaiser 1996, 1025; Henshall 1992, 75; Dré villon 2000, 306; Graham 2000, 187; Zysberg 2002, 171; Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 189; Walpole 1822a, 292–293; TNA, SP 78/232, Yorke to Bedford, Paris, 15th/26th Apr. 1749, 182–183; Poisson 1766a, 200, 227; Poisson 1766c, 197–198, 224–225; Fauques 1759, 117–118; Fauques 1758b, 38–39; Fauques 1766a, 193.

⁹⁶¹ See, e.g. Hours 2002, 211; Bell 1994, 121; Henshall 1992, 76; Mairobert 1779b, LIXe LETTRE. De Madame la Princesse de Conti, 28 Mai 1771, 83–84; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER LIX. From the Princess de Conti, 28th May 1771, 68.

⁹⁶² See, e.g. Hours 2002, 211, 213, 215–216, 218–220, 234, 245; van Kley 1997, 771; Shennan 2007, 147; Kaiser 1997, 370; Henshall 1992, 75; Dré villon 2000, 307; Graham 2000, 103; Bell 1994, 176; Shovlin 2010, 130; Zysberg 2002, 174–177, 195–197; Walpole 1822a, 292–293; Pierre 1902b, 78; Pierre 1903, 152–154; Pierre 1902a, 172–174; Fauques 1759, 118; Fauques 1758b, 39; Fauques 1766a, 193–194; TNA, SP 78/232, Yorke to Bedford, Paris, 15th/26th Apr. 1749, 182–183.

Nicolas Charles Augustin de Maupeou (usually referred to as Chancellor Maupeou); Emmanuel-Armand de Vignerot du Plessis-Richelieu, Duc d'Aiguillon. The composition of this group was understood in terms of an adversary in relation to the next group.⁹⁶³

- v. Group composed of, for example, Duc de Choiseul; Béatrix de Choiseul-Stainville, Duchesse de Gramont; César Gabriel de Choiseul, Duc de Praslin. This group was generally understood as opposing Mme du Barry and all who associated with her.⁹⁶⁴

In the case of the research on the British court, there has not been such a vigorous trend of mapping the networks of influence and power as in French research, since British political historiography has a strong tendency of investigating parliamentary and ministerial politics. Of course, this does not exclude the research on lobbying and influencing but tends to steer attention to the office-holding men. In the British court, the compositions of the interest groups seem to have followed the party divisions between the Whigs and the Tories, between the court and the parliament, between the British courtiers and the Hanoverian ones, and between the supporters of Walpole and his political opponents.

During the reign of George I the royal mistresses (or alleged mistresses) Melusine von der Schulenburg, Duchess of Kendal, and Sophia von Kielmansegg, Countess of Darlington, were connected to the Hanoverian power-group and German ministers that also formed the king's social circle,⁹⁶⁵ especially to Hans Caspar von Bothmer⁹⁶⁶ and Andreas Gottlieb von Bernstorff⁹⁶⁷. The British courtiers and memoirists did not always divide the Hanoverian courtiers into factions, even though they were no more a unitary group of courtiers and ministers than the British were. In the British representation of the circles and power-groups that the royal mistresses of George I belonged in, the most important feature was their Germanness. This trend did not end with the change of the monarch. For example, in Horace Walpole's letter to Sir Horace Mann, Amalia von Wallmoden, Countess of Yarmouth, the German mistress of George II, was connected without further specification to "The German ministers"⁹⁶⁸ and

⁹⁶³ See, e.g. Zysberg 2002, 307–309; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 158; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, [private], 57; Mairobert 1775, 118; Bécu 1777a, 78–79; TNA, SP 78/280, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 21st Feb. 1770, 65; TNA, SP 78/287, Horace St. Paul to Rochford, Paris, 24th Mar. 1773, 117; BL, Stowe MS 89, Appendix containing a Journal of the affairs of France in the year 1771, Monday 23rd Sep. 1771, 44.

⁹⁶⁴ See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 157; Zysberg 2002, 307–309, 313; Swann 2007, 180; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 30th Nov. 1769, 58; TNA, SP 78/282, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 2nd Jan. 1771, 59–60; BL, Stowe MS 89, Appendix containing a Journal of the affairs of France in the year 1771, Monday 23rd Sep. 1771, 44.

⁹⁶⁵ See, e.g. LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 31 oct. 1714, 304; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 37.

⁹⁶⁶ See, e.g. LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 4 juil 1714, 142; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 août 1714, 103–104.

⁹⁶⁷ See, e.g. LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 13 oct. 1714, 204; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 août 1714, 103–104; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 109.

⁹⁶⁸ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCXXII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 22nd Dec. 1750, 150.

counterpointed against the British Secretaries of State.⁹⁶⁹ In general, the French diplomats who were also keeping in mind the possible valuable position of continental Hanover in the case of war, peace, and alliances, were more interested in the specific Hanoverian connections of the royal mistresses than the British courtly memoirists and gossipers.⁹⁷⁰

In general, the royal mistresses in their various roles in relation to the political courtly factions seemed far less significant in British than in French political culture. The power-groups were identified with and personified in the ministers – or the nationality of their members – rather than the royal mistresses. Furthermore, the British ambassadors stationed in the French court shared even the little anecdotes about the new female favourites and love intrigues of the king.⁹⁷¹ In contrast, the French ambassadors in the British court mentioned the royal mistresses or new royal fancies comparatively seldom.⁹⁷² This further indicates that there was a considerable difference between the two countries, courts, and political cultures in relation to the political position and significance of a royal mistress, and especially in relation to their functions and roles that included any share of power or influence.

Then again, in the British courtiers' memoirs and correspondence about the reign and court of George II – but not in the French diplomatic correspondence – the most powerful group in the court and government was constructed in relation to the royal mistress. It was the power-group of Sir Robert Walpole and Queen Caroline. The royal mistress was not presented as having been the head, or even a significant member of the rival group. Quite the contrary, as we have already seen, the most prominent feature of Mrs. Howard was her powerlessness.

⁹⁶⁹ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCXXII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 22nd Dec. 1750, 150.

⁹⁷⁰ See, e.g. LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 août 1714, 102–105; LAD, P/10903, [M. d'Iberville], 10 juil 1714, 119–120; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 4 juil 1714, 142–143; LAD, P/11452, Memoire, 432.

⁹⁷¹ As e.g. the case of Mlle O'Murphy: BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 2nd May 1753, Private, 72–74; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 9th May 1753, Private, 79; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 9th May 1753, private, 82; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, London, 10th May 1753, Private, 83; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 23rd May 1753, Private, 90; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 5th Dec. 1753, Private, 193; TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Sir Thomas Robinson, Paris, Wednesday 8th May 1754, Private, 233; TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Sir Thomas Robinson, Paris, Wednesday 22nd May 1754, Private, 235; TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Sir Thomas Robinson, Paris, Wednesday 19th June 1754, 302; TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 16th May 1753, 101; TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret & Separate, 150. Or the case of Mme d'Esparbesse [d'Esparbès]: TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 4th May 1765, 82–83; TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 21st May 1765, 144.

⁹⁷² The most referred to mistresses were George I's mistresses Melusine von der Schulenburg, Duchess of Kendal, and especially his presumed mistress Sophia von Kielmansegg. See, e.g. LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 16 août 1714, 89; LAD, P/10907, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 23 oct. 1714, 410; LAD, P/10907, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 22 nov./3 déc. 1714, 357; LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 31 oct. 1714, 304. Mrs. Howard on the other hand was very seldom mentioned, and even then not necessarily in her capacity as the king's mistress. See, e.g. LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 nov. 1714, 264.

However, her person was presented as a crucial factor in the formation of the Walpole-Caroline group. This crucial factor was constructed in terms of personal and *feminine* rivalry between the Queen and the mistress of her husband. Especially Horace Walpole and John Hervey, the memoirists of the reign of George II, underlined the animosity of the Queen toward Mrs. Howard as the key in the issue of the possible positions of power. The connection with a royal mistress was constructed as a decisive disrecommendation for the power block of Caroline and Walpole. All the courtiers that associated themselves with the mistress were presented as having been shut out from the positions of influence and power simply due to their connection with the mistress that had awoken the resentment of the Queen. This was the case especially with Phillip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield⁹⁷³ and Sir Spencer Compton⁹⁷⁴. On the other hand, Horace Walpole explained his father's position of power and influence repeatedly in terms of his complete rejection of the royal mistress:

[...] he [Sir Robert Walpole] not only devoted himself to the princess [Caroline], but totally abstained from even visiting Mrs. Howard.⁹⁷⁵

The division of the court in two, to the powerless associates of Mrs. Howard and to the powerful favourites of the Queen, was of course an oversimplification of the complex relationships within the court.⁹⁷⁶ Then again, such a presentation served to highlight the greater narrative about Queen Caroline's and/or Sir Robert Walpole's power – and George II's powerlessness. Yet, more than that it was a description of the formation of the most influential power block on the premise of the vengeful pride of an injured wife. As such, it was an example of the legitimation/delegitimation of the use of power and influence through the conception of gender and use of gendered language that will be further discussed in the following sections.

The networks of the royal court and the meanings of the personal relationships were not as easy constructions as the presentation of the power-groups would suggest. In fact, in the French court the same person could be identified in various groups – even rivalling ones. That was possible because the

⁹⁷³ For example, Horace Walpole presented the Earl of Chesterfield's disgrace in terms of feminine whim and grudge. According to his anecdote, Queen Caroline had witnessed Lord Chesterfield visiting Mrs. Howard, which had angered the Queen, and consequently Lord Chesterfield soon found himself in a position where he could gain no more favours from the court and was forced into opposition. See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 45; Walpole 1818, 64. Of course, the matter of Lord Chesterfield's fall into political opposition was not a simple matter of feminine rivalry and jealousy. More than anything, it was a political breach and contest between Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Chesterfield. See, e.g. Borman 2010, 191–194; Downie 1994, 111–145, on opposition to Walpole and especially on Chesterfield's oppositional journal *Common sense, or, The Englishman's journal*.

⁹⁷⁴ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 101.

⁹⁷⁵ Walpole 1818, 60–61. The same idea was expressed also in e.g. Walpole 1804a, CII. Countess of Suffolk, 86–87

⁹⁷⁶ See, e.g. the curious situation of Lord Ilay and his brother the Duke of Argyll, who, paradoxically, were presented as having been able to both hold their political positions and pay their court to Mrs. Howard. Hervey 1848a, 98, 173–174; Walpole 1818, 88–89; Walpole 1822a, *Memoirs of the year 1752*, 241; Hervey 1848a, 289–290.

eighteenth-century French *partis* were not stable political parties, neither in the modern sense nor in the sense that eighteenth-century British understood the political parties of Whigs and Tories.⁹⁷⁷ Even those power blocks that were regarded as relatively stable or long-term formations were in the essence interest-groups where particular members joined together over a certain common issue or interest, and thus on other issues might have opposite views. On some issues, the members of the same interest group might have contradictory opinions, and yet in some other cases they could still overcome differences in opinion in order to work together towards another common goal.

For example, Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul have been paired together under the same *parti*, and Mme de Pompadour has been presented as the supporter and protectress of Duc de Choiseul in all types of sources as well as in modern historical studies.⁹⁷⁸ Yet, in many separate cases, the eighteenth-century commentators gave rather dissenting presentations in respect to the interests of Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul. For example, Hans Stanley, Chargé d'Affaires of the French Embassy in 1761, wrote to William Pitt 1st Earl of Chatham, then Secretary of State for the Southern Department, about Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul in terms of political rivalry (usually in favour of Duc de Choiseul, with whom he negotiated⁹⁷⁹). There were two main points in the rivalry between these two prominent personas during Stanley's mission.

Firstly, their attitude towards the main objective of foreign policy. Mme de Pompadour was presented as the advocate of the alliance between Austria and France with an unwritten implication that she was against the peace with Britain while Duc de Choiseul was presented as having supported the peace with Britain.⁹⁸⁰ Hans Stanley's presentation of Mme de Pompadour's positioning against the peace is a curious one, since in other sources she was presented as the most eager advocate of pacific policies.⁹⁸¹ Respectively, Duc de Choiseul has

⁹⁷⁷ See, e.g. Hours 2002; Ravel 2004; Drévilion 2000, 306–308; Zysberg 2002, 336; Ihalainen 1999, 195–210.

⁹⁷⁸ See, e.g. Walpole 1845a, 138–139; Pierre 1903, 152–154, 207; Pierre 1902a, 172–174, 196. As, for example, when reminiscing about the times around the death of the Marquise, Horace Walpole wrote that "The Duc de Choiseul, whom she had destined for Minister, succeeded her in the King's confidence without a rival." Walpole 1845a, 415; Shennan 2007, 147; Drévilion 2000, 307–308; Zysberg 2002, 196–197; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 131.

⁹⁷⁹ Certainly, the political opinions and participation in political debates changed over time. In the case of Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul, Mme de Pompadour's participation in the political debates and affairs of the court diminished after the Seven Years War as her health declined – and Duc de Choiseul's influence and participation might have been represented as proportionately increasing. Occasionally, this was regarded or represented in terms of rivalry, indeed bitter rivalry, even without being so. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 28th June 1761, 170; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 110–115; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 6th Aug. 1761, 22–24; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 22nd Aug. 1761, 116.

⁹⁸⁰ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 110–115. The same composition was renewed by Ambassador John Russell, 4th Duke of Bedford, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/253, Bedford to Egmont, Paris, 19th Sep. 1762, 69.

⁹⁸¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 168; Poisson 1766d, 199–200; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE II. Au Duc de Mirepoix, 1753, 3; Poisson 1771c, LETTER II. To the duke of Mirepoix, 1753, 6;

borne the reputation of a warmonger.⁹⁸² However, in this specific case of Stanley, it is more likely that his account of the intentions of the Mistress and the Minister arise from his position as an envoy sent to negotiate peace between France and Britain during the Seven Years War. From his point of view, the French Alliance with Austria put his endeavours at risk.⁹⁸³ Consequently, Stanley's accounts, due to his own interest, made the aspirations of Duc de Choiseul and Mme de Pompadour appear as rivals and contradictory.

Secondly, the Mistress and the Minister took opposite sides in the conflict between Charles de Rohan, Prince de Soubise and Victor François de Broglie, 2nd Duc de Broglie. Both were Maréchals de France that participated in the Battle of Villinghausen 15–16 July 1761 which ended in French defeat and the victory of the British-Hanoverian-Prussian forces. The humiliating defeat was quickly attributed to the disharmonious Maréchals, who blamed each other for the battle lost. Mme de Pompadour supported the cause of Prince de Soubise while Duc de Choiseul that of Maréchal de Broglie's.⁹⁸⁴ This second point was discussed as an incident that indicated the supreme power, influence, and favour of either Mme de Pompadour or Duc de Choiseul. As the case of Maréchal de Broglie and Prince de Soubise ended in the disgrace of the former, Stanley concluded that "the dispute between Mess. De Soubise, and De Broglie gave the Lady the Superiority over the Minister, [...]"⁹⁸⁵ – superiority that was furthermore extended in relation to influencing in all other political matters as well, the direction of foreign policy included.⁹⁸⁶ Thus superiority, or power, influence, and favour, was not understood as superiority in one singular matter, but superior influence and favour in all political matters. Such instances as the contest between Prince de Soubise/Mme de Pompadour and Maréchal de Broglie/Duc de Choiseul served to indicate the currents of this superior influence, power, and favour.

The factions of the royal court were not the only relations of power that were meaningful. The eminent persons that took part in the struggles for power, influence, or favours in form of a faction or power block had their own personal networks as well: the relationships of patronage, family ties, and personal friendships that complicated the social and political relations within the royal

Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LVI. Au Duc de Nivernois, 1762, 22–24; Poisson 1771d, LETTRE LVI. To the duke of Novernois, 1762, 14–15; Fauques 1766b, 144–145. In literature, see, Shennan 2007, 148.

⁹⁸² See, e.g. Shennan 2007, 157; Drévilion 2000, 308; Black 2002, 178, 194; Zysberg 2002, 267, 312; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 154–159.

⁹⁸³ France and Britain had their very own conflict in North America, but in the Continental theatre the alliances and related loyalties and responsibilities complicated the negotiations. For example, France was tied by its alliance to the interests of Austria and Britain was allied with Prussia, and the interests of Prussia and Austria conflicted in Silecia. See, e.g. Black 2002, 171–178; Black 2004a, 108; Zysberg 2002, 216–217, 239, 249–251.

⁹⁸⁴ See, e.g. BL, Add MS 36798, from Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, copy, 175; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 110–115; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 232; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

⁹⁸⁵ TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

⁹⁸⁶ As, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

courts.⁹⁸⁷ All these relationships carried divergent loyalties and obligations as well. Especially the ties with friends and families produced stability in the environment of continual competition.⁹⁸⁸ In the light of these entangled, multifaceted, and continually changing networks of personal relationships and respective overlapping loyalties, it is no surprise then that the conceptual pairs of *affectation/naturalness* (as *candour* and *sincerity*) and *gratitude/ingratitude* gained meaning. They were part of the normative language that was used in order to reinforce loyalty within the network, and to morally control its members.⁹⁸⁹ For this reason, it is no surprise that the rival interests of the courtiers and their alliances were understood as the source of the insincerities and affectations of the court.

From the point of view of legitimate monarchy, the language of affectation, ingratitude, and inconstancy as normative language that aimed to control the loyalties within an alliance, was rather harmless as long as it did not escape the courtly circles. But, as we have seen, the changes in the ways and means of communication carried the internal disputes of the court to the audiences outside of it. As discussed in section 3.7.3, the language of affectation was an important element of criticism against courtly and aristocratic life as well. As the rival divisions of the court became more and more prominent, their existence started to test the credibility of traditional ideals of *unity* and *harmony* in political decision-making, namely the unity of the realm in the person of the monarch, and the unity and the harmony of the court as the microcosm of the realm under the command of a king. In this situation, the contests of the courtiers and power-blocks that escaped the courtly circles – or, that were intentionally moved outside the courtly circles by rival power-blocks – and that came to characterise the reign of Louis XV were no longer only practical handicaps to the good management of the realm. Symbolically it was about much more. It was simultaneously a blow against the ideal order of nature, of the universe, and of God – and the ideal government that mirrored those laws – where the king as the master of his household, his court, and his realm made the political decisions on the authorisation of his position as the master. If the king could no longer be master of even his own household, how could he be the master of his symbolical family of the realm? However, for now let us continue with the discursive meanings of

⁹⁸⁷ See, e.g. Scott & Storrs 2007, 12, 23; Ravel 2004, 113; Elias 2006, 3; Chalus 2000, 674; Mettam 2007, 134; Price 2003, 437–438; Lind 1996, 124.

⁹⁸⁸ See, e.g. Ravel 2004, 113.

⁹⁸⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER LXIII. To the count of Maurepas, minister of marine, 1751, 142; Mairobert 1779a, XVIII. LETTRE. A Mr. Radix de Ste. Foix, Trésorier Général de la Marine, 6 déc. 1767, 25–26; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XVIII. To M. Radix de St. Foix, Treasurer General of the Navy, 6th Dec. 1767, 21–22; Russell 1843, Duke of Bedford to Mr. Yorke, Whitehall, 4th Apr. 1749, 22–23; Walpole 1820c, To the Rev. Mr. Cole, Arlington-street, 9th Jan. 1775, 506; Walpole 1843a, LETTER LXXXVII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th July 1766, 298. As well as the language of friendship, Poisson 1772, LETTER XL. To the duchess d'Étrées, 87; Mairobert 1779a, LVIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, 23 mai 1771, 81; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LVIII. From the Count du Barry, 23rd May 1771, 66–67; Pierre 1902a, XXXVI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Versailles, 31st Mar. 1758, 162; Pierre 1902a, CVII. To Monsieur le Duc de Choiseul, Vic-sur-Aisne, 17th Dec. 1758, 302; Pierre 1902a, XV. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 22nd Nov. 1757, 113.

networks of power and leave further investigations concerning ideas and ideals of unity, harmony, and stability until section 4.2.3.3.

4.1.4 Observing the networks of power

The political parties, interest groups, factions, and cliques that sought to influence political decision-making were a prominent feature of the eighteenth-century debate about the royal mistresses too. The writers and commentators of courtly politics and life eagerly sought and shared information concerning alliances and personal relationships between the courtiers. In all types of sources, the writers devoted great attention to describing the relationships of the courtiers: the friendships, the animosities, the dependencies, the debts of gratitude, and insults of ingratitude.⁹⁹⁰ Alongside the personal relationships, the eighteenth-century writers closely followed the *favours* of the king to his courtiers and ministers.⁹⁹¹

For the courtiers and the foreign ambassadors and envoys functioning within the royal court, the information about the relationships and royal attention in the court was a necessity without which they could not hope to achieve their goals. Consequently, courtly life was a life of continual observation of others.⁹⁹² Without the knowledge of the friendships, alliances, and animosities within the royal court, they would not know the best channels to the royal person. In the worst case, an ambassador or envoy who did not know the personal relationships and sentiments between the courtiers could awaken royal distaste by attaching himself to the wrong persons who were slipping from the royal favour.⁹⁹³ For this reason, for example in British diplomatic correspondence,

⁹⁹⁰ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 111; Fauques 1759, 70-71, 127-128, 173; Fauques 1758a, 91; Fauques 1758b, 52, 122; Anon. 1760, 19-20, 94, 125; Mairobert 1775, 72-74, 108; Bécu 1777a, 23-26, 63.

⁹⁹¹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/215, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 15th/26th June 1737, Most secret and Particular, 126; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 2nd May 1753, Private, 72; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 58-64; LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 31 oct. 1714, 304; Fauques 1759, 108-109; Fauques 1766a, 177; Mairobert 1775, 124, 157, 158-159; Bécu 1777a, 87-88, 135, 138; Walpole 1833a, LETTER LII. From Orford to Mann, Houghton, 8th Oct. 1742, 185.

⁹⁹² See, e.g. Elias 2006, 97, 99-100, 113-121, 143; Elias 1978, 78-81, 137, 139; Sternberg 2013, 241; Hours 2002, 22, 41-42, 118.

⁹⁹³ For example, when Duc de Choiseul was disgraced and expelled from the court, his relatives and supporters shared his fate and lost their places in the court. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 162-163, 168; Bécu 1777a, 143-144, 150; Mairobert 1779a, LIe. LETTRE. Au Duc de la Vrilliere, 24 déc. 1770, 70; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LI. To the Duke de la Vrilliere, 24th Dec. 1770, 57. Or, when the reign of a mistress ended, either due to the death of the king, as was the case with Mme du Barry, or due to the king's change of heart, as was the case with e.g. Mme de Châteauroux, many of the supporters, creatures, clients, and friends of the former mistress were expelled from the court and from their posts as well. For the downfall of du Barry family and their clients, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 335-338, 340-341; Bécu 1777b, 381-385, 387-388; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXX. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 8th June 1774, 277-278; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 25th May 1774, 96. For the dismissal of Mme de Châteauroux, see, e.g. Walpole 1833a, LETTER CXIV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 19th Oct. 1744, 310-311. As Walpole's letter indicates, the dismissal of the persons connected to the courtier that had lost the royal favour or

information about the networks, personalities of the court, and royal preferences of his company within the court – usually expressed with the reductive term of *interior of the court*⁹⁹⁴ – were repeatedly requested by the home country and thoroughly explicated by the envoys abroad.⁹⁹⁵

For the courtiers, the company that the king preferred and favoured also gave a clue about his future plans. This was more important for the foreign ambassadors who were sent to negotiate the future relationship between two kings, courts, and countries. In diplomatic correspondence the whole political system and decision-making was presented in terms of the composition of the court. The king was the maker of the final decision, but the active political players were presented as being the counsellors that formed rival interest groups and with whom the envoys actually negotiated. Furthermore, in the correspondence, the whole interest group, faction, or *parti* could collapse – or be reduced – to one of its most prominent persons. For example, as already mentioned, Hans Stanley described the internal positionings of the French court in his correspondence with William Pitt in terms of the polarity between Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul:

It is my first opinion, that the conclusion of a peace with England, or the continuation of the Austrian Alliance depend here upon the interior state of the French Court; That the Duc de Choiseul (notwithstanding all variable, and even contrary appearances) is disposed towards the first plan, as M. De Pompadour is most zealous for the second.⁹⁹⁶

The whole political plan of consolidating the peace was then personified in Duc de Choiseul and the plan for an alliance between France and Austria was reduced in the endeavours of Mme de Pompadour. This style of describing the alliances, rivalries, and networks of power and influence in the royal court has created a serious problem concerning the difference between the power or influence that the royal mistresses *actually* used and that which they were *presented* as using. Identification of a whole interest group, faction, or *parti* with an intriguing and famous person or figure in the court certainly did not mean that this individual necessarily had personally something to do with the triumphs or failures of that faction. Neither did it mean that this person was automatically the political head of that power group. That might have been merely a metonym, a figure of speech

evoked the royal distaste was not a surprise but an expected part of the politics of courtly networks of power that functioned on the premise of the royal favour.

⁹⁹⁴ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 2nd July 1738, Most Private, 276; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 20th Aug. 1738, Most Secret, 10; TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16; TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 19th July 1739, Most Private, 6; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

⁹⁹⁵ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 2nd July 1738, Most Private, 276; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 20th Aug. 1738, Most Secret, 10; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 8th Dec. 1738, Most Secret, 223–225; TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 24th Aug. 1739, Most Secret, 110; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 2nd Sep. 1761, Private, 131–132; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 5th Sep. 1761, 210; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 231–232.

⁹⁹⁶ TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

that has left historians with endless arguments about the extent of the power of royal mistresses or other eminent persons of the court.

The case of Stanley's accounts of the motives and relationships of power in the French court reveal the complex networks of power and the intractable problem of pinpointing the persons, moments, and places of influence. His accounts are full of incoherencies that could be explained only partially by his own position and mission to negotiate peace between Britain and France. On the one hand, he gave illustrations of Duc de Choiseul's unrivalled power and subjugation of Mme de Pompadour.⁹⁹⁷ On the other, he described Mme de Pompadour as a prominent person fighting back against Duc de Choiseul, offering him a worthy and enduring rival, or even controlling and keeping him down.⁹⁹⁸

As a further example, in 1768–1769 Horace Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann giving a series of curious illustrations where he connected the idea of saving Filippo Antonio Pasquale di Paoli, Corsican statesman and revolutionary leader,⁹⁹⁹ to another titillating political event of the day: the long-awaited formal presentation of Mme du Barry as *maîtresse-en-titre*. Moreover, he wrote as if he was expecting Mme du Barry as a recognised mistress to have the power to save Paoli:

She gets ground every day, and probably will save Paoli before my Lord Chatham steps in to his assistance.¹⁰⁰⁰

Now, no one in their right mind should interpret Walpole's words as proof that he was really expecting Mme du Barry to personally save Paoli. That would have been absurd. Even though it seems that the British hopes for Paoli (and for the end of the French invasion of Corsica) were personified in Mme du Barry, they were not attached to herself personally: it was not Mme du Barry who was assumed to persuade the king to change his foreign policy. First of all, she was not considered to have understanding of political affairs. There may have been hope for Mme du Barry to gain political influence, but at the same time it was

⁹⁹⁷ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Received from Mr. Stanley, 12th June, 1761, 86–87; BL, Add MS 36798, rec. from H. Stanley, 12th June 1761, Decyphered copy, 46–47; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 28th June 1761, 170; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 6th Aug. 1761, 22–24; BL, Add MS 36798, From Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 6th Aug. 1761, copy, 161–162.

⁹⁹⁸ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 28th June 1761, 170; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 110–115; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 22nd Aug. 1761, 116; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

⁹⁹⁹ Paoli was the president of the Diet of the Republic of Corsica and the head of Corsican rebellion against the French invasion after 1768.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 2nd Dec. 1768, 12. However, the presentation of Mme du Barry was delayed, and Walpole started to lose his hopes for Paoli as well. Yet, throughout the spring of 1769 these two instances, the Corsican situation and the presentation of a mistress, were connected together. See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 6th Feb. 1769, 24; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXIX. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 14th Apr. 1769, 35; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXL. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th May, 1769, 36–37.

already known that she was of no considerable birth, education, or political intelligence. Even Walpole himself referred to her in derogatory terms, for example, as a *street-walker*¹⁰⁰¹, which stressed her humble origins and rumoured base life before entering the court. Street-walker was probably one of the most degrading euphemisms for a royal mistress, since it highlighted the inappropriate social distance between the king and his mistress. However, other references to prostitution delegitimised the power, influence, and existence of a mistress as well. As for the language of Walpole, he was sure not to allow the base origins of Mme du Barry to be forgotten. Even in the beginning of her rise when Walpole wished for her presentation, he referred to her and her relatives in terms that reminded the reader of her rumoured scandalous past, for example, by using the term *pimp* when referring to her former keeper Jean-Baptiste du Barry.¹⁰⁰²

Secondly, when writing about the ascent of Mme du Barry, Walpole was in fact writing about the rise of the *parti*, clique, or network that was attached to Mme du Barry. Moreover, he was not only addressing the rise of advocates of Mme du Barry, but also referring to the downfall of the opposite *parti*, or networks that were attached to the Foreign Minister Duc de Choiseul. For Walpole, it was Duc de Choiseul that was sustaining the expedition for the conquest of Corsica.¹⁰⁰³ Thus, the presentation of Mme du Barry indicated the rise of the political opponents of Duc de Choiseul and his fall that would (at least in the hopes of Walpole) end the Corsican aggression:

We believe the presentation [of Mme du Barry] was made last Sunday, though the account is not yet come; and I think there is as little doubt of Choiseul's fall. I agree with you in praying that it may save Paoli.¹⁰⁰⁴

Thus, it was not Mme du Barry who was going to save Paoli, but the downfall of Duc de Choiseul and the foreign policy that he pushed. Walpole was a witty writer with a known curiosity for royal mistresses, and thus his choice of wording in his description of the power-struggles of the French court and over the direction of foreign policy is understandable. He connected together the two topical events, the rising mistress and the Corsican struggle, through the common denominator of Duc de Choiseul. His expression did not mean that Mme du Barry had any political influence or power; it only meant that her

¹⁰⁰¹ See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII, From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 165; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CCXXIII, From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 2nd Sep. 1774, 289.

¹⁰⁰² See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 2nd Dec. 1768, 11–12; or *nymph*, see, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 2nd Dec. 1768, 11–12; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXIX. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 14th Apr. 1769, 35.

¹⁰⁰³ For example, Walpole commented on the situation after the delayed presentation of Mme du Barry, which did not relieve Corsica from fighting, Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIII, From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 19th July 1769, 46–47; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 14th June, 1769, 41–43.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXVI. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 6th Feb. 1769, 24.

presentation was a mark of the rising influence and favour of the *parti* that opposed Duc de Choiseul and his policies.

Certainly, this is a matter of difference between actual influence and presented or assumed influence. For example, Hours has demonstrated that the royal mistress was not the only channel to royal decision-making and has further pointed out that sometimes a mistress could have influenced the king's decisions and sometimes not.¹⁰⁰⁵ That is to say, the royal mistress's networks and private and intimate connection to the king cannot be understood as equivalent to power and influence. However, we are not interested in the actual power or powerlessness of the royal mistresses but rather in the political meanings and uses of the presentations of their power and influence. In this connection, the presentations of a mistress as the head of a *parti* are significant even if in practice the mistresses had no real weight in political decision-making.

Both examples, that of Stanley's presentation of the juxtaposition of Mme de Pompadour's and Duc de Choiseul's policies as well as that of Walpole's integration of the two topical and exciting events, highlight the meaning of rhetorical reduction and simplification, which did not go without its political uses. In both examples, the royal mistress was presented as having a significant role in political influencing, and in both cases, a whole group of courtiers, ministers, and agents in the court were personified in the royal mistress.

Presenting a political *parti* in terms of one of its prominent members is a metonym.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thus far, I have noted the meanings of metaphors in political language. Metaphorical analogies, as previously discussed, tend to extend the meanings of the concepts that they define by transferring qualities between the referents. By contrast, metonyms function on the premise of collapse and reduction. Thus the figures of speech that emphasised the power or influence of a mistress (especially in relation to important political decisions), or her position at the head of a power group (or herself as the personification of the power group) did not necessarily reflect the political reality where the mistress was actually wielding political power or leading a political power group. But, such a habit of referring to the whole by its part – usually by its famous, curious, or scandalous part – had political meanings as well: that was the moment when the influential and interesting entwined.

First of all, referring to a political power group by its most scandalous part necessarily cast a scandalous shadow over the whole power group and its policies as well. This could end up testing the credibility of the agents functioning within the power group. In connection with the royal mistresses, this related also to the legitimating/delegitimating power of ideas about gender and gendered understandings about power that will be further discussed in section 4.3.2.

Secondly, it obscured the process of decision-making within the court, oversimplified the complex relationships and networks of power and influence, and masked the actors and agents of the court that participated in political influencing and lobbying. Especially in correspondence, the reduction of a power

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hours 2002, 158–165.

¹⁰⁰⁶ A synecdoche, to be precise.

group to one of its renowned or notorious members was a shorthand that saved the writer from itemising all members of the power-block. It is certain that the correspondents receiving the letters knew to whom the writers were referring when using these shorthands: during the correspondence, the networks were described in detail and the members of power groups were named at some point.¹⁰⁰⁷ The courtiers and diplomats who were familiar with courtly life were accustomed to the observation of others' relationships, and they were aware of the functioning of networks and grouping in political influencing. Consequently, they knew, especially when referring to important affairs of the state, such as the direction of foreign policy or appointments of Ministers of State, that there was a power group operating wider than merely a royal mistress.

However, when the metonyms escaped from the sphere of the court into public debate, for example, in the form of an anecdote or a jesting poem, it is no longer certain that the recipients knew the difference between the whole power group and its personification.¹⁰⁰⁸ In the public debate, the presentations of a royal mistress as an individual and separate political agent making the ministers or deciding the foreign policies masked both the functions of the networks in political influencing and the other political players. In this sense, the habit of presenting the whole power group or network in the person of the mistress was also part of the discourse of evil advisers and shifted the blame for unpopular policies onto the royal mistress instead of a king and his ministers. In this as well, conceptions of the legitimate use of power that were intertwined with the understandings of gender were an important element.

The meanings of the conversations and communications about the networks and positions of power and influence in the court did not end here. The act of describing the networks of power was also an act that produced impressions of power – and impressions of power could become potentials of power as well. As discussed in the previous section, the premise of any courtier's position of influence and power was her/his successful networking, which started from the point that people inside and outside the court considered her/him a proper channel to the royal person or royal favours. That is to say, they assumed that she/he had power or influence to grant them their wishes. Communications on the positions of power and descriptions of the power

¹⁰⁰⁷ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313–315; TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 14th July 1742, 276; TNA, SP 78/232, Yorke to Bedford, Paris, 15th/26th Apr. 1749, 182–184; TNA, SP 78/243, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 18th/29th Mar. 1752, 218–220; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 231–232; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 58–64; TNA, SP 78/289, Horace St. Paul to Rochford, Compiègne, 28th July 1773, 88–89; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 août 1714, 102–111; LAD, P/10904, M. d'Iberville, Londres ce 13 oct. 1714, 204.

¹⁰⁰⁸ As, e.g. a poem stating that the fate of France was in the hand of a certain Strumpet, referring first to Mme de Pompadour and later to Mme du Barry. "O France! la sexe femelle/ Fit toujours ton Destin!/ Ton Bonheur vint d'une Pucelle,/ Ton Malheur vint d'une Catin." Anon. 1760, 205. "Oh, France! the Fates have then, I find/ Subjected thee to womankind./ A maid preserv'd thee heretofore;/ Now art thou ruin'd by a w---e." Bécu 1777a, 156. Also in Mairobert 1775, 177.

networks and groups guided the beseechers of favours and aspirants to power and positions to seek the aid of persons that they assumed had influence in the court and on the king. As stated, these people courting the courtiers that they assumed could help them to achieve their goals, were the starting point of the formations of networks of power. That is to say, to some extent, those who were assumed to have power, gained power.¹⁰⁰⁹

For example, Hans Stanley, whose presentation of the power struggle between Mme de Pompadour and Duc de Choiseul has already been discussed on several occasions, betrayed his assumption of the locus of influence in the French court in his correspondence. His communications similarly revealed his assumptions about how the positions of power affected his networking with the French courtiers. First of all, his great interest in the illustration of Mme de Pompadour's powerlessness indicates surprise, or that there must have been a presumption of her influence and importance.¹⁰¹⁰ Secondly, he was eager to stress his connections as the most fitting ones in relation to his mission. But in his letter of 20th August he described his most important connections with the Choiseuls, (Duc de Choiseul and his sister, Duchesse de Gramont) and the reasons why he had not sought the acquaintance and assistance of Mme de Pompadour:

I cannot help observing, that in my frequent intercourse with the brother, and sister, neither of them has ever given me the least hint that it would be proper for me to see Mad. de Pompadour, or has ever said any thing at all that shewed any respect, or good will towards her. I was on the contrary advised by the very best, and most confidential hand, against seeking her; still more against speaking of any business to her without the Minister's previous directions, as against steps, that would be highly resented, and would prove fatal to my success: [...].¹⁰¹¹

That is to say, Stanley was convinced by Duc de Choiseul, by Duchesse de Gramont, and by other courtiers that were probably attached to Duc de Choiseul, that Mme de Pompadour was not the proper channel for Stanley to use when

¹⁰⁰⁹ See, e.g. "A mesure que la division entre la France & l'Angleterre augmentoit, Louis XV. me donnoit plus d'ascendant. On avoit imaginé dans le monde que j'étois l'arbitre de cette nouvelle révolution. Il est vrai que le Roi me demandoit mon avis sur bien des choses: mais je me gardois bien de prendre sur mon [compte] les événements qui auroient pu donner une nouvelle tournure aux affaires générales. Je les renvoiois au conseil d'état, lui laissant par-là tout le blâme, s'il y en avoit à encourir. Les ministres me voioient plus régulièrement, & les officiers généraux qui vouloient commander les armées me faisoient leur cour avec une assiduité plus marquée." Poisson 1766b, 229. "In proportion as the quarrel between France and England increased, Lewis XV. [sic.] gave me more power. It was imagined in the world, that I was the arbitress of this new revolution: it is true, the King asked my opinion upon many things; but I took care not to be answerable for such events as might give a new bias to affairs in general: I referred them to the council of state, leaving them to share all the blame, if any was incurred. The ministers saw me more regularly, and the general officers who were desirous of commanding the armies, paid their court to me with remarkable assiduity." Poisson 1766d, 240; Poisson 1766a, 31, 204; Poisson 1766c, 31, 201; Mairobert 1775, 130–132; Bécu 1777a, 96.

¹⁰¹⁰ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 6th Aug. 1761, 22–24; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris 20th Aug. 1761, 114–115.

¹⁰¹¹ TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 114.

striving to fulfil his mission of peace negotiations. Consequently, Stanley decided to abstain from doing business with her:

I have therefore only called in a general way upon this Lady as all other foreign Ministers do: [...] I was the less solicitous for opportunities with her, because I am well persuaded, that it was as little in her power, as in her inclination, to promote my affairs: [...].¹⁰¹²

Thus, the information that the Choiseuls or their partisans conveyed affected the networking of both Envoy Stanley and the royal mistress, and redirected the endeavours of Stanley from Mme de Pompadour to the Choiseuls and their associates.

Much in the same manner, the spreading information about the powerlessness of Mrs. Howard made her unattractive in the eyes of those seeking mediation, influence, or power. The more she was presented as failing to influence the king's decisions and consolidate her reciprocal networks, the less she was approached by those who wished to achieve their ambitions through her and who were ready to attach themselves to her.¹⁰¹³ As much as the assumption of power could produce power – could be turned into power and networks of power – so did the assumption of powerlessness produce powerlessness.

Thus, the presentations of a powerful mistress are by no means unproblematic testimonies of a singular mistress's power, influence, or significance. The actual and final acts of making a political decision – whether regarding policies or distributing posts and offices of the court, government, or royal households – were and are unobtainable: the kings did not explain their decisions. Consequently, contemporaries produced their own explanations and interpretations of the political influencing and decision-making. Thus, the question of historical inquiries should not be *Who actually made a political decision*, but instead *What did it mean that a mistress was presented as making political decisions*.

4.2 A reigning mistress? The entanglements of power, influence, and gender

The interconnection of women and power was a complicated one. For sure, the route to formal and official power was largely blocked for women. Yet, women, especially royal mistresses, were nonetheless presented as having used power. Women's use of power was always problematic, which in itself demonstrates that there was a set of gendered conceptions tied to the understandings of power – either legitimate or illegitimate. In fact, in this section I argue that gender was an important category through which the meanings of legitimate/illegitimate use of

¹⁰¹² TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 114.

¹⁰¹³ For example, Dean Swift, embittered by Mrs. Howard's failure in securing him royal patronage, not only abandoned Mrs. Howard but also made the world know his rancour and resentment of her. See, e.g. Howard 1824b, From Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732–3, 54–55. Also noted in Borman 2010, 152–154.

power were defined, and further argued and negotiated in eighteenth-century debates concerning the legitimacy of the current monarchical rule. That is to say, it was just because political power embodied gendered concepts and conceptions that the discourse on the royal mistresses gained political meanings and could be used as a specifically useful tool when discussing and negotiating the limits and nature of legitimate monarchical rule.

During the eighteenth century women's use of formal and official power was limited by practices, customs, and laws in France and Britain alike. The only official and formal way for a woman to use legitimate political power was through her role and status as a queen. The British constitution or laws regulating the succession of the Crown admitted of rule by a female monarch, the reigning queen, who used the sovereign power that was understood as hers. In France, there was no such possibility due to succession by Salic Law that debarred not only women from the throne but also succession through the female line.¹⁰¹⁴ Thus, in France sovereignty was essentially and inextricably a male right, although – as in Britain as well – it could in exceptional occasions be used by the queen. Such exceptions were times of Regency, during which the queen consort, queen mother, or queen dowager used the sovereign power belonging to her husband or son during his incapacity (for example, absence, sickness, or minority).¹⁰¹⁵ Other than these exceptions that were usually considered anomalies or times of political crisis, women had no right to participate officially in the political decision-making because they i) had no right to hold offices, and ii) because there were strong cultural conceptions and norms restricting women's use of power and limiting the understanding of women's capacities for ruling.

As stated in the Introduction section 1.5, there was a set of cultural understandings regarding the two sexes with their characteristics, abilities, capacities, and duties, which were established as cultural norms, as *natural* attributes of men and women that were regarded as inseparable from their biological sex as well as a perpetual and unchanging part of their existence. Not that they actually were. There were heated debates especially on women's capacities throughout the eighteenth century. However, the assumed gendered expectations were further reflected in the social, political, and economic realities and possibilities of the two sexes, mainly in the form of education and legislation practices. Even though the assumed normative capacities were continually negotiated, during the early modern period, women were categorically excluded from formal and official use of power and political participation, and their exclusion was conceptualised, explained, and legitimated through cultural understandings concerning their gendered abilities and capacities. There was a set of gendered characteristics, abilities, and inclinations, usually expressed in terms of weaknesses, vices, or passions that were used in order to explain

¹⁰¹⁴ See, e.g. Gerber 2012, 76; Richet 1987, 30; Valensise 1987, 449–450; Wellman 2013, 7, 28–29.

¹⁰¹⁵ See, e.g. Wiesner-Hanks 2008, 229. There was quite a few queen mothers or dowager queens that functioned as regents, as for example, Marie de Médici, see, e.g. Wells 1999; Shennan 2007, 61; Major 1994, 181. Catherine de' Medici, see, e.g. Major 1994, 107–108. Or Anne of Austria, see, e.g. Merrick 1994; Shennan 2007, 95.

women's exclusion from higher education and political decision-making. For example, as discussed previously in section 3.7.4, women were regarded as the passionate sex. Passion was furthermore regarded as the antithesis of reason. And reason was constructed as the premise of any justifiable decision-making and action. As *naturally* passionate, inclined to succumb to the temptations of passions (and simultaneously to abandon reason), how could women in general meet the requirements of legitimate political decision-making that highlighted reason?

The female sex did not thus necessarily have the natural inclinations and characteristics that were the requirements for ideal rule. Consequently, the assumed female characteristics were used to explain women's exclusion from political participation. Nevertheless, their exclusion inevitably simultaneously reinforced the understanding of women as the sex that had no suitable characteristics for political decision-making. That is to say, this bidirectional reciprocal reinforcement – or circular logic – tied the normative understanding about the sexes and cultural practices and customs together: the norms and cultural understandings affected the laws, practices, and regulations, and the laws, practices, and regulations reinforced the cultural norms and understandings.¹⁰¹⁶

This section is dedicated to the debate about the royal mistresses' power and influence, and the political meanings of the conceptions about female rule. The royal mistresses as much as any women of the court were debarred from the legitimate and official use of power. They had no right or privilege to officially impact on legislation, distribution of justice, foreign policies, taxation, or any kind of political decision-making. But, as discussed at length in the previous section, the entanglements of official and unofficial networks of power in the court, which was simultaneously the seat of government and the royal household(s), offered opportunities and means for courtiers – men and women – to participate in the political influencing. The politics of networks offered the royal mistresses their means of power and influence as well. As previously discussed, any royal mistress's power and influence rested upon two conditions: firstly, on her access and proximity to the king that would offer a personal and trusting relationship through which the mistress could influence the royal decision-making; and secondly, on her ability to establish her own networks of power and to facilitate the success and fortune of her supporters, allies, clients, and protégé(e)s.

The courtly practices and customs that enabled unofficial and personal use of power and influence alongside the official and formal use of power and influence, were by no means unproblematic. The first problem is obvious: the confusion of *power* and *influence*.

¹⁰¹⁶ For further details regarding the interplay of cultural ideals, values, and norms, and practices, regulations, and laws, see, e.g. Scott 1999, 42–49; Capp 2003, 5–6; Hufton 1998, 55–59; Landes 1988.

4.2.1 Power or influence: small differences with great significance

These two concepts, *power* and *influence* were – and are – often and conventionally used together almost synonymously.¹⁰¹⁷ There obviously was a shared sense in these two concepts. In the works of eighteenth-century lexicographers, both of these concepts referred to *authority* or *ability* to do something, both of them were connected to *dominion*, *command*, or *governance*, and both of them referred to and explained each other.¹⁰¹⁸ As we can see, power and influence offer an elusive conceptual pair, where the meanings partly overlap or fluidly shift from one conceptual field to another. Yet, on some occasions, the significations of these concepts were constructed as antithetical. There certainly were important differences in connotations as well in that related to the alternative possibilities of stressing the legitimacy of action of the agent that was presented as using either *power* or *influence*, or both. The important differing connotations relate to three points: i) *formal* and *official*; ii) *personal*; and iii) gender. In these three points, there was a strong tendency to construct meanings through binary oppositions, and further construct and define meanings of the concepts through the act of defining their conceptual opposites.

It must be noted here that the analysis in this section is based on the differences between the concepts *power* and *influence*, but it is not connected solely to these two precise terms. In French discourse, there was no explicit equivalent used for the English terms *power* and *influence*. The French writers used far more versatile vocabulary when describing the use of political power or influencing, using similar terms, as for example, *pouvoir*, *puissance*, or *influence*,

¹⁰¹⁷ See, e.g. “he [duc de Choiseul] has so decided a resolution in every thing, which relates to his own power, or influence, that he braves, and subdues all those who would oppose another.” TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 112; Bécu 1777b, 304; London Chronicle, London, 5.–8. June 1784, iss4306, “On the extraordinary influence of the fair sex in France”; Allen 1765, “power”; Barlow 1772b, “power”; Bailey 1730, “influence”; Bailey 1759, “authority”; Ash 1775a, “authority”; Barclay 1774, “George I”, “power”; Ash 1775b, “power”; Chambaud 1761, “pouvoir”, “empire”.

¹⁰¹⁸ See, e.g. “command; authority, influence, or dominion. Ability; force. Strength. The moving force of an engine. Prevalence upon. Natural strength. A faculty of mind. Government; the right of governing. A sovereign, a potentate, or one invested with command or dominion. A divine or spiritual being. [...]” Barlow 1772b, “power”; Bailey 1730, “power”; Allen 1765, “power”; Barclay 1774, “power”; Ash 1775b, “power”; Bailey 1730, “influence”; Allen 1765, “influence”; Barlow 1772b, “influence”. “1. Legal power. 2. Influence; credit. 3. Power; rule. 4. Support, justification, countenance. 5. Testimony. 6. Weight of testimony; credibility.” Bailey 1759, “authority”; Ash 1775a, “authority”. “to rule over as a superior. Figuratively, to direct, influence, manage, or restrain. [...]” Barlow 1772a, “govern”; Dyche 1756a, “autorité”, “pouvoir”; Chambaud 1761, “autorité”, “empire”, “pouvoir”.

but also many euphemisms, as for example, *faveur*¹⁰¹⁹ or *empire*¹⁰²⁰. Since this research is conducted in English, I am using the English terms of *power* and *influence*. Nevertheless, the discourse and conceptualisation of legitimate political power that I am analysing is not solely English. Similar understandings can be found in the French conceptualisations as well, even though the actual terms used might be different. Furthermore, the euphemisms and other adaptable expressions were not absent from the English debates either, even though the writers seemed to favour the terms *power* and *influence*. The various alternative ways to describe use of power or influence also served the purpose of creating meanings, describing the nature or origins of the power used, or highlighting the legitimising/delegitimising connotations, as for example, in *begging*¹⁰²¹, *advising*¹⁰²², *commanding*¹⁰²³, and *persuading*¹⁰²⁴ are all articulations that include relations of power.

Of the two concepts, *power* was more closely connected to *sovereignty*, *formal government* and *royal prerogatives*.¹⁰²⁵ *Power* was essentially *right*, *ability*, or *faculty to decide*, *command*, or *use supreme power* in reference to political decision-making

¹⁰¹⁹ See, e.g. “rivaies de sa [Mme du Barry] figure & de sa faveur” Mairobert 1775, 106; Where the English translator chose to use the expression “rivals of her charms and power”, Bécu 1777a, 61; Bécu 1777a, 130; “La dernière preuve, & la plus complète, de la faveur constante de Madame Dubarri”, Mairobert 1775, 219; Where the English translator preferred the expression “The last, and most complete proof of the permanent influence of Madam Dubarrè” Bécu 1777b, 214. This flexibility only highlights the fact that the concepts *power* and *influence* were partly overlapping.

¹⁰²⁰ See, e.g. Mairobert 1779a, XXVIIe LETTRE, Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 23 avril 1769, 40; Mairobert 1775, 154; Fauques 1759, 123–124.

¹⁰²¹ Mairobert 1775, 95; Bécu 1777a, 44; Poisson 1766a, 145; Poisson 1766c, 144; Hervey 1848b, 99, 100.

¹⁰²² TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 14th July 1742, 276; Pierre 1903, 208; Pierre 1902a, 197; Poisson 1766a, 201; Poisson 1766c, 198; London Chronicle, London, 5.–8. June 1784, iss4306, “On the extraordinary influence of the fair sex in France”; Hervey 1848b, 375.

¹⁰²³ Fauques 1766a, 58; Fauques 1758a, 49; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, From Albemarle to Holderness, Private, 69.

¹⁰²⁴ Walpole 1833b, LETTER CC. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 3rd May, 1749, 76.

¹⁰²⁵ See, e.g. “[pouvoir, F. potestas, L. [...]. Ability, Authority, Force, natural faculty; a Sovereign Prince or State. Legislative POWER, is that which is employ’d in transcribing general Rules of Action. Judiciary POWER, is that which determines the Controversies of Subjects, by the Standard of the Rules of Legislative Power. [...].” Bailey 1730, “power”; “command; influence, dominion. Ability, force. Strength. the moving force of an engine. natural strength. A faculty of mind. Government, or the right of governing. A sovereign, or one invested with command or dominion. [...]”, Barclay 1774, “power”. In relation to forms of government, see, e.g. Bailey 1759, “monarchy”; Bailey 1730, “aristocracy”; Barlow 1772a, “aristocracy”; Allen 1765, “democracy”; Bailey 1730, “democracy”; Ash 1775b, “republic”. In relation to royal prerogatives, see, e.g. “king”: “a person who rules singly over a people. In England, the king has power of making peace and war, and calling, continuing, proroguing, and dissolving of parliaments; of enforcing old laws, determining rewards and punishments, pardoning offenders, laying embargoes on shipping, and of opening and shutting sea-posts. He is the fountain of honour, and has the sole power of conferring dignities and titles of honour; as creating dukes, earls, barons, &c.[...]” Barclay 1774, “king”; Barlow 1772b, “king”; Dyche 1756a, “gouverner”, “despotique”; Chambaud 1761, “gouverner”; Dyche 1756b, “monarchie”.

and government.¹⁰²⁶ Further, it had a strong connection to *independency* or *freedom*¹⁰²⁷ in the sense that the person invested with the *right* to decide (power) necessarily had to have the *ability* to decide, which was understood as *independence* or *freedom* to make a decision or act, but also preferably the *reason*¹⁰²⁸ and *virtue*¹⁰²⁹ for making good decision as well. In this sense, *power* had a strong connection to formal rule or government, and a connotation of legitimate, justified, or entitled use of the right to highest political decision-making that was based on either right or ability.

It was in this sense that the eighteenth-century writers describing the royal mistresses and their courtly circumstances used the term *power* when referring to formal agents of the government (especially ministers¹⁰³⁰) and the locus of supreme political power (in the monarch¹⁰³¹). Furthermore, conventionally *power* was used in the sense of a *place* on occasions when the writers evaluated the relative possibilities of action of the courtly agents, as for example, in expressions “the minister in power”¹⁰³² or “driven out of power”¹⁰³³.

Certainly, the concept *power* was not used solely for legitimating purposes. There was an understanding about *arbitrary* or *despotic* power as well that

¹⁰²⁶ See, e.g. in relation to entitled supreme power over others, see, e.g. “lord” or “majesty”: “a person invested with sovereign power over others; master.” Allen 1765, “lord”; Barlow 1772b, “majesty”. In relation to ability or faculty, see, e.g. “reason”, “virility” or “virtue”: “having the power or use of reason. Agreeable to reason; wise; judicious.” Barlow 1772b, “rational”; Ash 1775b, “rational”; [...].” Bailey 1730, “reason”; Bailey 1759, “reason”; Barlow 1772b, “virility”; Barclay 1774, “virility”; Barclay 1774, “virtue”; “habitually good. Chaste; efficacious; powerful.” Barlow 1772b, “virtuous”.

¹⁰²⁷ See, e.g. “freedom; a state in which a person or thing is not controlled by, or any ways in the power of, another.” Allen 1765, “independence”; “Freedom of the Will, a state or faculty of the mind, wherein all the motions of the will are in our power; and we are enabled to determine on this or that; to do good or evil without any force or constraint from any foreign cause whatsoever.” Bailey 1730, “freedom”; Bailey 1759, “freedom”; Barlow 1772a, “freedom”; Barclay 1774, “freedom”; Barlow 1772b, “liberty”; Barclay 1774, “liberty”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “indépendance”, “liberté”; Dyche 1756a, “indépendant”; Dyche 1756b, “liberté”, “pouvoir”, “puissance”; Chambaud 1761, “liberté”, “pouvoir”.

¹⁰²⁸ See, e.g. “a Faculty or Power of the Soul, whereby it distinguisheth Good from Evil, Truth from Falshood [sic.]; or that Faculty of the Soul whereby we judge of Things; also the Exercise of that Faculty; [...].” Bailey 1730, “reason”; Bailey 1759, “reason”.

¹⁰²⁹ See, e.g. “a habit of acting agreeable to the rules of morality, which improves and perfects the possessor; moral goodness; moral excellence; [...] power; excellence; [...].” Barclay 1774, “virtue”; “habitually good. Chaste; efficacious; powerful.” Barlow 1772b, “virtuous”.

¹⁰³⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 15th Jan. 1771, 126; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 113; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 28th June 1761, 170.

¹⁰³¹ Either a personal or impersonal sense. See, e.g. “sovereign power”, Fauques 1758b, 54; Fauques 1766a, 209; “his [king Louis XV] own power over both [Clergy and Parliament]”, Fauques 1758b, 48; Fauques 1766a, 203. The Monarch as the source of power was stressed in the British presentations as well. See, e.g. Hervey’s description of the relation of power between George II and Sir Robert Walpole: “instead of hating him [Sir Robert Walpole] whilst he [George II] employed him, and grudging every power with which he armed him”, Hervey 1848a, 185.

¹⁰³² Russell 1843, The Duke of Bedford to Mr. Yorke, Whitehall, 4th Apr. 1749, 24.

¹⁰³³ Fauques 1758b, 38.

denoted illegitimate use of highest political decision-making.¹⁰³⁴ However, such expressions were not easily connected to the ruling monarch. Instead, if *power* was presented in illegitimate terms, it was always connected to the persons around the monarch and especially to those persons who somehow participated in the political decision-making without having the right to do so. For example, when Fauques wrote about the “oppression of arbitrary power”¹⁰³⁵ she indeed referred to the royal policy of censorship and surveillance of public debates, or “spying”¹⁰³⁶, as Fauques expressed it. However, this policy was attributed to Mme de Pompadour. The *power* certainly referred to the royal power or sovereign power that had promulgated the policy, but the blame for such an illegitimate action was pinned on the royal mistress.¹⁰³⁷

Surely, no mistress could use formal, sovereign, or royal power by her own right. If *power* was understood in legitimate terms, it was connected to formal power attached to official and formal positions and places in the government and administration. Accordingly, no woman (except the extraordinary occasion of the reigning queen in Britain) could use political *power* by the right or authority of her office. Which brings us to *influence*.

There were several trains of thought that connected the courtly women – especially the royal mistresses – and feminine capacities and operations to *influence* rather than *power*. The connotation within the term *power* that stressed formality was only one of them. In the case of a royal mistress the idea of *personal*, both regarding royal *personal* preferences (that is, the royal *favour*) and *personal* relationship with the king, proved to be an important source for defining their operations as *influencing*.

Let us first view the meanings of the connection between the *personal preference* of the king and *influence*. All kinds of eighteenth-century writers readily connected the royal *favour* to both *power* and *influence* of the ministers and courtiers. But more than anything, the power or influence emanating from the royal favour was connected to the royal mistresses. As I have already pointed out, a royal mistress was a creation of royal favour: she was a “creature of fancy”¹⁰³⁸. She had risen to her position solely due to the royal preference and remained in her place only as long as the king desired her. For example, Fauques (and her English translators) wrote about the “tenure of favour and power”¹⁰³⁹ of Mme de Pompadour. Everything with respect to royal mistresses’ power or influence had a connection to the royal favour. The particular royal favours (for example, gifts, ennoblements, or more importantly in a political sense, the designations of the places of the royal household or even the members of the councils, ministers, and

¹⁰³⁴ See, e.g. “absolute power, applied to those governments, wherein the power of the prince is absolute, unlimited or arbitrary.” Barlow 1772a, “despotism”; Barclay 1774, “to lord”; Dyche 1756a, “despotisme”; Dyche 1756b, “tyran”, “tyrannie”; Chambaud 1761, “absolu”, “arbitraire”, “despotique”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “autorité”, “despotisme”, “tyrannie”.

¹⁰³⁵ Fauques 1766b, 11.

¹⁰³⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 1, 7, 11–18.

¹⁰³⁷ Fauques 1766b, 1, 7, 11–18.

¹⁰³⁸ Fauques 1758a, 59. “une idole imaginaire”, Fauques 1759, 48.

¹⁰³⁹ Fauques 1766b, 154.

generals) were considered marks of royal preference but also as demonstrations of a person's *power of influence*. Consequently, the continual royal favours were, as for example in the case of Mme du Barry, "most complete proof of the permanent influence of Madam Dubarrè"¹⁰⁴⁰. That was the *appearance of power*¹⁰⁴¹ or *favour*¹⁰⁴² that the courtiers keenly observed, and that was understood as having value in itself.¹⁰⁴³

The interconnection of a royal mistress's power or influence and royal favour created a dual tension in the perceived hierarchical relationship between the king and his mistress. On the one hand, the mistress was presented as dependent on the royal will, as her position as the *Female Favourite*¹⁰⁴⁴ would indicate. The position of a royal mistress resembled that of a *creature*: a person, "who owes his rise and fortune to the favour of a great man"¹⁰⁴⁵ and who was expected to be under the control of his/her supporter.¹⁰⁴⁶ This was a presentation that coincided with the understanding of the monarch as the source and centre of power and political will as well as with the conceptions concerning the hierarchical relationship between the sexes, and between the ruler and the ruled.

However, *influence* also complicated the hierarchical relationship between the king and his mistress. In the eighteenth-century lexicon, the concepts of *power* and *influence* both incorporate an idea of *dominion* or *control* over someone or something. In the concept *power* this ruling over contains an idea of *right* and an understanding of *hierarchy* that was considered natural, proper, or at least

¹⁰⁴⁰ Bécu 1777b, 214. "La dernière preuve, & la plus complète, de la faveur constante de Madame Dubarri, [...]." Mairobert 1775, 219.

¹⁰⁴¹ Hervey 1848a, 94; Hervey 1931, 746.

¹⁰⁴² Howard 1824b, From Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732-3, 54-55.

¹⁰⁴³ Although, especially in relation to Queen Caroline, these presentations were disapproving. They disapproved of the real value of appearance of power, feminine ambitions to rule, and the female agent's motives and capacities to rule. See, e.g. "her [Queen Caroline] single consolation was in reflecting she had power, and that people in coffee-houses and ruelles were saying she governed this country." Hervey 1848a, 262; Hervey 1848a, 261. This is part of a debate concerning especially women's abilities and capacities to make political decisions that constituted a central part of the process of gendering the legitimate use of political power. I return to this theme in section 4.2.3.3.

¹⁰⁴⁴ A very popular euphemism for a royal mistress. See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 204; Mairobert 1779b, Advertisement, iii; St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post, London, 20.-22. Oct. 1761, iss 96, "A Letter from Parias, dated Oct. 5"; Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser, London, Mon. 4th Sep. 1769, iss. 12639, "To the printer of the Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser". Also just "Favourite", see, e.g. Pierre 1903, 118; Pierre 1902a, 158; Mairobert 1775, 109, 157; Bécu 1777a, 23, 65, 135, 289; Bécu 1777b, 314; Fauques 1759, 13; Fauques 1758a, 13; Fauques 1766a, 92; Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'Editeur, ix; Poisson 1766c, the Editor's preface, vi; Hervey 1848b, 355; Walpole 1818, 61; Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelliger, London, 21.-24. Jan. 1749, iss 461; BL, Egerton MS 3456, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 29th Nov. 1752, Private, 296; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 28th Mar. 1753, Private, 60; TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 27th Mar. 1754, Private, 151; TNA, SP 78/291, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 23th Mar. 1774, Secret and Confidential, 291; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 27th Apr. 1774, Most confidential, 11.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Bailey 1730, "creature". See also, Dyche 1756a, "créature"; Chambaud 1761, "créature".

¹⁰⁴⁶ See, e.g. "[...]; also one that at the direction or under the influence of another." Bailey 1730, "creature"; Dyche 1756a, "créature".

uncontested¹⁰⁴⁷, as for example, in the understanding of supreme political power in monarchical systems. The monarch has the right to rule, *authority*, which included an element of entitlement and justification in itself:

authority: that which leaves a person the liberty of choice, arising from superiority; supposes merit in the person invested with it; is communicated by the laws; is relative to right; includes the secondary idea of respect; and is applied to God with respect to his creatures, and to parents with respect to their children.¹⁰⁴⁸

The definition also sets the king at the top of a hierarchy (made natural by the reference to the authority of God and parents) in which the monarch rules his subjects by his own right.

Influence, by contrast, was (and is) always control (or attempted control) over a person who has the *power* (either as *right* or *ability*) to do something by a person who does not herself/himself have that power. Thus, first and foremost, *influencing* was understood in terms of an act of a person directing another:

to influence: to act upon so as to impel, direct, or modify; to operate on the mind, so as to bias or direct it to any particular end or action.¹⁰⁴⁹

It was *influence*, capacity to sway the political decision-maker, that was constructed as the *power* of a mistress. Representations of influence always included a secondary idea of an agent using her/his *power of influence* over an object. In the case of a royal mistress, the object of her use of power of influence was most often the monarch himself – although, usually this was only implied.¹⁰⁵⁰ It was left unwritten, not necessarily because of the fear of charges of *lèse-majesté*, but because there was no need to emphasise it: the mistress and the monarch were inseparably interconnected, and the mistress was always presented in relation to her royal lover.

In the light of this, it is easy to see that the term *influence* could be readily used as a delegitimising term in relation to every courtier, and especially in relation to royal mistresses who could not use political power by virtue of an

¹⁰⁴⁷ Except for the cases when it referred to power that was gained through violence, fear, or cruelty. See, e.g. Bailey 1730, “tyranny”, “tyrannical”, “tyrannise”, “oppress”; Barlow 1772b, “oppressive”, “tyrannical”; Allen 1765, “tyrannical”, “tyranny”; Barclay 1774, “tyrannical”, “tyranny”; Ash 1775b, “tyrannical”, “tyranny”; Dyche 1756b, “opprimer”, “tyran”, “tyrannie”, “violence”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “tyrannie”; Chambaud 1761, “opprimer”, “tirannie”, “violence”. But in this sense, *power* was connected to the illegitimate rule by e.g. a despotic or arbitrary ruler, which was not necessarily questioning the *right* of the monarch to use the highest power but only his *way* of using it. That relates to the question of whether a bad ruler still had the right to rule regardless of his badness, which was not an easy question during the early modern period when especially political theology stressed the complete submission to the will of the monarch on every occasion. See, e.g. debates justifying Glorious Revolution and rebellion against the king. Downie 1994, 8–48; Goldie 2006, 44–45, 57.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Barlow 1772a, “authority”.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Barclay 1774, “to influence”. Also in Allen 1765, “to influence”; Barlow 1772b, “to influence”; Ash 1775a, “to influence”; Bailey 1730, “influence”; Allen 1765, “influence”; Barlow 1772b, “influence”; Barclay 1774, “influence”; Ash 1775a, “influence”.

¹⁰⁵⁰ The term *empire* in the French vocabulary emphasises especially this connotation of *rule over*. See, e.g. “donner à la Favorite un empire tout puissant sur son Amant.” Mairobert 1775, 154.

official or formal place. *Influence* could be constructed as the binary opposite to *power* in various aspects. If *power* was understood in terms of *formal authority* annexed to *office* or *official* position, then the power and influence of the royal mistresses – as much as any courtly agent’s without a formal and official position in the government or administration – was unavoidably rendered as i) influence, and ii) illegitimate. Furthermore, the term influence insinuated that there was a distorted hierarchical relationship between the mistress and the monarch. If *power* was understood as *right* or *authority*, then *influencing* could be represented in terms of usurpation of legitimate monarchical authority.¹⁰⁵¹ Then again, if *power* was understood as *ability* or *capacity*, the use of the concept *influence* also questioned the capacities of such a ruler who was under the influence – that is, under the sway, control, or force of one of his subjects - by implying that he was no longer *independent*, *free*, or *at liberty* to act according to his own *reason* or *will*.

As we can see, in these latter points, the debate is no longer only about the influence or power of influence of a royal mistress, or the justification of their involvement in political decision-making. The differences in the meanings and uses of the terms *power* and *influence* were moved from the narrower sphere of the royal mistress’s use of power of influence to the wider debate concerning the fundamentals of royal authority, the justifications of monarchical rule, and especially the kind of political rule that was based on the royal will and personal decision.

Lastly, then, let us explore the personal nature of the relationship between the king and his mistress, or more precisely, the meanings of *personal* in relation to the legitimate/illegitimate use of power or influence. It must be noted that *personal* does not necessarily imply *private*, even though these concepts have common denominators, as for example connotations of intimacy and unpublicness. A royal mistress might have been a *personal* choice of the king, and most certainly, she enjoyed a *personal* and *intimate* relationship with him. But she was far from being a *private* person or *private* affair of the king. A *recognised*, or *official*, mistress (*maîtresse-en-titre* especially) was a public figure, a person made public, and a figure through which the *personal person* of the king was made public.

As previously discussed, the courtly networks of power were personal by their nature, and the personally ruling monarch was at least symbolically at the nexus and top of these networks. Accordingly, the persons physically and emotionally (as *favour*, or royal preference would indicate) closest to the monarch were the persons who were considered to have the greatest possibilities of *influencing* royal decision-making. They were the persons who knew what the king liked or disliked,¹⁰⁵² whose company the monarch enjoyed and sought, and

¹⁰⁵¹ As, e.g. in the Fauques’ anecdote about the attempted royal control of speaking and writing. Fauques 1766b, 1-23.

¹⁰⁵² This idea of the intimate knowledge concerning the monarchs’s personal likes and dislikes accompanying the personal relationship with him was not connected solely to the royal mistresses. It recurs, for example, in the diplomatic correspondence in relation to powerful ministers. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 111-112, about Duc de Choiseul. This theme will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.4.

consequently, who had more opportunities of persuading him to accept their opinions.

Here, we again encounter the dichotomy of *personal* and *formal*. The connection of personal networks and formal political decision-making produced an awkward relationship because they were not completely separated nor totally interknitted. The formal and official networks of government existed and functioned alongside the informal and personal networks, there was significant overlapping (as, the terms *favourites*, *ministers*, and *favourite ministers*¹⁰⁵³ would indicate), and both of them had their own internal hierarchies that did not fit together. Most importantly, there was considerable contest for power within the court (between the ministers, courtiers, nobility, and so on, and their power-blocks or parties) as well as within and between the bodies that had any share of political power or authority, or that claimed to have it (most importantly the Crown and the Parliament in Britain, and the King, the Church, and the Parlements in France). In these struggles for power (political power, authority, and legitimacy) the understanding of *personal* and *private* use of power, and *official* and *formal* use of power were constructed as tools for discursive legitimisation.

There are many interconnected trajectories that brought forth the idea of the legitimisation of political power through *official* place or status or *formal* procedures. Especially in France, the expansion of royal administration, centralisation, bureaucratisation, and the professionalisation of administration and government had brought into the political arena agents that sought to justify and legitimise their authority and actions by their education, merits, or office rather than by their birth, as was the more traditional way of understanding the rights and prerogatives relating to participation in political decision-making. These trajectories caused changes in the social order and hierarchies within the administration, government, and society, and consequently created political contests of power.¹⁰⁵⁴ As many historians have argued, the conflicts within

¹⁰⁵³ See, e.g. *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, London, Tue. 1st Jun. 1762, iss 10330, "To the Printer"; Pierre 1903, 366; Pierre 1902a, 283; Fauques 1758a, 74; Fauques 1766a, 83; Walpole 1822a, 329; Walpole 1822b, 455. For example, Duc de Choiseul's stability and power in the court were owed to the personal royal favour and preference that he had won by entertaining and amusing the king instead of merely succeeding in political matters. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 111–112; Mairobert 1775, 70–71; Bécu 1777a, 20–21.

¹⁰⁵⁴ On the increasing complexity and process of centralisation, byrocratisation, and professionalisation of royal administration, see, e.g. Beales 1990, 51–52; Roche 1999, 279, 356–358, 395–396; Antoine 1987, 12–15, 21; Baker 1990, 61, 64, 229–231; Roche 1987, 340; Ridder-Symoens 1996; van Horn Melton 2009, 46; Mettam 2007, 131; Zysberg 2002, 163; Henshall 1992, 65; Wilson 2000, 90–92; Graham 2000, 203; Scott & Storrs 2007, 35–36. On the sale of offices of justice and administration, and the relating schism between traditional nobility of *noblesse d'épée* and new *noblesse de robe* ennobled by their office, see, e.g. Mettam 2007; Swann 2007, 159; Scott & Storrs 2007, 35–36; Mączak 1996, 200; Spellman 1998, 17–19; Wilson 2000, 90–92; Bell 1994, 45; Henshall 1992, 12, 41, 50, 65; Major 1994, 103–106, 120, 321–331; Scott & Storrs 2007, 15, 20–21, 35–36, 39; Molas Ribalta 1996, 36; Elias 2006, 205, 220; Hanley 1989, 7–8; Graham 2000, 203; Shennan 2007, 87. On the use of *merits* as a challenge to the traditional legitimisation of nobility based on birth, see, e.g. Drévilion 2000, 321–331; Maza 1993, 76; Hours 2002, 28–29.

nobility over the conceptualisation of nobility and the identity, privileges, honours, dignity, and rights embodied in it seem to increase during the eighteenth century. The nobility as an estate shared mutual interests and noble houses and families were interconnected through marriages, alliances, and networks. Yet, the nobility itself remained highly heterogeneous, and the ideological differences in line with the traditional functional division into ancient nobility, *noblesse d'épée* and the relatively younger, *noblesse de robe*, seems to have widened in eighteenth-century France. Many historians have pointed out that the officials, the judges, the magistrates, and the lawyers of the Parlements created their own culture that came to play a significant role in the political changes of eighteenth-century France. Located especially in the Parlements, they created their own political culture, ideals, and ideas that challenged the traditional nobility as well as constituted a locus for the criticism of the monarchical system and the royal monopoly of legitimate authority.¹⁰⁵⁵

Along with this process, also the understanding of authority and rightful power (especially regarding legislative power) came to stress the formal procedures, enacted by administration officials (especially magistrates of Parlements), rather than the royal *will* as the sole source of the highest power of political decision-making and execution.¹⁰⁵⁶ These trajectories belong to the process of discursive legitimation of parliamentary use of power and authority that eventually introduced revolutionary ideas about representation and sovereignty in the nation that separated the nation from the person of the monarch. As I have already stated, the discourse on the royal mistresses was not explicitly revolutionary or anti-monarchical. Thus, at this point, I believe it is sufficient to acknowledge that there existed growing currents of thought that emphasised the legitimacy of political power based on *formal* and *official* position and practices – and that these currents affected the understanding of *influence* as well, by categorically delegitimising it.

In the debate on the royal mistresses, these currents are visible in two specific instances. Firstly, in the growing emphasis on *merits* as the premise of employment in governmental positions. Secondly, in the royal mistresses' claims of justification for their advice and recommendation through reference to counsel or information from an incumbent minister. In case of *merits*, we once again encounter an ambiguous concept, referring to a complete range of capacities or talents. However, in the French discourses, there was a distinct sense that *merit*

¹⁰⁵⁵ See, e.g. Mettam 2007; Poussou 2014, 87–89, 99–105; Shennan 2007, 87; Henshall 1992, 50; Major 1994, 103–106, 120, 321–322, 326–331, 374; Roche 1999, 198–199, 387, 395–396; Marraud 2014; Dré villon 2000, 317–333; Hours 2002, 18, 28, 36, 38–40, 58, 61, 275–276; Lainé 2014; Maza 1993, 71–76, 88–96, 147–154, 166; Zysberg 2002, 163; Elias 2006, 220.

¹⁰⁵⁶ As recognisable in e.g. the Parliamentary claims regarding independent authority and representative status. See, e.g. Roche 1999, 249, 280, 334, 378, 387, 422–423; Antoine 1987, 12–15, 21; Baker 1987b, 472–477; Baker 1990, 36–37, 61, 64, 229–231; van Kley 1987, 177, 184–185, 187, 189; Baker 2006, 626–628; Henshall 1992, 102; van Horn Melton 2009, 51, 53; Valensise 1987, 453; Dré villon 2000, 316–317, 319–320, 334–338, 340; Zysberg 2002, 161, 208–209.

signified competence and skills that were not solely attached to extraction.¹⁰⁵⁷ Furthermore, in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) Mme de Pompadour's influence was justified through the eager support she showed for every one that had merit regardless of his or her rank: "I delight to honor merit [...]"¹⁰⁵⁸ By contrast, alluded lack of merit delegitimised a person's authority in his formal position. This was the case with, for example, Mme de Pompadour's brother, Abel-François Poisson de Vandières, Marquis de Marigny, whose appointment as Directeur Général des Bâtiments du Roi was much opposed and discursively delegitimated through the presentation of his lack of merits.¹⁰⁵⁹

Thus, the conflict between the ancient nobility with their position that was established by tradition and birth, and the rising bureaucratic nobility that sought to legitimate and strengthen its position in the royal government during the eighteenth century, is very much present in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766). Especially arguments explaining the actions of incompetent ministers through their improper and corruptive education and pastimes, discussed in section 3.7.1, and given on the part of Mme de Pompadour, demonstrate the aspirations of the enlightened nobility, bureaucratic nobility, or even of the higher middling sorts, such as educated and wealthy bourgeoisie. On this point, it would be credible that she actually sketched the memoir herself, as was alleged. Mme de Pompadour originated from higher middling sort of people, having wealthy and powerful *fermier generals* and *financiers* in her family and as her supporters that aspired to climb social ladders. Her background might explain the given interest of Mme de Pompadour to promote *merit* instead of *birth* and to disclaim the privilege of ancient nobility to access the highest places of royal administration by argument of birth, rank, and tradition.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁷ See, e.g. "I have obtained for you, sir, that little government you desired, and the preference has excited many murmurs among your rivals; [...] It was objected that you were a soldier of fortune, a man of no birth. That is precisely what makes you more valuable: your merit is personal, that of others is foreign to them. I shall ever deem it my duty to serve you, and all like you; and so will it be seen that a woman accused with such rancor and injustice, knows how to honour merit and virtue." Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXI. To mr. de Chevert, lieutenant-general, 69; Poisson 1766a, 41, 45, 79, 252-253; Poisson 1766c, 41, 45, 79, 125, 251; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVI. To the duchess of Duras, 1748. 77-79; Fauques 1759, 179; Fauques 1758b, 130-131; Fauques 1766b, 122-123, 130; LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 28 août 1714, encrypted, 104; LAD, P/11452, Mr. Mist, 31 déc. 1728, 390-391; LAD, P/12020, [Chavigny; Cambis; Silhouette, agent à Londres], Idée Generale sur la situation presente d'Angleterre, [1734-1739], 29; LAD, P/12021, [Silhouette; Fournier; Durand; Mirepoix], Caractere de quelques uns des hommes principaux en Angleterre, [1740-1749], 63; Pierre 1902a, 190; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 231.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Poisson 1772, LETTER IX. To the marshal de Belleisle, 1747, 18. See also, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIV. To the chevalier de Sade, 1747, 53-54; Poisson 1772, LETTER LV. To mr. de Paulmi, minister of state, 1750, 121; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXII. To the marquis of Saint-Consent, 1751, 140; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXI. To mr. de Chevert, lieutenant-general, 69; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LII. To the countess du Barail, 1.

¹⁰⁵⁹ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 8-11; Fauques 1759, 39; Fauques 1766a, 55-56.

¹⁰⁶⁰ See, e.g. Poisson 1772, LETTER IX. To the marshal de Belleisle, 1747. 18; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXIV. To the chevalier de Sade, 1747, 53-54; Poisson 1772, LETTER LV. To mr. de Paulmi, minister of state, 1750, 121; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXII. To the marquis of Saint-Consent, 1751, 140; Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXI. To mr. de Chevert, lieutenant-general, 69; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LII. To the countess du Barail, 1.

In the case of justification of a royal mistress's advice to the king, usually in relation to nominations for a vacant post and places in the court and government, the reference to official and formal position is more straightforward. For example, the legitimacy of the advice given by Mme de Pompadour in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) was based on the claim that before giving the king any advice she consulted his official and formal counselors, generals and ministers, who held the formal right to counsel in matters relating directly to their specific branch. For example, after being accused of giving away military posts, Mme de Pompadour was given to state that:

Cette accusation étoit d'autant moins fondée, que je n'emploïois mon cretis auprès du Roi pour personne, que je n'eusse consulté ce ministre auparavant.¹⁰⁶¹

In general, in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) Mme de Pompadour's abilities, influence, and advice were justified through her seeking and taking advice from men in office, whether from ministers of state or generals, or reading their memoranda.¹⁰⁶²

In Britain, the discourse emphasising the *formal* and *official* use of power as legitimate rested upon the ideas of legitimate power being checked, and the claims surrounding the proper mechanisms for checking the use of political power (whether legislative, judicial, or executive).¹⁰⁶³ Unlike in the French debates, here ideas arose concerning *transparency* in political decision-making, resulting in the denunciation of secrecy and secret political decision-making by cabinets, and especially during the reign of Sir Robert Walpole.¹⁰⁶⁴ Once again, this was by no means a cry for openness of political participation or complete transparency of political decision-making, where the decision-making process would be exposed to the totality of the population. More than anything, it was about the interrelation of the Crown and Parliament, where the language of *secret cabinets* played a part in the discourse claiming parliamentary supremacy, stressing the Crown's accountability to Parliament, or aiming at limiting the Crown's influence in Parliament, as for example in the placemen debates or debates concerning the Crown's independent use of revenues (the Civil list debate).¹⁰⁶⁵ In the British parliamentary debate, the legitimate use of power was thus connected to *transparency* (as accountability to Parliament) and/or was part of rhetoric of oppositions that highlighted public debate and freedom of press.

¹⁰⁶¹ Poisson 1766a, 227. "Now this accusation was so far from being true, that I never recommended any person to his Majesty, without previously consulting that Minister [Comte de Argenson]." Poisson 1766c, 225.

¹⁰⁶² See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 28–29, 82, 91, 96, 110–111, 204; Poisson 1766c, 29, 82–83, 90–91, 95–96, 110, 202.

¹⁰⁶³ See, e.g. Lieberman 2006; Wootton, 2006; Downie 1994, 46.

¹⁰⁶⁴ See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 68, 70; Clark 1998, 20; Black 1987, 126, 128; van Horn Melton 2009, 37.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Reitan 1966, 318, 320–322; Goldie 2006, 70; van Horn Melton 2009, 27, 37; Lieberman 2006, 327–328; McCormack 2005, 18.

Consequently, the political language supporting these claims tied together *secrecy*, *secret cabinets*, and *corrupted influence*.¹⁰⁶⁶

As we see, the debates concerning the discursive separation of *power* and *influence*, and further the identification of the legitimate use of power as *formal* and *official*, and the illegitimate use of power as *influence*, *personal*, and *secret* derived from different political discourses in Britain and France. Yet, the resulting dichotomy of power and influence, and the debates surrounding it, marked the beginning of the end of the idea of the highest political decision-making as the private (as secret and unaccountable) and personal (belonging to him only) affair of the king. This process was sped up by the expansion of communication, and the simultaneous exploitation of *public opinion* (as a source of legitimacy) by all the parties striving for the legitimation of their claims to power.

In the eighteenth-century struggles for legitimation it was exactly this *formality* that provided an important source for the legitimation of participation in political decision-making. Respectively all things *personal* gained negative significations. For example, Fauques reminisced in 1766 about the pacific turn of Louis XV during the Seven Years' War:

[...] and who does not know the influence, that the personal inclinations of princes have, on the greatest human affairs [whether making a war or peace]?¹⁰⁶⁷

She was certainly denouncing the personal and private reasons of Louis XV for peace, and she was denouncing them precisely because they were personal and private.¹⁰⁶⁸

Now, this is a curious comment on the highest political decision-making in the French context. Fauques did sympathise with the English system of balanced/mixed monarchy,¹⁰⁶⁹ so her presentation of the French political system conveyed strong criticism of unrestricted monarchical rule (or, rule solely by *will*) as well as of the constraints on discussions about political matters. Nonetheless, her comment contravened the traditional understanding of politics as the king's *personal* and *private* affair, as expressed in the idea of *Mystère du Roi*. I do not claim that her comment was a denunciation of *Mystère du Roi* itself, or a demand for openness or transparency of political decision-making. Certainly, the historians of the eighteenth century for the most part agree that the idea of politics and political decision-making as the private and secret affair of the king was challenged by the 1770s.¹⁰⁷⁰ Similarly, the rising culture of political transparency

¹⁰⁶⁶ See, e.g. Goldie 2006, 65–68; Black 1987, 115, 122, 128; Clark 1998, 20; van Horn Melton 2009, 37.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Fauques 1766b, 144–145.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Certainly, in Fauques' presentation, there was also a mistress pushing her political agenda with the king. Mme de Pompadour was presented as persuading the king to peace by feeding his desires. See, Fauques 1766b, 145. Mistress' influence in monarch will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Especially regarding the authority of the Parliament. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 123; Fauques 1758b, 45–46, 101–103; Fauques 1766a, 202; Fauques 1766b, 85–87, 141.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See, e.g. van Horn Melton 2009, 54; Munck 2002, 118; Graham 1997, 102.

that developed into an obsession in the downright revolutionary discourses during the reign of Louis XVI is hardly unfamiliar.¹⁰⁷¹

Admitting this, I still believe that Fauques did not push for transparency and openness of political decision-making. What Fauques wanted was a strong king, one that decided the political matters with resolution, without the *influence* of favourites (male or female), and with the help of officially and formally named counsels and political advisors – who themselves were chosen by the king without any interference of others, especially of the courtiers who were motivated by their corrupting *private interest*.¹⁰⁷² She did not imply that the people (neither as the generality nor as some kind of elite group of enlightened men) should know his reasons, let alone participate in the decision-making. Thus, the highest political decision-making was still the king's *private* business. But as Fauques wanted, the decisions made were not supposed to be based on *personal* inclination, but on a judgement made by an *impersonal* monarch without any personal interests, wishes, or needs but the interest of his realm.¹⁰⁷³ Thus, Fauques' comment contained a traditional idea of the monarch being simultaneously personal and impersonal – and a wish and hope that with the help of formal and official counselors, the personal could be sectioned off in order to promote the good government of the real.

Fauques' comment should be read in the light of a differentiation between *formal* or *official* political decision-making, and *personal* political decision-making. I cannot stress enough that this is not a juxtaposition between *public* (as formal and official; regarding political matters, government, or nation; or, open or generally known) and *private* (as having no political, public, or official aspect; or, closed, hidden, secret) even though both *personal* and *private* are always closely associated with *secrecy* and *nonpublicness*. The royal mistresses were always connected to the *private* (having no position of official or formal power¹⁰⁷⁴) and *personal* (intimate, relating to will, preference, and sentiments). Thus, they might have been excluded from *official* and *formal* political decision-making, but not from *public* (as from public view, known, not secret), as they were famous and well-known figures who, moreover, participated in the presentation of the public image of the monarch. Fauques' criticism was directed against the *informal* and *unofficial* elements in political decision-making, and thus, in her argumentation, the *official* and *formal* positions were the keys to the legitimate use of power: an

¹⁰⁷¹ See, e.g. Baecque 1997, 209–246.

¹⁰⁷² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 29, 44, 81; Fauques 1758a, 34, 53, 107; Fauques 1766a, 37, 62; Fauques 1766b, 9–10, 146.

¹⁰⁷³ Here, *personal inclination* could be understood as *private interest* as well.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Even though the royal mistresses in France enjoyed an officially recognised position that was without any share of formal or official power in relation to political matters, i.e. it was a position that came with some annexed advantages (e.g. apartments and certain honours) but mainly it was about publicity. An official or recognised mistress was one that was made publicly known by the king himself. Yet, their officially recognised position included influence in some matters that related to e.g., festivities and entertainments of the king and his court. That is to say, they could have authority, or even power, over some affairs, but these never extended to political matters as affairs of the state. But this will be further discussed in following sections.

official position contained authority.¹⁰⁷⁵ Respectively, *personal* (as regarding non-public life, will, reason, sense, and sentiments of a particular person) was constructed as delegitimising.

The act of defining the legitimate use of political power through official and formal positions resulted in various meanings, both relating to the justification/denunciation of the power or influence of the royal mistresses as well as to the wider understanding of monarchy as a political system based on the personal rule of one. In such a discourse where legitimate power was connected to formal and official positions, it was not only the royal mistresses whose power or influence suffered serious damage. The legitimacy of the personal networks of power within the royal court was questioned as well. As we saw in the previous section 4.1, the personal networks of power were traditional and known channels to the foot of the throne and an inseparable part of the monarchical system.

Additionally, the discursive separation of *power* and *influence* with their connections to *formal*, *official*, and *personal*, concealed an even more puzzling problem relating to the royal *favour*, since that always rested on *personal* preference. But that would be a question concerning the properties and attributes that made the preferential royal decision legitimate. Fauques' use of the term royal *favour* was inconsistent. She used the term in a conventional way, presenting it as a decisive element in the courtly and political matters that was not necessarily a delegitimising way to discuss royal decision-making.¹⁰⁷⁶ And yet, she occasionally denounced royal *personal* preference as a justified reason for decision-making, and especially in relation to strictly political matters (as, for example, in decisions concerning the direction of foreign policy¹⁰⁷⁷). One explanation for this incongruity can be found in the changing understanding of the king's two bodies. In early modern French political theories, the two bodies of the king, the personal and the impersonal, were indivisible: the ruling monarch embodied the two bodies simultaneously and inseparably.¹⁰⁷⁸ At least according to the currents of political thought. In ordinary language use there was always some fluctuation. Fauques' presentation of the reprehensible influence of personal preference was then a moment when the king's two bodies were shown as separate.

The debate, where power, and especially legitimate power, was constructed in terms of formality and officiality, and where the royal mistresses were

¹⁰⁷⁵ Or, as in the case of monarchical rule, authorisation. The power that the ministers used was delegated power, usually presented as coming from the monarch in Britain as well. See, e.g. "instead of hating him [Sir Robert Walpole] whilst he [George II] employed him, and grudging every power with which he armed him [...]." Hervey 1848a, 185.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1766a, 206–207. In similar sense in other sources as well, see, e.g. Mairobot 1775, 123; Bécu 1777a, 86; Poisson 1766a, 12; Poisson 1766c, 12; Howard 1824a, Lady Chetwynd to Mrs. Howard, Ingestry, 29th July 1727, 252; BL, Add MS 36798, Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, copy, 175; TNA, SP 78/236, Yorke to Newcastle, Paris, 11th/22th Aug. 1756, 361.

¹⁰⁷⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 144–145.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See, e.g. Kantorowicz 1957, 7–18, 207–231, 314–336, 437–448; Baker 1987b, 469–471; Roche 1999, 194, 231; Kelly 1981, 271; Franko 2003; Franko 1994.

inseparably connected to *influence* and *personal* (either *personal* relationship with the king, or *personal* preference of the monarch), was then not only a debate about the use of power or the influence of royal mistresses. It was a debate about the proper and rightful use of power of highest political decision-making. The discourse on the royal mistresses was part of and contributed to the wider debates outlining the nature of legitimate/illegitimate use of power – and the figure of a royal mistress, associated with *personal, preference, informal, unofficial, and influence* (over the king) could provide an epitome of the illegitimate use of power against which legitimate power could be defined and understood as *formal, official, and impersonal power*.

So, here we have reconstructed a rather rough frame for the separation of *power* and *influence* that suggests that the royal mistress would have used only *influence* – that is to say, some kind of power of persuasion over the king in order to direct his opinions and decisions. It is easy to further assume that this influence was understood increasingly in illegitimate terms. As always, the situation was not quite so straightforward. Since the royal court was simultaneously, and especially in France inseparably, the political centre, the royal household, and the symbol of the realm, it incorporated a wide range of functions and practices that were in the grey area between different aspects of the court and that also had political significance, either in relation to political decision-making or public representation of the political system, realm, and/or the monarch. Royal mistresses participated in these functions and practices as well, and their contributions were not always considered improper or illegitimate. Quite the contrary, there was also a range of tasks within the royal court, where the royal mistresses' use of power was expected and accepted. Thus, in order to discover the finer nuances in the debates defining the legitimate/illegitimate use of power and influence of a royal mistress, we need to define a borderline between her accepted or justified use of power of influence and its denounced use, take a closer look at the *objects* of her use of power of influence, as well as at the *means* that a royal mistress was presented as having employed in achieving her power of influence.

4.2.2 Accepted influencing

As we have already seen, the royal mistresses participated, and were presented as participating, in various activities of the court and various affairs that took place in it. Some of them related to the private affairs of private courtiers, or at least as private as affairs in the court could get, some of them concerned sociability and entertainments, and some of them even had political importance. The discourse of power, alongside that of money, is the most important element of the debate on the royal mistresses. Recalling the discourse of evil advisors that have been discussed on several occasions, it is no surprise that the royal mistresses' potential use of power and influence became a subject of a great many negative debates and even general discontent, as will be discussed in section 4.2.3. Before unravelling the royal mistresses' illegitimate use of power we will have to begin with outlining the limits of the appropriate use of power of influence of a

royal mistress. Certainly, there was a certain set of objects that were regarded as having been under feminine guidance, or under the control of the queen, the royal princesses, or other great and noble ladies of the court. This generated opportunities for the royal mistresses' influencing in positive terms as well. Some of these matters have been mentioned before: amusements and entertainments, and patronage of the arts. In addition, charity was a traditional field of public or quasi-public activity in which women of higher status were able to participate or were even encouraged and expected to have participated.¹⁰⁷⁹

These three fields of activity offered courtly women, and especially the royal mistress, possibilities of power and influence that could have been tolerated or even applauded. They were traditionally feminine activities, in the sense that noble or wealthy ladies even outside the court attended similar activities. They were also strongly connected to gendered ideals, and especially to the feminine capacities that were considered to make the female sex a better judge in matters relating to these fields. As already mentioned in section 2.2, the organisation of entertainments was connected to the dedication to the pleasures of others, to ideals of sociability, as well as to delight and recreation as the opposite of (masculine) work and business. Patronage of the arts was connected to the idea of refinement, taste, and sensitivity that all had strong feminine connotations. Charity, even though an ideal that concerned both sexes, had its roots in Christian values and morals that highlighted pious and compassionate feminine characteristics.¹⁰⁸⁰

Even though all the distinguished ladies participated in similar activities, their festivities, patronage, and charity did not have the same meaning as the royal mistresses'. The king, as the centre of the cultural, social, and political world, made the difference. One cannot stress enough the fact that the royal mistress was to a certain extent an extension of the ruling monarch. Her entertainments, her patronage, and her charity always carried a meaning in relation to the king and his public image as well. Thus, a royal mistress's activity in these fields could carry a significant political meaning, either concretely, practically, discursively, or symbolically, as I intend to demonstrate in the following sections. Previous scholars interested in women's history, gender history, and/or history of the royal courts have focused significant attention on the activities of queens and royal mistresses and have affirmed their cultural significance especially as patronesses of the arts.¹⁰⁸¹ In what follows, we shift the focus from the activities of the mistresses and objects of their patronage to the stories, narratives, and anecdotes about their activities and ask what these articulations tell about the prevailing understanding regarding the justified and appropriate use of power and influence, as well as how these utterances and images were used in order to define the boundaries of the political.

¹⁰⁷⁹ See, e.g. Garrioch 2007, 496–497; Capp 2003, 27–28; O'Brien 2007, 631; Vickery 2001, 26; Wellman 2013, 362; Roche 1999, 346, 473, 509.

¹⁰⁸⁰ See, e.g. Garrioch 2007, 496; Roche 1999, 346, 473, 509; Capp 2003, 27–28; Rendall 2007, 256; Vickery 2001, 24–27; Wellman 2013, 4.

¹⁰⁸¹ See, e.g. Wellman 2013; Orr 2002; Corp 2002; Barclay 2002; Bucholz 2002; Marschner 2002; King 2002.

4.2.2.1 Connecting people

Of the three fields of activity, entertainments, patronage, and charity, the amusements and entertainments organised by royal mistresses were by far the most prominent. The meanings of the royal amusements in relation to the enduring practice of keeping royal mistresses were discussed in section 2.2, and in relation to discourses relating to money and aristocratic lifestyle in sections 3.5.3 and 3.7.5. Here, we shall consider the meanings that the various forms of amusements had in relation to networking within the royal court and to channelling the royal presence.

We have already seen that the court as a political centre functioned on the premise of personal networks. This indicates, as many scholars have already noted, that the social networks were a premise of political power and influencing – and the eighteenth-century elites were accustomed to pursuing political agendas in social arenas.¹⁰⁸² In the field of sociability, women were paramount. They organised social gatherings of various sorts, and during the social events the role of a hostess was considered essential since it was her duty to make the event both *enjoyable* and *useful* to the participants.¹⁰⁸³ For example, it was the hostess's duty to monitor the conversation in order to prevent disagreements.¹⁰⁸⁴ The elite women had thus an important part in the formation of social networks that functioned as the basis for possible future political cooperation.¹⁰⁸⁵

The entertainments that the royal mistresses organised were not an exception in this sense. The royal mistress organised all manner of social events that were not entirely dedicated to merry-making. Suppers, journeys, and spectacles that the royal mistresses organised all had this same important function of connecting people. In this sense, the royal mistress was an enabler. She created a place and opportunity for the courtiers, ministers, and ambassadors to meet and associate, create connections, mingle, study each other (temperament, inclinations, opinions, and motives, which, as previously explained, was an

¹⁰⁸² See, e.g. Chalus 2000; Kleinman 1990; Goodman 1992, 12; Chalus 2009; Chalus 2001; Vickery 2001, 8–11; Hours 2002; Norrhem 2010. For example, the British ambassadors did not hide nor were ashamed to admit that they had been discussing politics with ministers and ambassadors during suppers (all kinds of suppers, not only those organised by royal mistresses), which would demonstrate that the eighteenth-century politicians were indeed accustomed to dealing with official political matters in informal and social arenas. See, e.g. Russell 1846, Duke of Bedford to Lord Egremont, Paris, 19th Sep. 1762, 104–111; TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 14th Aug. 1771, 63–64; BL, Add MS 36798, Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 8–9th June 1761, copy, 41–42; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Fontainebleau, 11th Nov. 1738, 143.

¹⁰⁸³ See, e.g. Chalus 2000, 687–690; Munck 2002, 17; Wellman 2013, 102; Hours 2002, 32.

¹⁰⁸⁴ See, e.g. "So experience has taught me how wrong, unjust, and senseless party factions are; therefore I am determined never wholly to believe any side or party against the other: and, to show that I will not, as my friends are in and out of all sides, so my house receives them all together, and people meet here that would fight in any other place." Howard 1824b, From Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, February 8, 1732–3, 56. In literature, see, e.g. Chalus 2000, 687–690; Munck 2002, 17.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See, e.g. Chalus 2000; Vickery 2001, 11.

important element in the courtly culture of continual observation of others), and even discuss political matters in a more relaxed manner.¹⁰⁸⁶

A royal mistress was then a person who connected people. She created a place for the great men of political importance to attach to each other, and thus enabled the formation of networks of power and political cooperation. Besides, she herself was also a place or a symbol of affinity. A royal mistress's person was considered and used as a common connector even without her immediate presence. For example, M. de Bussy, Charge de Affaires of the French Embassy in Britain, was urged to pass the greetings and compliments of Mme de Pompadour to the Duke of Newcastle, then the Prime Minister of Great Britain.¹⁰⁸⁷ While the Abbé de Bernis and Duc de Choiseul continually conveyed Mme de Pompadour's greetings and her tidings in their correspondence.¹⁰⁸⁸ The mistress as a mutual acquaintance could function as the basis for the connection between great men and a symbolical point of an already existing joint relationship that was used in order to create a sense of togetherness. That was, of course, one way to stress the common ground, solidarity, loyalty, common political interest, and the need for cooperation in the endeavours and pursuits of political and personal interest of the parties involved in the exchange.

As discussed in section 4.1.3, the networks were a necessity for every person who wished to succeed in the royal court. The royal mistress's position as the royal favourite under the protection of the royal preference could safeguard her against the aggression of rival courtiers to some extent, but it did not necessarily give her any opportunities of acquiring power or wealth without powerful supporting personal networks. The royal mistress's entertainments were also a way for her to create and strengthen her own networks of power as well.

A successful entertainment was an event that was made public and that acquired significance through its publicity. First of all, it was known by everyone in the court when a royal mistress organised a spectacle, a supper, or a journey. In this sense, the publicity of the mistress's social events served to highlight the mistress as a point of coming together. Her parties were constructed as the place to be.¹⁰⁸⁹ This stressed the wideness of her connections and social circles, and

¹⁰⁸⁶ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/285, Blaquiere to Rochford, Compiègne, 6th Aug. 1772, 306–307; TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 14th Aug. 1771, 63–64; BL, Stowe 89, "Appendix containing a Journal of the affairs of France in the year 1771", Saturday 23rd Mar. 1771, 34; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 56; Pierre 1902a, XL. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 16th Apr. 1758, 171; Pierre 1902b, LXXXVIII. To Madame de Pompadour, 30 Oct. 1758. 272; LAD, P/10907, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 22 nov./ 3 dèc. 1714; TNA, SP 78/278, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 14th June 1769, 169; TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 14th Aug. 1771, 63–64.

¹⁰⁸⁷ See, e.g. LAD, P/7023, Lettre particuliere, Recû le 22. par le courier La fond, Repondû le 26. Lettre de M. de Bussy a M. le D. de Choiseul a Marly, 19 juin 1761, 72.

¹⁰⁸⁸ See, e.g. Pierre 1902b, V. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Fontainebleau, 24th Sep. 1757, 91; Pierre 1902b, XIV. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Versailles, 14th Nov. 1757, 117; Pierre 1902b, LVI. To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 24th June 1758, 203; Pierre 1902b, CXI. To Monsieur le Duc de Choiseul, Vic-sur-Aisne, 7th Jan. 1759, 310.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See, e.g. "[...] but in three months [fashionable Parisians] will die to go to court, and to be invited to sup with madame du Barry." Walpole 1820c, Orford to the Hon. H. S.

consequently endorsed the opportunities of networking during the social event. The existing connections and networks attracted more people to seek the company of the royal mistress, which in the ideal case resulted in the ever wider networks – with the potential security, influence, leverage, and wealth – for the mistress as well.

Furthermore, the royal mistress's entertainments as the place for establishing networks and connections had also a great advantage that made participating in them lucrative for the politically ambitious courtiers: the possibility of the royal presence. For example, in a public notice informing of and discussing Mme du Barry's official presentation as *maîtresse-en-titre*, as quoted in Mairobert's *Anecdotes sur Madame la comtesse Du Barri* (1775), the writer stressed the change in the importance of the social events organised by the newly formalised royal mistress:

Depuis lors [la présentation de Mme du Barry], Madame la Comtesse Dubarri donne des soupers, où elle invite tous les Grands de la Cour & les Ministres. Au bas de l'invitation, on assure qu'on y lit : S. M. m'honorera de sa présence.¹⁰⁹⁰

After the formal presentation the royal mistress was allowed to appear publicly with the king. Thus, she could organise public or semi-public social events that the king participated in as well. The possibility of personal conversation with the king was a tempting opportunity for eighteenth-century courtiers to make themselves noticed by the king and to gain royal favour that could eventually elevate them in the courtly hierarchy or produce political or pecuniary advantages.

Secondly, everyone knew about the royal mistress's social gatherings, but not everyone was invited. It was then about the politics of inclusion and exclusion, both practically and symbolically. Invitation to the entertainments of a royal mistress was a mark of a close connection to and the favour of a royal mistress. In the same sense, a royal mistress's participation and acceptance of invitations of others was a mark of her favour. And the *favour*, as discussed in the previous section, could turn into other benefits, as is evident for example from the British Ambassador Lord Albemarle's description of the ball organised by the Spanish Ambassador:

The Spanish Ambassador gave a publick Ball this day [sennight] at which all persons of Distinction were invited. The Marquise de Pompadour honour'd in with her presence, staid there above an hour, and danced. – That Ambassador has received a great Mark of favour from the King His Master, who, upon his representing, that his ordinary, allowance, which was an hundred and twenty thousand Livres a Year, was not

Conway, Paris, 30th July 1771, 374; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 56.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Mairobert 1775, 97. "Ever since [the presentation of Mme du Barry], the Countess Dubarrè gives suppers, to which she invites the nobility and foreign ministers; it is asserted that she concludes her invitation with these words: *His Majesty will honour me with his company.*" Bécu 1777a, 47. The same idea of using the royal presence as the inducement to participate in the mistress's events is presented in e.g. TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 25th Apr. 1769, 56.

sufficient to support the Expences and honour of his Embassy, has had the Goodness to grant him an Addition of sixty thousand Livres a Year.¹⁰⁹¹

It should not be understood that the Ambassador received the considerable pecuniary advantages because Mme de Pompadour attended his Ball. Yet, it is remarkable that Lord Albemarle listed both the favourable attendance of Mme de Pompadour and the favours of Ferdinand VI together as marks of the Spanish ambassador's success. Lord Albemarle was certainly measuring the footing and position of the Spanish ambassador in the royal favour of the French king during a time when the tension in French and British foreign relations was rising, and the relationship between the Bourbons of France and Spain and their potential rapprochement with Austrian Habsburgs was starting to reshape the political alliances in Europe.¹⁰⁹² The favour and success of the Spanish ambassador was then noted and reported by the British ambassador as a way of estimating his standing in the French court and his access to the French king, which were considered to indicate changes in the relationships between the countries and even hint at the future plans of the French majesty.

Evidently, the royal mistresses' favour and royal favour were inseparably interconnected, and in fact, the favour of a royal mistress was in many cases regarded or represented as an extension of royal favour. A royal mistress's favour produced invitations to her social events: inclusion that potentially produced networks or even direct access to the king. On the other hand, through inclusion and exclusion, the royal mistress could introduce those courtiers to the king that she considered worthy, loyal, or useful: she could serve the interests of her clients and creatures through influencing the royal preference by controlling the social circle around him. This certainly caused some discord among the courtiers that did not get along with the royal mistress for one reason or another.¹⁰⁹³

There was also a difference between private and public social events. In the French court and especially in relation to the French king, there was no such thing as a private affair. He was a public figure in a court that intermixed political affairs in personal networks and social arenas – in fact, everything in relation to the king was a public matter that had some political importance. As the royal mistress was connected to the utterly public king, she herself, as his extension, was a public figure as well. Thus, each and every social event organised by the royal mistress was to some extent a public (as known) event that potentially had

¹⁰⁹¹ TNA, SP 78/249, Albemarle to Sir Thomas Robinson, Paris, Wednesday 22nd May 1754, 246–247. Most likely referring to Jaime Masones de Lima y Sotomayor, conde de Montalvo, Spanish Ambassador to France between 1752–1761.

¹⁰⁹² In the War of Austrian Succession, France had allied with Spain against Britain and Austria. Pacte de Famille (1743) tied together the interest of Bourbons in France and Spain. However, after the war, there was a rapprochement between France and Austria that brought about the Franco-Austrian Alliance between old enemies. In the Seven Years' War, France, Spain, and Austria united against Britain and her German allies. See, e.g. Black 2002, 159, 164, 171, 174, 176; Black 2004a, 107–108; Zysberg 2002, 216–219, 224, 247–249; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 123, 128.

¹⁰⁹³ See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 126, 131–132; Fauques 1759, 176, 179; Fauques 1766b, 107, 116–117, 123; Mairobert 1775, 153–154; Bécu 1777a, 131; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 37; TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430.

political meaning or significance. Still, there were social events that were less public than others, that were less formal, and that were restricted to a smaller circle of intimate friends.¹⁰⁹⁴ The advantage of attending the events of a more private nature, such as private suppers, related first and foremost to the opportunities for more easy and informal access to the royal ear. The public spectacles and entertainments that were grand events staged for wider audiences (that is, access to the spectacle was open to the whole courtly society or even wider audiences outside the royal court) were quite a different matter.

The royal journeys, for example, were an established custom with an important public aspect. The king traveled with his court, but not with all of his court. The privilege of deciding the participants in the royal journeys was a great favour from the king, and a great opportunity to use the power of inclusion and exclusion that the eighteenth-century courtiers and courtly commentators did not leave unnoticed.¹⁰⁹⁵

The journeys were important not only because during the journeys the court surrounding the king was significantly smaller than when residing at Versailles, and consequently, the courtiers had better opportunities for meeting their majesty and distinguishing themselves in the royal eyes.¹⁰⁹⁶ A royal journey was also a public spectacle, and as such inclusion in it carried a significant meaning. The courtly society was a society that functioned on the premise of the royal notice, and therefore it was characterised by continual observation of the royal favour and its alterations. In such an environment, even the tiniest marks of royal notice carried meaning and significance that could turn into a position of influence and power – or lead to social or political nonentity. Inclusion in the royal presence, no matter due to whoever's mediation, was understood as a mark of royal favour, and the more public the mark the better. The royal favour and the public marks of it were the premise that made a courtier potentially interesting to all those who sought patronage, support, protection, influence, or cooperation that radiated from the throne. That is why inclusion in the royal journeys and other public entertainments and spectacles was so necessary, followed and reported so keenly by the courtiers as well as wider audiences, and why exclusion was considered so mortifying – even politically devastating.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 37–38; Fauques 1758a, 44; Fauques 1766a, 52–53; Poisson 1766a, 25; Poisson 1766b, 104; Poisson 1766c, 25; Poisson 1766d, 108; Mairobert 1775, 108–109, 150–151, 300; Bécu 1777a, 63, 126; Bécu 1777b, 332.

¹⁰⁹⁵ See, e.g. “Madame de Mailly and Mademoiselle [Mademoiselle de Nesle, Pauline Félicité de Mailly, future Marquise de Vintimille and mistress to Louis XV] hold their Ground, and none are admitted to La Muette but those they name.” TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16; Mairobert 1775, 153–154; Bécu 1777a, 131.

¹⁰⁹⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 175; Fauques 1766b, 115–116; Mairobert 1775, 124, 125–126, 153–154; Bécu 1777a, 87, 89, 90, 131; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIV. From Orford to Mann, Calais, 8th Oct. 1769, 50–51; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313–314; TNA, SP 78/220, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 6th/17th Jan. 1738, Most private, 16.

¹⁰⁹⁷ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 189–190; Bécu 1777a, 174; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXL. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 11th May 1769, 36–37; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 30th Apr 1769, 66–67; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to

For example, Mairobert presented the exclusion of Comtesses de Brionne and d’Egmont, and Duchesse de Gramont from the royal journeys both as a great dishonour and mortification but also as the beginning of the end of the favour of Duc de Choiseul. First, the ladies were excluded from the journeys, and Duc de Choiseul was soon to follow them into their public omission, and finally, to the humiliating fall from the royal favour and position in the government and court.¹⁰⁹⁸

The spectacles, journeys, and suppers that the royal mistresses organised also served the purpose of show. Especially the suppers and spectacles organised for ambassadors served to highlight the magnificence and wealth of the whole court. The mistress functioned thus as an extension of the royal magnificence that incorporated the splendour of the whole realm.¹⁰⁹⁹

In the case of royal mistresses’ entertainments, the justification of their use of power and influence was not often discussed. With this, I do not mean that the diversions of a royal mistress did not provoke discussion – in fact, this discussion about the royal mistress’s diversions could, and did, take on politically significant tones. As explained in section 2.2, organising diversions was one of the most important functions of a royal mistress. The royal mistresses organised entertainments, and their existence in the royal court was justified through their role as organisers of diversions. The justifiableness of entertainments and spectacles themselves was furthermore discussed in relation to i) excess of entertainments, as too many insignificant entertainments that left the political business uncared for and/or that caused too great expenses; ii) control or domination of the king’s ear; or iii) the quality of the royal entertainments that the royal mistresses organised. The first point was already discussed in section 3.7.5. The second point relates to access to the king and control of royal sociability. When analysing royal sociability from a different angle, Bernard Hours has demonstrated that the management of royal privacy and intimacy, especially in relation to *petits soupers* and royal journeys (particularly to Marly), was an intentional way used by Louis XV in order to control his court and to strengthen his own position as the master of his court.¹¹⁰⁰ However, in the discourses on the royal mistresses the social events around the majesty were first and foremost connected to the royal mistress instead of the royal will. Certainly, as previously explained, the debates about the royal mistresses are not a source that can tell us much about the royal decision-making. Rather, they tell us a lot about the contemporary reaction to royal decision – in this particular case, reactions to the changing practices regarding royal intimacy that Hours illustrated. For sure, in the representations of royal mistresses’ entertainments, there are traces of criticism and discontent originating from courtly circles – especially from those

Newcastle, Paris, 2nd July 1738, *Most Private*, 276–277; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, *Very Secret & Confidential*, 60–61. The diplomatic descriptions of the journeys usually contain a detailed list of the persons who had enjoyed the honour of supping or playing cards with the king.

¹⁰⁹⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 123–124, 153–154; Bécu 1777a, 88, 131.

¹⁰⁹⁹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/283, Harcourt to Rochford, Compiègne, 14th Aug. 1771, 63–64.

¹¹⁰⁰ Hours 2002, 89–93, 112, 114–127, 156–158, 277–279.

circles that aspired to inclusion but failed. More importantly, the image of the mistress as the organiser, if not controller, of royal sociability had further significance. Such presentations put the king himself in a rather passive position and stressed the mistress as the gatekeeper to the royal presence, which gained further significance in relation to the formation of the political will in the person of the king, as will be discussed further in section 4.2.3.

The third point regarding the quality of entertainments relates more than anything to the social rank and status of the royal mistress and her quality in relation to the king. For example, Mme du Barry's entertainments were repeatedly disqualified as vulgar.¹¹⁰¹ Such a presentation highlighted the social distance between the royal mistress and the king that essentially was not considered appropriate, which made the particular mistress and all her actions unjustified.

Even though all three above-mentioned points could be used to dismantle the justification for the royal mistresses' existence – or even the justification for the whole practice of keeping a mistress – the royal entertainments remained a field that was under the power and influence of the royal mistress.

4.2.2.2 Protecting people

The second two fields of courtly activity where the royal mistresses' power or influence were generally accepted as justified related to protection, or more accurately, to the protection of arts, letters, and sciences (patronage), and protection of people (charity). These two fields also partly overlapped. Therefore, they will be discussed together in this section, starting with the meanings of patronage.

The patronage that the most important courtly women offered to artists, writers, thinkers, *men of letters*, and scientists of various sorts was a pronounced part of eighteenth-century British and French political culture. For example, as discussed earlier in section 4.1.3, many commentators considered the moment when artists and scientists flocked to court the favour of the royal mistress to be a mark of her established position in the court:

Mais ce qui certifie peut-être plus positivement le fait [the increasing influence of Mme du Barry at Court], ce furent les hommages que les Gens de lettres lui rendirent à leur tour.¹¹⁰²

The role of a patroness was then a function in which the royal mistress became visible to the audiences outside the royal court as well. Furthermore, the role of a patroness was an established role belonging to the long tradition of courtly or princely patronage.¹¹⁰³ In fact, as will be demonstrated in this section, the patronage channeled through the royal mistress could be understood as an

¹¹⁰¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 206–208, 221; Bécu 1777b, 195–197, 217; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21.

¹¹⁰² Mairobert 1775, 113. “But a still stronger testimony of this matter [increasing influence of Mme du Barry at Court], was the homage paid her by the men of letters.” Bécu 1777a, 71.

¹¹⁰³ See, e.g. Chartier 1995, 25–42; Wellman 2013.

extension of princely patronage. Thus, it must be asked, what was the meaning of princely patronage for arts, letters, and sciences in eighteenth-century British and French political cultures, and what qualified a royal mistress to participate in the process of distributing such patronage?

First, I must note that the eighteenth-century writers and commentators were not very specific about the source of the pensions or other rewards that the various artists, writers, and scientists received. The question concerning the ultimate payer is of little significance in this section, since the meanings of the royal mistresses' expenses were discussed previously in section 3.5.2. Neither did the eighteenth-century writers concern themselves with this question: the merit – and the honour of the name *patroness* – was given to the royal mistress who guided the possible clients to the king, and whose mediation was presented as essential in the process of seeking and distributing royal patronage. In general, the artists, *men of letters*, and scientists sought the *royal patronage* through the medium of a mistress or a queen.¹¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, in this section we shall discuss the patronage that the royal mistresses offered to the arts, letters, and sciences as mediated royal patronage – if not explicitly defined otherwise.

It is obvious that the task of protection of the arts and sciences was the mission of high and noble ladies of the court, especially that of queens and royal mistresses: all queens and royal mistresses of eighteenth-century France and Britain were estimated in relation to their interest in arts, letters, and sciences and their protection of them.¹¹⁰⁵ In this function, the role of a queen and that of a royal mistress overlapped. During times when there was both a queen and a mistress in the court, this could certainly cause tensions.¹¹⁰⁶ For example, Queen Caroline was presented as an eager patroness and a jealous wife, who wished to dwarf her rival's, Mrs. Howard's, efforts to secure any patronage for those who sought royal patronage through her medium.¹¹⁰⁷ For the courtly ladies, there was considerable contest for the position of a patroness of arts, letters, and sciences,

¹¹⁰⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 67; Fauques 1766b, 38; Howard 1824a, Dean Swift to Mrs. Howard, Twickenham, 9th July 1727, 248–251; Hervey 1848a, 140; Howard 1824b, Dean Swift to Lady Betty Germaine, 8th Jan. 1733, 45–53; Walpole 1818, 61–62.

¹¹⁰⁵ Most comments concern Queen Caroline, Mme de Pompadour, and Mme du Barry. Regarding Queen Caroline, see, e.g. Chesterfield's, Tindal's and Smollet's presentation of her character in Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield," 11; Walpole 1818, 85. Regarding Mme de Pompadour, see, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 64–73; Anon. 1760, 144–149; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXVII. To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 64–67; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXVII, a la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 109–111. Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXVII, a la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 190–111; Pierre 1903, 114; Pierre 1902a, 155. Regarding Mme du Barry, see, e.g. Maiorbert 1775, 113–114, 130; Bécu 1777a, 71–73, 97. Mrs. Howard, on the other hand, was famed as a mistress who wished to protect her friends, but failed. See, e.g. Walpole 1844a, LETTER CCCXXI. From Orford to Mann, Berkeley Square, 13th Jan. 1780, 209; Walpole 1818, 61–62; Howard 1824b, Dean Swift to Lady Betty Germaine, 8th Jan. 1733, 45–53; Howard 1824b, From Lady Betty Germaine to Dean Swift, 8th Feb. 1732–3, 54–57; Hervey 1848a, 140, 356. Marie Leszczyńska was presented to have dedicated her life to religion, implying that she had discarded worldly worries, as e.g. politics and patronage. See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 14; Poisson 1766c, 13–14; Walpole 1848b, 240; Poisson 1772, LETTER X. To the marchioness of Blagni, 21.

¹¹⁰⁶ See, e.g. Orr 2002, 18, 20; Corp 2002, 55–56; Wellman 2013, 362; Hours 2002, 180–181.

¹¹⁰⁷ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 61–64; Hervey 1848a, 101.

and for the accompanying honour – and one not without its political meanings¹¹⁰⁸ during the century of Enlightenment and rise of public opinion, as will be discussed after perusing the question of why the role of a mediator of royal patronage was assigned to the queens and/or royal mistresses.

The function of a patroness fell to the queens and royal mistresses for many reasons. Firstly, interest in and protection of especially arts was related to the understanding of taste and sensibility that were regarded as feminine characteristics.¹¹⁰⁹ Secondly, the scope of arts and sciences overlapped with the field of entertainments, which was an established realm of the royal mistresses. The idea of *arts* covered painting and sculpture, but it also encompassed all kinds of other crafts. In their function as the hostesses of courtly entertainments, the royal mistresses commissioned (or made the king commission) various sorts of spectacles (for example, fireworks, theatrical or musical pieces) and the necessary stages for these performances with their decorations¹¹¹⁰. Furthermore, as explained in section 3.5.1, the royal mistresses were important consumers of all kinds of ornaments, accessories, jewellery, apparel, furnishings, and apartments.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the role of a patroness, or mediator of royal patronage, fell to the royal mistresses and queens because it was a part of the duty¹¹¹¹ of the impersonal monarch or monarchy that the personal king was not necessarily interested in. Louis XV, George I, and George II were all presented as monarchs who were not interested in arts, sciences, or literary works.¹¹¹² Fauques explicitly stated that Louis XV was not interested in conversing with *men of*

¹¹⁰⁸ On courtly patronage and culture policies as the queen consorts' means to gain influence in the British court, see, e.g. Orr 2002, 5, 12–14, 29–31; Corp 2002, 55–56, 64. Regarding French queens' patronage, see, e.g. Wellman 2013, 6, 13–14, 17, 60, 98–99, 362; Hours 2002, 180. On the mistresses' attempts to gain influence through patronage, see, e.g. Wellman 2013, 6, 13–14, 17, 113, 185, 362.

¹¹⁰⁹ See, e.g. Ash 1775a, “delicacy”; “feminine”; Barlow 1772a, “delicacy”, “delicately”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “femme. homme”. Discussed also in section 2.3.

¹¹¹⁰ See, e.g. Walpole 1833b, LETTER CC. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 3rd May 1749, 76; Fauques 1766b, 106–107, 154–155; Poisson 1766b, 103; Poisson 1766d, 108–109; Poisson 1772, LETTER LXV. To the dutchess d'Étrées, 1751, 147.

¹¹¹¹ See, e.g. “La libéralité qu'elle inspira au Roi en leur faveur, est un trait qui embélira toujours son histoire. Toujours on la louera de lui avoir appris à connoître un de ses principaux devoirs, qui est de récompenser le mérite. On reconnoitra ce qu'on a reconnu jusqu'ici, que l'honneur principal de cette conduite lui appartient de plein droit; puisque tout semble accréditer le soupçon, que sans elle, on se seroit vainement attendu à quelque chose de pareil.” Fauques 1759, 139. “The liberalities with which she inspired the king, were a merit both to her and himself, in whole station of royalty, they were but a duty of which the reminding him was, in fact, right loyal service.” Fauques 1758b, 69; Fauques 1766b, 38. In literature, see, e.g. Beales 2006, 503; Roche 1999, 266, 346, 352–353, 460–464, 509, 512; Hont 2006, 382, 384, 407; Henshall 1992, 152; Chaouche 2008, 396; Fitzpatrick 2007, 135, 141–144; Shennan 2007, 105.

¹¹¹² Usually not explicitly expressed, but implied when presenting the monarch as a man interested solely in hunting (as Louis XV, see, e.g. See, e.g. Walpole 1845b, 239–240; Fauques 1759, 175; Fauques 1766b, 116; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne 18th July 1738, 289; Fauques 1758a, 12; Poisson 1766c, 171; Poisson 1772, LETTER X. To the marchioness of Blagni, 21.), or money (as George II, see, e.g. Stanhope 1799b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” George the Second, by Chesterfield, 4–5; Walpole 1818, 74, 85; Walpole 1822b, 455; Waldegrave 1821, 7.).

letters.¹¹¹³ Horace Walpole deemed that “George [II] had no respect for them [learned men] or their works”¹¹¹⁴. This indifference of the kings was excusable since as monarchs their immediate concerns related to the political rule of the realm. Thus, it fell to the queens and royal mistresses to endorse the arts and sciences.

This function was not insignificant. Neither was it completely separated from the political management of the state. As stated, it was part of the duty of the monarch to nurture arts and sciences as part of the grandeur of the monarchy and the realm. Deciding on patronage was also one of the most important royal prerogatives, both in Britain and in France.¹¹¹⁵ Fauques uncovered the many functions and meanings of the arts, letters, and sciences to the monarchy and to the nation. According to her, the generous support and protection for the arts, letters, and sciences was an honourable merit of the monarch – and of the mistress who reminded the monarch of this duty of his.¹¹¹⁶ The protected artists adorned the nation and made it desirable for foreigners to come and visit with their money.¹¹¹⁷ The artists were also presented as irreplaceable, since they produced such objects of luxury that had become a necessity, and consequently that would be bought from abroad unless produced at home:

[...] celles [articles of arts and crafts] qu’une magnificence outrée, un luxe excessif a rendu nécessaires. Où en seroit un país où les besoins se seroient ainsi multipliés, sans qu’il trouvat chès soi, les moiens de les satisfaire?¹¹¹⁸

The arts, letters, and sciences thus supported the monarchy and the nation. They underlined the glory and grandeur (as well as the merit, honour, and duty) of the monarch and monarchy and they paraded and advanced the prosperity of the nation. For all these reasons, Fauques did not take lightly the function of a royal mistress as a patroness of arts, letters, and sciences. Instead, she called it a *duty* or *right* and *loyal service* to the king and to the nation.¹¹¹⁹ Decidedly, it was not the mistress’s duty to distribute the royal patronage, but to remind the king of his duty to protect the arts, letters, and sciences – and if needed, help him to fulfil this duty.

Thus, the function of a patroness was constructed as not only accepted and justified, but also as an expected duty of a royal mistress. Fauques even connected the royal mistress’s function as a patroness directly to idea of public utility, namely to the claim that the mistress facilitating the development of arts, letters, and sciences participated in the production of general good in the realm.

¹¹¹³ Fauques 1758b, 67; Fauques 1766b, 37–38.

¹¹¹⁴ Walpole 1818, 85.

¹¹¹⁵ See, e.g. Major 1994, 335, 357; Henshall 1992, 17, 154; Spellman 1998, 41; Reitan 1966.

¹¹¹⁶ Fauques 1759, 139; Fauques 1758b, 69; Fauques 1766b, 38.

¹¹¹⁷ “[arts and artists] qui embéllissent un país & y atirent une utile foule d’étrangers” Fauques 1759, 141. “[...] public decorations that illustrate a country, and draw a profitable resort of foreigners to it; [...],” Fauques 1758b, 71–72.

¹¹¹⁸ Fauques 1759, 141. “[...] those articles, of which the prevalence of luxury having made a kind of necessary of life, they would, if not to be found at home, be sought for abroad, to the detrimental extraction of specie from the kingdom.” Fauques 1766b, 58.

¹¹¹⁹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 139, 141; Fauques 1758b, 69, 71–72; Fauques 1766b, 38, 58.

In this sense, the whole practice of keeping royal mistresses could be justified through their role as patroness that was furthermore defined as supportive of the monarch, monarchy, and nation.

This function, however, was not without its weaknesses. There were three important trains of thought that could be used in order to dismantle the justification of the royal mistress as a patroness, as well as her use of power or influence in the function of mediating royal patronage: i) discourse of money, ii) representations of her abilities and character, and iii) antithetic arrangement of ideas concerning the traditional form of princely patronage and emerging ideas concerning rising public debate and public opinion.

First things first. Money, as demonstrated in chapter 3, was a problematic point in relation to the justification of royal mistresses. During the eighteenth century, the royal mistresses were increasingly regarded – and rejected – as *too expensive*. Yet simultaneously, their function as a medium of royal patronage was rather generally accepted even though it increased their cost to the king and to the royal purse. Once again, Mme de Pompadour gives us an ample example. As I claimed in section 3.2, an unjustified mistress was one that amassed fortunes. Instead, a justified mistress-patroness was one that used them:

Do you know that I [Mme de Pompadour] have bought the hotel d'Evreux? [...] But I am going to pull it down, and to build another more to my mind. The folly of building is everywhere laughed at: I again approve vastly that same folly, which gives bread to so many wretched. My delight is not to contemplate gold, but to diffuse it.¹¹²⁰

Using money was in the essence of a noble lifestyle, but it was not solely because the money was used to display one's rank. Nobility, as explained earlier in section 3.4, was expected to use money to show their magnificence, which also had a connection to generosity and benevolence. Money was meant to be used, in order to create a sense of rank, of magnificence, and of generosity, but also in order to create prosperity and employment in their community and in the kingdom. This explanation, especially as it was published as late as in the 1770s, was part of the debate concerning *public utility*, and the significance and roles of different estates and ranks in the *common good* or *bien public*. Within the frame of the idea of the kingdom as a single body composed of differing specialised parts (estates and ranks) that all functioned towards the good of the whole, the traditional role of the nobility and high society was to spend their money.¹¹²¹ Hence, the money that the royal mistresses channeled to the arts, letters, and sciences was money that was used to enhance domestic trade. By using the money she was doing her part for the general good of the realm. The justification of the royal mistresses' use of power or influence regarding the royal purse rested upon the differentiation of collecting money and using it *usefully*.

However, as discussed in section 3.5.1, the money could not be spent on whatever. The same idea was incorporated in patronage as well. Patronage, or mediation of it, produced wealth and grandeur for the monarch, monarchy, and

¹¹²⁰ Poisson 1772, LETTER XXXVIII. To the countess of Brézé, 1748, 84.

¹¹²¹ See, e.g. Roche 1999, 266, 346, 352–353, 509; Hont 2006, 394.

nation (and for the mistress, of course) only if the artist, writer, or scientist and his/her product were deemed worthy. The royal mistress's right to use her power or influence in the distribution of royal patronage was easily contested if her choices for protection were presented as worthless, base, or dishonourable. Mairobert chose this technique when demonstrating Mme du Barry's patronage.

Madame Dubarri prodiguoit l'argent jusqu'aux plus mauvais Poètes, assez vils pour lui adresser des Vers. [...] Les Acteurs, Chanteurs, Danseurs, tout avoit part à ses largesses.¹¹²²

Over and over again, he described the artistic pieces that Mme du Barry supported and protected as unworthy.¹¹²³ This, of course, was a technique that supported his greater narrative about a mistress of a low origin.¹¹²⁴ Fauques chose this technique as well when presenting the life of Mme de Pompadour:

Si elle [Mme de Pompadour] soutint les arts dont la réalité marche à l'égal de leur beauté, elle fut toujours disposée à favoriser ceux qu'une élégance *feminine* ou une vaine curiosité retiennent à leurs gages.¹¹²⁵

When illustrating the worthless objects of royal mistresses' protection, both authors also defined the forms and modes of arts that they considered worthy/unworthy. Not surprisingly, the classical arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture can be found among the incontestable *solid* arts, generally alongside music, as well as the unspecified works of equally unspecified *men of letters*.¹¹²⁶ While base arts and objects of art were defined in terms of fashion,¹¹²⁷ or were those closely related to the world of theatre¹¹²⁸ that was already burdened with eighteenth-century moralistic discourses¹¹²⁹.

There was also another option for denying the royal mistresses the right to use power or influence in matters relating to royal patronage. This technique did not attack the objects of patronage. Instead, by questioning her capacities and abilities in distinguishing worthy objects, it attacked the distributor herself. Which brings us to the second of the possible ways of discursively challenging

¹¹²² Mairobert 1775, 273. "Madam Dubarrè, in the mean while, lavished money on the most wretched scribblers, who were mean enough to address their verses to her: [...] Players, singers, and dancers had all a share in her liberality." Bécu 1777b, 290–291.

¹¹²³ As for example, indecent comic opera *La Vérité dans le Vin* Mairobert 1775, 206–208; *In Wine there is Truth*, Bécu 1777b, 195–197. Or country dance *Fricassée* that was popular among the lowering sorts, Mairobert 1775, 221; Bécu 1777b, 217.

¹¹²⁴ See also section 4.1.4.

¹¹²⁵ Fauques 1759, 142. "If the liberal and solid arts were countenanced by her, she did not less favor those frivolous ones, [...]" Fauques 1758b, 72–73; Fauques 1766b, 59.

¹¹²⁶ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 130; Bécu 1777a, 97; Fauques 1759, 140; Fauques 1758b, 69–70; Fauques 1766b, 38, 55. Anonymous writer of *The history of the Marchioness de Pompadour* dedicated great attention to the objects of Mme de Pompadour's patronage as well. He did not only recollect the worthy forms of art (painting, sculpture, architecture, music), but also gave model examples of the most worthy works of *men of letters* (e.g. Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, Mably's *Negotiations*). Anon. 1760, 148–149.

¹¹²⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 142; Fauques 1758b, 72–73; Fauques 1766b, 59; Mairobert 1775, 273; Bécu 1777b, 290–291.

¹¹²⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 273; Bécu 1777b, 290–291.

¹¹²⁹ See, e.g. Berlanstein 1997; Berlanstein 1994; van Horn Melton 2009, 164–165.

the royal mistresses' role and function in the process of distributing royal patronage. The French writers and critics of the mistresses' use of power or influence in patronage utilised this rhetorical technique rather rarely. Mairobert applied it, and his English translator further represented it eloquently in the form of an oxymoron when describing Mme du Barry as a patroness of writers as "illiterate Urania"¹¹³⁰. In Greek mythology, Urania was the muse of astronomy and closely connected to philosophy. However, the analogy was most likely chosen because *Urania* was also connected to the heavenly aspect of Aphrodite (the goddess of love and sensual pleasures), *Aphrodite Urania*.¹¹³¹ Here, the mistress was obviously constructed as an unworthy patroness due to her lack of ability to read: how would she be able to distinguish between a worthy and unworthy piece of literature if she could not read? Further, the allusion of illiteracy also indicated that she could not have had any earlier experience of worthy literature or possibly any education whatsoever.

As for the British court commentators, and especially the critics of Queen Caroline, they endorsed this alternative way of crushing the legitimacy of the use of power and influence in the dispensation of royal patronage. As the most explicit among the critics, Horace Walpole rejected the claims that Queen Caroline could have been an exemplary patroness of arts, sciences, and especially of letters – and he rejected them because Caroline (as he presented her) was lacking in ability and capacity. Horace Walpole stated that "her majesty's own taste was not very exquisite, nor did he [George II] allow her time to cultivate any studies."¹¹³² and that "her learning I have said was superficial; her knowledge of languages as little accurate."¹¹³³ Such a lack in abilities and capacities would instantly deny the justification of a queen or a mistress as a proper patroness.

The function of distributing the royal patronage fell to the queens and royal mistresses by virtue of their being noble (duty to distribute wealth) and women (naturally more sensible and tasteful than men; duty to assist the king their husband/lover). By the same token, the technique that contested their ability and capacity to fulfil this function was far more severe than the technique of contesting their justification adopted by Mairobert and Fauques. The technique that denied the French royal mistresses' justification for participation in the distribution of royal patronage because of their choice of unworthy objects of course hinted that the distributor herself was unworthy or did not have what it took to distinguish between a worthy and unworthy piece. But stating it openly, as for example Horace Walpole did in relation to Queen Caroline, had far greater meanings. It was about showing her moral character. The function or role of a patroness was traditionally accepted as being under the power and influence of a queen (and of a royal mistress). Yet, by presenting a description of a queen or a mistress that had no sense or taste when distributing patronage, the writers could

¹¹³⁰ Bécu 1777a, 72. "Uranie, qui ne savoit pas lire." Mairobert 1775, 114.

¹¹³¹ See, e.g. Bailey 1730, "Urania"; Barclay 1774, "Urania"; Ash 1775b, "Urania"; Dyche 1756b, "Uranie".

¹¹³² Walpole 1818, 85.

¹¹³³ Walpole 1818, 87.

also indirectly question if she could have sense or taste in other traditional functions or roles either.

Questioning the mistress's or queen's justification of the distribution of patronage on the grounds of her lacking capacities was significant, because it was not a question concerning only sensibility or taste. Sensitivity in matters relating to good taste could be, and was, regarded as a characteristic that came naturally more easily in women than in men. This idea also justified a royal mistress's or queen's participation in the distribution of royal patronage, as mentioned earlier. Accordingly, many other justifiable functions and roles of a royal mistress were explained through her femininity, or her assumed feminine nature. On many occasions, her justification (both of her existence and place beside the king, and of her right to use any kind of influence or power) was based on her character, abilities, and virtues, which were understood as essentially feminine. That is to say, her femininity legitimated certain functions and roles (for example, those of hostess, supporter, advisor, and patroness) that included the use of influence or power. Challenging the characteristics and virtues that were considered *naturally* feminine, as for example taste and sensibility, was simultaneously a challenge against her justification in all roles and functions that were justified through feminine attributes.

But there is more. As the examples provided by Horace Walpole clearly demonstrate, productive patronage was not based entirely on some kind of feminine intuition. It required education, knowledge, learning, and time. Accordingly, a patronage deemed successful not only demonstrated the patroness's taste and sensibility, but also her knowledge and reason. Vice versa, a failed patronage was a demonstration of i) lack of natural inclinations of taste and sense, ii) lack of education, or iii) lack of wits, reason, and/or knowledge. A queen or a mistress failing in her role and function as patroness due to her want of knowledge, reason, taste, and sensibility was not only a failed patroness but simultaneously a probable failure in every other function as well – and not only in those functions and roles that were based solely on the understandings and interpretations of the two sexes and their mutually complementary natural characteristics.

This lack was the more important, since queens and royal mistresses served in roles and functions that were after all considered to have direct political significance as, for example, supporters of domestic trade, mediators of the royal ear (as in the previous section), or as political advisors of the king (as will be discussed in section 4.2.3). All these roles were very sensitive regarding gender, or represented gendered characteristics, virtues, and capacities, because they existed on the boundaries of the *public* or *political* government of the realm. As demonstrated in the beginning of this chapter, during the eighteenth century in both countries legitimate political decision-making and use of power was ever more closely connected to the official and formal places from which women were categorically excluded. That, alongside traditional and cultural understandings concerning the capacities of the two sexes that were considered *natural* (or, normatively right), made high politics, political decision-making, government,

and administration the realm of men. Political decision-making was further evaluated and regulated through ideals and norms that were regarded as essentially and *naturally* masculine, as for example bravery, sturdiness, independence, resolution, and rationality, and, of course, enforced by the fear of opposite attributes that were regarded as *naturally* feminine, or by the fear of effeminacy itself.¹¹³⁴ But, to return to the point: the royal mistresses (as well as the queens) participated in the courtly functions in roles where symbolically gendered boundaries of political decision making became blurred. That is why the representation of their character (especially in respect to feminine qualities, capacities, and virtues) was utilised in the debate on the legitimacy of their actions.

Consequently, this produced contesting and even contradictory illustrations of the character of the queens and royal mistresses. Especially the presentations of Queen Caroline and Mme de Pompadour as patronesses of arts, letters, and sciences provided two cases of contradictory presentation. In different texts and illustrations¹¹³⁵ the Ladies were pictured both as renowned and esteemed patronesses as well as failed ones. As much as Horace Walpole denounced the Queen's abilities and capacities as a patroness, other authors, memoirists, and writers of letters acknowledged her learning, skills, and abilities that justified her role as patroness as well as her right to use power and influence in matters relating to the distribution of royal patronage to various arts, letters, and sciences. For example, Chesterfield's¹¹³⁶, Tindal's¹¹³⁷ and Smollet's¹¹³⁸ presentations of her character – certainly, after her death – were approving, praising her sagacity¹¹³⁹, talents¹¹⁴⁰, education and personal development (reading and conversing with men of letters),¹¹⁴¹ and her generosity in patronage¹¹⁴². Lord Chesterfield implied that her understanding in the field of patronage surpassed even her greatest failing, her otherwise dominant rapacity: "She loved money, but could occasionally part with it, especially to men of

¹¹³⁴ See section 3.7.4.

¹¹³⁵ Occasionally even in the same texts, as for example in Fauques' texts concerning Mme de Pompadour.

¹¹³⁶ Philip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield, who was friends with Mrs. Howard, and consequently not altogether on good terms with Queen Caroline.

¹¹³⁷ Most likely Nicolas Tindal (1687-1774), translator and historian.

¹¹³⁸ Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), renowned Scottish author.

¹¹³⁹ Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Tindal, 11; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Smollet, 11.

¹¹⁴⁰ Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Tindal, 11; Stanhope 1779a, [Memoirs of the year 1737], 158-159.

¹¹⁴¹ Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Tindal, 11; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Smollet, 11; Stanhope 1779a, [Memoirs of the year 1737], 158-159.

¹¹⁴² Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Queen Caroline, by Tindal, 11.

learning, whose patronage she affected.”¹¹⁴³ Of course, obituaries were commonly praising, here serving the point of highlighting eighteenth-century norms and ideals regarding royal, noble, or courtly persons.

The polarity in the presentations demonstrates that the role and function of a patroness was i) a matter of contest, and ii) a matter that was public. Which leads us to the last point in contesting the justification of a royal mistress or a queen as patroness (and her power and influence in the function of mediating royal patronage): publicness, public images, public debate, public opinion, and the changing meanings of traditional forms of princely patronage. This technique of contesting the queen’s or royal mistress’s legitimacy as a patroness did not touch on her abilities. Instead it attacked her motivation as well as the motivation of protected artists, writers, and scientist (and those seeking protection). Thus, it questioned the legitimacy of the traditional form of princely patronage and the cultural products produced under it.

Let’s start by examining the applicants seeking protection. The artists, writers, and scientists that sought patronage through the medium of a royal mistress (or a queen) endeavoured to please her with their works as well as with their praises. In this discourse, the royal mistresses were celebrated in words and pictures by the artists and writers who sought the pecuniary protection that she could grant them. Commonly, the mistresses were celebrated as Goddesses and Muses¹¹⁴⁴, for example as *Minerva*, Roman goddess of wisdom and war,¹¹⁴⁵ *Urania*,¹¹⁴⁶ *Juno*, patron goddess of Rome who was presented as the counsellor and protector of community and women,¹¹⁴⁷ *Venus*, Roman goddess of love and prosperity (obvious analogy for a mistress),¹¹⁴⁸ and *Pallas Athene*, Greek goddess of wisdom and war¹¹⁴⁹.

For artists and scientist, courtly patronage was a traditional way to ensure livelihood (and a certain amount of freedom that the universities, academies, or guilds could not offer with their internal politics and restrictions), as Roger Chartier has demonstrated.¹¹⁵⁰ Yet, many commentators, especially the writers of the French royal mistresses’ biographies, condemned this traditional practice by pronouncing it as *prostitution* of pens.¹¹⁵¹ Such a statement could be found especially in the texts of writers that were critical of royal mistresses and who sought to legitimise their own presentation, and consequently, to delegitimise rival presentations on the royal mistresses as well as the praises that the mistresses received from the various artists, writers, and scientists.

Undeniably, the debate concerning the patronage that the royal mistresses offered or channeled was not solely about money and livelihood. Of course, it

¹¹⁴³ Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11.

¹¹⁴⁴ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 114, 130; Bécu 1777a, 72, 97, 273; Bécu 1777b, 290–291.

¹¹⁴⁵ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 130; Bécu 1777a, 97; Anon. 1760, 145–146.

¹¹⁴⁶ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 114; Bécu 1777a, 72. Although, this particular use was ironic.

¹¹⁴⁷ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 230–231.

¹¹⁴⁸ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 230–231.

¹¹⁴⁹ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 144–145.

¹¹⁵⁰ Chartier 1995, 35–36.

¹¹⁵¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 114; Bécu 1777a, 72.

was based on the tradition of patronage of arts, letters, and sciences, where writers, scientists, and artists dedicated and presented their works to their patrons or potential patrons, whose favour they sought.¹¹⁵² In this sense, the great amount of presentations relating to the royal mistresses' patronage, as well as artists and writers seeking this patronage, demonstrate the continuity of that tradition.

Nonetheless, as is obvious from Horace Walpole's recollections, after the mid-eighteenth century the tradition of princely patronage was to face the challenge of the *public*:

Patronage of authors is an antiquated fashion, and at present means nothing. [...] The public favour is deemed a sufficient recompence;¹¹⁵³

The first three-quarters of the century was still a period when the continuity/discontinuity of traditional courtly patronage was not definite, and the increasing public debate and the buying power of wider audiences had not yet established their place. Simultaneously, it was also a period when the debate about patronage became also a debate about legitimacy through public opinion.

In the discursive contests for legitimacy, the discourse of patronage was transformed into a discourse on the legitimacy of cultural products. In this, the artists and writers working under (or for) patronage were delegitimised due to their dependency on their patrons. They had sold their talents, and thus were producing *partial* or biased and thus wholly unworthy products – mainly worthless flattery.¹¹⁵⁴

In contrast, writers, artists, and scientists without patronage could be presented as free and independent actors whose opinions were not biased by their dependency, and consequently, whose viewpoints were correct and legitimate. For example, both *Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1771) and Fauques' *The life of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (fourth edition, 1766) highlighted Rousseau as a worthy author because he declined the patronage that Mme de Pompadour offered him.¹¹⁵⁵ In this sense, *public opinion* was presented as a tribunal that impartially assessed the worth of cultural products. The traditional form of patronage may have lost its meaning as the markets for books and arts expanded, but it gained new – and political – meanings, when the buying public was considered the judge that legitimatised one viewpoint over another.

The courtly patronage of arts and sciences was then no longer solely about the livelihood of artists, writers, and scientists. Nor it was solely about the legitimacy of their respective cultural products. It was also a political contest over the control of public opinion. As I already discussed in the Introduction, the

¹¹⁵² Chartier 1995, 29–33.

¹¹⁵³ Walpole 1804a, CXXXVI. Patronage. 115.

¹¹⁵⁴ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 144–145; Mairobert 1775, 273; Bécu 1777b, 290; Fauques 1759, 10; Fauques 1766a, 9–10. Or, the writers could seek the favour of the mistress in order to circumvent the censorship of a book that was otherwise questionable, as was presented to have been the case of Chevalier de la Moliere. See, Mairobert 1775, 114; Bécu 1777a, 71–72.

¹¹⁵⁵ Poisson 1771a, LETTRE LXVII, a la Comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 109–111; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXVII. To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 64–67; Fauques 1766b, 156.

traditional elites participated in forming and manipulating public opinion as well. Concretely, this meant that the internal conflicts and pursuits of power of the courtiers and power blocks were moved from the court to the arena of public debate: into the print, gossip, song, caricature, and other modes communication feeding general discussion. The courtly circles supported the writers and printers in pushing through their agenda in the general discussion outside the royal court.¹¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the patronage that the royal mistresses offered was also their means to improve their own image in the eyes of publics within and outside the royal courts. It was a way to generate praise and positive images, especially as a benefactress and woman of good sense and taste. For example, Mairobert explained this when presenting the strife between Mme du Barry and Choiseuls:

En attendant [...], on fit entendre à Madame Dubarri qu'il falloit contrebalancer les Satyres [disseminated by the Choiseuls], qu'on lançoit contre elle, par les éloges qu'elle se feroit prodiguer d'ailleurs; qu'elle feroit bien d'accueillir les Muses & les Arts, dispensateur de la Renommée.¹¹⁵⁷

Thus, Mairobert revealed that Mme du Barry had an ulterior (and political) motive for her patronage: she wanted public praise and reputation.

With this in mind, let us return to the example mentioned earlier of Mme de Pompadour and the patronage that Rousseau declined. Fauques did not only emphasise Rousseau's worthiness as an author (because he refused the patronage of the royal mistress) but also revealed the (alleged) reasons of Mme de Pompadour for attaching this already renowned author to herself: it was "her project of adorning her character with the honor of protection and munificence to literary merit."¹¹⁵⁸

The patronage of arts, letters, and sciences was then understood as a tool that produced not only panegyrics but also *reputation*. But what kind of reputation? After all, the eighteenth century witnessed emerging ideals of enlightenment, philosophic and scientific conversation, and exercise of reason. Some of the high-standing and nobility wished to have a place in this world as well. For example, the century introduced new ideals to the rulers, as for example the idea of *enlightened despot* or *philosophical kingship* that highlighted strong (absolute) monarchy; the education, learning, knowledge, and understanding of the personal monarch; the monarch's willingness to impose reforms (especially fiscal and economic); and the common or general good as the greatest concern,

¹¹⁵⁶ There are two very good examples of this in relation to the royal mistresses. Firstly, the case of Mme de Pompadour and the campaign of *parti dévot* against her. See, e.g. Kaiser 1996, 1029–1034; Kaiser 1997, 366, 375; Darnton 2004, 104; Graham 2000, 65–70. Secondly, the contest between Mme du Barry and Duc de Choiseul (and his sister, Mme de Gramont), as presented by e.g. Mairobert. Regarding Mme du Barry, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 74, 114, 144; Bécu 1777a, 25–28, 40. On public debate in other rivalries, see, e.g. Bécu 1777a, 88; Bécu 1777a, 113; Bécu 1777b, 208; Mairobert 1775, 285–286.

¹¹⁵⁷ Mairobert 1775, 183. "In the mean while, [...] it was hinted to Madam Dubarrè, that she should counterbalance the satires that were levelled at her by praises from another quarter; that she would do well to court the attention of the Muses and Arts, who alone could bestow fame and reputation." Bécu 1777a, 165.

¹¹⁵⁸ Fauques 1766b, 156.

motivator, and mover of the nation and its monarch.¹¹⁵⁹ This ideal recurred especially in the French debates concerning the nature and origins of sovereignty, the constitution, and the legitimate use of power. Yet, it was not limited to French discourses as the title of *Philosopher King* became desirable and the eighteenth-century monarchs all over Europe strived to acquire it, the most famous cases being Frederick II of Prussia and Catherine II of Russia.¹¹⁶⁰ The ideal stressed the image of the rulers and decision-makers as not only strong and independent but also educated, rational, and knowledgeable. For example, the writer of the *Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1766) emphasised these ideals when defining the ideal monarch as one that was strong, independent (from the influence of others), capable of making decisions (resolute), compassionate, humane, just, willing to sacrifice his own happiness for the general good of his realm, and knowledgeable in history, practices, manners, and the nature of his realm, nation, and government.¹¹⁶¹

Neither were these ideals restricted to the kingship only. As the examples of Mme de Pompadour and Queen Caroline indicate, the reputation of being knowledgeable was desired by the queens and royal mistresses as well – and strived for:

She [Queen Caroline] possessed more learning than commonly falls to the share of her sex, and was every day endeavouring to increase it. Men of science were encouraged by her; she enjoyed their conversation, and wished to have a place among them. Philosophy and politics were her constant study, and she took a pride in shewing her superiority in both.¹¹⁶²

The patronage of arts, letters, and sciences was the route of mistresses and queens to the world of letters that reasserted their reputation and fame as knowledgeable. The image of a mistress as a great patroness of arts, letters, and sciences had its political meanings, as explained earlier, but it was also a value in itself, correlating with the cultural ideals of conversation, reason, education, understanding, and learning.

One of the easiest ways of contesting the royal mistress's or queen's reputation as knowledgeable was to reveal her motives for patronage. If the patroness was revealed to have an ulterior motive of gaining reputation, her patronage was immediately rendered illegitimate. After that, her patronage was considered merely a tool for manipulating the opinions of publics, not as a mark of her taste, sensibility, knowledge, or understanding. This was very much the case with Chesterfield's presentations of Queen Caroline,¹¹⁶³ Fauques' presentation of Mme de Pompadour,¹¹⁶⁴ and Mairobert's presentation of Mme du

¹¹⁵⁹ See, e.g. Beales 2006, 497–498, 511; Henshall 1992, 191–196; Tomaselli 2006, 11–12, 35; Wilson 2000, 108; Zysberg 2002, 442–443.

¹¹⁶⁰ See, e.g. Beales 2006, 504–509; Blanning 1990, 265–288; De Madariaga 1990, 289–311.

¹¹⁶¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 12–14, 71, 219–225; Poisson 1766c, 12–13, 71, 216–223; Poisson 1766b, 25–26, 110–111, 146, 150, 179–181; Poisson 1766d, 25–26, 115, 151, 156, 188.

¹¹⁶² Stanhope 1779a, [Memoirs of the year 1737], 158–159.

¹¹⁶³ See, e.g. Stanhope 1779a, [Memoirs of the year 1737], 158–159.

¹¹⁶⁴ Fauques 1759, 139; Fauques 1758b, 69; Fauques 1766b, 35–37.

Barry:¹¹⁶⁵ a motive revealed was a motive contested that furthermore tested the legitimacy of the traditional form of princely patronage as well as the royal mistresses' or queens' right to participate in its distribution.

Much of what has been said about patronage can also be applied to the charity that the royal mistresses distributed. Not unlike patronage, charity was also strongly connected to femininity. Especially as an act of virtuous compassion and pious religious duty, it encompassed a strong reference to feminine virtues.¹¹⁶⁶ Similarly, it was connected to the ideals regarding aristocratic use of money, or the ideas of benevolence and generosity as well as ideas concerning the common good and duties of the different estates. Neither did the writers generally differentiate between the charity that the royal mistresses carried out on their own and that which they encouraged their royal lover to invest in. In fact, as in the case of patronage, the royal mistresses were once again presented in their function as mediators of royal support and protection (that is to say, making the king do something).

Also, the objects of patronage and charity were not always completely separated. For example, different writers recollecting the life of Mme de Pompadour presented an anecdote regarding her charitable protection of M. de Boissi, an impoverished author who after losing all hope for a brighter future had resolved to end his (and his wife's and child's) life.¹¹⁶⁷ According to the anecdote, the story about the unfortunate M. de Boissi was carried to Mme de Pompadour, who was moved by his distress and took him under her protection, providing him a place and a pension.¹¹⁶⁸ All the writers passing on this anecdote agreed that relieving the distress of the impoverished author was not an act of protection belonging to patronage but to charity. After all, she did not order a theatrical piece from the author but supported him by giving him a place to work.

Furthermore, much like the patronage of arts, letters, and sciences, the charity of the royal mistresses too had a political dimension correlating with the ideas concerning the preservation and improvement of the realm and life of the subjects of the monarchy. In relation to Mme de Pompadour, two noteworthy instances indicate the wider political meanings of her charity. Firstly, the anonymous writer of *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) and Fauques both presented Mme de Pompadour's concern for the young girls of the kingdom who were too poor to get married.¹¹⁶⁹ Most notably this was expressed

¹¹⁶⁵ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 183.

¹¹⁶⁶ See, e.g. Spongberg 2002, 49; Offen 2000, 37; Farr 1991, 400–401, 405, 412; Roche 1999, 473; Capp 2003, 353–361; Rendall 2007, 256; Häggman 1994, 183, 187; Taque 2001, 95.

¹¹⁶⁷ Fauques 1766b, 40–54; Anon. 1760, 165–183; Universal Chronicle and Westminster Journal, London, 8.–15. Mar. 1760, iss 102, "An affecting Anecdote of the celebrated Monsieur Bopissi; from the Third Volume of the History of the Marchioness de Pompadour."

¹¹⁶⁸ Anon. 1760, 175–182; Fauques 1766b, 54; The recollection of Universal Chronicle and Westminster Journal mentions that M. Boissi was made the Comptroller of the *Mercure de France*. Universal Chronicle and Westminster Journal, London, 8.–15. Mar. 1760, iss 102 "An affecting Anecdote of the celebrated Monsieur Bopissi; from the Third Volume of the History of the Marchioness de Pompadour."

¹¹⁶⁹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 31–32, 163–164; Poisson 1766c, 161–164; Poisson 1766b, 31–32; Poisson 1766d, 31–33; Fauques 1766b, 108–110.

through Mme de Pompadour's charitable distribution of dowries for the young, unmarried girls. During the festivities celebrating the birth of Louis Joseph Xavier, Duc de Burgundy, eldest son of Dauphin Louis¹¹⁷⁰ in 1751, she was told to have distributed (or persuaded the king to distribute) a considerable sum from the money reserved for royal celebrations to the young girls in order to get them married.¹¹⁷¹ Thus, Mme de Pompadour was both presented as having personally distributed the dowries as well as having encouraged the king to distribute them as well. Both were irrefutable charitable acts, beneficence that relieved the distress of those young and poor girls.

Yet, at the same time it was not only a short-term solution concerning questions of poverty and poor relief, but also one of domestic order and population growth. As such, an incontestable political act. Both the writer of *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* and Fauques, who generally took a more critical tone towards the royal mistress, did not deny the political significance. Both of them considered it an act that produced general good through the satisfaction of private individuals (married couples) and resulted in general good in the form of the kingdom's population growth.¹¹⁷² The anonymous writer also revealed that calculations had even been made to measure the significant increase of population that this generous charitable act produced.¹¹⁷³ Furthermore, this act was not meant to be a single and isolated event, but it was proposed as an example to be followed in other great cities and provinces as well.¹¹⁷⁴ Thus, this first example shows that the charitable acts had a political significance. They could be regarded as – and most likely were – attempts to respond to the wider concerns relating to population decline¹¹⁷⁵, starting from Versailles and Paris, but intended to cover the whole realm.

¹¹⁷⁰ Hence a celebration of the dynasty. He was the first living son of Louis, Dauphin of France. Had he lived, Duc de Burgundy would have been the king of France; but he died in 1761, leaving his younger brother Duc de Berry, future Louis XVI, as the successor to the throne after his father's death 1765.

¹¹⁷¹ Poisson 1766b, 31–32; Poisson 1766d, 32–33; Fauques 1766b, 108–110.

¹¹⁷² Fauques 1766b, 109; Poisson 1766b, 31–32; Poisson 1766d, 32–33.

¹¹⁷³ "Monsieur de Belleisle qui calculoit tout, disoit que ces mariages donneroient chaque année environ vingt mille citoïens à la monarchie: c'est ainsi que les petites choses servent aux grandes, & qu'une tournure de plus dans les finances peut contribuer à agrandir un état." Poisson 1766b, 32; "M. de Belleisle, who made all the calculations, averred that these marriages would furnish near 20,000 citizens annually to the monarchy: thus do small things promote great ones, and one single additional turn in the finances contribute to aggrandise a state." Poisson 1766d, 32–33.

¹¹⁷⁴ Poisson 1766b, 31–32; Poisson 1766d, 32–33; Fauques 1766b, 109–110.

¹¹⁷⁵ This indeed seems to have been a great concern. For example, in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* this same concern was approached from a different point of view. The writer expressed concern for the decline of population that he/she furthermore accusingly claimed to have been the result of Cardinal Fleury's ministry, wars, and religion. To corroborate his/her argument, the writer presented to the readers a citation of a humble plea from a nun in Lyon that was addressed to Mme de Pompadour. In this cited letter, the nun implored Mme de Pompadour to ask the King to restrict young girls' access to convents that had lately been a practice followed too eagerly. "La France entiere se sondoit dans les cloitres: on voïoit de toutes parts s'élever de vastes républiques de filles, qui faisoient vœu de ne point donner d'enfans à l'état." Poisson 1766a, 163. "All France was mouldering away in convents: every town and village had numerous communities of girls, who made vows against having children." Poisson 1766c, 161. This practice was explicitly presented as abusing

The second example gives us yet another perspective on the meanings of charitable acts of royal mistresses. It was about relieving the posterity of the officers that served in the War of the Austrian Succession. To the same extent as the unmarried girls, the distressed (military) officers and their children were presented as a great concern of Mme de Pompadour. In the late 1740s and early 1750s, after the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748, the late war was still felt in the kingdom. It was felt in taxation and debt; it was felt in loss of men, revenues, and conquests; it was felt in unpopular Aix-la-Chapelle and general discontent; and it was felt by the men and families who had participated in the war. As is evident from the presentations of Mme de Pompadour's life, the officers, and especially the officers of noble origin,¹¹⁷⁶ were feeling dissatisfied with the compensations for their efforts in the defense of the realm, monarchy, and monarch.¹¹⁷⁷ Mme de Pompadour was presented as having taken up their cause.

Firstly, she was described as having been moved by the distress of the children of those officers who had died in the service of their country and who were commoners ennobled by their office only – meaning that their children did not inherit their noble rank. Thus, after the loss of the ennobled head of their family, these families were left vulnerable and distressed. Mme de Pompadour was presented as having persuaded the king to issue an edict for “ennobling military officers and their posterity”¹¹⁷⁸. This politically significant act that was furthermore presented as having brought much satisfaction¹¹⁷⁹ to the whole realm was then understood as essentially charitable work targeted at relieving the distress of the children of no noble birth.¹¹⁸⁰ The charity was presented in terms of compensation. It was a due and just reward for the families who had “performed the greatest services to the state”¹¹⁸¹. Thus, it was also an honourable act that accentuated the monarch as a benevolent, generous, and just ruler that did not forget those that had done him service.¹¹⁸²

“both religion and the prosperity of the state”, Poisson 1766c, 163. “La religion & la prospérité de l'état [...]” Poisson 1766a, 165. According to the writer, Mme de Pompadour persuaded the king and “issued an arret, forbidding all religious communities to admit a novice under twenty-four years of age and a day.” Poisson 1766c, 164. Poisson 1766c, 161–164; Poisson 1766a, 166–167.

¹¹⁷⁶ *Noblesse oblige*, that was true. The war was the traditional function of nobility, and one through which they legitimated their privileges and their place in the social hierarchy. The nobility engaged in war and poured their personal revenues into it as well. Yet, after the war they expected that their service was to be rewarded. See, e.g. Scott & Storrs 2007, 7, 40–45; Black 2002, 56–57; Major 1994, 97, 318; Roche 1999, 273, 352–353; Swann 2007, 159, 178; Mettam 2007, 131–132; Elias 2006, 167.

¹¹⁷⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 149; Poisson 1766c, 147–148.

¹¹⁷⁸ Poisson 1766c, 203–204. Poisson 1766a, 206 “annobliroit les militaires & leur postérité.”

¹¹⁷⁹ Poisson 1766a, 206; Poisson 1766c, 204.

¹¹⁸⁰ Poisson 1766a, 205–206; Poisson 1766c, 203–204.

¹¹⁸¹ Poisson 1766c, 203. “les plus grands services à l'état,” Poisson 1766a, 206.

¹¹⁸² This was defined through the opposite. The abandonment of the officers' children and families in need was pictured as an abuse from the quarter of political government: “Il est difficile, dans un royaume aussi étendu que la France, de prévenir tous les abus: il en est de nécessaires & qui naissent de l'ordre lui-même. Mais une plainte qu'on m'adressa m'en fit remarquer un, qui me parut digne de l'attention du

For the help of nobles in distress, Mme de Pompadour was presented as having had another plan: the *École Militaire*, built in the 1750s. Just as Mme de Pompadour's deeds for enabling poor girls to marry, the foundation of this Royal Military School was simultaneously about relieving current distress and reinforcing the kingdom, but this time through improving military education, military command, and advancing the French army. This school was intended for the help of noble, yet poor families all over the kingdom.¹¹⁸³ It was intended to help them to have their children boarded and educated – and it was to have “their children educated for the service of their king and country”¹¹⁸⁴. Again, the act that was presented as having originated from the charitable sentiments of relieving those in need was utilised as service to the monarch and monarchy.

All these given examples of Mme de Pompadour's charitable works were also – as was the patronage of arts, letters, and sciences – a matter of honour, merit, and reputation. All the writers that depicted Mme de Pompadour's charitable relief for the poor author M. de Boissi agreed that it was honourable and produced merit for the royal mistress.¹¹⁸⁵ All writers describing the provisions distributed to young girls in order to get them married considered it a wise as well as an honourable action.¹¹⁸⁶ And all writers celebrating the founding of the military school celebrated the royal mistress's understanding and charitable sense.¹¹⁸⁷

In relation to publicity and public praise, all these three above-mentioned cases were also remembered long and reported widely. All three cases were also presented in one form or another in London newspapers. In 1751, for example,

Prince: c'étoit l'oubli qu'on avoit toujours fait des enfants de ces militaires qui mouroient pour le service de la patrie. [...] on [privilèges du trône & ceux de la noblesse] perdoit la trace des familles qui avoient rendu les plus grands services à l'état. Les belles actions mouroient avec le héros: sa postérité n'y avoit aucune part sa gloire étoit ensévelie avec lui dans le même tombeau.” Poisson 1766a, 205–206; “In so large a kingdom as France, it is scarce possible to prevent all abuses; some necessarily arise from the very constitution, and the maintenance of political order. But one complaint so particularly struck me, that I thought it deserved to be laid before the King. This was the disregard of the children of the officers dying in the service of their country. [...], no trace [of officer's achievements regarding nobility and land of office] remained of the families which had performed the greatest services to the state: a hero's achievements [sic.] died with him, his posterity were never the better for his exploits.” Poisson 1766c, 203.

¹¹⁸³ Poisson 1772, LETTER XXX. To the count d'Argenson, 66; Poisson 1766a, 227–228; Poisson 1766c, 226.

¹¹⁸⁴ Poisson 1772, LETTER XXX. To the count d'Argenson, 66.

¹¹⁸⁵ Fauques 1766b, 40–54; Anon. 1760, 165–183. Although, in this case it had a small sting in the tail. The authors did create a convergence between M. de Boissi, a playwright in distress, and his benefactress, Mme de Pompadour, by calling Mme de Pompadour a “very great actress” herself. Fauques 1766b, 55; Anon. 1760, 183. This sting rested upon the metaphor of the court (and politics) as the Grande Theatre, referring further to affectation – the roles and masks – of the courtiers and politicians. But, it also had a further connection to the descriptions of Mme de Pompadour's illegitimate ways of gaining influence, which will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.4. This being said, even with the slight taunt, the anecdote in itself approved of the royal mistress's act towards M. de Boissi as charitable beneficence.

¹¹⁸⁶ Poisson 1766b, 31–32; Poisson 1766d, 31–33; Fauques 1766b, 108–110.

¹¹⁸⁷ Poisson 1772, LETTER XXX. To the count d'Argenson, 66–67; Poisson 1766a, 227–228; Poisson 1766c, 226.

the *General Evening Post* reported Mme de Pompadour as having distributed portions for the girls to be married, and having inspired the king to the same charitable deeds in his various royal palaces.¹¹⁸⁸ M. de Boissi's case was repeated in *The Universal Chronicle and Westminster Journal* in 1760 as part of the series of (very selected) abridgements of *the Third Volume of the History of the Marchioness de Pompadour*.¹¹⁸⁹ These cases can thus be understood as part of the most public figure of the royal mistress. Event though – or rather just because – they were cases that highlighted the compassionate, understanding, benevolent, and charitable nature of the royal mistress instead of her intentional aspirations for public praise, they simultaneously also strengthened the justification of her i) use of power or influence in directing the royal benevolence, and ii) existence in the court and beside the king.

Furthermore, as repeatedly expressed, the royal mistress was never really separated from the persona and public image of her royal lover. In this regard, the royal mistress served as an extension of the monarch: their benevolent and praiseworthy actions highlighted the monarch's benevolent, generous, just, and magnanimous nature as well. Especially on the occasions where the mistress was highlighted as the medium of royal attention and royal beneficence.¹¹⁹⁰ As in the case regarding the dowries of the poor girls, we find the royal mistress presented as a person that inspired the benevolence of the monarch. This illustration rested upon two notions. Firstly, it presented the royal mistress as an inspirer that encouraged the monarch to do good. This supporting role was a traditional role belonging to women, and especially to beloved women (or, wives and mistresses), as explained in section 2.3. Secondly, it suggested that the monarch was essentially benevolent, generous, and just by nature, that he only needed to be shown a great injustice, and he would immediately mend it. Thus, the presentations of the mistresses' charitable work reinforced both their own justification and the traditional grounds of monarchical rule, at least in as much as they were validated through the disposition, inclination, characteristics, capacities, and abilities of the personal monarch.

This particular charitable act also had a significant symbolical dimension. As discussed in Introduction, section 1.3.1, political language is filled with metaphors that explain the abstract nature and relations of power. One of the most important political analogies in early modern France was the family-state

¹¹⁸⁸ See, e.g. *General Evening Post*, London, 1.-3. Oct. 1751, iss 2782, "Paris A-la-main, October 8"; *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, London, 1.-3. Oct. 1751, iss 881; *London Evening Post*, London, 1.-3. Oct. 1751, iss 3737, "Paris, October 9"; *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, London, Thu. 3th Oct. 1751, iss 184, "Paris, Oct. 8".

¹¹⁸⁹ *Universal Chronicle and Westminster Journal*, London, 8.-15. Mar. 1760, iss 102, "An affecting Anecdote of the celebrated Monsieur Boissi; from the Third Volume of the History of the Marchioness de Pompadour".

¹¹⁹⁰ As was the case when the royal mistress's charitable part was to persuade the king to take benevolent actions, e.g. in the case concerning the humble plea of the nun from Lyon, Poisson 1766a, 163-166; Poisson 1766c, 161-164. Or in the case concerning the posterity of the officers ennobled by their office, Poisson 1766a, 205-206; Poisson 1766c, 203-204. In both these cases, the problem was addressed through the royal edict that the mistress could not possibly have issued but only facilitated.

analogy, in which the monarch and his rule was legitimated through his role as the benevolent father of the metaphorical family of the realm. Especially in the case concerning the dowries that Mme de Pompadour distributed and that she encouraged the king to distribute further, the king quite concretely played the part of the father. The distribution of the dowries enabled Louis XV to present himself and his actions in the role of head of the family, and as a consequence, reassert both the existing metaphorical conceptualisation of the body politic and his personal authority as the head of the state.

Of all these cases, the one really highlighting the meanings of the blurred persona of the royal mistress and her royal lover was not the case of dowries but the case of the Royal Military School. In 1774, after the death of Louis XV, the *General Evening Post* reminisced on the life, accomplishments, and failures of his late reign. Certainly, the London newspaper did not hesitate to recall Louis XV's vices and defeats.¹¹⁹¹ Nonetheless, the article was more or less an obituary that noted his greatest achievements as well. Among those, the Royal Military School was mentioned more often than any other of his accomplishments. It was presented as the "noblest monument of his reign"¹¹⁹² and a matter of admiration, envy, and imitation of the rest of the Europe.¹¹⁹³ It was again mentioned (as a translation of a description of his character in *Parisian Gazette*) alongside his notable patronage of arts, letters, and sciences – alongside achievements and characteristics that had secured him his cognomen *Well-beloved*:

The great qualities of this Monarch, the sensibility of his soul, his virtues, his tender attachment to his family, his moderation in his triumphs, his beneficence and affability to all who had the honour to serve or approach him gained him all hearts, and made him surnamed *Lewis the Well-beloved*, a title which, by informing future ages of the love of his subjects, will testify how much he deserved it.¹¹⁹⁴

The Military School, the founding of which was strongly rooted in charitable compassion, was then translated as an expression of the king's admirable characteristics of beneficence and affability, and constructed as part of his undying honour and merit.

And what is more, Mme de Pompadour's role in founding the Military School was not mentioned in the London journal. But that was the essence of charity. Charitable work was legitimate only as an act that aspired to generate good without any benefit or profit for the benefactor/benefactress – fame, reputation, or merit included. The greatest difference between the presentations of charitable actions and the previously discussed distribution or mediation of

¹¹⁹¹ As e.g. the attack of Damiens, political and religious schism of bull *Unigenitus*, the dissolution of Parlements, royal mistresses, and military defeats and loses. *General Evening Post*, London, 21.-23. June 1774, iss. 6346, "Memoirs of the life of the late king of France, continued".

¹¹⁹² *General Evening Post*, London, 21.-23. June 1774, iss. 6346, "Memoirs of the life of the late king of France, continued".

¹¹⁹³ Imitated by Empress-Queen Maria Theresa of Austria. *General Evening Post*, London, 21.-23. June 1774, iss. 6346, "Memoirs of the life of the late king of France, continued".

¹¹⁹⁴ *General Evening Post*, London, 21.-23. June 1774, iss. 6346, "Memoirs of the life of the late king of France, continued".

royal patronage was that the charitable actions were not contested – or not turned into challenges to the justification of the royal mistress’s abilities, capacities, motives, or existence. They were not evaluated as unworthy objects, but instead as deeds that benefitted the whole realm (that is to say, as politically significant). They were not presented as attempts at the manipulation of public debate in order to win the support of the general population. In fact, for example in the case of ennobling the posterity of the military officers, the writer highlighted that Mme de Pompadour’s role in the process was not publicly known.¹¹⁹⁵ Thus, the works of charity were incontestably acceptable deeds, and in many instances, also politically significant deeds that were generated from the sentiments of Christian charity and humane compassion.

4.2.3 The evil advisors and usurpers of political resolution

It is easier to see the problematics in the royal mistresses’ illegitimate use of power after demonstrating that there indeed were areas of public activity (as relating to the management of affairs affecting the totality of the realm and as visible to larger audiences outside the royal courts) in which the royal mistresses were expected and accepted to function – with their own grey areas, of course. Thus far, we have seen that not all the influence used by the mistresses on the monarchs was deemed unjustified or harmful. However, the main body of the representations of the royal mistresses’ influence – all influence in fact – was categorically denounced as illegitimate. In this section, the main task is to understand the meanings that the presentations of the royal mistresses using unaccepted power had in relation to the monarchy as a system of political government. This cannot be achieved unless we peruse the imaginations that were used in order to legitimise/delegitimise certain kinds of uses of power or influence. In order to understand how the powerful or ruling mistresses’ figures were used in the debates about political rule, we need to analyse several aspects of the description of mistresses using illegitimate power. First, we need to find the boundary between the accepted and absolutely unaccepted use of power or influence. Second, we need to outline the most common and most outrageous objects of the mistresses’ use of power. Third, we need to grasp eighteenth-century conceptions of the nature of women’s rule in general and that of royal mistresses in particular – that is to say, specifically their motivations and capacities for participating in political decision-making. And finally, we need to look into the means that the royal mistresses were presented as having used in order to gain their position of power. As stated before, the long-standing debate about women’s abilities, capacities, and nature, the *woman question* or *querelle des femmes*, ensured that there were great anxieties and traditional disapproving imageries related to public and/or potentially powerful and influential women which further strengthened during the eighteenth century alongside ideas regarding ideal political masculinity. The writers describing the royal mistresses’ power and influence certainly leaned on these imageries, expressed some more

¹¹⁹⁵ Poisson 1766a, 206; Poisson 1766c, 204.

general cultural apprehensions about women's use of power, as well as participated in wider discussions about the nature of women and their rule. In this study, we are not interested in the categorical denunciation of women's legitimate power. Instead, we are about to see how the writers presenting the mistresses' unacceptable use of power and influence conceptualised legitimate monarchical rule. All the above mentioned points discussed the legitimacy of the monarchical system from different points of view, as for example, from the premise of ideals regarding the nature of political *power* itself, and of the norms and ideals expected and hoped for from wielders of it.

In relation to the royal mistresses' illegitimate use of power there are two premises that must be noted first. First, in this respect, unlike in the case of accepted and expected use of power or influence where eighteenth-century commentators eagerly wrote about royal mistresses' use of *power* (even in cases when they acted in order to influence the king), the actions of the royal mistresses were always regarded as *influencing*.¹¹⁹⁶ This indicated and emphasised that they did not have the legitimate right or ability to use power themselves, but that they were instead influencing persons who had the power to do what they wanted – usually this referred, as stated before, to the king himself. This led to questions concerning authority and hierarchy that were discussed previously in section 4.2.1. The most direct form of this was the presentation of the *governed*¹¹⁹⁷ or *enslaved*¹¹⁹⁸ king – that is, a representation of a mistress who had usurped the royal power entirely. That was by no means an innovation of the eighteenth century. In fact, it was a continuation of a long European tradition of *evil advisers* that diverted accusations of misgovernment, tumults resulting from unpopular policies, and general anxieties to persons near the monarch and away from the king himself.¹¹⁹⁹ However, the discourse on the royal mistresses was not only a simple reiteration of this long-used and well-known device of evil advisors. Instead, the royal mistresses came to offer an exceptionally inviting locus for all general discontents that correlated with the ideas concerning the complementary nature of the sexes as well as the changing ideals of political decision-making.

¹¹⁹⁶ For example, in form of *influencing, forcing, inducing, extorting or prejudicing*. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 148, 161; Bécu 1777a, advertisement, ii; Bécu 1777a, 122, 142; Bécu 1777b, 208; Fauques 1759, 55, 137; Fauques 1758a, 75–76; Fauques 1758b, 67; Fauques 1766a, Advertisement, i; Fauques 1766a, 38, 78, 183, 213, 220; Fauques 1766b, 132; Stanhope 1777, 10; Stanhope 1779d, 1; Hervey 1931, 792, 850; Walpole 1822b, 234; Pierre 1902a, 301; Pierre 1902b, 15, 60, 75; Poisson 1766b, 27, 146; Poisson 1766d, 28, 151; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 59; Mairobert 1779a, LETTRE XXXVI. A la Comtesse de Moyan, 4 Août 1769, 51; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXXVI. To the Countess de Moyan, 4th Aug. 1769, 42; Anon. 1760, 91; Almon 1792a, 88. On Queen Caroline's influence, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 97, 101; Hervey 1848b, 37–38; Walpole 1818, 82.

¹¹⁹⁷ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 182, 214; Bécu 1777a, 163; Fauques 1759, 132, 179–180; Fauques 1758b, 58, 131; Fauques 1766b, 30, 115, 123; Pierre 1902b, 195; Walpole 1822a, 291–292; Walpole 1845b, 239. Queen Caroline's reign over the King, see, e.g. Stanhope 1777, 13; Stanhope 1779a, 159; Stanhope 1779d, 5; Hervey 1848a, 98, 120, 121, 262; Walpole 1818, 76, 85–86; Walpole 1822a, 155.

¹¹⁹⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 34, 57–58; Fauques 1758a, 40, 73–74; Fauques 1766a, 48, 81–82; Mairobert 1775, 206; Bécu 1777b, 196.

¹¹⁹⁹ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 57–58; Spellman 1998, 23; Kaiser 1996, 1042; Drévilion 2000, 298; Wellman 2013, 14, 18, 20–21, 38.

The second point concerns the meanings of *politics* and *political*. As demonstrated in the previous sections, the royal mistresses participated in all kinds of functions and played various roles that eighteenth-century commentators readily considered to have political significance. However, the royal mistresses' direct participation in politics, political decision-making, and political affairs was not swallowed without hesitation. In fact, the field of politics formed the most unambiguous boundary to the accepted influencing or use of power for the royal mistresses, as I have already implied¹²⁰⁰, and will be further demonstrated in this section. Their participation in the political affairs and political decision-making was belittlingly called *meddling*¹²⁰¹; *acting the politician*¹²⁰²; *reigning*¹²⁰³ and *puzzling the King's ear*¹²⁰⁴, and unacceptably denounced as *oppression*¹²⁰⁵; *miss-management*¹²⁰⁶; acting or being the *prime* or *head minister*¹²⁰⁷; *conspiracy*¹²⁰⁸; *prejudicing*¹²⁰⁹, *forcing*¹²¹⁰ or *governing the King*¹²¹¹ as well as *intrigues*¹²¹² - and of course, *influencing*¹²¹³. However, drawing the boundary between a political matter and matter of political significance was not always so straightforward. Nonetheless, this violent rejection of royal mistresses' justification for participation in political decisions served only to indicate that the royal mistresses were regarded or represented to have participated in them - which both had further political meanings.

¹²⁰⁰ In the previous section 4.2.1, it was claimed that the understanding of legitimate rule and decision-making were increasingly associated with officiality and formality that excluded women categorically from legitimate decision-making.

¹²⁰¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 228; Walpole 1822b, 208; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 28th June 1761, 170; TNA, SP 78/221, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 19th July 1739, Most Private, 6; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 59

¹²⁰² See, e.g. Bécu 1777b, 227. "Un Rôle, où Madame Dubarri étoit vraiment déplacée, c'étoit lorsqu'elle se mêloit de politique." Mairobert 1775, 228; or *femme d'État*, as in e.g. Fauques 1759, 178.

¹²⁰³ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 12; Anon. 1760, 233.

¹²⁰⁴ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 14th July 1742, 276.

¹²⁰⁵ Especially in relation to unpopular policies. See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 292-293; Fauques 1766b, 11.

¹²⁰⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 11.

¹²⁰⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1902b, 36; Fauques 1766b, 2, 8.

¹²⁰⁸ See, e.g. Bécu 1777a, 125.

¹²⁰⁹ See, e.g. Almon 1792b, [Pitt's anecdotes concerning Duc de Choiseul 1770], 88-89.

¹²¹⁰ See, e.g. BL, Stowe MS 88, 11.

¹²¹¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 180; Fauques 1758b, 131.

¹²¹² See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 398; Pierre 1902a, 309; BL, Stowe MS 88, 18; Walpole 1804b, CXLVII. Choiseul, 95-96.

¹²¹³ See, e.g. Shebbeare 1757, 42-43; TNA, SP 78/281, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 16th Dec. 1770, 258-259; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 24th Sep. 1738, Most Private, 86; Walpole 1822b, Memoires of the year 1759, 382; Pierre 1902a, 283 (or *employer son credit*, as in the French original, Pierre 1903, 366); Fauques 1766a, 183; Fauques 1766b, 127-128.

4.2.3.1 The meddling mistress: the transgression to unjustified political participation

Even if the royal mistresses might have been praised for serving in roles and functions that had political *significance*, their direct participation in *political affairs* was unequivocally rejected. There was a scope of political matters in relation to which their use of power of influence was clearly and unhesitatingly deemed illegitimate, unfounded, and unjustified. The royal mistresses' use of influence was denied in matters concerning the nomination of the most important officers of the realm, either military commanders or ministers. There is indeed a huge amount of presentations of British, and especially French, royal mistresses *making, supplanting, and removing* ministers, generals, and ambassadors.¹²¹⁴ As Fauques put it when presenting Mme de Pompadour's excessive influence: "Ministers disgraced, Generals recalled at her imperious nod"¹²¹⁵ – imperious referring to insolence, haughtiness, pride, and tyrannical commanding.¹²¹⁶

The French royal mistresses and their use of influence was represented as the main cause of most of the resignations, replacements, and disgraces of the officers, as well as of the resulting unpopular or failed policies, either domestic or foreign. For example, Mme de Pompadour's interference in the business of nominating military officers (and political protection of her creatures) was given as the cause of the greatest of the military defeats that the French suffered during the Seven Years' War. One of the French *maréchals* most attached to her was Charles de Rohan, Prince de Soubise. He was not only attached to her, but his whole rise to a *Maréchal de France* in 1758 was attributed to her – and solely to her, since his personal abilities as a commander were questioned and

¹²¹⁴ For example, on Mme de Pompadour supplanting *Maréchal d'Estrées*, see, e.g. Walpole 1822b, 229. On Mme du Barry naming Prince Louis Rohan as an ambassador to Vienna, see, e.g. BL, Stowe MS 88, 7. On Mme de Pompadour making the *Abbé de Bernis* first an ambassador and then a minister, see, e.g. Walpole 1822b, *Memoires of the year 1758*, 332–333. On Mme de Pompadour removing *Comte de Maurepas*, see, e.g. TNA, SP 78/232, Yorke to Bedford, Paris, 15th/26th Apr. 1749, 182; Walpole 1844b, LETTER to George Selwyn, Paris, 2nd Dec. 1765, 281. On Mme de Pompadour dismissing *Comte d'Argenson*, see, e.g. Pierre 1903, 366; Pierre 1902a, 28. On Mme du Barry removing *Marquis de Monteynard*, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 307; Bécu 1777b, 343. On Mme du Barry dismissing *Duc de Choiseul*, see, e.g. Almon 1792b, [Pitt's anecdotes concerning *Duc de Choiseul 1770*], 88–89. All these examples, of *d'Estrées*, *Rohan*, the *Abbé de Bernis*, *Maurepas*, *d'Argenson*, and *duc de Choiseul* were well-known cases that were considered political shocks. Of course, there are a lot more cases concerning the lesser-known persons of the court. Furthermore, the same cases were presented and represented in differing texts as well since the dismissals of known ministers and generals were significant political events. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/282, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 2nd Jan. 1771, 1, on *Duc de Choiseul's* disgrace; Walpole 1822b, *Memoires of the year 1758*, 332–333, on the *Abbé de Bernis's* disgrace; Mairobert 1775, 160, on *Duc de Choiseul's* disgrace.

¹²¹⁵ Fauques 1758b, 129. "des Ministres disgraciés, des Généraux congédiés", Fauques 1759, 178.

¹²¹⁶ See, e.g. Bailey 1730, "imperious"; Allen 1765, "imperious"; Barlow 1772b, "imperious"; Barclay 1774, "imperious"; Ash 1775a, "imperious"; Dyche 1756a, "imperieux"; Chambaud 1761, "imperieux".

ridiculed.¹²¹⁷ Thus, when the catastrophe of Rossbach (1757) hit, it was attributed to Prince de Soubise, and consequently, to the hand that had lifted him to the command of the French troops. It was also understood that Mme de Pompadour protected Prince de Soubise in order to maintain his position in the military and even promote him to a *maréchal* so that he would fail French hopes again at the battle of Villinghausen (1761).¹²¹⁸

At Villinghausen, the French defeat was explained through the discord between the *Maréchals Duc de Broglie* and Prince de Soubise. This schism escalated into a controversy between Duc de Choiseul and Mme de Pompadour with their respective partisans, as was also mentioned in section 4.1.3.¹²¹⁹ Neither was Mme de Pompadour presented as having been idle in relation to the belligerent foreign policy between the great failures of Prince de Soubise. She was presented as having meddled in the nominations of the generals that led to the public political arguments between Louis Charles César Le Tellier, *Maréchal d'Éstrées* and Yves Marie Desmarets de Maillebois, *Comte de Maillebois* after the victory of Hastenbeck (1757).¹²²⁰ Likewise, Louis de Bourbon, *Comte de Clermont*, whose place was attributed to Mme de Pompadour, disappointed the hopes of his protectress and country in the humiliating battle of Krefeld (1758).¹²²¹ Neither should we forget the man who replaced him, Louis Georges Érasme de Contades, *Marquis de Contades*, and his defeat at Minden (1759) that were ascribed to the influence of Mme de Pompadour as well.¹²²²

Thus, concerning the royal mistresses' harmful participation in the management of the realm, it was not only about making her protégés, creatures, partisans, clients, and allies royal officers, but also about their continuous protection. This protection was occasionally presented as having led to even greater abuses of monarchical power. For example, it was well known that Mme du Barry was the main supporter and protectress of Duc d'Aiguillon.¹²²³ Emmanuel-Armand de Vignerot du Plessis-Richelieu, Duc d'Aiguillon, had been the Governor of Brittany in 1753–1768, during which time he fell into a dispute with the local *Parlement* opposing the government's decisions on fiscal reforms. As the argument heated up, the *Parlement* of Brittany accused Duc d'Aiguillon

¹²¹⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 390–398; Pierre 1902a, 302–309; Pierre 1902b, 31–32; Anon. 1760, 117; Poisson 1766b, 216–217; Poisson 1766d, 227; Fauques 1766b, 173; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 232.

¹²¹⁸ In relation to the defeat in Rossbach and Mme de Pompadour's protection of Prince de Soubise, see, e.g. Pierre 1903, 390–398; Pierre 1902a, 302–309; Pierre 1902b, 31–32; Anon. 1760, 102–105; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XXVIII. Au *Maréchal de Soubise*, nov. 1757, 43; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XXVIII. To marshal de Soubise, Nov. 1757, 90–91.

¹²¹⁹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 110–111; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adam, 15th Sep. 1761, 210; BL, Add MS 36798, Stanley to Pitt, L'Isle Adam, 15th Sep. 1761, copy, 255–256; Anon. 1760, 117; BL, Add MS 36798, Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, copy, 175; TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 30th July 1761, 232.

¹²²⁰ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 117–118; Fauques 1758b, 38–39; Fauques 1766a, 193; Pierre 1903, 394–395; Pierre 1902a, 306; Walpole 1822b, *Memoires of the year 1758*, 307–308.

¹²²¹ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 41–49, 52–56; Pierre 1902b, 51–53.

¹²²² See, e.g. Walpole 1822b, *Memoires of the year 1759*, 382; Anon. 1760, 191, 194–196, 200–201; Fauques 1766b, 127–128.

¹²²³ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, [private], 57.

of having abused his power. The accusation was carried to the Parlement of Paris and to the special tribunal.¹²²⁴ It was attributed to the influence of Mme du Barry that the king Louis XV in person participated in the legal proceedings, terminated the investigations against the Duc, and closed the case for good by taking all the related documents into his custody.¹²²⁵ The mistress's assumed and presented protection of her ally – as an influence exerted over the king in his role as a law-giver and Fount of Justice – went clearly against idea of a just king and the general sense of justice. Thus, it was constructed as an abuse of the most traditional functions of the monarch. In France the monarch had the right to terminate any trial and push through any edict he pleased in a process called *Lit de Justice*. As the cessation of legal proceedings was the royal prerogative, the royal decision for breaking off the proceedings against Duc d'Aiguillon could not be directly contested. However, through the presented influence of a royal mistress, it was possible to express dissatisfaction and especially sentiments of injustice. Indeed, the representation of the royal mistress's interference was used to delegitimise the royal action on this particular occasion.

Besides appointing and dismissing the most important officers of the state, or protecting one's clients and allies, eighteenth-century writers and commentators presented a set of more specific policies or political events where royal mistresses' contribution was deemed illegitimate, as for example, concerning censorship¹²²⁶. The common denominator of all these reprimands against the mistresses' use of influence was that they were all policies that were extremely unpopular and caused a lot of attention. For example, Fauques depicted Mme de Pompadour as the instigator of the "policy of neutrality"¹²²⁷ regarding the strife between the Parlements (mainly the Parlement of Paris) and the Gallican Church over Jansenism (and jurisdiction).¹²²⁸ It was called the "policy of neutrality" or "la neutralité"¹²²⁹ because, as Fauques presented it, it did not aim to call an end to this strife by the means of royal power and authority. Instead, it aimed to apply royal support and punishments to the Parlement and to the Clergy by turns in order to continue the contest between the parties by ensuring that neither won supremacy over the other. By adopting this "policy of neutrality", the (impersonal) king could maintain his authority over both bodies, collect money from them both, and further trick them both into directing their attention to politically insignificant, frivolous, and ridiculous matters of religious metaphysics (as Fauques interpreted the case of Jansenism) instead of real political questions and abuses (in Fauques' case, corrupted influence of ministers

¹²²⁴ See, e.g. Drévilion 2000, 339–340; Zysberg 2002, 297, 305–306; van Kley 1997, 764; Darnton 1995a, 148; Maza 1993, 26–27; Roche 1999, 421.

¹²²⁵ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 18th July 1770, Very Secret & Confidential, 58–60; Mairobert 1775, 147–149; Bécu 1777a, 122–124, 131–132; Mairobert 1779b, XLVIe LETTRE Au duc d'Aiguillon, 30 août 1770, 62; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER XLVI. To the Duke d'Aiguillon, 30th Aug. 1770. 51.

¹²²⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 1–23; Fauques 1759, 181–182; Fauques 1758b, 133–135.

¹²²⁷ Fauques 1758b, 50.

¹²²⁸ Fauques 1759, 119–128; Fauques 1758b, 41–54; Fauques 1766a, 195–209.

¹²²⁹ Fauques 1759, 171.

pursuing their personal interests instead of the nation's).¹²³⁰ That is to say, Fauques presented Mme de Pompadour's political influencing as the reason for the painful continuation of the political controversy between the Parlements and the Church that hindered the good government of the realm.

In similar manner, the royal mistresses were connected to unpopular policies and political events of the day in Britain, although not on the same scale as in France. For example, in the anti-Hanoverian pamphlet *A sixth letter to the people of England, on the progress of national ruin* (1757) Duchess of Kendal and Countess of Darlington were connected to the South Sea Bubble of 1720 and the related Bubble Act.¹²³¹ Furthermore, they were not pictured as innocent investors, but their actions and even the whole Bubble was represented as a German conspiracy seeking control over the British administration.¹²³²

All these instances when the criticism against the royal mistresses related to a specific policy or political event can be understood as products of the traditional discourse of *evil advisors*. They do not primarily focus on the royal mistresses' wrongful and illegitimate influence but on a specific unpopular policy. In these cases, the writers sought to influence the opinions of political audiences and decision-makers in order to revise the policy. They sought to do so by challenging the rationality and reasonableness of the decision-making process that had led to the policy they disliked. In their argument, they resorted to the conventional tool of *evil advisors* that represented the king as having been swayed by unworthy counsels. Still, at the same time, they participated in the discursive delegitimation of royal mistresses' influence in political decision-making, and resorted and contributed to a wider discourse that attacked especially courtly women's justification for participating in the process of political decision-making. However, this was not so explicit in the cases where the criticism was directed against certain unpopular policies. Yet, the important point is that these critics based their arguments and accusations on some kind of established idea or frame that defined certain kinds of uses of power or influence as justified/unjustified, reasonable/unreasonable, and legitimate/illegitimate – they referred to a cultural convention that did not need to be specified explicitly.

However, these cultural conventions defining legitimate/illegitimate use of power and influence are this study's greatest object of interest. If we cannot discover them through the obscure notions invoking the tradition of evil advisers, we have to look elsewhere. In contrast in the cases of making, dismissing, and supplanting royal officers (of government, civil administration, and military), eighteenth-century commentators revealed the (imagined) royal mistresses' influencing to their readers, described the mistresses' ways and means of acquiring their leverage on political decision-making, and their motives for doing so. From all these elements, it is possible i) to reconstruct the strains of thought that explained why the royal mistresses were deemed unfit for participating in political decision-making, and ii) to further understand what kind of political

¹²³⁰ Fauques 1759, 119–121, 123–126; Fauques 1758b, 41–42, 45–50; Fauques 1766a, 195–196, 201–206.

¹²³¹ Shebbeare 1757, 42–43.

¹²³² Shebbeare 1757, 42–43.

statement it actually was that the royal mistresses were presented as using their influence in political decision-making.

On the latter point, as we have already seen, the royal mistress's influence was always constructed, represented, and understood in relation to the king – sometimes as an extension, sometimes as a binary opposite. That is to say, a too strong royal mistress indicated that the king himself was weak; a weak mistress indicated a strong and independent monarch; an irrational mistress implied that the king himself lacked reason and rationality, and so forth. These presentations were furthermore not only based on the conceptions regarding the norms and ideals of political decision-making, of system of government, and especially of political decision-makers, but also participated in the debates that negotiated for these norms and ideals, and reviewed the current rule in relation to them.

Also, we should note, that in the British political culture under the reign of George II we find a Queen rather than a mistress as a political influencer.¹²³³ It is true, the queen consorts did not have any more share in political participation than the royal mistresses did. No law enabled them to participate in the highest political decision-making. Yet, their status as the lawful wives of the ruling monarchs might have given their influence some legitimacy. After all, a queen's support of her husband in his sorrows as a ruler was the more justified since she actually was the wedded wife whose duty was to help her husband carry the burdens of the realm. Further, she was a highborn lady, a princess in most cases, whose status matched the king's better than any mistresses'. Having an origin such as hers, it was assumed that she would have a spouse from the top of the ruling society, which was taken into account when planning her upbringing and education. Thus, there were traits, such as the status as a lawful wife, noble origin, and education aiming at the role as wife of a powerful man that might have legitimated some influence in political decision-making on the part of the queens. Nonetheless, in the case of Queen Caroline we encounter an abundance of negative presentations.

For example, in the case of Mrs. Howard, it can be judged that her reputed powerlessness protected her from the accusation of illegitimate usurpations of royal power. Instead, the criticism was directed at Queen Caroline. This possibility of transfer should be kept in mind, as we will further elaborate the similarities in the representations of the illegitimate use of influence of a queen and of a royal mistress, especially in section 4.2.3.4.

It goes without saying that the ardent and manifold opposition to royal mistresses' influence in the nominations of royal officers should raise questions. It indicates that this was the most important point of political decision-making that attracted the attention of eighteenth-century commentators and audiences who discussed all kinds of norms and ideals of political decision-making. Furthermore, it was simultaneously a point where the royal mistresses' semi-fictional figure offered a convenient tool for political debate. That is to say, even

¹²³³ See, e.g. "[...] she not only meddled with business, but directed everything that came under that name, either at home or abroad." Hervey 1848a, 99; Walpole 1818, 86; Hervey 1848a, 217.

though the royal mistresses' figure functioned as a nexus for various sorts of anxieties, in regard to political ones, it was in the matter of making ministers and generals that their figures were the most useful – and where the royal mistresses increasingly became more and more problematic. As always, this debate was never solely about the royal mistresses. It was a debate that drew ideas from and participated to, the ongoing debates concerning ideals of political decision-making¹²³⁴, the nature and limits of political rule, political authority, and of course, the legitimacy of the monarchical system. All these strains of thought intertwined in the representation of a royal mistress making and unmaking the most important officers of the Crown.

The royal mistresses' use of power or influence in making and unmaking ministers and generals was so rigorously renounced because on these occasions the mistresses were presented as having directly participated in the political rule of the country: after all, the ministers (and the king) made the government, and the government steered the realm. Thus, it was simultaneously a debate on the capability, skills, and merits of the royal officers. As, for example, in the *Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766), the writer imparted that Mme de Pompadour lamented the dreadful state of the government and administration, and consequently, the poor management of the realm:

On m'a chargé en même tems d'avoir employé des gens dans le ministere, dont le génie mince & superficiel n'étoit point propre aux affaires. Mais où en prendre d'autres en France? On diroit que l'esprit humain s'est retréci chez nous. [...] Il semble que le siècle d'habiles ministres en France soit passé. [...] On est forcé [sic.] de confier toutes les branches de l'administration à des financiers de professions, gens sans capacité, & qui ne savent qu'une chose qui est de piller l'état.¹²³⁵

However, at the heart of the whole problem was that the royal mistresses participated in the process that made and unmade ministers. That is to say, they were not only presented as taking part in political decision-making, but its entire process was a construction where they could not avoid taking part. This convention was formed from various practices of the royal court and of royal decision-making, as for example the networks of power, and similarly from various functions and roles that the royal mistresses traditionally played in the court and in her relationship with the king.

Firstly, as discussed in chapter 2, one of the important roles of a royal mistress was that of supporter of the monarch. It was a very feminine role, rooted in the feminine characteristics and duties of a wife (or a female companion), justified through her affection for the king, and through her desire of helping him

¹²³⁴ Norms and ideals regarding the characteristics of the persons making the decisions, the right of making decisions (power), and practices concerning the whole process of political decision-making.

¹²³⁵ Poisson 1766a, 41–42. "I have been likewise accused of introducing into the ministry persons of no turn for business, ignorant, shallow, and superficial fellows; but where shall I find any other in France? The human mind seems to have been degenerated among us. [...] The age of able ministers in France seems past. [...] so that I was forced to commit all the branches of government to financiers by profession; a set of people void of capacity, and only skilful in one thing, which is pillaging the state." Poisson 1766c, 41–42.

with his burdens. As the anonymous writer of *Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766) explained, this role of a supporter included that the mistress was ready to emotionally support the monarch, to share his worries, and to advise¹²³⁶ him whenever she could.

The role of this kind of an advisor was not essentially a role of political advisor – but what else were the king’s worries but political concerns? Contrary to the other memoirists, the writer of *Memoirs of the Marchioness de Pompadour* (1766) accepted Mme de Pompadour’s advice to the king as it was interpreted as part of her function to support the king – at least as long as her political advice was i) based on her educated and learned judgements, or reason and abilities¹²³⁷, ii) she did not step on the toes of those Ministers and royal counsellors that were the appointed experts on the matter in question¹²³⁸, and iii) her reason for advising the king arose from her genuine sentiments of affection and love, and feminine inclination to support and help her lover¹²³⁹. Similar justification for advising the king through feminine characteristics and the duty of a female companion can be found in British political culture as well. Queen Caroline’s role as King George II’s political advisor was occasionally justified through

¹²³⁶ This was emphasised by avoiding terms such as *induce*, *convince*, or *persuade* that could be used with negative association, and by favouring the term *advice*. See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 156; Poisson 1766d, 162.

¹²³⁷ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l’editeur, iv; Poisson 1766c, Editor’s preface, iv. This was usually stressed by stating that before advising the king she herself sought advice and instruction from the more learned politicians, discussed with ministers and generals, and read histories of states and political affairs, correspondences of political persons, and memoranda concerning the matter at hand. See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 27–28, 82, 91, 96, 110–111, 151–154, 167, 180–184, 200–201, 219–225, 227, 254; Poisson 1766c, 27–29, 82–83, 90–91, 95–96, 110, 149–154, 166, 178–182, 197–198, 216–223, 226; Poisson 1766b, 10–11, 76–77, 234–240; Poisson 1766d, 10–11, 79, 244–252.

¹²³⁸ See, e.g. “Le Comte d’Argenson, qui avoit le bureau de la guerre, ne m’aimoit point; il disoit pour raison que je dispois de trop d’emplois militaires, [...], Cette accusation étoit d’autant moins fondée, que je n’emplois mon credit auprès du Roi pour personne, que je n’eusse consulté ce ministre auparavant.” Poisson 1766a, 227. “The Count de Argenson, secretary at war, did not love me [Mme de Pompadour], saying, “That I gave too many military posts; [...].” Now this accusation was so far from being true, that I never recommended any person to his Majesty, without previously consulting that Minister.” Poisson 1766c, 225.

¹²³⁹ See, e.g. “Ce Prince me disoit souvent qu’il étoit heureux d’avoir une véritable amie à qui il pouvoit faire part de ses plaisirs & confier ses peines; car les rois en ont comme les autres hommes. Une de plus grandes pour Louis XV. étoit la conviction du besoin qu’avoient les peuples d’être soulagés, & l’impossibilité où il étoit de les rendre heureux. Il me monroit l’état de son ame, & n’avoit rien de caché pour moi. Je lisois dans son cœur comme dans le mien: nous nous quitions toujours avec peine, & nous nous revions toujours avec plaisir.” Poisson 1766a, 174–175. “This excellent Prince often said to me, that he was happy in having a real friend, to whom he could communicate his satisfactions and his troubles, for kings have theirs like other men; one of his greatest was the distress of the people, and the impossibility of relieving them so speedily as he could have wished. He laid open to me the whole state of his mind, without any reserved secrets; all his heart was as well known to me as my own: it was an uneasiness for us to part, and we always met again with redoubled pleasure.” Poisson 1766c, 172.

presentations of her simultaneously as an entrusted, faithful, and attentive companion, and a wise and educated counsellor.¹²⁴⁰

Secondly, as pointed out in section 4.1, the royal court was a place where the political centre of the realm and royal household(s) became entangled with their partly overlapping networks of power. The complicated networks of power, the intertwined personal relations, the official and unofficial, formal and informal networks that surrounded royal decision-making, and that were an important part of the process of royal political decision-making, allowed the royal mistresses a function that had political significance. The royal mistresses mediated the royal presence (or ear) that was the centre of political decisions. The royal mistresses also participated in the formation of networks and courtly power-blocs and political contests. From this point of view, it was quite unavoidable that the royal mistresses exerted an influence on their royal lover's opinions regarding his ministers: they conversed with the king, and they introduced courtiers and politicians to his company (or blocked entry for rivals), which could lead to the rise of a new minister (and/or disgrace of an old one). Furthermore, it is no surprise that in relation to the courtly networks of power we find the royal mistresses' influencing the process of making and unmaking royal officers – after all, it was the main objective of networking to raise the members of the network to notable positions in the government, administration, royal household, and military.

Thirdly, the elevating and disgracing of ministers had a special significance in relation to courtly networks of power. Because of alliances, duties of gratitude, and all range of rivalries, the disgrace of a powerful or prominent minister meant that the persons closely associated with him were disgraced as well, or that at least their position in the court, in the royal favour, and consequently in the power-blocs and networks of power was momentarily precarious. For example, when long-standing minister Duc de Choiseul fell, his cousin César Gabriel de Choiseul, Duc de Praslin, fell as well.¹²⁴¹ Contemporaries called such events of nominating or dismissing a powerful minister “revolutions”¹²⁴², because they certainly were at least to some extent surprises, but also because they simultaneously served as demonstrations of changing political lines. For example, Duc de Choiseul's fall indicated significant change in royal policy towards the

¹²⁴⁰ See, e.g. Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.”, *Queen Caroline*, by Tindal, 11; Walpole 1804a, 129.

¹²⁴¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 162; Bécu 1777a, 143–144.

¹²⁴² See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/282, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 2nd Jan. 1771, 1–2, on Duc de Choiseul's dismissal; Walpole 1822b, *Memoires of the year 1758*, 332–333, on the Abbé de Bernis' sudden rise; Mairobert 1775, 161–163 and Bécu 1777a, 140–144, on Duc de Choiseul's and Duc de Praslin's disgrace; Poisson 1766a, *Avant propos de l'editeur*, ix; Poisson 1766a, 260; Poisson 1766c, *Editor's preface*, xi; Poisson 1766c, 260; Poisson 1772, LETTER LIV. To the marquis de Saint-Contest, minister of state, 118; Walpole 1820c, to the Hon. H. S. Conway, Arlington-street, 29th Dec. 1770, 357; Walpole 1822b, 332; Walpole 1833a, LETTER CXXVIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 24th June 1745, 343; TNA, SP 78/282, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 2nd Jan. 1771, 60.

role and function of the Parlements in the royal administration.¹²⁴³ Furthermore, the British Secretary of State for the Southern Department Earl of Rochford and Ambassador Earl Harcourt definitely seemed anxious about the new minister that Louis XV had yet to nominate, since Duc de Choiseul had continued a consistent policy of honouring the *Pacte de Famille* that caused tension in Anglo-French relations.¹²⁴⁴

Especially since the policies and political lines were associated with certain notable persons of the court, or even embodied in them, the notion that the royal mistress was *regarded* or *represented* as participating in political decision-making had slightly different significances. To take the first point, the notion of being regarded as a participant, it is understandable that the royal mistresses were regarded as having participated in the process of political decision-making. They belonged to the royal court and its complex networks of power that surrounded royal decision-making. They had a position at the court that provided them with constant and favourable access to the royal presence. They had functions and roles that enabled them to – even justly – use some influence on politically significant matters. Furthermore, contemporaries certainly expected that the royal mistress could influence the decisions of her royal lover.¹²⁴⁵ The debate concerning the royal mistresses' use of influence in the political matter of nominating ministers was then not a debate about whether they *could* influence the process of royal decision-making, but whether they *should* influence it. And it is here that we must deal with the second point, that of *representations* of royal mistresses' use of influence in elevating, protecting, and bringing down the highest royal officers.

4.2.3.2 The nature of women's use of power

Of course, the royal mistresses should not have the power to decide the most important officers of the realm. That power belonged to the monarch alone. Their influence in political matters was outrightly unjustified. But once again, the debate was not only about the royal mistresses' use of influence or power of influence, but simultaneously about the process of royal decision-making, challenges made against its traditional forms, justifications for participation in political decision-making, and the legitimacy/delegitimacy of the use of power.

There can be distinguished certain groups of arguments, ideas, and strains of thought that were repeatedly used in the process of delegitimising the royal mistresses' political participation. Some of them were quite conventional and rested upon the interpretations concerning the two sexes with their respective and complementary characteristics, abilities, virtues, and vices. Once again, it should be kept in mind that 'complementary' suggests that the meanings can be formed through reference to either part of the binary oppositions.

¹²⁴³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 160; Bécu 1777a, 140. In literature, see, e.g. Bell 1994, 176, 313–321; Scott 1990a, 34; van Kley 1997, 764, 771.

¹²⁴⁴ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/282, Rochford to Harcourt, St. James's, 2nd Jan. 1771, 1–2.

¹²⁴⁵ This was discussed in more detail in section 4.1.3.

Some of the ideas and arguments that were used in delegitimising royal mistresses' use of influence in political matters have already been discussed previously from another perspective. For example, the royal mistresses' assumed and presented rapacity was presented in that discussion as well. The royal mistresses, both in Britain and in France alike, were presented as having sold the most important offices of the realm in order to satisfy their insatiable passion for money.¹²⁴⁶ For example, as Fauques presented Mme de Pompadour's detriments to the realm, she concluded that

Mais un des plus grands reproches qu'on eut à lui faire, étoit le trafic inoui qu'elle fesoit des charges & dont tout le profit étoit pour elle. Ce trafic tendoit visiblement à la ruine de la nation, qui dès lors, n'étoit plus desservie que par des sujets uniquement occupés à retirer tout le profit possible de leur achat. Il sembloit qu'elle eut exposé tout le royaume en vente & qu'elle fut prête à le donner au dernier enchérisseur.¹²⁴⁷

In this quote, Fauques expressed that the most important places of the government, administration, and military were distributed on the premise of the royal mistress's avarice and the wealth of the aspiring officers instead of the reasonable judgement of the decision-maker (the king) or the personal merits and abilities of the applicants.

Undoubtedly, the writers accusing the mistresses of venal offices did not mean that the ladies sold the offices, places, and posts themselves and got the money directly for themselves. It was about selling their *influence* over the king, who nominated his officers. The mistress exerted her influence in favour of a courtier or a minister, who gave her money or extravagant gifts (and his gratitude) in return.¹²⁴⁸ As discussed in section 3.2, the rapaciousness of a royal mistress entirely delegitimised not only all her actions, but also her existence beside the monarch.

The discourse connecting legitimate participation to political decision-making, or to formal and official places, functioned against the royal mistresses' use of power of influence as well. Even though the mistresses might have some legitimacy in influencing the royal opinion through their function and role as supporter and mediator, they could not hold any formal and official positions in the royal government. As an official and formal position in the government was constructed as the premise of legitimacy, the royal mistresses lost their justification for participation in royal decision-making.

¹²⁴⁶ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 154–155, on Lady Yarmouth selling peerages; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 119–120, on Mme Kielmansegg selling positions in the royal household and administration; Fauques 1766a, 183, on Mme de Pompadour selling all kinds of positions and posts in government, royal administration, and military.

¹²⁴⁷ Fauques 1759, 132. "Nor was it amongst the least of her reproaches, that prodigious venality of offices she had introduced wholly to her own profit, and to the apparent ruin of the interest of the nation, which could not but be ill – served by persons, who having bought their employs, thought of nothing but how to make the most of their bargains. France itself seemed to be put up by her at auction to the best bidder." Fauques 1758b, 59.

¹²⁴⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 41–42; Fauques 1758a, 49–50; Fauques 1766a, 183; Walpole 1833a, Orford to Mann, LETTER CLXXVIII. Arlington-Street, 26th June 1747, 32.

This theme was further emphasised by connecting the informal and unofficial to intimacy and privacy that were not marked as legitimate political, or where efforts at depoliticisation were made in the process. In the discourse on the French royal mistresses, we encounter here an interesting set of presentations concerning the political rule from the apartments of the royal mistress. The royal mistresses as well as the members of the royal family had *private apartments* in the court. This did not mean that they were not a place of political discussion and political significance. Notwithstanding the name *private apartments*, these quarters were places with a significant political meaning. They were rooms where important ceremonies and rituals belonging to liturgy of monarchy were performed (especially those of *le Lever du Roi* and *le Coucher du Roi*¹²⁴⁹) as well as where the politics of intimacy and inclusion/exclusion to the personal space of the monarch were played that demonstrated the courtly hierarchies and the centrality of the monarch and his favour.

The royal mistresses had their own ceremonial rituals that intertwined the public and private together, the most important of which was the morning *toilette*.¹²⁵⁰ The morning *toilette* of the royal mistress was a place where the mistress prepared for the day and where she met the high-ranking members of the court, foreign ambassadors, and even the king in an unofficial manner.¹²⁵¹ Even though it was a chance to meet the mistress in a more intimate atmosphere, while choosing her outfit for the day or powdering her face, it was not necessarily understood as a completely private occasion. For example, Willem van Keppel, 2nd Earl of Albemarle, British Ambassador to Paris noted, that:

[...] there is no speaking to her [Mme de Pompadour] but in publick [sic.] at her Toilette, where every body standing round her Dressing Table, gaze at her like so many statues, and wait to answer such Questions as she is pleased to propose [...].¹²⁵²

Yet, the royal mistresses' apartments were places where politicians, courtiers, and ambassadors met, and where policies and diplomacy were discussed and negotiated, even in a private or secret manner.¹²⁵³ For example, the Abbé de

¹²⁴⁹ For the meaning of royal ceremonial levee, see, e.g. Elias 2006, 91–94; Giesey 1987, 56.

¹²⁵⁰ See, e.g. BL, Add MS 33026, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 6th/17th July 1751, 218; BL, Egerton MS 3457, From Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69; Fauques 1759, 65–67; Fauques 1758a, 84; Mairobert 1775, 110; Bécu 1777a, 66.

¹²⁵¹ See, e.g. "I waited yesterday upon the Marquise de Pompadour, to pay my Court to Her, She had as large an Assembly at her Toilette," TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret & Separate, 150; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69; BL, Add MS 33026, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 6th/17th July 1751, 218; Mairobert 1775, 110; Bécu 1777a, 66; Fauques 1759, 65–67; Fauques 1758a, 84–86.

¹²⁵² BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69.

¹²⁵³ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 150; Bécu 1777a, 125; Fauques 1759, 65–67; Fauques 1758a, 84–86; Fauques 1766a, 102–104, 140–141, 208; Poisson 1766b, 187, 217; Poisson 1766a, 204; Poisson 1766c, 140, 201, 206; Poisson 1766d, 196, 227–228; Walpole 1818, 64; Walpole 1822b, 333; Walpole 1844a, LETTER CCCLXIX. From Orford to Mann, Berkeley Square, 25th Feb. 1782, Tuesday night, late, 366; BL, Add MS 33026, From Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris 6th/17th July 1751, 218; BL, Egerton MS 3457, From Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69; TNA, SP 78/247, Albemarle to Holdernessee, Paris, Wednesday 13th June 1753, Secret & Separate, 150; TNA, SP 78/283,

Bernis reminisced on the making of the Franco-Austrian alliance and Mme de Pompadour's role in it. As it was both an important alliance that changed the relations of the great powers in Europe as well as potentially an unpopular union with an old enemy, both sides in the negotiation wished for utmost caution and sensitivity. Johann Georg Adam Graf von Starhemberg, Count von Starhemberg, the Minister Plenipotentiary sent by Empress Maria Theresa, made his initial contact with Mme de Pompadour in order to initiate the negotiations for the alliance between France and Austria. This was a private and secret letter addressed to Mme de Pompadour, in which Count von Starhemberg asked "for an interview for the purpose of giving her certain secret proposals with which he was charged by Empress Maria Theresa."¹²⁵⁴ In other words, he was asking for a private audience. Further, the minister plenipotentiary asked the king to authorise one of his ministers to function in this meeting and to convey the formulated proposals to his majesty.¹²⁵⁵ This would transform the private audience with the Mistress into a political negotiation of a more official nature. What is more, all this information was given to the Abbé de Bernis when Mme de Pompadour met him in her private apartments in a private meeting.¹²⁵⁶ Further, as Mme de Pompadour was discussing the matter with the Abbé de Bernis, the King himself stepped into the room and into the discussion, and made the Abbé his chosen minister for the negotiation.¹²⁵⁷ When the first actual negotiation commenced, it took place in the presence and in the palace of Mme de Pompadour, in the château de Bellevue.¹²⁵⁸

With this in mind, the *privacy* alluded to in the name of the private apartments did not signify having no political significance, but instead it referred to the intimacy or personal relationship between the person owning the apartment and the person visiting, to inclusion in/exclusion from favour (especially royal), and to hierarchies within the royal court (especially through ceremonial and respectful visits).

Now, in most of the memoirs of the French mistresses, their private apartments were occasionally mentioned without further ado. They were presented as apartments where the mistress could discuss with her royal lover, her friends, or anyone she pleased about any matter she chose even politics. The royal mistresses' apartments had the air of informality and privacy. They were

Blaquiere to Rochford, Paris, 17th Sep. 1771, Private, 116; Pierre 1903, 222-230; Pierre 1902a, 204-210.

¹²⁵⁴ Pierre 1902a, 204. "[...] un rendez-vous où il pût faire part de propositions secrètes, dont il était chargé par l'Impératrice." Pierre 1903, 222.

¹²⁵⁵ Pierre 1903, 222-223; Pierre 1902a, 204.

¹²⁵⁶ Pierre 1903, 222-223; Pierre 1902a, 204-207.

¹²⁵⁷ Pierre 1903, 224-227; Pierre 1902a, 206.

¹²⁵⁸ Pierre 1903, 229-230; Pierre 1902a, 210. Certainly, there are many different versions of Mme de Pompadour's role in the Franco-Austrian alliance. Some believed that she was the authoress of it. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/261, Hertfor to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 88-89. Some concluded that she had nothing to do with it. See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/251, Stanley [to Pitt], Received from Mr. Stanley, 12th June 1761, in cypher, 86. In the Abbé de Bernis's case, he admitted Mme de Pompadour was irreplaceable in initiating the negotiation, but after the first contact she moved into the background and let the men conclude the alliance. Pierre 1903, 230; Pierre 1902a, 210.

places where courtiers, ministers and officers of state, administration, and government met and discussed with each other, or if fortunate, could meet with the king himself in a more relaxed environment.¹²⁵⁹ Thus, they were places of discussion and debate, for exchange of information, and establishing connections, but not for delivering a royal decision regarding political matters.

However, Mairobert presented the apartments of the royal mistresses, or specifically Mme du Barry's apartments, systematically in a more sinister manner. They were constructed as a place where the king made his decisions concerning political matters.¹²⁶⁰ They were also constructed as places of political intrigues, conspiracy, and schemes. For example, they were presented as the headquarters for the scheming of Duc d'Aiguillon and Chancellor Maopéou:

Il se forma alors une liaison très étroite entre ce Seigneur & le Chancelier, qui tenoient leurs Conférences chez Madame Dubarri, & par des raisons, personnelles à chacun d'eux, y méditoient la ruine des Choiseuls.¹²⁶¹

Mairobert's emphasis on the politicking, political decision-making, or political influencing in the royal mistress's apartments underlined the illegitimacy of the influencing that was based on personal and intimate space and relationships. Conversely, it legitimised the use of power that was based on formal and official positions and procedures. However, Mairobert's presentation also shifted the political decision-making from the monarch to the monarch in the mistress's apartments – a description where the physical place allegorically highlighted the grip of the royal mistress on the king. That is to say, it alluded that the king made his decisions in the royal mistress's apartment, under her immediate influence, and according to her wishes.

The remaining arguments and reasoning against the royal mistresses' participation in political decision-making can be separated into two categories, the first one stressing the characteristics or inclinations as motives of the mistresses, and the second illustrating the nature of their influence or power of influence in the royal court. Both of these were further strongly interconnected with the characteristics and inclinations the mistresses were assumed to have as women.

¹²⁵⁹ See, e.g. "M. de Lobkowitz ought to be content with the king, who talked with him for three quarters of an hour at Mme. de Pompadour's, and told him, on wishing him bon voyage, to assure the empress that his alliance with her would be eternal; [...]" Pierre 1902b, XXVI, To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 25th Jan. 1758, 144; "I am told then my Lord, that a nearer connection, between this Court and the king of Prussia, has been not only thought of, but actually agitated in council, that is in Mad. Du Barri's apartments." TNA, SP 78/283, Blaquièrre to Rochford, Paris, 17th Sep. 1771, Private, 116; Pierre 1902b, XXVI, To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, 25th Jan. 1758, 144; Mairobert 1775, 110; Bécu 1777a, 66; Poisson 1766a, 204; Poisson 1766c, 201; Walpole 1818, 72.

¹²⁶⁰ As for example, the dismissal of Duc de Choiseul, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 160–161; Bécu 141–142. The dismissal of Marquis de Monteunard, Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XCIX. To the Duke d'Aiguillon, 108. Or, the construction of new Comédie Française, Mairobert 1775, 212–213; Bécu 1777b, 204–205.

¹²⁶¹ Mairobert 1775, 150. "The most intimate connection was, at this time, formed between this nobleman and the Chancellor. Their conferences were held at the apartments of Madam Dubarrè, they both conspired the destruction of the Choiseuls." Bécu 1777a, 125.

I. Gendered desires as motives for political influencing

It is relatively easy to discern seven characteristics that were presented as the royal mistresses' predominant motivation for involving themselves with political influencing: i) avarice,¹²⁶² ii) pride,¹²⁶³ iii) vindictiveness,¹²⁶⁴ iv) vanity,¹²⁶⁵ v) self-love,¹²⁶⁶ vi) ambition¹²⁶⁷, and vii) jealousy¹²⁶⁸.

All these seven characteristics were eagerly attached not only to every individual royal mistress that was presented as having participated in political decision-making, but also to every woman who had any aspiration to participating in it.¹²⁶⁹ This is no surprise, since many of them embodied a specific gendered charge. For example, vanity and self-love were considered and presented as distinct feminine characteristics:

Je ne connais aux femmes qu'une minière commune à tout leur sexe, qui ne soit pas également l'attribut de tous les hommes, c'est l'amour-propre de la figure. Cet amour est dans les femmes le premier de tous les amours, et c'est à proportion de l'art avec lequel on sait flatter cette faiblesse qu'on s'assure des sentiments des femmes; la sagesse et la vertu ne défendent point les femmes de cette faiblesse.¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶² See section 3.2.

¹²⁶³ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 16–17; Fauques 1759, 61–63; Fauques 1758a, 77–80; Fauques 1766a, 86–89.

¹²⁶⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1820c, To Mr. Gray, Paris, 25th Jan. 1766, 143; TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris 15th July 1770, 53; Fauques 1759, 58–59, 61–63, 110–117, 131–132; Fauques 1758a, 77–80; Fauques 1758b, 29–37; Fauques 1766a, 86–89, 181–191; Fauques 1766b, 29–30; Anon. 1760, 16–18.

¹²⁶⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 58–59, 131–132, 134, 156; Fauques 1758b, 62, 95; Fauques 1766b, 29–30, 33, 79–80; BL, Stowe MS 89, "Appendix containing a Journal of the affairs of France in the year 1771", A Memorial on the Affairs of France, 25th Oct. 1775, 48.

¹²⁶⁶ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/281, Walpole to Weymouth, Paris, 15th July 1770, 53.

¹²⁶⁷ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 134; Fauques 1758b, 62; Fauques 1766a, 211; Fauques 1766b, 33, 83.

¹²⁶⁸ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 208; Pierre 1902a, 197; Pierre 1902b, 56, 58; Fauques 1759, 130, 179; Fauques 1758b, 130; Fauques 1766b, 123; Walpole 1822a, 292.

¹²⁶⁹ They are presented as the characteristics of individual eminent women of the court, as e.g. Queen Caroline or Duchesse de Gramont, but also as general characteristics of courtly women. Regarding Queen Caroline, see, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 205, 221, 261, 352, 407; Hervey 1931, 656; Walpole 1845a, 16; Stanhope 1777, Queen Caroline, 13–14; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." Character of Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11; Walpole 1818, 81, 85. Regarding Mme de Gramont, see, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 72–74, 114, 124–125; Bécu 1777a, 23–25, 72, 88; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 16 oct. 1768., 30–35; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXIII. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 16th Oct. 1768, 29–30; BL, Stowe MS 88, 44; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIe. LETTRE. Au Comte Du Barry, 15 oct. 1768., 31–32. On general notes, see, e.g. Pierre 1903, 42, 99, 109, 101; Pierre 1902a, 114, 145, 146–147, 152; Pierre 1902b, 59; Anon. 1732, "to the reader", xiv; Poisson 1766b, 183; Poisson 1766d, 192; Hervey 1848a, 120.

¹²⁷⁰ Pierre 1903, 99. "I know in women but one evil common to their sex which is not equally the attribute of men: I mean self-love, vanity of their persons. This love in women is the first of all their loves; and it is in proportion to the art shown in flattering that weakness that men secure the feelings of women; wisdom and virtue do not protect women from this weakness." Pierre 1902a, 145.

Both of these feminine characteristics were also understood in unequivocally negative terms as passions, vices, or weaknesses.¹²⁷¹ For example, lexicographer Chicaneau de Neuville defined extensive self-love as the source of all vice.¹²⁷²

Furthermore, vanity and self-love encompassed idle and trivial desires and pursuits of unworthy pomp¹²⁷³, thus connecting femininity to idleness (as the opposite of productive employment) and desire for objects of meaningless luxury. That is to say, personal *beauty* was in the essence of feminine vanity and self-love.¹²⁷⁴ The Abbé de Bernis further understood vanity or amour-propre as a characteristic that resulted from puerility:

On voit donc que cette frénésie d'amour-propre est une faiblesse distinctive du sexe, à laquelle il faut attribuer principalement le caractère d'enfance qui n'abandonne presque jamais les femmes. On peut même regarder cette misère comme la racine de toutes les autres faiblesses.¹²⁷⁵

Thus, this presentation correlated with the predominant eighteenth-century understanding on the familial relationship between the sexes. Male dominance in the family and in society was commonly constructed through the idea of women being dependent and protected – not unlike children.¹²⁷⁶

Thus, vanity and self-love referred essentially to i) weaknesses associated with femininity, ii) a childlike frame of mind that could be constructed as the opposite of independence and rational capacities, and iii) self-interestedness that could be constructed as the opposite of the general good/*bien public*¹²⁷⁷.

If vanity and self-love were considered female passions, vices, or weaknesses, ambition was a distinct male characteristic:

Dans tous les états de la société les hommes ont de l'ambition, & la plus dangereuse est celle qui prend pour prétexte la gloire de Dieu, & le bonheur des peuples.¹²⁷⁸

¹²⁷¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1766a, 211; Pierre 1903, 99; Pierre 1902a, 145.

¹²⁷² Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "vice".

¹²⁷³ See, e.g. Bailey 1730, "vanity"; Allen 1765, "vanity"; Barlow 1772b, "vanity"; Barclay 1774, "vanity"; Ash 1775b, "vanite"; Dyche 1756b, "vanité"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "vanité".

¹²⁷⁴ See, e.g. "The marquise had none of the great vices of ambitious women; but she had all the petty follies and fickleness of women who are in love with their own beauty and the so-called superiority of their mind;" Pierre 1902b, 59.

¹²⁷⁵ Pierre 1903, 99. "We see that this frenzy of vanity is a distinctive weakness of the sex [women], to which we must chiefly attribute the childish character which scarcely ever abandons women wholly. We may even regard this weakness as the root of all other weaknesses." Pierre 1902a, 145.

¹²⁷⁶ See, e.g. Wellman 2002, 268; McCormack 2005, 19, 22, 49, 75; Hirschmann 2008, 147; Roulston 1998/1999; Shoemaker 1998, 91; Hufton 1998, 38; Chambaud 1761, "créature".

¹²⁷⁷ See, e.g. Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "vice": "le vice est ce qui est opposé à la vertu. il prend sa source dans l'amour-propre mal entendu; c'est la préférence de l'intérêt personnel au bien public : c'est ce qu'on appelle mal moral." "Vice is the opposite of virtue. It springs from misunderstood self-love; it is the preference of personal interest over the public good: that is what we call bad morality." (Translation E.K.)

¹²⁷⁸ Poisson 1766b, 125. "In every state of life, man is animated with ambition, and the most dangerous kind is that which has for its pretext the glory of God, and the happiness of the people." Poisson 1766d, 129-130.

Ambition had a connection to other male characteristics, for example to resolution¹²⁷⁹ and the virtue of valour that further had a connection to defence of the general good/*bien public*¹²⁸⁰. Thus, unlike vanity and self-love, ambition was not only a negative characteristic or passion. Certainly, it contained an idea of excessive or even unrestrained aspirations especially to power, honour, dignity, elevation, notice, or wealth, and consequently was generally used in a negative sense.¹²⁸¹ Still, more moderate ambitions were accepted,¹²⁸² or even regarded as beneficial. In fact, regarding the ruling monarch, we can see the problematic tension within the concept *ambition*. On the one hand, it was the most dangerous passion to the ruling monarchs, a passion that the kings were warned against, a passion that led to war, conquest, and the suffering of the people, or even the illegitimate rule of despotism.¹²⁸³ On the other hand, the monarchs were not allowed to be without any ambition. A king without ambition was a king without interest in ruling and in his country, an idle king.¹²⁸⁴ Ambition was then a passion that was needed in order to get things done, but this embodied a danger of growing immoderate. In the discourse on royal mistresses and comments regarding the courtly circles and life, ambition was generally presented as a

¹²⁷⁹ See, e.g. "Becoming a man; stout; brave, or with undaunted courage and resolution." Barclay 1774, "manly"; Bailey 1759, "irresoluteness"; Bailey 1730, "irresolution"; Allen 1765, "irresolute"; Barlow 1772b, "irresolute", "manliness", "manly"; Barclay 1774, "irresolute", "manliness"; Dyche 1756a, "courage"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "ambition", "irrésolution", "vaillance". In literature, see, e.g. McCormack 2005, 15.

¹²⁸⁰ See, e.g. Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "Vailleance".

¹²⁸¹ See, e.g. Dyche 1756a, "ambition"; Chambaud 1761, "ambition"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "ambition"; Bailey 1730, "ambition"; Allen 1765, "ambition", "ambitious"; Barlow 1772a, "ambition", "ambitious", "ambitiously", "ambitiousness"; Barclay 1774, "ambition", "ambitious", "ambitiously", "ambitiousness"; Bailey 1759, "ambitious".

¹²⁸² See, e.g. "[...]: la seule ambition qui me restoit étoit l'établissement de ma fille, [...]." Poisson 1766b, 200. "the only ambition I [Mme de Pompadour] had remaining was the settling of my daughter", Poisson 1766d, 210. It would be tempting to interpret that Mme de Pompadour's ambitions regarding her daughter's future would be accepted without hesitation because when arranging her daughter's marriage Mme de Pompadour was functioning in a traditionally feminine and motherly role. However, it should be kept in mind that the marriage arrangements were alliances between great houses that could (and did) have political meanings, especially since they affected the networks of power in the court. Neither were Mme de Pompadour's ambitious views on her daughter's future spouse unanimously accepted. Quite the contrary, for e.g. Fauques deemed them indecently ambitious. See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 82; Fauques 1758a, 108–109; Fauques 1766a, 143. Regarding courtly women's role in marriage negotiations and arrangements, see, e.g. Fauques 1759, 82–85, 87–88; Fauques 1758a, 107–112, 115–116; Fauques 1766a, 142–146; Mairobert 1775, 282–287; Bécu 1777b, 305–312. In literature, see, e.g. Orr 2002, 35–36; Hufton 1998, 112.

¹²⁸³ See, e.g. "The ambition and vanity of Lewis XIV. were satisfied: he secured before his death the crown of Spain to his house. But too often the ambition and vanity of princes prove the misery of their people; as happened by this connexion [sic.] of the two monarchies." Poisson 1772, LETTER XLVIII. To mr. de Puisieux, minister of state. 1750. 104–105; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 19th July 1769, 46–47; Poisson 1766a, 198; Poisson 1766c, 196.

¹²⁸⁴ See, e.g. Walpole 1845b, 239; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 111.

negative passion or vice,¹²⁸⁵ which was further represented as one of the greatest forces moving and motivating the courtiers.¹²⁸⁶

Even though these characteristics of vanity, self-love, and ambition embodied strong gendered conceptions, they could be applied to both sexes. However, this also created new meanings for the characteristics, and could transfer other gendered qualities as well. Since ambition was essentially a masculine passion or vice, in women it was considered even more deplorable.¹²⁸⁷ As discussed in sections 3.7.4 and 3.8, effeminacy, the transfer of feminine attributes and characteristics to men, was a potent way of embarrassing and criticising men in power, and an especially important way to discuss the British political norms and ideals by comparing them to an imaginary opposite provided by French courtly representations. Therefore, it is no surprise that we find a great many comments – especially British ones – illustrating *vanity* as the French characteristic.¹²⁸⁸

If the ruling passions of courtly women were vanity, self-love, and ambition, jealousy, envy, and vindictiveness followed quite unsurprisingly. As ambition was regarded and presented as an essential characteristic and passion in courtly life, jealousy and envy were never far behind. In fact, the royal court, both in France and in Britain, was regarded and represented as a society where all its members were jealous of each other.¹²⁸⁹ More than anything, the ministers, generals, and courtiers – and the ruling monarch himself – were envious of each

¹²⁸⁵ See, e.g. notions for the justification of royal mistresses that stressed lack of ambition as an ideal characteristic for a royal mistress. Fauques 1759, 29; Fauques 1758a, 34; Fauques 1766a, 37; Mairobert 1775, 68; Bécu 1777a, 17; BL, Stowe MS 89, 44. Of course, *ambition* could be constructed as a great many things. Usually, as mentioned, it referred to desire for elevation, power, or wealth. Every now and then, however, it could be presented on more mundane occasions. E.g. Mairobert portrayed the desire for apparel and accessories as the only ambition of Mme du Barry. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 224; Bécu 1777b, 220–221. This certainly was a sort of compliment. He praised the lady for not having politically ambitious views, and simultaneously, reprimanded her for not having any greater aspirations. The ambition for pretty things only further correlated with the narrative of Mme du Barry's low origin and education. Also, in the case of Queen Marie Leszczyńska, her complete lack of ambition (for power, influence, and fame) was considered an ideal characteristic for a king's female companion. See, e.g. Walpole 1845b, 240. In Walpole's comment there certainly can be read a complaint against the British eminent ladies of his time, Queen Caroline and Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, Dowager Princess of Wales, mother of George III, who both were presented as having meddled excessively in the affairs of the realm.

¹²⁸⁶ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 173; Poisson 1766a, Avant propos de l'Editeur, iv; Poisson 1766c, the editor's preface, v; Pierre 1903, 368; Pierre 1902a, 285; Pierre 1902b, To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Ambassador to the Court of Vienna, Versailles, 20th Jan. 1757, 87; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 26.

¹²⁸⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 101, 109; Pierre 1902a, 146–147, 152.

¹²⁸⁸ See, e.g. Walpole 1804a, CXL. French character, 118–119; Walpole 1845b, 240.

¹²⁸⁹ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 282, 352, 384, 390; Pierre 1902a, 234, 272, 299, 302; Mairobert 1775, Préface, i; Mairobert 1775, 158–159; Bécu 1777a, Advertisement, i; Bécu 1777a, 138; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XXXVI. To the duke of Richelieu, 117; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE XXXVI. Au Duc de Richelieu, 55; Howard 1824a, Dean Swift to Mrs. Howard, Dublin, 21st Nov. 1730, 401; BL, Add MS 36798, rec. from H. Stanley, 12th June 1761, Decyphered copy, 46; TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 5th Sep. 1742, 364.

other's favour, power, influence, and authority.¹²⁹⁰ Just like ambition, jealousy was regarded as the mover and motivator of the action in the court¹²⁹¹: it was "the machinery of a court, to envy any man either the power of a minister, or the favour of the prince."¹²⁹²

The royal mistresses – just like all the courtiers – were presented as having been envious of influence over the king,¹²⁹³ but their jealousy had a strong feminine connotation as well. Firstly, and quite understandably, they were regarded and represented as being jealous of all other women that caught the attention of the king.¹²⁹⁴ This was an understandable sentiment, arising from the fear of a rival beauty competing for the place of an established or official royal mistress. Secondly, the royal mistresses' jealousy was strongly connected to matters of rank and reverence. For example, Mme de Pompadour was presented as being jealous of the marks of respect paid to her person, that is to say, all the little polite and civil honours that demonstrated rank and distinction in courtly society.¹²⁹⁵ This was furthermore a matter of pride, vanity, and rank. Especially Fauques considered Mme de Pompadour's vanity and jealousy regarding the manifestations of reverence and distinction as marks of her lower origin.¹²⁹⁶

Jealousy in itself was a passion or a vice that was not understood to produce any good effects – unlike ambition. Instead, it was rooted strongly in other passions and vices, especially in ambition, pride, self-love, fear, and consequently, revengefulness.¹²⁹⁷ Vanity, self-love, and hurt pride; an ambition unfulfilled; and fear and jealousy occupying the hearts of the courtiers – how could vengeance have been avoided?

If we are to look at the most political and public matters in which the royal mistresses were presented as having participated, namely the making and unmaking of the officers of the state, revenge was mentioned as the most common reason for their resolving to take action.¹²⁹⁸ For example, Fauques described the vindictive spirit of Mme de Pompadour as the reason for the

¹²⁹⁰ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 46, 47; Fauques 1758a, 58; Fauques 1766a, 65, 66–67; Poisson 1766b, 145; Poisson 1766d, 150; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCXXII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 22nd Dec. 1750, 150; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 315; Hervey 1848a, 185.

¹²⁹¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 47; Fauques 1758a, 58; Fauques 1766a, 66–67; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 315; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXIII. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 16th Oct. 1768, 29–30; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIe. LETTRE. Au Comte Du Barry, 15 oct. 1768, 31–32.

¹²⁹² Waldegrave 1821, 141.

¹²⁹³ See, e.g. Pierre 1902b, 58, 75.

¹²⁹⁴ See, e.g. Pierre 1902b, 56; Mairobert 1775, 106, 214, 306–307; Bécu 1777a, 61; Bécu 1777b, 207, 340–341; Fauques 1759, 63; Fauques 1758a, 81; Fauques 1766a, 90; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, [private], 58. In similar sense, Queen Caroline was presented as being jealous of the mistresses of George II. See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 81.

¹²⁹⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 179; Fauques 1766b, 122–123; Fauques 1758b, 130.

¹²⁹⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 64, 85, 152, 156, 173; Fauques 1758a, 82–83; Fauques 1758b, 89, 95, 122; Fauques 1766a, 100, 152; Fauques 1766b, 66, 74, 113.

¹²⁹⁷ See, e.g. Dyche 1756a, "jalousie"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "jalousie", "passion"; Dyche 1756a, "jaloux"

¹²⁹⁸ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 96–97; Pierre 1903, 367; Pierre 1902a, 284.

confusion in the royal ministries in 1757 when two long-standing ministers, Marc-Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy, Comte d'Argenson, Secrétaire d'État de la Guerre, and Jean-Baptiste de Machault d'Arnouville, Comte d'Arnouville, Secrétaire d'État de la Marine and Garde des Sceaux de France, were suddenly dismissed. The disgrace of the two eminent ministers caused a lot of speculation, and not least because the ministers were rivals and attached to opposing courtly factions. Thus, the banishment of both ministers did not signal the predominance of either of the power-blocks nor could it be read as the victory of either. The case was the more curious since Comte d'Argenson was the known rival of Mme de Pompadour, and Comte de Arnouville was supposed to be under her protection. Fauques explained the discrepancy through the mistress's vindictiveness. Mme de Pompadour was presented as having agreed on the dismissal of her Comte de Arnouville as long as she got her revenge on her bitter enemy Comte d'Argenson:

[...]; mais elle ne se fit aucun scrupule de sacrifier un ami, plutôt que de se priver des douceurs de la vengeance en ne perdant pas un ennemi.¹²⁹⁹

From all the motives for taking any resolution or action, revenge was the most unjustified. First, revengefulness was a blinding passion that caused the courtiers to make miscalculations in their actions.¹³⁰⁰ It was considered a passion resulting from hatred, just like jealousy and anger.¹³⁰¹ Secondly, revenge was always a personal motive or reason, that is to say, an interest that questioned the legitimacy of political actions that ideally were above the level of *personal* and strived to promote the public good. Revenge as a motive was occasionally discussed in relation to the monarchs. Generally, it was always presented as an unforgivable motive for royal actions and decision.¹³⁰² In fact, for the ruling monarchs it was deemed estimable to refrain from taking revenge on their enemies even when they were considered to have been entitled to do so.¹³⁰³ Since revenge was altogether an unjustified reason for taking any action or resolution, it could be easily utilised as a tool of discursive delegitimation. For example, in the *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) the escalation of

¹²⁹⁹ Fauques 1759, 127. "[...] but she made, it seems, no scruple of sacrificing a friend, rather than lose her revenge on an enemy: [...]" Fauques 1758b, 50-53. Also in Fauques 1766a, 206-208.

¹³⁰⁰ As e.g. the downfall of Mme de Gramont (and later his brother, Duc de Chosieul) was presented as having started from the public slander-campaign against Mme du Barry that Mme de Gramont initiated out of her blind revenge. See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 72-74; Bécu 1777a, 23-25; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, Paris, 16 oct. 1768., 30-35; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXIII. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 16th Oct. 1768, 29-30.

¹³⁰¹ Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "passion".

¹³⁰² See, e.g. "Je lui ai souvent oui dire que les Rois doivent punir, sans jamais songer à se venger: [...]" Poisson 1766b, 180; "I have often heard him say, that Kings should punish but never think of revenge." Poisson 1766d, 188; Poisson 1766b, 144-145; Poisson 1766d, 150; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIII. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 19th July 1769, 46-47.

¹³⁰³ See, e.g. Walpole 1845a, 5.

Jansenism from a religious dispute to a political controversy during the reign of Louis XIV was attributed to father Le Tellier¹³⁰⁴, who was presented as

[...] un homme ardent & ambitieux qui vouloit se venger de quelques offenses personnelles qu'il avoit reçues des Jansénistes: [...].¹³⁰⁵

Thus, a simple notion of personal revenge such as Le Tellier's motive was enough to question the justification of the whole religious policy adopted by Louis XIV.¹³⁰⁶ Even though these example of revenge did not describe the actions of the royal mistresses, they nonetheless participated in the process of defining the norms and ideals of monarchical rule and revealed the wider understanding of the revenge as a moral quality delegitimizing all action performed with such motivation.

The royal mistresses' motivation for interesting themselves in political decision-making was reconstructed as illegitimate through their represented personal characteristics, inclinations and passions. They were presented as rapacious, haughty, vengeful, conceited, ambitious, and envious. All these traits were given as an explanation for their assumed political decisions. All of them were also utterly unacceptable reasons for taking part in political decision-making. For one, they were all considered passions – and all passions were essentially repressing reason and rational judgment.¹³⁰⁷ Second, they were all strongly connected to femininity, either as characteristics, weaknesses, passions, or vices specific to the female sex, or through the idea that women in general were more vulnerable to the temptations of passions and less able to resist their temptations. It goes without saying that if the female sex was considered the sex of passions, the male sex was that of reason.¹³⁰⁸ And third, all these passions and motives were interconnected with personal interest, which itself went against the ideal of rule for the common good and benefit of the whole realm. Rule by a mistress, or rule by a woman, would then be an irrational rule that aimed at personal and short-term gratification of desires and passions, and consequently, ignored the wider consequences of decisions.

¹³⁰⁴ Most likely Charles-Maurice Le Tellier, Archbishop of Reims. However, could also refer to his father, Michel Le Tellier, who advocated the Catholic orthodoxy and persecuted religious dissidents.

¹³⁰⁵ Poisson 1766a, 237. “[...] a hot and ambitious man, who wanted to revenge some personal offences given him by the Jansenists, [...]” Poisson 1766c, 235.

¹³⁰⁶ Referring here specifically to bull *Unigenitus*. Poisson 1766a, 237; Poisson 1766c, 235.

¹³⁰⁷ See, e.g. Barlow 1772a, “enslavement”; Bailey 1759, “fool”, “reason”; Barclay 1774, “enslavenement”, “health”; Barlow 1772b, “mistress”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “amour-propre”, “concupiscence”, “jugement”, “modération”; Neuville 1751, “femme. homme”; Chambaud 1761, “ivresse”, “maitriser”, “passion”, “raison”, “tiraniser”.

¹³⁰⁸ See, e.g. Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “femme. homme”. In literature, see, e.g. McCormack 2005, 49, 132; Harvey 2005; Hirschmann 2008, 95, 99, 138, 162–163; Farr 1991, 397–398; Rendall 1985, 31; Shoemaker 1998, 24; Hufton 1998, 44.

II. Intrigues and whims

When it comes to the representations regarding the nature of the royal mistresses' uses of power in the court, we encounter yet again various strains of thought that delegitimise both women's use of power in general and royal mistresses' in particular. There is an enormous amount of accounts describing royal mistresses' use of power as i) influence, ii) intrigues, and iii) whim. Without any share of formal power, the royal mistresses' use of power was inseparable from personal relations and influence, as discussed in section 4.2.1. And without the power attached to formal and official positions, what else could royal mistresses do but plot and conspire their way through their personal connections to an influential position?

As the ideals regarding formality and officiality delegitimised the royal mistresses' power of influence, the ideals concerning honest and firm resolution in political decision-making similarly came to define their power of influence as illegitimate. The royal mistresses' designs and actions at court and especially in relation to political influencing were almost without exception represented in terms of *intrigue*. This concept had a great many connotations, but in general, it was represented as a low and despicable way of taking care of affairs.¹³⁰⁹ In the first place, *intrigues*, *schemes*, *cabals*, and *ruses* were connected to the court's internal power struggles.¹³¹⁰ This outcry was directed against the courtly and aristocratic culture as a world of artifice and deceit that affected the good

¹³⁰⁹ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Extracts from English Newspapers, delivered to M. de Bussy, 26th Aug. 1761, Extrait du Gazetteer, 21th août, 21; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, 58; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 20th Mar. 1771, 144; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 24; Mairobert 1775, 68; Bécu 1777a, 17; BL, Stowe MS 89, 19; TNA, SP 78/215, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 15th/26th June 1737, Most secret and Particular, 126. The intrigues were also belittlingly connected to anecdotes, as e.g. in Hervey 1848a, 95, and petty annoyances, as e.g. in TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 24. As for the more neutral uses, eighteenth-century dictionaries defined *affair* as *business*, *employment*, and *intrigue*. See, e.g. Barlow 1772a, "affair"; Barclay 1774, "affair"; Ash 1775a, "affair"; Dyche 1756a, "intrigue". However, in the comments concerning the royal courts, *intrigue* was very rarely a neutral term, and never a positive one.

¹³¹⁰ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 89, 109, 119–120, 364, 384, 398; Pierre 1902a, 139, 152, 159, 282, 299, 309; Pierre 1902b, To Monsieur le Comte de Stainville, Ambassador to the Court of Vienna, Versailles, 20th Jan. 1757, 87–88; Mairobert 1775, 70, 131–132, 150, 297–298; Bécu 1777a, 20, 99, 125; Bécu 1777b, 327; Fauques 1759, 48–55; Fauques 1758a, 60–68; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXVI. To the Duke d'Aiguillon, editor's footnote, 142; Mairobert 1779a, CXXVIe. LETTRE. Au Duc d'Aiguillon, commentaire de l'editeur, 172; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LIV. From the Chancellor Maupeou. 61; Mairobert 1779a, LIVE. LETTRE. De Mr. de Maupeou, 75; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XC. To the Duke de Duras, 98–99; Mairobert 1779a, XCe. LETTRE. Au Duc de Duras, 120–121; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXIII. From the Count Du Barry, Paris, 16th Oct. 1768, 29; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIIe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry Paris, 16 oct. 1768, 34; Poisson 1766a, 41, 140; Poisson 1766b, 22; Poisson 1766c, 41, 138; Poisson 1766d, 23; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXXV. To the countess of Baschi, 149; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXXV. A la comtesse de Baschi, 162; Hervey 1848a, 67; BL, Stowe MS 89, 3; TNA, SP 78/261, Hertfor to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 89; TNA, SP 78/289, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 16th June 1773, Private, 27; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 26.

government and general good of the realm, as discussed in section 3.7.3. Furthermore, there was a volatile interface between *intrigues*, *plotting*, and *faire la politique*, or what we nowadays call *politicking*, that reinforced the criticism against political decision-making in courtly circles.

On this point, the conceptualisations of the terms *political/politique* and *politically/politiquement* prove to be enlightening. As already noted in Introduction, section 1.2, these terms were not such key concepts of political vocabularies as they are now. However, they were still used even though to a lesser extent and with a different meaning. In the eighteenth century there existed an understanding, if not consensus, that *political* matters were first and foremost those that i) were common and general by their nature, and ii) had some connection to the government, administration, and monarch, namely the maintenance of law, order, and justice in the realm, fiscal administration, foreign policy, and a variety of measures for enhancing the material welfare of the subjects (and consequently, the strength and grandeur of the kingdom). The adjective *political* and the adverb *politically* were connected to political matters as ways to define some affairs (or persons) as relating to governmental structures, authority, or sovereign power. But they were also terms used to describe the manner in which the decisions concerning politics and policies were made.

In eighteenth-century political languages, these terms conveyed a very significant double meaning that could be exploited in the processes of discursive legitimisation/delegitimisation of the manners, practices, and customs of political decision-making. The term *political/politically* was understood as both *artfulness* and *cunningness*.¹³¹¹ With two such divergent connotations eighteenth-century writers could make strong statements about the nature of the power used in political decision making, and consequently, convey very different perceptions of political rule, its practices, and its legitimacy.

A perfect example of the possible political use of the term *political* would be the contravening uses of the term by the Abbé de Bernis and Mairobert. In every type of source – besides the two aforementioned writers – the term *political* was used in both meanings as an *artful* way of doing *politics* as well as a *cunning* way of doing *politics*. In these instances, the application of the first-mentioned connotation was used either in a neutral sense or to approve certain policies or ways of resolving political issues. For example, it could be paired with knowledge, and thus was usually a neutral expectation that all political decisions should be based on knowledge and be made by a knowledgeable person¹³¹². The second connotation was used to denounce and delegitimise certain policies,

¹³¹¹ See, e.g. “relating to politics; relating to the public administration of affairs; cunning; skillful.” Barlow 1772b, “political”; “relating to the public administration of affairs. Cunning.” Barclay 1774, “political”; Dyche 1756b, “politique”; Chambaud 1761, “politique”; Ihalainen 1999, 93–99, 194; Ihalainen 2013, 63–65; Papenheim 2013, 52–53.

¹³¹² See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 65, 84; “Artfully, cunningly.” Ash 1775b, “politickly”; Dyche 1756b, “politique”, “politiquement”; Chambaud 1761, “politique”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “politique”.

practices of political decision-making, and authority of certain persons.¹³¹³ In this last sense, *political* was furthermore strongly connected to terms such as *ruse*¹³¹⁴ and *intrigue*¹³¹⁵.

The Abbé de Bernis and Mairobert, however, provide a pair of examples where the general use of a certain connotation remained systematic. Thus, they demonstrate the typical meanings of these concepts in the prevailing political culture and political vocabulary. The Abbé de Bernis, being part of the royal government and court, almost unfailingly employed neutral or even approving language in his uses of the term *political/politique*. He was talking about political systems,¹³¹⁶ political careers,¹³¹⁷ or the political role of France,¹³¹⁸ mainly in relation to foreign policies, such as war, peace, and alliances.¹³¹⁹ As such, it is also obvious that his understanding about *politics* was limited largely to the foreign policies and functions of ministries. Mairobert, for his part, was equally steady in his usage of the terms, both *politics* and *political*, with the negative connotation, combining it generally with intrigues,¹³²⁰ personal pettiness,¹³²¹ or *coup de politique*¹³²². While the Abbé de Bernis restricted the use of the terms *politics* and *political* to the affairs of government and administration, thus limiting it as the business of the king and his ministers, Mairobert fused it with personal interest and relationships and made it possible to convey courtly politics as a field of rival personalities influencing political decision-making. In other words, the Abbé's way of utilising the term legitimised the royal political decision-making process, and Mairobert's way delegitimised it systematically.

It seems that the use of the disapproving and delegitimising connotation of cunningness became more common after the mid-century.¹³²³ The development of the use of the term was then in parallel with the increasing criticism of courtly culture and corruption as well as growing desires for transparency (as accountability) in political government and administration. But what is more important, it was also a part of the debate that challenged conventional political decision-making and rule that was based on personal relationships and networks of power.

¹³¹³ See, e.g. "Que Madame de Pompadour ait été l'auteur de ce coup de politique; [...] le système de neutralité [...]." Fauques 1759, 126–127; "That la Pompadour was the authoress of this policy of a neutrality, [...] political system of neutrality, [...]." Fauques 1766a, 205–207.

¹³¹⁴ See, e.g. "une ruse de sa politique" Poisson 1759a, 51.

¹³¹⁵ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 1–2; Poisson 1766c, 1–2.

¹³¹⁶ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 135, 243, 294, 286, 381, 416.

¹³¹⁷ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 144.

¹³¹⁸ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 271.

¹³¹⁹ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 267.

¹³²⁰ Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXX. To the Duke of Orleans, 34; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXII. To the Prince de Soubise, 126–127.

¹³²¹ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 68.

¹³²² See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 122, 129, 138.

¹³²³ For example, the early eighteenth-century dictionaries did not mention the undertone of cunningness in their definitions for *politic*. See, e.g., Bailey 1730, "politic". After the mid-century cunningness was not only mentioned in every definition of *politic* but the vocabulary extended as well to cover and describe other politics-related words, such as *political*, *politically* and *politically*. See, e.g. Allen 1765; Barclay 1774; Ash 1775b; Chambaud 1761, "politique".

Thus, intrigues and plots had an established place in the debates concerning the royal courts even disregarding the role of the royal mistress. However, the intrigues and schemes were specifically connected to the courtly contests that included women, either as agents or as tools of contest.¹³²⁴ One of the reasons for this was that the term *intrigue* had a strong connection to relations between the sexes as the term also signified a little love affair.¹³²⁵ In addition, the amorous intrigues and little gallantries were regarded as having political potential (as an opportunity for gaining political influence or even elevating a new royal mistress), and the use of sexual seductions was connected to the female sex.¹³²⁶ Furthermore, as the official and formal route to the use of power was blocked for women, “Cunning and perfidy were the means she made use of in business – as all women do – for want of better.”¹³²⁷ However, Chesterfield was not describing the political influencing of a royal mistress but that of Queen Caroline.

Thus, such concepts as caballing and intrigue were embedded with a strong feminine connection. In fact, the idea of women and scheming was constructed as a binary opposite to proper political decision-making. For example, Horace Walpole wrote about “female intrigues”¹³²⁸ behind the marriage arrangements of Louis XV with Marie Leszczyńska, thus questioning the political decision of royal marriage through a simple connection to femininity or female agency behind it. Fauques on the other hand wrote about Mme de Pompadour’s policy of neutrality as a demonstration of “female cunning”¹³²⁹ as opposed to “manly prudence”¹³³⁰. Thus, it is no surprise then that the royal mistresses’ power of

¹³²⁴ See, e.g. Pierre 1903, 152–154, 206; Pierre 1902a, 172–174, 195, 204; Pierre 1902b, 59; Mairobert 1775, 69; Bécu 1777a, 19; Fauques 1759, 125, 178; Fauques 1758b, 38, 48, 129; Fauques 1766b, 119–120; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXII. To the Count Du Barry, 15th Oct. 1768, editor’s footnote, 27; Mairobert 1779a, XXIIe. LETTRE. Au Comte Du Barry, 15 oct. 1768, commentaire de l’editeur, 29; Walpole 1804b, CXLVII. Choiseul, 95–96; Walpole 1804b, CXCIII. Devotion of Louis XIV, 151; Walpole 1822b; TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 24th Sep. 1738, Most Private, 87–88; TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 4th May 1765, 83; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 256–257; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, 53–54; TNA, SP 78/291, Stormont to Rochford, Thursday afternoon, 31st March 1774, Most confidential, 210; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 24.

¹³²⁵ See, e.g. Bailey 1730, “amour”; Barlow 1772a, “amour”; Barclay 1774, “amour”; Ash 1775a, “amour”; Bailey 1730, “gallantry”; Dyche 1756a, “amourette”; Chambaud 1761, “amourette”, “galanterie”; Poisson 1766a, 141; Poisson 1766c, 140; Walpole 1818, 96; Walpole 1845a, 64; Mairobert 1775, 69, 248–249; Bécu 1777a, 18; Bécu 1777b, 257–258.

¹³²⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 21; Fauques 1758a, 23; Fauques 1766a, 25; Poisson 1766a, 22–23; Poisson 1766b, 183; Poisson 1766c, 22–23; Poisson 1766d, 191–192; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 2nd May 1753, Private, 73; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 23rd May 1753, Private, 90; Pierre 1903, 206; Pierre 1902a, 195. Sensual seduction and sex as a women’s use of power will be further discussed in section 4.2.3.4.

¹³²⁷ Stanhope 1777, Queen Caroline, 13–14. Also in Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Character of Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11.

¹³²⁸ Walpole 1804b, CXCII. Bourbon, 150–151.

¹³²⁹ Fauques 1758b, 54; Fauques 1766a, 209. “la ruse d’une femmelete que d’une prudence male & courageuse”, Fauques 1759, 128–129.

¹³³⁰ Fauques 1758b, 54; Fauques 1766a, 209. “la ruse d’une femmelete que d’une prudence male & courageuse”, Fauques 1759, 128–129.

influence was often defined as intrigue, artifice, and ruse¹³³¹ – all of which were forms of unjustified, wrongful, and deplorable ways, more feminine than masculine, of meddling in the political decision-making process.

Cunning, intrigues, ruse, artifice, scheme, plot, conspiracy, and cabal were all common elements of eighteenth-century vocabulary presenting the royal mistresses. However, they were not all equally censuring. They were connected to the different aspects of the royal mistresses as epitomes of illegitimate rule, and they were not all used in a similar manner in the differing political cultures of Britain and France.

For example, *scheme* was a slightly more neutral term. On the one hand, it could be used neutrally (as a *plan*) in reference to certain policies or general political lines,¹³³² but it could be applied referring to contemptible chicanery or used as a word of belittlement.¹³³³ In the latter sense, it encompassed similar connotations as *intrigue*, as for example with reference to femininity and gallantry. For example, in 1738 James Waldegrave, 1st Earl Waldegrave, British Ambassador to France, used the term in this sense when describing Louise Anne de Bourbon, Mlle de Charolais's aspiration for finding a new mistress for her cousin Louis XV: "[Mlle de Charolais] has been a long while laying Schemes to give the King a Taste for Galantry, [...]."¹³³⁴ *Scheme* was also the term that British writers preferred, especially in relation to the inner designs of the British court. That is to say, *intrigues* – even though used in the sense of a little love-affair in the British context as well¹³³⁵ – was specifically a French political or feminine device.¹³³⁶

The intrigues typical of the French court also had a connection to the power-block of the court. As Earl of Harcourt, the British ambassador in France, stated regarding the internal divisions of the court: "I don't suppose that any Court ever produced more Intrigues, Factions & Cabals, than this Court does at present."¹³³⁷ *Cabal* was the third commonly used term when presenting the internal designs of the royal courts and especially the royal mistresses' pursuits of influence. Like intrigue and scheme, it was a term of denouncement aimed at delegitimising the

¹³³¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 125, 134, 189; Fauques 1758b, 58, 62; Fauques 1766a, 204; Fauques 1766b, 30, 33, 66, 111.

¹³³² As, e.g. in Walpole 1833a LETTER CIV. From Orford to Mann, London, 8th May 1744, 287; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 13th Feb. 1771, 65.

¹³³³ See, e.g. Walpole 1833a, LETTER LIII. From Orford to Mann, Houghton, 16th Oct. 1742, 187; Shebbeare 1757, 42; BL, Stowe MS 89, 19; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 26th Mar. 1769, 181; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 20th Mar. 1769, 172.

¹³³⁴ TNA, SP 78/219, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Paris, 20th Aug. 1738, Most Secret, 10. See also, e.g. TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 257.

¹³³⁵ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 96; Walpole 1845a, 64; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, Wednesday 2nd May 1753, Private, 73; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 23rd May 1753, Private, 90.

¹³³⁶ See, e.g. Walpole 1822b, 234; Walpole 1845a, 138; TNA, SP 78/289, Horace St. Paul to Rochford, Compiègne, 28th July 1773, 89; TNA, SP 78/291, Stormont to Rochford, Thursday afternoon, 31st Mar. 1774, Most confidential, 210; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, Supplement, Thursday Morning, 30; Walpole 1822a, 291.

¹³³⁷ TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 5th Feb. 1771, [private], 58.

pursuits of the political opponent of the speaker/writer/commentator.¹³³⁸ But it was also a term that demonstrated the internal splits of the court and the general sentiments regarding the division of the royal court and government.¹³³⁹

Remarkably – but not surprisingly – caballing was once again represented as an especially French courtly quality – and a political pain point. In eighteenth-century French political culture, there was an ideal of stability, harmony, and unity concerning the political rule of the kingdom. The unity of the realm was embodied in the person of the monarch, and consequently, the interest of the realm as a totality as well.¹³⁴⁰ The idea of the two indivisible bodies of the monarch, the body political and body natural, was also utilised through symbolical and metaphorical representations where the whole political body of the realm could be represented through the body of the personal monarch. Here, the body or person of the monarch represented the stability, unity, and continuity of the realm.¹³⁴¹ For example, G. A. Kelly (1981) argued that the discourse of evil adviser was an attempt to protect that unity embodied in the monarch.¹³⁴² On some level, this must have been the case – it was, as explained earlier, a device that stressed the political decision-making by the personal monarch only as legitimate use of power, and simultaneously confirmed the inherent expectation of the benevolence of the monarch (or, at the least, did not question the motives of the monarch as intentionally evil when enacting flawed or harmful policies).

However, as the public debate expanded and politicised during the eighteenth century, and especially as the internal contests of the royal court escaped into print, manuscripts, libelles, and other modes of communication and

¹³³⁸ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 203; Pierre 1903, 119, 355; Pierre 1902a, 159, 275; Poisson 1766a, 41, 237; Poisson 1766b, 183; Poisson 1766c, 41, 235; Poisson 1766d, 192; Poisson 1771b, LETTRE LXXI. A la comtesse de Baschi, 1762, 103; Poisson 1771d, LETTER LXXI, To the countess of Baschi, 1762, 93; TNA, SP 78/252, Extracts from English Newspapers, delivered to M. de Bussy, 26th Aug. 1761, Extrait du Gazetteer du 21 août, Extrait d'une lettre de La Haye endatte du 14, 85; TNA, SP 78/291, Stormont to Rochford, Thursday afternoon, 31st Mar. 1774, Most confidential, 210; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 24.

¹³³⁹ Walpole 1818, 11; Hervey 1848a, 362; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXLIV, From Orford to Mann, Calais, 8th Oct. 1769, 51; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXVIII, From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 15th Jan. 1771, 126; Pierre 1903, 345; Pierre 1902a, 267; Poisson 1766a, 197, 207; Poisson 1766c, 195, 204; Poisson 1766b, 99, 182; Poisson 1766d, 103, 191; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Paris, 8th Apr. 1753, Private, 69; BL, Egerton MS 3457, Albemarle to Holderness, Fontainebleau, Tuesday 6th Nov. 1753, Very secret, 182; TNA, SP 78/236, Yorke to Newcastle, Paris, 11th/22th Aug. 1756, 362; TNA, SP 78/272, Rochford to Shelburne, Paris, 7th May 1767, Secret and Confidential, 257; TNA, SP 78/278, Harcourt to Weymouth, Saturday night, 22nd Apr. (1769), 44; TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 20th Mar. 1771, 144.

¹³⁴⁰ See, e.g. Merrick 1986, 499; Baker 1990, 225–226; Hours 2002, 226–227; Baecque 1997, 96–104; Graham 2000, 258; Franko 1994, 74–75; Franko 2003, 71. Of course, there was a desire for unity through the person of the monarch in British political culture that was articulated especially after 1730s, but most certainly had been sought and reconstructed before that as well. See, e.g. McCormack 2005, 69–70. For example, Queen Anne sought to unite her subjects through conscious ceremonial policies, where her person was constructed as the point of unity. See Bucholz 1991, 297, 305.

¹³⁴¹ See, e.g. Baecque 1997, 4–13; Kantorowicz 1957, 7–15, 207–211, 219, 220–221, 223–229; Drévilion 2000, 283–284, 296; Roche 1999, 194, 230–231; Gruder 1987, 365–366; Baker 1987b, 470; Franko 1994, 74–75; Franko 2003, 71.

¹³⁴² Kelly 1981, 275–276.

debate outside the immediate courtly circles, the overtly used technique of evil adviser metamorphosed into something else. As the rival power-blocks and personages of the court and Parlements all sought to utilise the means of discourse on evil advisers, the result was that the whole royal administration was unveiled and presented as quarrelsome and disunited – as for example in the presentations on the cabals of the royal court. As Keith Michael Baker (1990), for example, argued, the incoherence, discord, and rivalry in the court, government, and between the administrative bodies eroded the symbolic unity of the realm in the monarch – who was, after all, supposed to be the master of his court, government, and governing bodies.¹³⁴³

A caballing court was anathema to the idea of unity, stability, and harmony in the person of the monarch. And it was the more so in France, where there were no means of legitimate opposition. In Britain, Parliament and party politics made possible both loyal and legitimate opposition. Thus, in Britain, *caballing* was connected to party politicking rather than courtly activities.¹³⁴⁴ The French system was not designed to feature stable opposition or contesting power-blocks.¹³⁴⁵ In fact, in French political culture, the British system of political parties was considered unfamiliar, threatening, and dangerous. It was a quarrelsome, agitated, and overtly passionate way of doing politics, one that unnecessarily agitated the debates and that did not seem to be a stable and orderly process, as was the French ideal.¹³⁴⁶

Thus, internal conflicts, intrigues, and especially cabals of the court have always been a threat to the monarchical system that was based upon the ideas of unity, unanimity, and consensus. However, as the public debate started to change, expand, and politicise, such intrigues became even more threatening. At this point, the royal mistress's figure was typically constructed as an element or agent of instability and disunity in itself. It was the royal mistress that was presented as having made and unmade royal officers and counsellors, as intrigue and cabal, in order to form her own *parti* against another power-block, and thus, to dissolve not only the unity of the court, ministries, and councils, but also the hopes for finding any common ground in an environment where the actors changed so often. Similarly, it was the royal mistress that encouraged the king to make volatile and unpredictable decisions, to change his royal resolutions, or even more dangerously, to leave political decisions unfinished, as in the case of Mme de Pompadour's *policy of neutrality* regarding the contest between the Parlement of Paris, Church, and Crown. The French monarchical system, based

¹³⁴³ Baker 1990, 115. Furthermore, Louis XV adopted a style of ruling with the help of several ministries and councils that had no clear and distinct management of certain affairs – i.e. the boundaries of these governmental aids were flexible. That style further made the government seem intricate and fragmented. See, e.g. Zysberg 2002, 68–71. Regarding the prevalent ideal for unity in government, see the general lamentations on the lack of it, as e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXXVIII, From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 9th Sep. 1771, 167–168; Pierre 1903, 205, 333; Pierre 1902a, 194, 260; Poisson 1766d, 103.

¹³⁴⁴ Ihalainen 1999, 167, 199, 204–205, 210, 212–214, 228, 322.

¹³⁴⁵ See, e.g. Graham 2000, 59; Graham 2000, 258.

¹³⁴⁶ See, e.g. Baker 1990, 173–175, 179–181; Bell 1994, 110; Gruder 1987, 367; Graham 2000, 80–81; Ihalainen 1999, 52, 153, 183.

on a strong and resolute monarch, could not endure uncertainty and indecision. As stated in numerous studies, Louis XV was considered to have lost control of his court and its rival power-blocks.¹³⁴⁷ Along with that went the unity of his realm, unity of his government, and resolution of his political decision-making – and it was all attributed to the influence of his mistresses.¹³⁴⁸ For example, in 1771 Simon Harcourt, 1st Earl Harcourt, the British Ambassador to France, highlighted the rise of Mme du Barry when describing the disunited French court:

The Confusion and Disorder that prevail at Versailles, the Want of a Minister, and the great Ascendancy which Madame Barri dayly [sic.] acquires (and which nothing but Imprudence & Mismanagement can lessen) makes it very difficult to know the real Sentiments of this Court, which is divided into Factions and Cabals that employ all thin Intrigues in promoting their Respective Parties.¹³⁴⁹

When it comes to the anticipated changes in the relations of power within the court, the moments of the rise of new mistresses were the most feared. A new favourite nurtured her own favourites, and influenced royal decision-making in order to gain royal favours for them and in order to raise them to positions of power. Such was case when courtly commentators noticed new rising mistresses, as for example, Mme de la Tournelle,¹³⁵⁰ Mme du Barry,¹³⁵¹ Mme d'Esparbesse,¹³⁵² or Mlle Romance¹³⁵³. On all occasions, there were expected, whether feared or hoped for, new rising favourites and changes in the composition of ministries, and even in political direction. For example, when Earl Harcourt described the sentiments in the French court after the formal presentation of Mme du Barry as *maîtresse-en-titre*, he was anticipating significant political changes both within the ministries and in the direction of foreign policy:

Madame Barré, Presentation has occasioned the more Speculation as it is imagined that great Alterations may happen in consequence of it. Monsieur de Castries, the Duke D'Aiguilloin, & Marshal de Broglio are mentioned as Persons likely to be employed in the management of Publik [sic.] affairs. The Duke D'Aiguillon & Mons. de Castries are known to be the Duke de Choiseuls Enemies, & Marshal de Broglio far from being considered as his Friend.

¹³⁴⁷ See, e.g. Henshall 1992, 62, 97; Shennan 2007, 150; Graham 2006, 150. Not that he necessarily actually was, as emphasised by Bernard Hours 2002.

¹³⁴⁸ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 4th May 1765, 82–83; TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107; TNA, SP 78/261, Hertfor to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 88–89; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXVII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, Saturday evening, 29th Dec. 1770, 121–123; Mairobert 1775, 166–168, 337–338; Bécu 1777a, 147–150; Bécu 1777b, 384; Pierre 1903, 205; Pierre 1902a, 194.

¹³⁴⁹ TNA, SP 78/282, Harcourt to Rochford, Paris, 20th Mar. 1771, 144–145.

¹³⁵⁰ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/227B, Thompson to Newcastle, Paris, 12th Nov. 1742, 430–431.

¹³⁵¹ See, e.g. Walpole 1843b, LETTER CXXXV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 31st Jan. 1769, 21.

¹³⁵² TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 4th May 1765, 82–83; TNA, SP 78/266, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 21st May 1765, 144.

¹³⁵³ TNA, SP 78/261, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 19th Apr. 1764, 88–89.

If a Change of Ministry should take Place, it must necessarily be added with great alterations in the Political System, & as the Nation in general has expressed the utmost Aversion to the Corsican War, [...].¹³⁵⁴

By contrast, the established mistress, whose favour was on a solid foundation, who prevailed in attempted coups for her position in the royal favour, and who occupied her position for a long period of time, could be regarded and presented as having the opposite impact. Even though such statements were in the minority in contrast to representations of royal mistresses as elements of instability, there were occasions when the long-reigning mistress was presented as a stabilising element and agent in the court. If presented as parts of a somewhat established *parti*, they were parts of a group that had established or known sentiments towards certain political lines. Thus, they were agents that had foreseeable objectives. A good example would be Hans Stanley's statements on Mme de Pompadour as an advocate of the Franco-Austrian alliance.¹³⁵⁵ As a supporter of the alliance, she was expected to act in favour of the Austrian Habsburgs.¹³⁵⁶

The understanding of an established mistress acting as a stabilising element was of course also implicitly present in describing the moments when commentators feared a change of mistress and change in the direction of royal policies as well.¹³⁵⁷ The reign of an established mistress could thus be presented as a relatively peaceful time when it comes to courtly contests. At least, this can be deduced from the descriptions of times when there was a mistress – or a queen – on the wane, either on her way out of the royal court, royal favour, or departing this life, and leaving a power vacuum behind. For example, in 1750 Horace Walpole wrote to Horace Mann about the possible changes in the ministry at the beginning of the year 1751:

The German ministers are more alarmed, and seem to apprehend themselves in as tottering a situation as some of the English: not that of any Secretary of State is jealous of them – their Countess [Lady Yarmouth] is on the wane.¹³⁵⁸

For his part, John Hervey intimated the possible power-vacuum after Mrs. Howard indicated her wish to leave the court by stressing “[...] the danger there might be, from the King's coquetry, of some more troublesome and powerful successor, [...].”¹³⁵⁹ Hervey further stressed similar fears of uncertainty and instability in the court when discussing Queen Caroline's declining health and fears for her passing away. On this occasion, he quoted Sir Robert Walpole:

¹³⁵⁴ TNA, SP 78/277, Harcourt to Weymouth, Paris, 2nd Feb. 1769, Secret, 106–107.

¹³⁵⁵ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 112; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], L'Isle Adan, 15th Sep. 1761, 210.

¹³⁵⁶ See, e.g. TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 2nd Sep. 1761, Private, 131.

¹³⁵⁷ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 291; Walpole 1845a, 415; Walpole 1818, 91–92, on Queen Caroline's constant policies.

¹³⁵⁸ Walpole 1833a, LETTER CCXXII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry-Hill, 22nd Dec. 1750, 150.

¹³⁵⁹ Hervey 1848a, 353.

"Oh! my Lord," said Sir Robert, "if this woman should die, what a scene of confusion will there be! Who can tell into what hands the King will fall? or who will have the management of him? I defy the ablest person in the kingdom to foresee what will be the consequence of this great event."¹³⁶⁰

In relation to the French court, the Abbé de Bernis presented a difficult situation where Mme de Pompadour was exhausted by competing with a rival beauty that had caught the king's eye, and she asked to take her leave from the court. To prevent this happening, the Abbé wrote a letter to the king,

[...] and represent to him how much a new acknowledged mistress would injure his reputation, his affairs, and give umbrage to the Court of Vienna, which had addressed itself to her, Mme. de Pompadour, in the matter of its alliance with him; and that as a new mistress would surely change all that her predecessor had established, the empress would no longer have confidence in the stability of the new political system of France;¹³⁶¹

The king replied to the letter by letting go of his new fancy in order to prevent Mme de Pompadour taking her leave, "[...] because he felt the danger for his affairs, and for his reputation."¹³⁶²

Meanwhile, Francis Seymour-Conway, 1st Marquis of Hertford, the British Ambassador to France feared that the death of Mme de Pompadour would change both the composition of the court and the relations between Britain and France:

[...] her Death, if it happen, must be attended with great Consequences, the wisest & most experienced Courtier is not able to conjecture, much less to foretell, what these Consequences may prove. For my part, besides my personal Regard to the Lady, I am so satisfied in the present pacifick [sic.] Dispositions of the Court of France, that I should be sorry any Alteration should happen in it, which might endanger, tho' in the most remote Degree, the present Harmony between the Kingdoms.¹³⁶³

But these relate to the sentiments of stability and predictability in courtly politics. That is to say, the royal mistress might occasionally be presented as the element or agent of stability, but never that of unity in the royal court. They were always elements and agents that brought forth competition, scheming, and caballing.

After influence and intrigues, we arrive at the last point regarding the nature of women's use of power: caprice. The royal mistresses' act of using their power of influence in political matters was generally illustrated in terms of

¹³⁶⁰ Hervey 1848b, 828. Also in Hervey 1931, 904. In a similar manner, Hervey presented a conversation between Sir Robert Walpole and Queen Caroline upon the same subject: "Should any accident happen to your Majesty, who can tell into what hands he would fall - who can tell what would become of him, of your children, and of us all? Some woman, your Majesty knows, would govern him; for the company of men he cannot bear. Who knows who that woman could be, or what she would be? She might be avaricious; she might be profuse; she might be ambitious; [...], she might blow up the father against the son; irritate the son against the father, the brother against one another; [...]. To these divisions in the palace, the natural consequences of those would be, it is much more terrible to think of than difficult to foresee." Hervey 1848a, 345.

¹³⁶¹ Pierre 1902b, 56-57.

¹³⁶² Pierre 1902b, 58.

¹³⁶³ TNA, SP 78/260, Hertford to Halifax, Paris, 11th Mar. 1764, 220.

volatility, humour, and fancy.¹³⁶⁴ There certainly were various meanings attached to the terms *whim* and *caprice* that made the representations of royal mistresses' use of influence politically significant. Firstly, the concepts of *whim* and *caprice* had a strong connection to femininity.¹³⁶⁵ Women, in general, were regarded as fanciful and volatile creatures, as for example the conventional collocation "woman's whim"¹³⁶⁶ indicates. Secondly, whims and caprices were inseparably connected to humours and passions as the opposite of calculated and well-informed decision-making. Besides, these two strains of thought were not necessarily far from each other, as we are about to see. And thirdly, whims and caprices had a distinct connection to the rule of law.

The interconnection between women and volatility or fancifulness was essentially rooted in the understanding of women as passionate and vain. As discussed previously, women were understood to aim for gratification of passions and desires, and in this pursuit, they were not understood to grasp the consequences of their actions. For example, the Abbé de Bernis stressed this interconnection with a little anecdote about Queen Elizabeth of England. According to his anecdote, Queen Elizabeth was presented as having elevated her worthless favourite into high positions just because she was in love with him. It was understood as an action that flattered the vanity of the Queen but that also had severe consequences for the management of the realm.¹³⁶⁷

The recollections of the French royal mistresses are filled with descriptions of politically significant resolutions made on the premise of the fancy or whim of the royal mistress. For example, both Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry were presented as having persuaded the monarch to fulfil their fancies, whims, and little passions to the extent that it affected nominations of royal officers and distribution of honours.¹³⁶⁸ Mairobert shared a little anecdote about the whims of Mme du Barry. A man called Sieur Dabbadie showed the Mistress a parrot, which she immediately wanted and was ready to pay any price S. Dabbadie named. He wished to gain the cross of St. Louis, that is, to be knighted in the Order of St. Louis, which was usually an honour granted to those with exceptionable merit.¹³⁶⁹ And, as Mairobert stated, as "the King was obliged to give way to all the extravagant whims of his mistress, [...]"¹³⁷⁰, Sieur Dabbadie was knighted.¹³⁷¹

Fauques passed on an anecdote about the whims of Mme de Pompadour based on her hurt vanity and pride. Mme de Pompadour was presented as

¹³⁶⁴ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 40–41, 123; Pierre 1902b, 59; Mairobert 1775, 301–302; Bécu 1777b, 334–335.

¹³⁶⁵ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 117; Fauques 1758b, 38, 95; Fauques 1766a, 192; Fauques 1766b, 80.

¹³⁶⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1758b, 38, 95; Fauques 1766a, 192; Fauques 1766b, 80.

¹³⁶⁷ Pierre 1903, 99; Pierre 1902a, 145.

¹³⁶⁸ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 117, 132, 152–156; Fauques 1758b, 38, 89–95; Fauques 1766a, 192; Fauques 1766b, 30, 80, 120–121; Pierre 1902b, 64; Mairobert 1775, 301–302; Bécu 1777b, 334–335.

¹³⁶⁹ Mairobert 1775, 301–302; Bécu 1777b, 334–335.

¹³⁷⁰ Bécu 1777b, 334. "[...] le Roi étoit obligé de céder à toutes les idées folles qui passoient par la tête de son Amante, [...]" Mairobert 1775, 301.

¹³⁷¹ Mairobert 1775, 30; Bécu 1777b, 335.

having felt inferiority because her husband did not have his own magnificent house in Paris, which he should have had as the husband of the magnificent royal mistress. Consequently, Mme de Pompadour organised a little plot with M. d'Étiolles' sister Mme de Baschi, his mistress Mme de la Mothe, and M. Bouret. The plot succeeded, and M. Bouret's handsome house was sold to M. d'Étiolles at a low price and Mme de Pompadour's vanity was flattered and hurt pride mended. In compensation for his services to the Mistress, M. Bouret received a position in the Post office with a generous yearly pension.¹³⁷² Fauques's English translator concluded that

Thus ended this farce, perhaps only memorable for its furnishing one proof of the most considerable employs in the kingdom, being sport of that woman's vanity and whim.¹³⁷³

It was not necessarily a problem that women were understood as being whimsical by nature. The problems arose when their fancies and whims affected the management of royal affairs. Or rather, when the mistress was presented as having acquired such an influence over the king that he would act according to "to her fancy, or to her little passions, [...]"¹³⁷⁴ when appointing his ministers and officers and distributing royal honours. Then the consequences would be severe, or as Fauques put it: "[...] when once affairs are put on so irregular a footing, as such a woman's whim, every thing becomes precarious."¹³⁷⁵ The result would be

[...] subjecting the most essential interests of the state to the ill consequences of such an instability of councils in the so frequent remove of the great Officers; [...].¹³⁷⁶

Whim and caprice could be understood as resulting from the physical constitution of a human body – thus carrying a sense of naturalness, inescapability, and perennity. As explained in section 2.1, the eighteenth century was still a century when humoral pathology intertwined medical and philosophical traditions together. Thus, at least some of the mental inclinations were inseparably connected to interpretations of the biological body.

This connection was understood in terms of *humours*. The whole vocabulary of *humour* was impregnated with the idea of certain passions being a constituent and irremovable part of certain kinds of human bodies – the term *humour* having

¹³⁷² Fauques 1759, 152–156; Fauques 1758b, 89–95; Fauques 1766b, 74–80.

¹³⁷³ Fauques 1758b, 95. Also in Fauques 1766b, 80. In the French version, "Ainsi finit la comédie. Elle ne méritera, peut être, l'attention des Lecteurs, que parcequ'elle porte avec soi la preuve la plus claire, que les places les plus considérables du Roiaume, étoient soumises à la vanité & au caprice de cette personne." Fauques 1759, 156.

¹³⁷⁴ Fauques 1766b, 120.

¹³⁷⁵ Fauques 1758b, 38. "Cela arrive surtout quand tout est dirigé par le caprice d'une femme telle que la célèbre Marquise. [...]" Fauques 1759, 117. Also in Fauques 1766a, 192.

¹³⁷⁶ Fauques 1766b, 120–121.

a double meaning as a bodily constitution and mental sentiment.¹³⁷⁷ For example, lexicographer N. Bailey defined *humour* as

[...] the particular temperament or constitution of a person, considered as arising from the prevalence of this or that *Humour* or *Juise* of the body; as a *choleric Humour*, a *melancholy Humour*, a *sprightly Humour*.¹³⁷⁸

Further, *humour* could also be understood as fancy, whim, or caprice.¹³⁷⁹ Passions and caprices were thus a naturalised part of human existence. But, due to the interconnection with passions (or weakness to resist passions), they were the more connected to femininity and the female sex.

If invoked *passion* was not enough to delegitimise any decision made on whim, there was more. Whim and caprice connoted ungrounded decision-making. It referred to surrendering oneself to one's passions, inclinations, opinions, and prejudices, which were all unaccepted grounds for political decision-making. *Whim* and *caprice* were thus constructed as the binary opposite to the legitimate political decision-making that was based on thorough consideration of information, exercise of reason, understanding, perseverance, and rational judgement. Whim was an act that was decided quickly, without further calculations on the results, as we saw in the example given by the Abbé de Bernis regarding Queen Elizabeth or in the example given by Mairobert regarding Mme du Barry's parrot. Royal mistresses' illegitimate influencing on the premise of their feminine whim thus authenticates the ideals of political resolution as masculine judgement, or "manly prudence"¹³⁸⁰

However, caprices and whims did not burden only women. Even though it was just stated that whims and caprices had a strong link to femininity, it did not mean that the men could escape their bodily constitution and resulting humours and passions – in fact, as the moral philosophers understood it, it was more like a life-long struggle between reason and passions and inclinations inherent in human existence.¹³⁸¹ Men, in general, might have the better capacity to resist their fancies and personal inclinations because they were regarded as having higher intrinsic capacity to reason and access to education that further honed their reasoning and judgement. Nonetheless, men were also subject to the caprices of the humoral body. And the monarch, as a mortal and personal body, had his *inclinations*, *temperaments*, *humours*, *dispositions*, and *constitutions* just like any other man.¹³⁸²

¹³⁷⁷ See, e.g. Dyche 1756a, "humeur"; Chambaud 1761, "humeur"; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "humeur"; Bailey 1730, "humour"; Barlow 1772b, "humour"; Barclay 1774, "humour"; Ash 1775a, "humour"

¹³⁷⁸ Bailey 1759, "humour".

¹³⁷⁹ Bailey 1730, "humour"; Barclay 1774, "humour"; Ash 1775a, "humour"; Dyche 1756a, "humeur".

¹³⁸⁰ Fauques 1758b, 54; Fauques 1766a, 209; "une prudence male & courageuse", Fauques 1759, 128–129.

¹³⁸¹ See, e.g. Bailey 1730 "passions of men"; Bailey 1759, "passions of men", "reason"; Chambaud 1761, "maîtriser", "obéissant", "passion", "raison", "tiranniser" [sic.]; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, "amour-propre", "passion"; Farr 1991, 397–398; Roche 1999, 485, 539–540, 542–547.

¹³⁸² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 17, 20, 36, 56, 171, 174; Fauques 1758a, 17, 19, 21, 41, 43, 70; Fauques 1758b, 119, 124, 137; Fauques 1766a, 18, 19, 48, 50, 79; Fauques 1766b, 2, 114,

As the process of coming to political decisions was not open to public audiences and because the act of making a political decision depended or was presented as depending on the personal decision of the monarch, there existed an element of volatility that could be utilised in the projections of political decision-making. In the *Letters of the Marchioness of Pompadour* (1772), Mme de Pompadour was given to present foreign policy as a field where the ministers needed to “[...] be thoroughly acquainted with the interest of the various princes, their genius, often their caprices, the mysteries, or rather the darkness of policy; [...]”¹³⁸³ Whims and caprices were thus a part of monarchical policy-making. Nevertheless, through the debate on royal mistresses they were highlighted, made visible, and turned into tools for challenging the legitimacy of a certain kind of monarchical decision-making. The royal mistresses were inseparably associated with whims and caprices of their own, but also with the whims and humours of the kings as well. As discussed in section 2.2, the royal mistress’s existence could be justified through her role as a hostess of royal entertainments and as a supporter of the king. It was her praised duty to divert the king from his melancholic constitution or humour, and by those means, to ensure proper rule. As Mme de Pompadour was presented as having stated:

On fait que c’est de la disposition actuelle de notre ame que dépendent toutes nos résolutions. Tel monarque qui refuse tout, quand une certaine mélancolie s’empare de son esprit, accorde tout quand cette vapeur est dissipée. Cette disposition, [...] ne suit pas toujours l’ordre de l’équité. Il est malheureux pour les peuples d’être gouvernés par des mortels sujets à une machine susceptible de toutes sortes d’impressions. Il faudroit, pour le bonheur du genre humain, que les hommes fussent gouvernés par des Agnes.¹³⁸⁴

144, 145, 171, 178; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXII. To the Count Du Barry, 15th Oct. 1768, editor’s footnote, 27; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVI. From the Chancellor de Maupeou, Paris, 1st Feb. 1774, Letter from the Duke d’Aiguillon to the Baroness de Neukerque, which came inclosed in the foregoing, 155; Poisson 1766a, 5, 23, 25, 124, 209, 266; Poisson 1766b, 1, 2, 18–19, 52, 61, 62, 105, 113; Poisson 1766c, 5, 22, 23, 124, 171, 172, 194, 206, 266; Poisson 1766d, 1, 2, 19, 26, 54, 64, 71, 109, 117, 188; Poisson 1771a, LETTRE X. Au Duc de Mirepoix, Juin, 1755, 17; Poisson 1771c, LETTER X. To the duke of Mirepoix, June, 1755, 34; Poisson 1771c, LETTER XII. To the dutchess of Charost, 1755, 39; Stanhope 1779b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.”, George the First, by Tindal, 2; Stanhope 1779b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11; Stanhope 1779b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” George the Second, by Chesterfield, 4, 6; Stanhope 1779b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” George the Second, by Smollet, 7; Stanhope 1779b, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” George the Second, by Dr. Chanler 9; Hervey 1848a, 97, 114, 121, 185; Hervey 1931, 904; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112, 121; Walpole 1822a, 292; Walpole 1822b, 113; Walpole 1833b, LETTER CCLXXIV. From Orford to Mann, Arlington-Street, 23rd Feb. 1756, 270; Stanhope 1777, 14; BL, Add MS 36798, Stanley to Pitt, Paris, 6th Aug. 1761, copy, 170; BL, Stowe MS 88-89, 1777, 5; TNA, SP 78/258, Hertford to Halifax, Fontainebleau, 2nd Oct. 1763, 221; TNA, SP 78/218, Waldegrave to Newcastle, Compiègne, 1st Aug. 1738, Apart, 313.

¹³⁸³

¹³⁸⁴

Poisson 1772, LETTER LXXI. To the marchioness of Blagni, 1752, 160–161.
Poisson 1766b, 105–106. “We know that all our resolutions spring from the actual disposition of the soul. A monarch that refuses every thing when his mind is seized

Which leads us to the third and last point of delegitimising uses of power in terms of capriciousness. At the heart of the meanings related to whim and caprice, we find decision-making that was not tied to any reason, that did not “pursue the rule of justice”¹³⁸⁵, or that did not respect any law. That is to say, whimsicality was directly linked to arbitrary and despotic rule.¹³⁸⁶

The question is, to what extent can the whimsical influence of the royal mistresses be read as a demonstration of monarchical decision-making on whim? In relation to a political decision, the king, after all, could not be presented as acting on the premise of his passion, prejudice, and caprice. Yet, the persons around him could. The royal mistresses were inseparably connected to feminine whim, and further presented as having influenced the royal resolution on the premise of their caprices. However, it was the royal *inclination*, *temperament*, and *constitution* that had led to the situation where the feminine whims of the royal mistresses could affect political decision-making. Thus, the next task would be to analyse the means that the royal mistresses were presented as having used in order to gain influence over the king – or to usurp royal decision-making.

4.2.3.3 Gaining ascendancy

So far, we have seen that there was a set of objects, capacities, functions, and roles in relation to which the royal mistresses’ use of power of influence could be regarded as justified and legitimate. A royal mistress using legitimate power of influence that she was entitled to due to her function, role, and position as a king’s mistress, and as a woman of high society, was generally accepted as long as the object of her influence did not belong in the ambiguous field of *political business*. However, on far more numerous occasions their influence was constructed as illegitimate *influencing* and *meddling* in political decision-making.

The epitome of a royal mistress using illegitimate power was a *reigning mistress* – one that had consolidated her position in the court and in the royal favour, one that had established an ascendancy over the royal resolution, one that had subdued the monarch.¹³⁸⁷ In the presentations of a reigning mistress, feminine power, influence, and rule had severe consequences. If the royal mistress’s influence in political decisions was denied due to her presented lack

with a certain melancholy, grants every thing when this vapour is dissipated. This disposition, [...] does not always pursue the rule of justice. It is unhappy for the people to be governed by mortals subject to a machine susceptible of every kind of impression. It would be for the good of mankind if they were governed by angels.”
Poisson 1766d, 109–110.

¹³⁸⁵ Poisson 1766d, 110. “ne suit pas toujours l’ordre de l’équité”, Poisson 1766b, 106.

¹³⁸⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1766b, 87; Allen 1765, “arbitrary”; Barclay 1774, “arbitrary”; Ash 1775a, “arbitrary”; Chicaneau de Neuville 1751, “despotisme”. For the meanings and debates concerning *despotism*, see section 3.5.1.

¹³⁸⁷ See, e.g. Maiorbert 1775, 182, 206, 214; Bécu 1777a, 163; Bécu 1777b, 196; Fauques 1759, 34, 57–58, 132, 179–180; Fauques 1758a, 40, 73–74; Fauques 1758b, 58, 131; Fauques 1766a, 48, 81–82; Fauques 1766b, 30, 115, 123; Anon. 1760, 229, 233; Pierre 1902b, 195; Walpole 1822a, 291–292; Walpole 1845b, 239. For a queen’s illegitimate dominion over the king, see, e.g. Stanhope 1777, 13; Stanhope 1779a, 159; Stanhope 1779d, 5; Hervey 1848a, 98, 120, 121, 262; Walpole 1818, 76, 85–86; Walpole 1822a, 155; Walpole 1804a, 129.

of formal and official position, understanding, education, reasonable judgement, and perseverance, as well as due to her excessive feminine weaknesses and passions, self-centeredness, and interestedness, what else could her influence be but fallible?

We have seen how the excessive influence of the royal mistresses was constructed as the reason for all the evils of the political management of the realm. Their rapacity ruined the wealth of the kingdom. They were the culprits behind the confusion in the government because they meddled in the nominations and expulsions of the royal ministers. They were presented as having caused military defeats because they influenced the rise and fall of generals. They displaced legal processes. They confused courtly political life with their intrigues and affectations. And theirs was the fault for stopping beneficial reforms of domestic policy and pushing through those that drove the realm to distress. All in all, they were presented as driving the management of the realm into chaos – or into languor via excessive entertainments – both of which caused misrule of all the matters of the kingdom.

If we look at the list of the objects of royal mistresses' use of illegitimate influence, we find that it correlates with the most important royal prerogatives and duties: the right to appoint his ministers and generals, the prerogative of distributing and duty of protecting justice and law in the realm, the duty of protecting the liberties (especially in relation to property and subsistence) of his subjects. That, of course, is not a surprise. The royal mistress was attached to the monarch, and consequently, the discourse on her power was a discourse on royal power. If the royal mistresses were thus presented as having usurped the most important royal prerogatives and functions, the question should be asked: how were they presented as having succeeded in such a task? By what means did they subdue the monarchical resolution?

The most common and banal explanation given was *sex*¹³⁸⁸ – after all, the royal mistresses could never be completely separated from sensual pleasures. The royal mistresses presented as controlling the royal libido, and through the libido the royal decision-making. For example, Mairobert gave a curious presentation on the hottest of the political contestations of the day, namely the one between Duc de Choiseul and a clique composed of Duc d'Aiguillon and Chancellor Maupeou – and Mme du Barry. Taking place at the end of the 1760s and early 1770, this political contest revolved around divergent visions regarding the lines of foreign policy and the role of the Parlements in the royal administration.¹³⁸⁹ In Mairobert's case, this great political contest was mainly presented in terms of Duc de Choiseul's and Mme de Gramont's endeavours to supplant Mme du Barry as the royal mistress. On most of the occasions, the political content of the debate was even omitted, and the controversy was discussed as a rivalry between two ladies: as a competition between two jealous, vain, and proud women that dragged the ministers of state into their trivial

¹³⁸⁸ In relation to Mme du Barry and Mme de Pompadour, the theme of sexual dominance has been explored also in Kauppinen 2012.

¹³⁸⁹ See, e.g. Bell 1994, 176; Shennan 2007, 157; van Kley 1997, 764–766, 771; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 159; Black 2002, 194; Zysberg 2002, 306–308, 310–312.

struggle for royal notice and favour.¹³⁹⁰ First of all, Mairobert claimed that the political strife originated from the contest between Mme du Barry and Mme de Gramont:

[...] ce qui contribua vraisemblablement à ouvrir une guerre implacable entre les deux Cabales, ce fut la rivalité de la Duchesse de Grammont, sœur du Ministre.¹³⁹¹

Second, Mairobert described the strife as escalating because Mme de Gramont ruled over her brother, Duc de Choiseul, and mobilised all the means that the minister had for her own project of getting rid of Mme du Barry:

Cette femme, plus haute, plus impérieuse, plus intrigante que son frere, s'il est possible, avoit jetté le Grapin sur celui-ci, & l'avoit subjugué au point d'en faire tout ce qu'elle vouloit.¹³⁹²

And third, Mairobert utilised the same set of vices, passions, and inclinations that were used in order to delegitimise the royal mistresses' (or any woman's) use of power:

Qu'on juge si une femme de qualité, dévorée d'ambition, qui se voyoit tout-à-coup frustrée du rôle qu'elle comptoit jouer [maîtresse-en-titre], dut être furieuse. La vengeance lui fit perdre la tête entièrement; & sans prévoir ce qui pouvoit en résulter de funeste, elle profita de son empire sur le Ministre, son frere, pour l'engager dans sa querelle & le rendre fourd à toutes les propositions qu'il recevoit de l'autre parti. C'est à cette rage effrénée qu'il faut proprement remonter pour trouver la premiere cause de la chute des Choiseuls.¹³⁹³

The political struggle for power ended up in the disgrace of Duc de Choiseul and his most important and attached ministers and courtiers, and even led to a *letter de cachet* that banished him from Versailles.¹³⁹⁴ Mairobert intimated that there was a conspiracy consisting of Duc d'Aiguillon and Chancellor Maupeou, who prepared the *letter de cachet* awaiting the royal signature.¹³⁹⁵ It was only through the power of Mme du Barry that the fateful royal signature was acquired – and thus, Duc de Choiseul banished. Her tools for extracting the signature from the royal hand consisted of the combined intoxication of alcohol and sex:

¹³⁹⁰ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 92, 144–145; Bécu 1777a, 40, 117–119.

¹³⁹¹ Mairobert 1775, 72. “[...] probably that which occasioned an implacable war between the two parties, was the attempt made by the Dutchess of Grammont, sister to the minister, to rival the favourite.” Bécu 1777a, 23.

¹³⁹² Mairobert 1775, 72. “The Dutchess, more haughty, more imperious, and more artful, if possible, than her brother had the entire ascendant over the latter, and had so far moulded him to her purpose, as to make him a mere puppet in her hands. [...]” Bécu 1777a, 23.

¹³⁹³ Mairobert 1775, 73 “What then must have been the rage of a lady of quality, whose ambition was boundless, when she saw herself suddenly thrown out of a part [maîtresse-en-titre] which she expected to perform! Vexation and revenge drove her almost to distraction; and without considering the fatal consequences that might result from her proceedings, she took advantage of her empire over her brother, to persuade him to espouse her quarrel, and make him deaf to every proposal that might be offered by the other party. In this intemperate rage we may properly trace the first cause of the fall of the Choiseuls.” Bécu 1777a, 24–25.

¹³⁹⁴ See, e.g. Zysberg 2002, 313; Darnton 1995a, 148; Tombs & Tombs 2007, 159.

¹³⁹⁵ Mairobert 1775, 160–163; Bécu 1777a, 139–144.

[...]; ils [Duc d'Aiguillon, Chancellor Maupeou] lui [Mme du Barry] donnoient tout prêts les ordres à signer, & quand son Amant, la tête échauffée des vins exquis qu'elle lui versoit, & le cœur brûle de l'amour qu'il respiroit dans ses bras, sollicitoit ses faveurs dernières & n'avoit plus rien à lui refuser, elle en extorquoit les signatures fatales, & rien ne passoit au Conseil; [...].¹³⁹⁶

Thus, the most important power-struggle, both of Mme du Barry's and the later reign of Louis XV, was concluded "in the hours of pleasure and intoxication"¹³⁹⁷, in the embrace of a royal mistress.¹³⁹⁸

If sex and the sexual powers of a royal mistress were the common or garden explanation for her influence gained, then Mme de Pompadour's case was problematic for eighteenth-century commentators. Her sexual relationship with Louis XV ended only a few years after her becoming the king's mistress,¹³⁹⁹ and yet, she maintained her position in the royal favour and court – and influence – till her death in 1764.

Eighteenth-century commentators considered this a paradox. Mme de Pompadour was a mistress "disqualified from discharging what is commonly thought the most essential function of it"¹⁴⁰⁰. As amusing as it might have been to consider the French king keeping a useless mistress, the lack of sexual relationship forced the commentators to consider the royal mistress's power from new perspectives. There was a great variety of explanations for Mme de Pompadour's permanence – some of which quite imaginative. But sex and control of the royal sexuality survived as one of the most important ones. After Mme de Pompadour's withdrawal from the royal bed, she was presented as having used indirect sexual power – that is to say, she was described as the controller of the royal desires through the medium of other women.¹⁴⁰¹

Eighteenth-century writers presented their readers with a variety of anecdotal examples of known (or assumed) ladies that entertained the royal bed, including the famous Mlle O'Murphy¹⁴⁰² and Mme de C – sl – n¹⁴⁰³ or Cesilia,¹⁴⁰⁴ who was elaborately tricked and deceived into the royal bed by Mme de Pompadour and Louis XV. C – sl – n or Cesilia was an aspiring beauty in the court who, after noticing the king's fancy toward her, made claims before surrendering to his desires. Most important of these demands was that Mme de

¹³⁹⁶ Mairobert 1775, 161. "[...]; they gave her orders ready drawn up for signing; and when her lover, with his head heated with delicious wines, and his heart inflamed with love, which he poured out on her bosom, solicited the last favours, and there was nothing more to be granted, she extorted the fatal signature, and nothing was transacted in the Council; [...]." Bécu 1777a, 142.

¹³⁹⁷ Bécu 1777a, 141; "momens d'aimable yvresse", Mairobert 1775, 161.

¹³⁹⁸ The interpretation of the royal mistress's sexual power was implied also in *Lettres originales de Madame la Comtesse Du Barry* (1779). See, e.g. Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XCIX. To the Duke d'Aiguillon, 108; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER LXXVII. From the Abbé Terray, 86–87.

¹³⁹⁹ In 1752, according to Shennan. Shennan 2007, 146.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Fauques 1766a, 80. "le point essentiel de cette condition", Fauques 1759, 56.

¹⁴⁰¹ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, footnote (p), 76–77; Anon. 1760, 24–34; Fauques 1759, 63–64; Fauques 1758a, 81–82; Fauques 1766a, 90, 92–100; Walpole 1843a, LETTER LVII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 14th May 1764, 198.

¹⁴⁰² See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 91–108; Fauques 1758b, 6–29.

¹⁴⁰³ Anon. 1760, 24–34.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Fauques 1766a, 92–100.

Pompadour should be sent away. On the initiative of the reigning Mistress, Mme de Pompadour and the King pretended to be growing apart. When Mme de Pompadour finalised the performance by suddenly leaving the court to visit a convent, the circulating rumours regarding her fall from royal favour persuaded Cesilia that the King had yielded to her demands, and therefore, accepted the invitation to the royal bed. However, as Mme de Pompadour returned to the court the following day, Cesilia understood that she had been fooled, and retired from the court.¹⁴⁰⁵

A king misleading and betraying the hope and trust of his subjects was, of course, an abuse of his position and power. As previously discussed, the kings were supposed to have taken care of their subjects' lives and property – in the case of a sexual relationship these could be understood as honour and reputation – and to compensate for the reputation lost in extramarital relationships. The case of Cecilia thus served as one example amongst many that illustrated the dormant possibilities for the abuse of power inherent in the French monarchical system. Once again, the royal mistress was the person who provoked this possibility of royal misconduct and injustice.

The descriptions of a royal mistress having subjected the royal sexuality to her control reached their height in the rumours concerning the Parc-aux-Cerfs – and the assumed royal brothel under the care of *valet-de-chambres* Dominique Guillaume Lebel (usually referred to as Le Bel). Mme de Pompadour was presented as the founder and procuress – Madam – of this royal bordello, and she was presented as having established it in order to compensate for her own sexual disability and to retain her power over the monarch:

[...] Madame la Marquise de Pompadour avoit établi un espece de Dépôt, pour y loger les jeunes filles qu'on étoit sans cesse occupé à chercher dans Paris, & que cette Dame mettoit dans le lit de son auguste Amant. Elle avoit senti de loin la nécessité de subvenir à ses besoins physiques avec des secours étrangers, & de conservoit toutefois par cette surintendance le cœur du Monarque & tout l'honorifique d'une Maîtresse en titre.¹⁴⁰⁶

Mme de Pompadour was constructed as the model example of a mistress using indirect sexual power. But Mme du Barry did not lag behind her illustrious predecessor. Especially Mairobert attributed to her the device of indirect sexual power.¹⁴⁰⁷ In her case, the other women were presented as a way of providing

¹⁴⁰⁵ Fauques 1766a, 92–100; Anon. 1760, 24–34.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Mairobert 1775, 58. “Madam Pompadour had established a kind of seminary for the reception of young damsels that her emissaries were perpetually collecting in the city and suburbs of Paris, to furnish new entertainment for the bed of her royal lover. The sagacious mistress was sensible of the necessity of compensating for her own physical defects with foreign supplies; and by this prudent attention preserved the heart of the prince, and all the honours that belonged to the ostensible mistress.” Bécu 1777a, 1–2. Also in Anon. 1760, footnote (p), 76–77.

¹⁴⁰⁷ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 254–255; Bécu 1777b, 266–267; Mairobert 1779b, XCIVe LETTRE, A Mlle. de Raucoux, Actrice de la Comédie Française, 127–128; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER XCIV. To Mademoiselle Raucoux, an Actress belonging to the French Comedy, 104; Mairobert 1779b, LXXVIIe LETTRE, De l'Abbé Terray, 105–107; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER LXXVII. From the Abbé Terray, 87.

variety¹⁴⁰⁸ and as “a proper instrument to assist her in rousing the languishing and exhausted nature of her royal lover.”¹⁴⁰⁹ Thus, as resorting to indirect sexual control was for Mme de Pompadour a necessity without option, for Mme du Barry it was a way to consolidate her influence through sexual supplement. It goes without saying that Mme du Barry’s way was the more deplorable of the two, since it reflected the low morality of the low woman herself, highlighted her background in common prostitution, and commented on and degraded the sexual appetites and abilities of the king.

The representations of indirect sexual power were cases that could be presented in quite a different light as well – if the writers had chosen to do so. The kings had many mistresses, because they could and because they were expected to, as discussed in section 2.5. Their amours could have been regarded as little and insignificant transitory amours without using them as representations of royal mistresses’ illegitimate indirect sexual control, as for example in *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766).¹⁴¹⁰ The little amours were something that the king wanted or needed – because of his naturally amorous constitution, temper, or humour¹⁴¹¹ – and thus they did not have to be presented as the tools of indirect sexual power. Still, many commentators chose to do so, in France and in Britain as well – even though in the case of George II it was not his mistresses using indirect sexual power but his wife Queen Caroline. Especially Lord Hervey addressed the theme of Queen Caroline tolerating and adapting to the mistresses of her husband – and occasionally even hinted at her presenting George II with new mistresses.¹⁴¹² However, in Queen Caroline’s case it was most commonly her adapting to the inclinations of the monarch and working her power through the mistress chosen by him:

But the Queen, knowing the vanity of her husband’s temper, and that he must have some woman for the world to believe his mistress, wisely suffered one to remain in that situation [...].¹⁴¹³

Which leads us to the second, and more nebulous, way of gaining control of the royal will: adaptation, complaisance, and pleasing.

¹⁴⁰⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1779b, LXXVIIe LETTRE, De l’Abbé Terray, 105–107; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER LXXVII. From the Abbé Terray, 87.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Bécu 1777b, 266–267. “[...] l’aider à aiguillonner le physique languissant & usé de son Royal Amant.” Mairobert 1775, 254.

¹⁴¹⁰ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 4, 8, 30; Poisson 1766b, 1, 19 Poisson 1766c, 5, 8, 30, 140; Poisson 1766d, 1, 20.

¹⁴¹¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766b, 1; Poisson 1766d, 1; Fauques 1759, 17; Fauques 1758a, 17, 19; Fauques 1766a, 18, 19; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXII. To the Count Du Barry, 15th Oct. 1768, editor’s footnote, 27; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER CXXXVI. From the Chancellor de Maupeou, Paris, 1st Feb. 1774, Letter from the Duke d’Aiguillon to the Baroness de Neukerque, which came inclosed in the foregoing, 155.

¹⁴¹² See, e.g. Hervey 1848b, 37–38, 139–140, 141, 144–145; Hervey 1848a, 97, 407–408; Hervey 1931, 746. Other commentators repeated this as well. See, e.g. Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11–12; Stanhope 1777, Queen Caroline, 13–14.

¹⁴¹³ Hervey 1848a, 97.

As eighteenth-century writers commenting on courtly life, the practice of keeping royal mistresses, and the life and preference of the ruling monarchs all agreed that the kings had their own inclinations, humours, tempers, or constitutions, they also agreed that knowing them and adapting to them was the surest way of pleasing the personal monarch, whose preference decided the distribution of royal favours of any sort. The royal mistresses and queens who had constant and intimate personal access to the king were of course presented as the true masters in the matter of knowing the royal state of mind. Manipulation of this knowledge concerning royal inclinations and humour was further presented as women's secret for gaining power.¹⁴¹⁴ Especially in the case of Mme de Pompadour, eighteenth-century writers eagerly explained her permanence in the royal favour and her ability for gaining control over the royal decisions in terms of her capacities for understanding his state of mind and adapting to it. Or, as Fauques expressed it in a slightly more intentioned and sinister light:

Fine & rusée comme elle étoit, elle l'eut bientôt étudié, & profitant de ses connoissances, elle s'y prit si bien, que le Roi désespéra de retrouver jamais, une personne avec laquelle il put passer des jours aussi tranquilles & aussi heureux. Elle avoit découvert le foible du Roi, en remarquant, que, de tous les moïens de plaire qu'elle avoit point à sa disposition, [...].¹⁴¹⁵

Careful study of the king's character, temper, and passions produced the leverage which the royal mistresses used to influence him. They resolved to learn the king's wishes, opinions, and inclinations, which further gave them various different tools to employ in their greater mission of controlling the royal will. Firstly, they learned what the monarchs liked and disliked, so that they could adjust their behaviour accordingly, to adapt to conduct that pleased the king the most, and through the subtle means of making one's council agreeable, shape the royal resolution.¹⁴¹⁶ In this respect, Queen Caroline was not presented as an exception. She was presented as having ruled over George II

[...] by a superiority of understanding, through knowledge of his temper, and much patience in her own, she could work him by degrees to any point where she had a mind to drive him, [...].¹⁴¹⁷

Secondly, by studying the temper and passions of their lovers, the royal mistresses – and Queen Caroline – discovered the ruling passions and fears of the monarchs. In the case of George II, his greatest terror was posited to be the

¹⁴¹⁴ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 56; Fauques 1758a, 70.

¹⁴¹⁵ Fauques 1759, 34–35. "Abundantly provided with art, she had thoroughly studied his temper, his humors, his inclination, and so perfectly conformed to them, that she fixed him to her, by creating in him, a despair of finding another woman, with whom he could be so easy and happy, [...]." Fauques 1758a, 40–41.

¹⁴¹⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 34–37, 55–56, 184; Fauques 1758a, 40–44, 70; Fauques 1758b, 137; Fauques 1766a, 48–52, 77–78; Fauques 1766b, 145–146; Stanhope 1779a, [memoirs of the year 1737], 158–159.

¹⁴¹⁷ Hervey 1848a, 185. See also, Hervey 1848a, 121, 261–262.

fear of appearing to be governed, especially by his queen.¹⁴¹⁸ By adapting to his wishes and fears, Queen Caroline was presented as having been able to act the part most pleasing to her husband: the part of an obedient wife respectfully submissive to her husband's rule – and to subtly manipulate his opinions and resolutions through this pleasing act.¹⁴¹⁹ Lord Hervey even called this her “doctrine”¹⁴²⁰. Through pretended and publicly performed submission to the monarch's rule, Queen Caroline was able to hide her influencing. Thus, the appearance of being governed by the king was constructed as a means of control.

Mme de Pompadour was presented as having used such affected submission as her means of gaining influence over the king as well.¹⁴²¹ Such a charade of a respectful and obedient woman was not regarded as an easy task for the royal mistresses or the queen. It was considered a taxing and tiresome performance that involved playing roles, dissimulating one's feelings and sentiments, sacrificing one's own wishes and pleasures, and affecting especially tender and loving sentiments towards the king.¹⁴²² More than anything, it was a role performed where ladies sacrificed their own pride in order to satiate their desire for power:

Her [Queen Caroline] predominant passion was pride, and the darling pleasure of her soul was power; but she was forced to gratify the one and gain the other, [...], by a strict and painful *régime*, which few besides herself could have had patience to support, or resolution to adhere to.¹⁴²³

In the case of Louis XV, it was not his fear, but “Sa passion dominante pour les passetems”¹⁴²⁴ that gave his mistresses the advantage of gaining control over him.¹⁴²⁵ In this respect, pleasing and amusing were combined. For example, Mme de Pompadour was presented as the master of “talents and arts of pleasing”¹⁴²⁶ that were “the principal means of her tenure of favour and power”¹⁴²⁷. But what really sealed and secured her empire over the monarch was her “power of

¹⁴¹⁸ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 98–99, 185; Walpole 1818, 85–86; Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 154–156.

¹⁴¹⁹ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 98–99; Walpole 1818, 84–86; Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 154–156; Stanhope 1779a, [memoirs of the year 1737], 158–159; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11–12; Stanhope 1777, Queen Caroline, 13–14; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 122.

¹⁴²⁰ Hervey 1848a, 184.

¹⁴²¹ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 44–46; Fauques 1758a, 53–57; Fauques 1766a, 62–65.

¹⁴²² See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, Appendix, 154–156; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, “The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.” Queen Caroline, by Chesterfield, 11–12; Stanhope 1777, Queen Caroline, 13–14; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 122; Fauques 1759, 45–46, 55–56; Fauques 1758a, 54–56, 71; Anon. 1760, 163, 183; Fauques 1766a, 77–78; Walpole 1818, 85; Hervey 1848a, 261–262.

¹⁴²³ Hervey 1848a, 261.

¹⁴²⁴ Fauques 1759, 58. “[...] his predominant passion for amusement, [...]” Fauques 1758a, 73.

¹⁴²⁵ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 175–176; Fauques 1759, 34–37; Fauques 1758a, 40–44; Fauques 1766a, 48–52; Fauques 1766b, 144; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 111–112; Mairobert 1775, 70; Bécu 1777a, 21.

¹⁴²⁶ Fauques 1766b, 154.

¹⁴²⁷ Fauques 1766b, 154.

amusing the king”¹⁴²⁸. The royal mistresses, and Mme de Pompadour especially, were presented as having subjugated the monarch through exploiting his weakness for amusements, entertainments, and pastimes. The ability to satisfy the monarch’s insatiable appetite for new diversions was presented as a far stronger means for retaining power over him (or a “link of his chain”¹⁴²⁹) than mere carnal pleasures.¹⁴³⁰ Thus, the task of amusing the king that – as discussed in section 2.2 – was presented as one of the most important functions of any royal mistress, was converted into as an unjustified means for taking advantage of the monarch’s weaknesses and passions in order to usurp the royal will.

Alarmingly, the means of ruling through the art of pleasing and amusing (even though defined as largely women’s or feminine means), were available to any courtier and minister as well. However, an influence gained through the exploitation of the king’s weaknesses, and especially through something as far from prudent business as trifling amusements, was constructed as deplorable and illegitimate. After all, it was a route that did not require any merits or capacities relating to the management of political matters. The route to royal preference through pleasing and entertainments was attributed to, for example, Duc de Richelieu and Duc de Choiseul.¹⁴³¹ The anonymous writer of *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766) revealed the hidden agendas and trivial means that Duc de Richelieu utilised in his campaign for elevation:

[...] il étoit des petits soupers, & ménageoit tous les plaisirs de Versailles. [...] Il se donnoit beaucoup de mouvemens & saisissoit avidement toutes les occasions de plaisir qui se présentoient, pour divertir le roi: mais ce n’étoit pas pour le monarque qu’il prenoit toute cette peine: des motifs de fortune & d’agrandissement le faisoient agir: c’est l’homme le plus avide de rangs & de grandeurs qu’il y ait dans l’univers. [...] il avoit formé le dessein de devenir [...] ministre d’état sans aucun des talens propres à en remplir les fonctions. ¹⁴³²

Duc de Choiseul’s means of making himself agreeable were noted by Hans Stanley as well. When judging the position, power, and influence of Duc de

¹⁴²⁸ Fauques 1766b, 1.

¹⁴²⁹ Anon. 1760, 175.

¹⁴³⁰ See, e.g. Anon. 1760, 175–176; Poisson 1766a, 26; Poisson 1766c, 26; Fauques 1759, 34–37, 44–46, 58; Fauques 1758a, 40–44, 53–57, 73; Fauques 1766a, 48–52, 62–65; Fauques 1766b, 1, 4, 144–146, 154–155, 183–184; Walpole 1822a, 292; Pierre 1903, 208–209; Pierre 1902a, 197; Mairobert 1775, 154, 253; Bécu 1777a, 131; Bécu 1777b, 264–265; BL, Stowe MS 89, “Appendix containing a Journal of the affairs of France in the year 1771”, A Memorial on the Affairs of France, 25th Oct. 1775, 48; BL, Stowe MS 88, 13; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CLXX. From Orford to Mann, Arlington Street, 22nd Feb. 1771, 132; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 114–115.

¹⁴³¹ See, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 20–21; Poisson 1766c, 20–21; TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 111–112; Mairobert 1775, 70–71; Bécu 1777a, 20–21.

¹⁴³² Poisson 1766a, 21. “He was sure to be one at the private suppers, and he superintended all the diversions of Versailles. He made it his business to divert the King, and was very alert in seizing every opportunity conducive to that end: but it was not for the King’s sake that he gave himself all that trouble: his motive of acting was his own aggrandizement; for he is insatiably greedy of rank and distinctions. [...] without any political talents, he was for thrusting himself into the ministry.” Poisson 1766c, 20–21.

Choiseul in the French court and in the royal favour, he concluded that his position was stable, since he

[...] has always had three circumstances greatly in his favour; in the first place, no man living wants amusement so much as the King of France, Mons. de Choiseul has the talent of entertaining him, being indeed a person of the most lively, and cheerful conversation that I have met with; secondly, he contrives to carry on all his affairs with the least personal trouble, or fatigue imaginable to His Majesty; [...]¹⁴³³

In the case of Mme de Pompadour and Queen Caroline, the female companions of the monarchs were presented as having further solicited their position in the court and in power through making themselves irreplaceable, or as the only ones who could make the monarch's life agreeable. Both of them were presented as the true masters of understanding the monarch's state of mind and conforming themselves perfectly to that, so that the king himself was presented as *dependent* on their services.¹⁴³⁴ This dependency could be understood in terms of companionship between spouses, which in itself was only a demonstration of affection and caring – or would have been, if the ladies' motives had been presented as pure and they had been presented as contenting themselves only with pleasing the monarch. However, hidden agendas and ulterior motives for pleasing the monarch stripped the justification of the Mistresses and the Queen. What was left was the question concerning the proper relationship between the sexes and the meanings of dependency. As there was a common and general model, normatively constructed as natural, that stated that men ruled women, women were dependent on their husbands, and independence was the premise of political participation, such descriptions of the king being dependent on his mistress or wife challenged simultaneously the king's capacities and abilities as a man, as a master of his own house, and as a political decision-maker.¹⁴³⁵

After sexual control (direct and indirect) and the art of complaisance, pleasing, and amusements, the last commonly employed explanation for the dominance gained by the royal mistresses (and Queen Caroline) was outlined in terms of a *habit*. Especially Mme de Pompadour's continuation in the royal favour was explained by Louis XV's habit.¹⁴³⁶ As the Abbé de Bernis reminisced, Louis XV's passion for Mme de Pompadour was replaced by habitual disposition:

¹⁴³³ TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 112.

¹⁴³⁴ See, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, 122; Poisson 1766a, 26; Poisson 1766c, 26; Fauques 1759, 34–37, 55–56; Fauques 1758a, 40–44, 71; Fauques 1766a, 48–52, 77–78; Fauques 1766b, 1, 183–184.

¹⁴³⁵ The interconnection between masculinity, independence, and political participation was discussed in section 2.5.

¹⁴³⁶ See, e.g. Walpole 1845b, 238; Walpole 1822b, 23; Fauques 1766b, 153; Pierre 1903, 206; Pierre 1902a, 195; Poisson 1766b, 1, 51; Poisson 1766d, 1, 53; Fauques 1758b, 27; Fauques 1766a, 177.

Le Roi n'avait plus de passion pour elle depuis plusieurs années; il ne lui restait que de l'amitié, de la confiance, et ce lien de l'habitude qui, chez les princes, est le plus fort de tous.¹⁴³⁷

As explained in section 2.5, the royal mistresses functioned as demonstrations of royal capacities of masculine virility, vigour, and vitality. In relation to these, *passion* was not necessarily a destructive force, but merely an inseparable part of masculine vitality. That is to say, masculine passion for sensual pleasures could be presented as an indicator of other abilities and capacities that were regarded as masculine or requiring masculine vigour – such as resolute attendance to important political business. A king keeping a mistress because of habit or habitually was then a depiction that denied masculine passion and questioned the king's masculinity through the expectations of virility and vitality.

Both George II and Louis XV were described as slaves of their habits and customs, both through direct statements and through the reprehending language of regularity and punctuality.¹⁴³⁸ George II was described as “the most regular man in his hours”¹⁴³⁹, and even his commerce with his mistress was described to have been managed “with such dull punctuality”¹⁴⁴⁰. Louis XV was depicted as “the slave of habit”¹⁴⁴¹ and his life as “regular by the most mechanic sameness”¹⁴⁴², and especially the continuation of the favour of Mme de Pompadour was explained with the king's habit and dislike of change, as “the effect of the power of habit”¹⁴⁴³. Such a dispassionate attitude to mistresses – or to sensual passions that they represented – did not only challenge the royal masculinity, virility, and vigour. It had other implications as well.

For example, the accounts of the king's habitual behaviour, routine, and boring life indicated that his court was not lively enough.

The king's [George II] last years passed as regularly as clock-work. At nine he had cards in the apartment of his daughters the princesses Amelia and Caroline, with lady Yarmouth, two or three of the late queen's ladies, and as many of the most favoured officers of his own household. [...] and his majesty fancied himself the most gallant and lively prince in Europe.¹⁴⁴⁴

As stated, the king was the embodiment of the grandeur of the country, and it was expected of him to represent wealth and magnificence both within his court

¹⁴³⁷ Pierre 1903, 206. “The king had ceased for some years to feel passion for her; nothing remained in him but friendship, confidence, and that bond of habit which, in princes, is the strongest of all ties.” Pierre 1902a, 195.

¹⁴³⁸ On Louis XV, see, e.g. Walpole 1845b, 238–239; Walpole 1822b, 23; Fauques 1766b, 153; Pierre 1903, 206; Pierre 1902a, 195; Hervey 1848a, 114; Mairobert 1779b, Le LETTRE De Mr. de Maupeou, 5 déc. 1770, 68–69; Mairobert 1779a, LETTER L. From the Chancellor Maupeou, 5th Dec. 1770. 55. On George II, see, e.g. Walpole 1822a, 513; Walpole 1818, 83, 97; Hervey 1848a, 95.

¹⁴³⁹ Walpole 1822a, 513.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Walpole 1818, 83.

¹⁴⁴¹ Walpole 1845b, 239.

¹⁴⁴² Walpole 1845b, 239.

¹⁴⁴³ Fauques 1766b, 178. On the habit of keeping Mme de Pompadour, see also, Fauques 1758a, 56–57, 73; Fauques 1766a, 65, 81, 177; Pierre 1902b, 55; Poisson 1766a, 68; Poisson 1766b, 51; Poisson 1766d, 53, 71.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Walpole 1818, 97.

and in public ceremonies. His whole court should likewise have been an example of a grand and lively lifestyle. A lifestyle too regular or private was then a disappointment both to the aristocracy, who waited for court festivities as a place to show their own distinction, and to the subjects outside the court, who wished to see in their king the full *éclat*, splendour, and vigour of the body politic: as the strength, wealth, and power that was envied and feared by the rest of Europe.

The more disturbing implication, however, was that the representations of the king's routine-like life, regularity, and habituality could also insinuate his aversion to change – and in the case of a personally ruling monarch such an aversion was not a characteristic limited to his mistresses and private life: it implied that he was unwilling or even incapable of making changes in his administration – even when needed. There was a danger that if the king was a creature of habit, his government would follow old customs and could not rise to the challenge that changing circumstances posed. This was the case especially with Louis XV. For example, Mairobert stated that Louis XV knew that Duc de Choiseul could no longer serve his interests (and the interests of his country), but he could not let him go because he had “[...] become accustomed to him; [...]”¹⁴⁴⁵ That was already a direct accusation that the king was not capable of renewing his government even on an occasion when his minister did more harm than good to his country. In the worst case, the whole government would thus stagnate.

In notions regarding royal attachment to habits, there was also a slippery slope to inactivity, passive government, idleness, and pure laziness. Especially the British commentators describing Louis XV noted his habitual life or laziness and inactivity in relation to the political rule of his kingdom.¹⁴⁴⁶ Here, royal disinterestedness was also ignorance of the affairs of his kingdom, which undermined the ideal monarchical rule as *Mystère du Roi*.

4.3 Discussion: Etching the norms and ideals of the legitimate ruler

In the preceding sections, we have seen the representations of royal mistresses as users of any kind of politically significant power or influence. As the parallel between the power and influence of Queen Caroline and those of the mistresses indicates, the problematics of any women's use of power arise from the contradictions between ideals and practices. In political philosophy, to some extent in normative and general vocabularies, increasingly in the discourses of administrative and judicial bodies, and in the discourse on royal mistresses, the justified political decision-making was connected to terms such as *public*, and increasingly to *official* and *formal* positions. These certainly were also marked as masculine as well, since women in general were simultaneously closely

¹⁴⁴⁵ Mairobert 1779a, LETTER L. From the Chancellor Maupeou, 5th Dec. 1770. 55. “[...]. s’y est habitué, [...]” Mairobert 1779b, Le LETTRE De Mr. de Maupeou, 5 déc. 1770, 68–69.

¹⁴⁴⁶ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 114–115.

associated with *private* and *personal* and further excluded from official and formal political decision-making. In discourses and ideals, the oppositions masculine/feminine, public/private, official/unofficial, and formal/informal were used in attempts at defining or marking certain kinds of persons or issues as a- or non-political, that is, in endeavours to either depoliticise or delegitimise certain issues, uses of power, or persons using power.

In practice, however, the traditional functions and activity of courtly women in general and the royal mistresses in particular had elements that positioned them in the grey area of political decision-making and even policy-making. They could and were expected to use power or influence in matters that were understood as politically significant, such as patronage of arts, letters, and sciences, charitable contributions, and to some extent in the mediation of the royal presence and functions relating to the formation of the networks within the royal court. That is to say, it was understood, and on some occasions accepted and even praised, that their actions carried justified political significance. The royal mistresses' justification for participating in these politically significant deeds and functions was also related to assumptions regarding the abilities and capacities of the two mutually complementary sexes. In other words, their assumed feminine capacities, abilities, and inclinations were used in order to legitimise their participation in these roles and functions, as for example that of a hostess, a mediator, a supporter, a patroness, and a benefactress.

Yet, even if the actions of the royal mistresses could be constructed as politically significant within certain limits, they could not be defined as justly political. This indicates that there was an existing set of issues and matters that were considered political, or *business*, as the contemporary term read. Legitimate participation in these matters required formal and official positions in royal councils, ministries, the army, judicial courts, or parliament, and the sense of authorisation that followed formality and officiality. In the last section 4.2.3, we have seen the royal mistresses (and Queen Caroline) as they were presented as meddling in these kinds of matters, or as using illegitimate power of influence. We have seen the figure of the mistress using unjustified influence to embody a great variety of vices and weaknesses in relation to their motives, capacities, inclinations, and means of acquiring their power. In fact, we have seen eighteenth-century commentators construct the royal mistresses into the form of a *reigning mistress* or as an *evil mistress*, as an epitome of illegitimate influence. Consequently, we have seen the writers construct figures through which they could discuss, define, and negotiate the norms and ideals regarding the nature of political rule itself, the practices of wielding political power, and of the capacities and abilities required in wielding it justly.

In eighteenth-century Britain and France, there was an abundance of literature discussing the ideals regarding legitimate rule, ranging from philosophical treatises to political testaments – and, of course, the whole traditional genre of *Les miroirs des princes*. However, the figure of a *reigning* or an *evil mistress* was an effective instrument in discussing the norms and ideals of the nature and use of political power as well: it was a scandalous figure, an anecdotal

figure, a figure that moved, shocked, and amused, and as such, a figure that easily stuck in the mind and in talk.

The writers criticising the royal mistresses (as singular persons and as a practice) constructed the mistresses as the prime examples of a threat to the political rule of the nation as well as an antithesis of legitimate decision-making. The figure of the evil mistress was constructed as an antipode to normative and ideal rule through i) the anecdotal illustrations of occasions that were represented as having involved abusive royal use of power due to her influence, ii) the representations of her assumed motives for *interfering* in political decision-making as well as her equally assumed capacities and abilities for political agency, iii) the demonstrations of the consequences of feminine influence in political decision-making, and iv) the most imaginative accounts of her means and instruments for acquiring her leverage over royal decisions. Especially in the biographical portrayals of the French royal mistresses' lives, all these elements intertwined as a grand narrative of the rise of a reigning mistress, ruling over an *enslaved* king. However, the aforementioned elements that were tied together in royal mistresses' memoirs and biographies could be found scattered in the other types of sources as well.

Certainly, the figure of the evil mistress leaned on two pre-existing traditions: the tradition of evil advisors and the more general cultural assumptions of women's rule as anomalous, usually illegitimate, and most likely resulting in devastation. Women's rule in general was understood as illegitimate due to the characteristics that women were regarded to have – or rather, due to the characteristics that they were not assumed to have as women. Not surprisingly, the debate on the power and influence of the evil mistress occurred in highly gendered terms and utilised gendered assumptions. Yet, the debate about the illegitimate rule of the royal mistress was not necessarily primarily a discussion that sought to limit the power and influence of women. Rather, it was a discourse in which the expectations, hopes, ideals, and norms regarding legitimate authority and use of political power were discussed. Consequently, it encompassed or referred to various other debates and discourses discussing the limits and nature of the legitimate use of power. However, it is evident that the discourse on evil mistresses came to question the traditional forms and practices of royal decision-making that relied on ideas of *Mystère du Roi* and personal networks by connecting these forms and practices to such terms as informal, unofficial, private, secret, and personal and systematically denouncing them as delegitimate or unjustified ways of deciding political matters.

Essentially the discourse of the evil mistress was then a discourse on the ideals and norms of legitimate monarchical rule. As is typical of normative language, we have seen the debate on legitimate and justified political rule and decision-making occur through binary oppositions, for example proper/improper, good/bad, or natural/unnatural, and especially such oppositions that had a strong politicising element included. This means terms that carried an aspect or intent of marking the boundary between political or politically legitimate and a- or non-political or politically delegitimate, such as,

for example, private/public, informal/formal, personal/impersonal, unofficial/official, secret/known – and when speaking about normative abilities, capacities, and inclinations in political decision-making, also feminine/masculine. These binary oppositions did not function alone. Rather, in language-plays the oppositions could be juxtaposed. Especially gender was an adaptable marker that could be attached to other oppositions, not unlike a metaphorical construction of meaning where parallels have a tendency to map ideas beyond the basic correspondence. As the result of these fluid adaptations, we encountered a highly gendered language of power where gender distinction further reinforced other binary and mutually complementary oppositions.

By utilising binary oppositions, eighteenth-century commentators defined the limits and nature of legitimate political decision-making. When the evil royal mistresses' motives and capacities for participating and influencing in political matters were defined in terms of avarice, pride, vindictiveness, vanity, self-love, ambition, and jealousy, we – as much as eighteenth-century readers – are provided with a list of attributes through which we can read the ideal motives needed for and capacities required in political decision-making. For example, the terms related to caballing or factions highlighted the ideals of political unity and honest and united decision-making. Intrigues referred to the necessity of honesty in political decision-making. References to personality and privacy stressed officiality, formality, and formal and official procedures as legitimising a political decision. On this point, also the royal mistresses assumed means of gaining influence over the royal will (sexual control and manipulation through affectation, fear, and pleasing) highlighted the distance from the legitimate official and formal functions. Reference to passions highlighted reason and knowledge as the only legitimate premise of decision-making. Passions also referred to private interest (as gratification of private passions), which was quite universally denounced in political debates in both countries. Whim referred to the ideal of well-grounded decision-making, especially to resolution, perseverance, and wide understanding on the conditions in which the decision was made. Thus, it was also a term that could correlate with the ideals embodied in the *Mystère du Roi*. Further, whim had a strong connection to *despotism*. In this, it stressed the hopes for limiting arbitrary rule by tying it to the law and lawfulness. Thus, the writers utilising the discourses relating to avarice participated in the prevailing debates on the limits of royal power and highlighted the rights to private property.

When observing these lists of ideal attributes, expressed in a normative light through the counterpoint of the illegitimate power of a royal mistress, we can see that the definition of power was gendered. The *evil mistress* was a figure whose illegitimate power of influence was never really separated from the understanding of sex, gender, sensuality, and consequently, privacy. It was essentially informal and unofficial, private and personal – or, secret whispers in the royal bed in the moments of passion. Thus, it was dangerous because it was unmonitored and secret, and was feared to be unreasonable and unjustified.

Yet, at the same time, the influence of the royal mistresses in these moments of passion could be depreciated and brushed aside as politically insignificant. In the public debate and in criticising tones we have seen pillowtalk in its dangerous capacity as women's illegitimate means of gaining ascendancy over royal resolution. However, in the debates between the ministers, diplomats, and ambassadors we occasionally see the feminine management of political affairs in a different light. For example, Duc de Choiseul disparaged the influence and importance of women in the consolidation of foreign affairs between Austria and France. He not only belittled the role of his supporter and protectress Mme de Pompadour in political decision-making on the premise of her femininity, but also that of the Empress Maria Theresa. "[...] promesses de femmes!"¹⁴⁴⁷ is what he called the most political discussions and negotiations held privately between the Mistress and the Empress regarding the treaty of alliance between France and Austria.

As we can see, the construction of the royal mistresses' influence in management of public affairs in terms and means of personalness, privateness, and femininity was not exclusively dangerous to the royal resolution. It could also be regarded as insignificant, or marked as a- or non-political by virtue of it being private, personal, and feminine. The sweet talk during the sensual moments could thus be understood as trifling or trivial, containing words of affection, and empty of reason and real business.

Be it in either way, legitimate power in itself was gendered and had gendered bearings, which made the French royal mistresses an important tool in political debates and in the discursive processes of constructing, maintaining, and deconstructing monarchy as a legitimate political system. The interconnection between power and gender (specifically femininity as delegitimising and masculinity as legitimising) made the French monarchy vulnerable to the representations concerning the royal gender, sex, and sexuality. Because the legitimate political power was impregnated with masculine attributes, characteristics, and values, the challenges against the royal masculinity were simultaneously and inevitably challenges against his use of political power and its legitimacy.

That is to say, the real question was never really about the royal mistresses' use of power. That was illegitimate, because it was based on the characteristics, attributes, and abilities that the mistress was assumed to have as a woman; and it was illegitimate, because as a woman she could not use legitimate power. The real question was that even though the royal mistresses' use of power was utterly illegitimate, did its presentations necessarily delegitimise monarchical rule?

The simple answer is yes. The illustrations of the royal mistresses' illegitimate use of influence and power of influence were simultaneously illustrations of abusive or at least failed royal power. Firstly, the failings of a royal mistress as a political influencer reflected on the royal person. As stated many times over, the person of the royal mistress and the person of her royal lover were inseparably interconnected – meaning that the characteristics of the mistress were extended to or reflected on the king as well. A monarch keeping an

¹⁴⁴⁷ TNA, SP 78/252, Stanley [to Pitt], Paris, 20th Aug. 1761, 113.

incompetent, inconsiderate, and wicked mistress, whose vices were known to the whole world, must necessarily be personally flawed himself in order to suffer such a person in his presence – let alone suffer her opinions to influence his political will. That is to say, it was explicitly a matter of the integrity of the personally ruling monarch, and implicitly a matter of the integrity of the whole political system that was built upon personal monarchical rule. A monarch tolerating a mistress harmful to his realm and subjects was either a fool, an idiot, lazy, disinterested, ignorant, or despot – all of which nullified his grounds for political decision-making. Here was a monarch unable to let go of a harmful mistress, a monarch whose heart, resolution, sexuality, and masculine virility and independence were seized by the mistress, or a monarch that had succumbed to his inclinations, temper, and passions that the mistress exploited – an emasculated and effeminate king. Certainly, that was the image that was used in public debate in order to influence the king through normative language to give up his mistress. Which is exactly what the rival power-blocks within the royal court did when competing for positions of power. Thus, the internal conflicts escaped or were transferred from the court to wider audiences.

Secondly, there was a certain set of failures of the political system, or threatening images of failure, that were attributed to the mistresses' illegitimate rule. In this respect, it was especially their influence in the making, protecting, and dismissing of royal officers that was considered the most harmful. It was the royal mistresses' unjustified and unprincipled use of influence that channelled the positions of power in government, administration, and the military to undeserving and unskilful hands – which led to the confusion, instability, and disunity in the government, irresolution in the royal decision-making, misgovernment of the realm, and inevitable suffering of the subjects. This was, however, an indirect or mediated evil. The mistresses were not presented as intentionally evil agents plotting the downfall of the realm. They were merely uncomprehending women gratifying their petty passions and who, consequently, were insensitive to the wider and long-term impacts of their actions. The king, however, should have been aware of the consequences of his decision. Thus, the debate revealed weaknesses inherent in a political system that relied on unsupervised decision-making by one.

Thirdly, besides general notification of the whole realm being led astray, the royal mistresses were presented as inducing the monarch to personal abuses of royal power that could be regarded as transgressions against the law or the common sense of justice, as for example the case of the purchase of Bellevue and l'Hôtel d'Evraux for Mme de Pompadour, or the termination of the trial of Duc d'Aiguillon for Mme du Barry. In these cases, the mistress's influence caused the monarch to abuse his most traditional role as the source and protector of law and justice. Consequently, the French debate affirmed the protection and distribution of law and justice as the foundation and core of legitimate monarchical rule as well as revealing the latent potentials for illegitimate rule in the monarchical system.

The illustrations of the royal mistresses' illegitimate use of power were representations of the political system that was constituted on the premises that

allowed – or even encouraged – the abusive use of royal power. A political system based on personal rule – or rather personal political decision-making by the monarch at the centre of his administration, government, and court – had its vulnerable point in the formation of the political will of the personal monarch. The discourses confirming the political decision-making by the king only created a system that was vulnerable to attacks aimed at i) the abilities and capacities of the personal decision-making monarch (usually discussed through his inclinations and attributes), and ii) the whole process of political decision-making that included the complex, partially overlapping, and partially contesting networks of power (official and formal networks, personal networks, and traditional networks based on ranks, titles, and noble families). The figure of a royal mistress that had usurped royal power through illegitimate means, wielded it on ungrounded premises, and influenced the creation of all kinds of networks of power (by making and removing royal officers, assigning positions in the royal households, and influencing the alliances between the noble houses) was a figure through which the prevailing monarchical system could be questioned.

The *evil mistress's* figure thus demonstrated that *personal* was the element in the French monarchical system that induced abuses of royal power. However, as tempting as it would be to read an attack against the personal monarchy into these representations, the illustration of the royal mistresses' illegitimate rule was not aimed at overturning the legitimacy of the political system built around the personally ruling monarch. In fact, the discourse of *evil mistress* was a discourse actively promoting the monopoly of political decision-making of the king. That is to say, the writers criticising the mistresses' (especially Mme de Pompadour's) influence on the royal use of power wanted a strong, resolute monarch who decided the political destiny of his realm and subjects without the influence of his corrupt, self-interested, and deceitful court. Especially for Fauques, but for other memoirists of Mme de Pompadour's life as well, it was a wish for a return to the (imagined) system of political rule by an untouchable and uncompromising monarch of integrity and solid principles – if there ever had been such a system. But nostalgia worked even without explicit example.

Thus, to sum up, in the conceptualisation and construction of images of monarchical rule the figure of the evil mistress functioned both as a tool and as a symbol. Firstly, her semi-fictional figure was a tool through which the informality, unofficiality, privateness, secrecy, and personalness of royal political decision-making was revealed to the audiences. Secondly, her figure was constructed as the symbol of the whole reprehensible political system based on personal and private relations that was criticised as illegitimate. The figure of the evil mistress using usurped royal power was a symptom, result, and mark of a greater flaw in the monarchical system. This flaw resulted from the prevalence of parallel and yet interlocked networks of power that confused the boundaries of personal/impersonal, private/public, formal/informal, and official/unofficial, and allowed corruption, affectation, and private interest to worm their way into the royal court, into the royal councils and ministries, into the information and advice given to the crowned head, and finally, into political resolution.

5 THE POLITICISABLE MISTRESS IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

Most of what has been said about the royal mistresses, either as a practice, a discourse, or as a tool of discourse, has focused specifically on the French discourses on the French royal mistresses. Even though there were certain consistencies, or transnational motifs and themes in the discourse on the royal mistresses and in the utilisation of the figure of the royal mistress in political debates between Britain and France (and most certainly, a transfer of criticism from the mistress to the queen), the royal mistresses or their semi-fictional figure did not carry the same political significance or politicisable potential in British political culture, nor were they used in British political debates as extensively as in French political culture and debates.

Therefore, let us return to one of the claims I made in the Introduction, namely the assertion that the royal mistresses were a bigger phenomenon in eighteenth-century French political culture than in British political culture. Certainly, I was then talking about the volume of the texts written about them. However, this difference also hints in the direction of other disparities between the roles and functions of the mistresses themselves as well as in the discourse on royal mistresses in British and French political cultures. I would like to rephrase the claim: the French royal mistresses had a more significant political meaning and role in eighteenth-century French political culture than their British counterparts had in British political culture. With this, I mean the role and functions that the royal mistresses had in the royal court and in royal decision-making, and consequently, the role that semi-fictional figures offered to differing debating audiences. The British royal mistresses did not provide as meaningful, significant, and useful a figure for the various debating audiences as the French royal mistresses did. That is to say, even though there were significant similarities in the discourses on the royal mistresses, the British royal mistresses were not utilised in the political debates in a similar manner and their semi-fictional figure did not encompass similar politicising potentials as that of the French royal mistresses. The royal mistresses were indeed a bigger political phenomenon in eighteenth-century French political culture than in British

political culture. This, of course, originates from the great variety of differences in political cultures, in ideas and conceptions regarding political power and its use, and in practices of political decision-making, or constitutions, at which I have already hinted.

First, the difference in political systems and political communications obviously diverted part of the criticism that the French commentators expressed through the semi-fictional figure of the mistress. There was no such possibility of legitimate opposition nor of open debate on political matters in France as there was in Britain. The British newspapers could satisfy the thirst for political news directly and at least some of the opposing voices could be channelled through parliamentary debate. Further, the separation of powers between the two houses of Parliament and the Crown safeguarded the Crown and the Majesty from accusations that in France were directed against the monarch who withheld legislative, executive, and judiciary authority.

Second, as we have seen, during the reign of George II there was a powerful queen and a powerless mistress. Mrs. Howard's reputed powerlessness most likely shielded her from attacks – and simultaneously, made her figure a less significant tool for political debate. Instead, we witnessed how contemporaries shifted the criticism from the Mistress to the Queen herself. This shift was further encouraged as the criticism Queen Caroline faced merged with the criticism against Sir Robert Walpole. However, when the queen consort was constructed as the example of wrongful feminine influence, the mistresses were not necessarily needed, and consequently, their figures did not gain such a meaningful role in debates on the political system and its ideals as they did in France.

Third, there were more interesting differences that related to the understandings of women's role and significance in the courts of George I and George II. Certainly, women surrounding the royal majesty were important mediators of the royal ear and presence, and they had important social functions according to the ideals of sociability. Yet, there was a stronger line drawn between the gatherings of a more social nature that included women (as for example, suppers and evening gatherings) and moments of doing politics (discussing with ministers and counsellors on political matters). For example, the French Ambassador M. d'Iberville gave several accounts of the suppers where Mary, Countess of Cowper,¹⁴⁴⁸ attempted to discuss current political affairs of Europe, only to be silenced by the response of George I: "Madam ne parlons point de cela, et laissons la politique."¹⁴⁴⁹

Yet, it is doubtful that this was a common feature in British political culture. Rather, it was most likely a German import. George I, George II, and Frederick, Prince of Wales, were still Hanover-born Princes who were raised in Hanover and who were adults when arriving in Britain. Their attitude to the role of women

¹⁴⁴⁸ Wife of William Cowper, 1st Earl of Cowper, then Lord Chancellor. Also Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline, Princess of Wales.

¹⁴⁴⁹ LAD, P/10903, M. d'Iberville, Londres, 4 oct. 1714, M. d'Iberville, 165. "Madam, do not talk about that, and leave the politics." (Translation E.K.) See also, e.g. LAD, P/10904, A Londres 9 sept. 1714, M. d'Iberville 147–148.

in courtly politics might have originated from their German upbringing. At least the British commentators found it strange. For example, Lord Hervey gave a disapproving presentation of Frederick, Prince of Wales, concerning his decision not to acquaint his wife Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha with his political affairs:

[...] the Prince kept this gilded piece of Royal conjugality in such profound ignorance of all his political affairs, that, at the time I am now writing, I believe she has as yet never heard of the dispute, last session, between her husband and her father-in-law in Parliament. His Royal Highness looked upon this conduct towards his wife as a piece of manly grandeur, and used always to say a Prince should never talk to any woman of politics, or make any use of a wife but to breed; and that he would never make the ridiculous figure his father had done in letting his wife govern him or meddle with business, which no woman was fit for.¹⁴⁵⁰

It would be interesting to compare the ideals regarding political masculinity and behaviour towards women in French, British, and German political culture, and not least because of the prominent homosocial preferences of Frederick II of Prussia that have led to a persistent discussion regarding his possible homosexuality.¹⁴⁵¹ Further, even though modern scholars prefer to remember Frederick II as a prince who admired male companions and created an overtly masculine court around him, eighteenth-century commentators connected female figures around him in a manner that reminds us of the traditional role and function of a mistress. For example, *London Chronicle* published an abridged section of Voltaire's memoirs of his stay at the Prussian court. In this text, the reader was reminded that "Neither women nor priests ever entered the palace [of Frederick II]"¹⁴⁵². Even so, Frederick was not presented without women as a proof and demonstration of heterosexual desire that itself was a mark of masculine (political) virility. This was achieved in two ways. Firstly, the reader was reminded that the king had had a mistress to whom he had granted a pension even though they no longer lived together. Secondly, the central ornament of his dining hall was described in great detail, stressing its licentiousness and (hetero)sexuality.¹⁴⁵³ Thus, to conclude, women and the female sex could not be completely separated from kingship, even in the case of Frederick II, who was notorious for not allowing women in his palace.

However, we leave this for further study. Here, we take the quote about Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his wife as a demonstration that in German and British political culture there were gendered spaces and times for business, or management of political affairs that were separated from the spaces and times of

¹⁴⁵⁰ Hervey 1848b, 301. Also in Hervey 1931, 792–793.

¹⁴⁵¹ See, e.g. Vogtherr 2001; Blanning 2015.

¹⁴⁵² *London Chronicle*, iss. 4362, London, Oct. 14–Oct. 16. 1784, "Curious and entertaining ANECDOTES. [from the MEMOIRE of the LIFE of VOLTAIRE, written by Himself]".

¹⁴⁵³ *London Chronicle*, iss. 4362, London, Oct. 14–Oct. 16. 1784, "Curious and entertaining ANECDOTES. [from the MEMOIRE of the LIFE of VOLTAIRE, written by Himself]". For more detailed description one must turn to the unabridged version that stated that "The subject [of the painting] was totally Priapian. Turtles billing, young men in the embraces of young women, nymphs beneath satyrs, cupids at lascivious sports, people fainting with desire at beholding them, [...]" Anon. 1826, 53.

non-political affairs. To give a British example, Mary Wortley Montagu portrayed George I's arrival in his new courtly environment in Britain:

[...] the poor man was in peril of coming hither without knowing where to pass his evenings; which he was accustomed to do in the apartments of women, free from business.¹⁴⁵⁴

In the French debates and practices this separation was not as strong. Or rather, it did not really exist.

This difference becomes more visible, if we observe the accounts of the royal mistresses' exit from the royal favour and royal court. As discussed in section 3.3, the British monarchs remembered their previous mistresses financially (or at least were expected to) when the ladies moved out from the royal court and the relationship with the king ended. On many occasions, the ex-mistresses got married or returned to their family's, or their husband's estate or residence.¹⁴⁵⁵ In any case, their future was quite settled and they continued to take part in social life. In France, the fate of the royal mistress exiting the royal favour was quite different. A mistress that for one reason or another no longer had the royal favour or a use in the royal court was sent to a convent and was thus debarred from social life. This was the fate of, for example, Louise Julie de Mailly-Nesle, Comtesse de Mailly,¹⁴⁵⁶ who was exiled because she lost the king's affection, as well as that of Mme de Maintenon and Mme du Barry, who were removed from the court after the death of their royal lover.¹⁴⁵⁷ In the case of Mme du Barry, even her contemporaries considered her treatment harsh. At first, she was not allowed to live a normal life, she was not permitted to receive visitors, she was denied

¹⁴⁵⁴ Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112–113.

¹⁴⁵⁵ For example, Duchess of Kendal remained unmarried, but lived in Kendal House in Isleworth. Walpole 1818, 28. Mrs. Howard married George Berkeley. Walpole 1822a, appendix, 512. In later life, she was a neighbour and a good friend and informant to Horace Walpole. See, e.g. Walpole 1820b, Orford to the Hon. H. S. Conway, Arlington-street, 14th July 1761, 257; Walpole 1820b, To the Earl of Strafford, Strawberry-hill, 22nd July, 1761, 267. Amalia von Wallmoden, Countess of Yarmouth, returned to Hanover and enjoyed an inheritance from George II. See, e.g. Walpole 1822b, 456; Walpole 1843a, LETTER I. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 1st Nov. 1760, 3. Anne Vane, mistress of Fredercik, Prince of Wales, received a house of her own and a yearly pension. Hervey 1848b, 31. Mary Bellenden, fancy of George II when Prince of Wales, married John Campbell, 4th duke of Argyll. Walpole 1818, 75; Walpole 1804a, 88.

¹⁴⁵⁶ See, e.g. Fauques 1759, 19; Fauques 1758a, 21; Fauques 1766a, 21; Walpole 1820c, To George Montagu, Esq. Paris, Sunday night, 17th Sep. 1769, 317–318.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Walpole 1820c, To George Montagu, Esq. Paris, Sunday night, 17th Sep. 1769, 314–317; Walpole 1848b, Letter CCCXXXVII, Strawberry Hill, 26th Nov. 1789, 408; Mairobert 1775, 334–335; Bécu 1777b, 380; Mairobert 1779a, CXLIVe. LETTRE. A la Marquise de Montrable, 204; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER the Last, To the Marchioness de Montrable, 166; Mairobert 1779a, XXVe. LETTRE. Du Comte Du Barry, 17 avril 1769, commentaire en note, 36; Mairobert 1779b, LETTER XXIV. To the Duke de Coigny, Paris, 11th Jan. 1769, footnote, 30–31; TNA, SP 78/292 Stormont to Rochford, Paris, 4th May 1774, Secret, 25; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris, Thursday night 12th May 1774, 58. This tradition of sending the mistresses that had fallen out of favour to a convent explains why poor Cesilia was so easily fooled when Mme de Pompadour suddenly left to visit the convent of the Capuchin nuns. Anon. 1760, 31; Fauques 1766a, 96.

private correspondence, and she was even excluded from the daily activities of the convent – she was more like a prisoner.¹⁴⁵⁸

Harsh or not, this internment was understood as necessary, as the mistress was in possession of the king's secrets: "[...] she was in the secrets of government, and it was prudent to prevent so volatile a woman from discovering them."¹⁴⁵⁹ That is to say, in the French court it could not be imagined that the king did not discuss political matters in the presence of and with his mistress.¹⁴⁶⁰ While in the British court, it was rather assumed that the kings did not discuss any politics or at least any such great secrets with their mistresses that could endanger the whole administration of the realm. This demonstrates the difference in the political role that the royal mistresses had in the two political cultures as well as the separation of political and personal spaces and moments in relation to women.

Which brings us to the fourth point, namely to the entanglement of the public and private, and personal and impersonal character in the person of the king. After all, the element of publicness of the private affairs of public persons has been the intricate problem at the heart of this study. Use of power on the premise of moral capacities and abilities did politicise the private capacities of the persons using public power. Furthermore, theories of the king's two bodies tied together his public (as political, touching the entire realm) and private (as personal) matters. However, the public affairs of the king were also his private or secret affairs, and as we have seen, were decided in the court, which was both a centre of public political affairs and a personal household. This entanglement of the public and the private has been one of the most important keys in grasping the political potential and meanings of the royal mistresses as a phenomenon, a practice, and a discourse.

The publicness of the private person, body, and affairs of the personal majesty was not a simple construction in either of the political cultures. However, it was not understood, constructed, and used in quite the same way. The difference in the conceptualisations of the private and public character of the king and possibilities of their separation in the two political cultures gives us yet one more explanation for why the British royal mistresses were not politicised to such an extent as the French ones were.

Even though there are numerous occasions when the French eighteenth-century commentators wrote about the king's *private* or *personal* inclinations, apartments, or preferences, the French king was always inseparable from his public nature. Further, as Hours pointed out, the ways the king himself constructed and utilised his privacy and intimacy did gain political meanings.¹⁴⁶¹

¹⁴⁵⁸ See, e.g. Mairobert 1775, 334–335; Bécu 1777b, 380–381; TNA, SP 78/292, Stormont to Rochford, Paris May 18 1774, Most Secret, 72; Walpole 1843b, LETTER CCXXIII. From Orford to Mann, Strawberry Hill, 2nd Sep. 1774, 289.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Mairobert 1779b, LETTER the Last. To the Marchioness de Montrable, footnote, 169. "Mde. Du Barry avoit le secret de l'Etat, & il étoit prudent d'empêcher une femme aussi légère de le divulguer." Mairobert 1779a, CXLIVe. LETTRE. A la Marquise de Montrable, commentaire en note, 204.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Mairobert 1775, 335; Bécu 1777b, 380; Poisson 1766a, 174–175, 251; Poisson 1766c, 172, 249; Pierre 1903, 356, 364; Pierre 1902a, 274–276, 282.

¹⁴⁶¹ Hours 2002, 115–127, 276–279.

That is to say, even in the *private* capacity every characteristic, action, or relationship was reflected in the political management of the realm, or as politically significant. Of course, the French writers toyed with the idea of showing the public and private life and capacities of the king as separated. Usually, however, this was a trick in a critical discourse that attacked the king from his private side but ended up reaffirming the inseparability of the king's two capacities as the private flaws of the monarch were reflected as abuses in public administration. This was an image of *king as a man*. By this token, the realm suffered because the king was a man whose immortal body was controlled by the mortal one.

Yet, there was a more unusual formulation of the same theme. In the anonymously published *Memoires de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour* (1766), the writer depicted Louis XV as a martyr. This was a different kind of construction of *king as a man*. Louis XV was a mortal man whose mortal side was denied him, a king, who had his "troubles both as men and as Princes."¹⁴⁶² What made this mortal man the king, and further, a justified and good king, was that he sacrificed all his private wishes, hopes, and joys as a mortal man to the immortal, impersonal, and public capacity of the king:

[...] affection due to his people had got the better of his passion. Happy government, when the Monarch sacrifices his pensions to the welfare of his subjects!¹⁴⁶³

Thus, the only act that the king was given to decide as a private man, was the act of deciding to give up his private capacity in order to become a king. By this token, the monarch suffered because he was a mortal body controlled by the needs of the immortal one.

Many scholars have undertaken the curious, yet elusive, task of explaining the conceptualisations of the king's two bodies and the meanings of scandal and libels in relation to them. For example, as explained in the Introduction, scholars interested in eighteenth-century public debate have proposed that the slander was a part of the banalisation, demystification, and desacralisation of the image of the monarch – that is to say, the slander diminished the king to a man among men. Further, this opened up possibilities for new conceptualisations of the legitimate use of power.¹⁴⁶⁴ Paying even closer attention to the dynamics between the king's two bodies, Herve Drévilleon has proposed that the expanding libellous writing, especially the scandalous kind attacking the monarch through royal mistresses, was central part in the process of wearing down the mystical and sacred aura as well as the legitimacy of monarchy by giving an illustration of dysfunction in between the king's two bodies.¹⁴⁶⁵ According to Drévilleon, the

¹⁴⁶² Poisson 1766c, 249. "[...] les rois en [peines] ont & comme hommes & comme Princes." Poisson 1766a, 251.

¹⁴⁶³ Poisson 1766c, 71. "[...]: mais que l'amour de ses peuples l'avoit emporté sur sa passion. Heureux le gouvernement, où le Monarque sacrifie son penchant à la félicité de ses sujets!" Poisson 1766a, 71. See also, e.g. Poisson 1766a, 254; Poisson 1766b, 2; Poisson 1766c, 253; Poisson 1766d, 2.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Darnton 1995a; Darnton 2004; Kaiser 1996; Kaiser 1997; Graham 2000; Graham 2006; Graham 1997.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Drévilleon 2000, 295–298.

libellous writings translated the personal misbehaviour of the monarch into matters of the function of the monarch as well as demonstrated that the dual-bodied monarch had abandoned his impersonal political body in order to indulge his private and personal body.¹⁴⁶⁶

I propose that the libellous writings, as for example in the discourses on the royal mistresses, were not so much about revealing a dysfunction between the king's two bodies and that they did not just passively cause the banalisation, desacralisation, and demystification of monarchy. Rather, the idea about the king's two bodies enabled, even compelled, constant comparison between the king's mortal and immortal, private and public, and personal and impersonal bodies. Slandering writers exploited this fluctuation between the king's two bodies actively and intentionally.

The idea of a dysfunction between the king's bodies notes the prevailing problematics within the conceptualisation of the king's bodies that the slanderous and libellous writers utilised. Yet, it leaves room for further elaboration. For one thing, the term dysfunction implies that there would have been some kind of proper function between the king's two bodies. I rather propose that the impression of dysfunction arises from two simultaneous trajectories regarding the conceptualisation of the king's two bodies.

On the one hand, the scandalous writers affirmed the idea of the inseparability of the king's two bodies when they created images where the personal flaws of the personal king were transferred as the flaws of the impersonal monarch and monarchy. This was not a dysfunction: it was the nature of the dual-bodied monarch to continually intertwine the two bodies together. Thus, there was no actual separation between the king's bodies and they were presented as inseparably intertwined.

On the other hand, the scandalous writings also included imageries that illustrate cracks and discontinuities between the king's bodies – or, that separated the king's two aspects. In relation to the prevailing theories concerning monarchy, these moments, when the king's two bodies were not shown as referring to or inseparable from each other, were the most provocative. In this study, we have seen a few interesting moments when the writers showed the king's two aspects as separate. For example, in section 4.2.1 we saw Fauques' representation that denounced the king's personal inclinations as a legitimate justification for political decision, in this case, pacific policies during the Seven Year's War. This was a moment when the king's personal and impersonal aspects were separated. In section 3.5.2 we saw Mairobert's separation of the king's purse and impersonal royal treasury that was further connected to the realm or people of the kingdom. In turn, this was a moment when the king was shown as separate from his kingdom. Generally speaking, however, these latter representations were in the minority. The more common utilisation highlighting the inseparability of the king's two bodies was the premise that ensured that the figure of the royal mistress could be utilised as an effective tool for conceptualising monarchy – and for challenging some aspects of it.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Drévilleon 2000, 296–297.

In British political culture, however, there was a possibility to separate the king's two natures and conditions. For example, when presenting the character of the kings, it was quite common to separate their public and private virtues and vices.¹⁴⁶⁷ For example, Horace Walpole wrote about George II that "His faults were more the blemishes of a private man than of a King."¹⁴⁶⁸ In fact, in British political culture there was a strong separation of public and political, and of private and a- or non-political character.¹⁴⁶⁹ To some extent, this could be applied to the king himself, even though the king was never just a private person.¹⁴⁷⁰ As it was possible to separate the private capacity of the king from his public capacity, and to separate private affairs (non-political) from public (political) affairs, it was also possible to construct an image of *king in private*, a king beyond the public gaze, a king that was not acting in his function as the public administrator or a symbol of the political body. Certainly, this was not a king as a private man. Rather, it was a king in private, personal, and non-political space and time.

Further, as there was such a private space, time, and side of the king that was separated from his public capacity, the royal mistresses could be related to the private rather than to the public person of the majesty. This was the case on most occasions. The association was further strengthened as the British royal mistresses were attached to the private hours of the king (defined in terms of absence of political business)¹⁴⁷¹, private apartments¹⁴⁷², and to the private household of the Queen or Princess of Wales (where the connection to femininity further stressed privateness and non-politicalness)¹⁴⁷³. As a result, the connection of the royal mistresses to political publicness or to the king's public capacity was far looser in British than in French political culture. Consequently, their person or figure did not have similar politicisable potential as that of the French royal mistresses. As the discourse on the royal mistresses operated on politicisation of the concepts private, personal, intimate, and secret, it did not find as solid a foothold in British political culture where there existed an understanding about the depoliticised personal space of the king.

¹⁴⁶⁷ See, e.g. Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." George the First, by Tindal, 2; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield.", George the First, by Chesterfield, 1-2; Stanhope 1779d, Advertisement, "The following Characters and Letters are genuine productions of the late earl of Chesterfield." George the Second, by Smollet, 7.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Walpole 1822b, 454-455.

¹⁴⁶⁹ See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 74, 174, 353-354; Walpole 1822a, 45.

¹⁴⁷⁰ See, e.g. Wortley Montagu 1837a, Account of the court of George I. at his accession. By Lady M. W. Montagu, 111.

¹⁴⁷¹ See, e.g. Walpole 1822a, appendix, 513; Walpole 1818, 83; Hervey 1848a, 94; Wortley Montagu 1837a, 112-114; Hervey 1848b, 44-45.

¹⁴⁷² See, e.g. Hervey 1848a, 351; Hervey 1848b, 259.

¹⁴⁷³ See, e.g. Walpole 1818, 74, 97; Hervey 1848a, 95; Hervey 1848b, 104.

6 CONCLUSION

This study set out to fulfil a dual purpose. On the one hand, its task was to deepen the understanding of the eighteenth-century royal mistresses as a historical practice and a phenomenon central to the political cultures of the time. In this respect, this research reconstructed differing interpretations and understandings of the royal mistresses' roles and functions in the royal court that were used by contemporaries in order to achieve political or purely economic goals. However, this was not the main aim of this study. Rather, the first task provided tools for unravelling the significant *how* of this study: how was the monarchy as a political system and a form of government construed, maintained, and deconstructed discursively in the debate on the royal mistresses and through their representations?

Previous studies, mainly in the field of the history of the book, communication, and public debate, have paid attention to the royal mistresses specifically as a scandal that eroded the sacred and mystical aura – even legitimacy – of the monarch and monarchy. In this study, the royal mistresses were not seen only as a *scandal* but simultaneously as a *practice* that had its own tradition and uses, some of which were considered justified and supportive to the monarch and monarchy. In the hands of courtiers, ministers, diplomats, and the wider audiences outside the royal courts, the discourse on the royal mistresses served multiple ends. Thus, far from being merely trivial, one-sided, or unequivocal conversations, the discussions on royal mistresses have been seen to form a multi-vocal and multidimensional discourse. Most importantly, however, the various commentators that used the figure of the mistress leaned on and took part in various contemporary debates concerning monarchy as a political system, including the debates that discussed the nature and limits of the use of legitimate power as well as those concerning the locus, manners, and practices of the political decision-making in the royal court.

In order to unravel the political meanings and potentials of the discourse on the royal mistresses, this study explored and analysed a few very central and commonly occurring themes that come up in the discourse on the royal mistress: money, corruption, and power. As general or superordinate concepts, terms, and

themes traditionally connected to women associated with men in power, avarice, sexual corruption or deviation, and illegitimate influencing appear historically sterile. In this relation, this study complemented and developed further the results of previous studies when it offered a more elaborate analysis of the meanings and uses of political language in relation to the most central themes of the scandalous mistress.

This study demonstrated how these “perennial” themes and terms regarding money, corruption, and power of the royal mistresses were connected specifically to the eighteenth-century debates on political participation and legitimate use of political power in the monarchical political system. This was accomplished by more semantic and rhetorical analysis that positioned the themes, terms, narratives, imageries, and concepts used by the writers in the discourse on the royal mistresses in the wider contemporary debates and understandings. It was also achieved through a comparison between France and Britain that provided a perspective on the more general transnational elements of the discourse as well as on specific national understandings and uses of the discourse and the figure of the royal mistress. As a result, we have seen that the discussions on these motifs of money, corruption, and power were both volatile and partly overlapping, which resulted in a thematically wide discourse that expanded in many directions. For example, we saw how the representations on the royal mistresses and their use of money encompassed discussions about royal benevolence and justice, the proper compensation of royal servants, the limits of royal power in relation to private property, the degradation of morals, manners, and rational administration of the realm, and the nature and capacities of the two sexes – all under the simplified figure of the avaricious or too expensive royal mistress. It would be more fitting to state that the royal mistress provided the eighteenth-century commentators a *figure* through which they could take part in various contemporary debates in a form that merged and simplified complex debates into simple anecdotes or recognisable figures.

The eighteenth-century commentators describing the royal mistresses participated in, contributed to, and utilised a wide range of contemporary debates and discourses. For example, in this study we have seen the semi-fictional figure of the mistress utilised in a rather traditional manner as a scapegoat, evil advisor, or conductor that served to attract and redirect criticism away from the person of the monarch or his ministers. In this respect, we have seen the discourse on the royal mistresses utilising and contributing to very long-standing debates (e.g. *the woman question/querelle des femmes*) as well as very topical ones (e.g. censorship; the strife between the Parlement(s), the Crown, and the Church; or the debates on despotism). We have also seen the presentations of the royal mistresses as a tool of power-struggles both within the royal court and outside of it, utilised in arranging and altering the positions and networks of power, or as an instrument in the attempts of rival courtly factions to challenge the reputation and credit of the royal mistress herself or of the opposing faction attached to the mistress. In this respect, the presentations of the royal mistresses were also a tool in endeavours of influencing royal decision-making, in directing

the royal attention and favours, and in binding the monarch himself to certain kind of behaviour, or pressurising him into it, by defining *appropriate/inappropriate* conduct – especially in relation to rewarding and noticing his aristocratic servants in the court.

Further, we have seen the semi-fictional figure of a *French* royal mistress escape national/spatial boundaries and seen how it was utilised in defining the *British* manners and cultures of court and royal life – and of course, doing politics and making political decisions. In this relation, this study affirms the cultural tension between Britain and France as noted in previous studies. However, it adds that the discourse on the royal mistresses was used to define not only differing social values but political ones as well. The imageries of the French royal mistresses encapsulated British conceptions of French political culture, national character, courtly life, and political decision-making that functioned as an opposite against which proper English masculinity could be defined. In addition, the British discussion on the French royal mistresses constructed English political masculinity (legitimate independent and rational political agency) through the conception of French effeminacy. In this debate, the parallel binary oppositions of outward fashion/self-control and rationality as well as industriousness and serious business/idleness both functioned and were affirmed on the English/French as well as male/female or masculine/feminine axis.

But more importantly still, we have seen the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress in the eighteenth-century context of developing critical publicity, or, entering into the wider and larger public debates, and consequently escaping the control of the courtly circles. In this regard, the figure of and the discourse on the royal mistresses rose from the level of *private, particular, and personal* to the level of *public, general, and impersonal*. In other words, we have witnessed the transformation of a royal mistress into a semi-fictional figure, utilised as a tool in shaping the images and imageries of the (personal and impersonal) monarch and monarchy, in defining, discussing, and negotiating the nature, values, norms, ideals, and practices of legitimate monarchical decision-making, and in redirecting and connecting the seemingly trivial and unimportant to constitutional issues and weaknesses of monarchy as a political system. Whereas previous studies have presented the scandalous discourse on the royal mistresses as a means to criticise the monarch or even monarchy as a political system – moreover, as a quite traditional means – this research, in turn, elaborates this indirect critique further by offering a more thorough analysis of the uses and mechanisms of the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress. This project functioned on three levels – simultaneously.

Firstly, the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistresses was used to transform the presentations from the surface level descriptions of the royal mistresses into presentations of the king's personal abilities and capacities. For example, breaches against the limits of appropriate compensation of the royal mistress's service (visible acts) would be turned into demonstrations of the monarch's inner capacities and abilities (most importantly moral and rational) that further related to the ideal and normative grounds for the use of legitimate

power. Further, the discussions, presentations, and narratives about the royal mistresses constructed reason and rationality as specifically moral capacity, and built the legitimacy and justification of monarchical rule on the premise of this moral and rational justness.

Secondly, the eighteenth-century commentators used the discourse on the royal mistresses to transfer the discussion from the personal and individual mistress and king and their personal abilities and potentials into presentations of the practices and functions of the royal court, of political decision-making in the court, and especially of the formation of political will in the person of the monarch inseparable from his court. That is to say, they discursively redirected the focus on to the impersonal mechanisms and practices of the political decision-making typical of monarchy as a political system.

Thirdly, the writers utilising the semi-fictional figure and the discourse on the royal mistresses brought forth and operated through the complex entanglement of the concepts impersonal/personal, public/private, intimate/formal, and secret/open in the person of the ruling monarch – and participated in politicising and reshaping their meanings and uses.

The politics of trivial

All in all, this study has been all about the ways the eighteenth-century commentators writing about the royal mistresses leaned on, tied together, utilised, and contributed to numerous wider discourses, and in the process, formed a many-sided and fluid discussion on the nature and use of legitimate power where the trivial and political entwined, where the political was trivialised and the trivial politicised. There are a few features that characterise the discourse on the royal mistresses especially as a political curiosity and a scandal.

First, the writers utilising the discourse on the royal mistresses created and utilised semantic fields that were partially overlapping, referred to and affirmed each other, could map ideas beyond their basic correspondence, and that all eventually came to refer to the power, nature of power, and use of power that were embodied in the personal monarch. The discourse on the royal mistresses was essentially a tool for discussing public power and authority where the use of the highest political power was seen by its users as inseparable from private and personal duties, qualities, and capacities – especially moral ones. The writers connected the debates on legitimate power directly to the personal body of the monarch through such concepts as *personal*, *private*, *favour*, and *intimacy*. These concepts in themselves did not necessarily deny or challenge the legitimacy of monarchy that was based on the private and personal political decision-making by the monarch. The danger and possibilities lay in the opportunities for connecting these concepts to wider conceptual fields and groups of binary oppositions through which legitimate public power and use of power was conceptualised – especially in relation to the traditional idea of private and secret royal decision-making.

Second, the writers describing the royal mistresses and their assumed characteristics and action took full advantage off building parallel binary

oppositions both explicitly and implicitly. The writers, for example, built further associations between the juxtaposition of private/public by connecting private to personal networks, relations, spaces, characters, and preferences, to private affairs and inclinations, to secrecy, and contrapositioned them to formal and impersonal ones, to the public, known, and open. Alongside these constructions, there was also the oppositional pair of the king's private, personal, and mortal body/public, impersonal, immortal body politic. Some oppositions discussed the limits of public power, especially in terms of public power and private right. Further parallel binary oppositions directed attention to normative constructions compelling certain behaviour, e.g. reasonable justice/injustice, naturalness/corruption, affectation/honesty, and proper/improper. The binary opposition of legitimate/illegitimate was invented in the dynamics of all these parallels.

On many occasions, although not in all, stereotypical notions of gender were an important tool in affirming and connecting binary oppositions together. Thus, in this study we have seen gender as both a discursive product and tool. Male/female and masculine/feminine were oppositions that supported other binary conceptual pairs. Thus, the main point of this study was not so much in proving the illegitimacy of female/feminine rule or even demonstrating how women's rule was discursively constructed as illegitimate. Rather, it was in contemplating and problematising gender as one of the most important axes in intertwining otherwise unconnected or just loosely connected oppositional pairs together. This made visible even the more implicit ways through which some matters could be both legitimated/delegitimated as well as politicised/depoliticised by using sex- or gender-divisions.

The processes of politicisation/depoliticisation of female/feminine and of trivial occurred in the discourse on the royal mistresses in two specific ways. On the one hand, in this study, we have witnessed a traditional frame in which courtly, high, and royal women in general and royal mistresses in particular were accepted and expected to function and influence in matters that contemporaries understood as *politically significant*. For example, in the first chapter we saw that the inseparability and interconnection of the king's two bodies created the space in which the royal mistresses could be understood and shown as beneficial to the monarch and the monarchy – or even as de rigeur as the mistress was presented as a phenomenon or even as an agent supporting and sustaining the government of the realm by supporting and sustaining the person of the monarch. Further, we witnessed that there were limits defined in terms of accepted (and even praised) politically significant use of power of influence and unacceptable illegitimate meddling in political *business or affairs*.

Essentially then, the discourse on the royal mistresses was not completely hostile to women's influencing. Rather, it affirmed the traditional arenas, objects, and ways in which high and wealthy women conventionally and very practically participated in political life. Firstly, it highlighted social arena in which women could function as positive and highly praised agents. Certainly, the contemporaries did not deny the political significance of sociability. Instead, they

highlighted the political meanings of personal networks as well as the politics of royal intimacy, notice, distinction, and favour where the royal mistress specifically played an important role. Second, the patronage and charity that the royal mistresses either performed themselves, mediated, and encouraged the king to perform, intertwined with the expectations and ideals regarding the monarch's duties and responsibilities towards the protection and promotion of his subjects and realm. That is to say, it was understood that (aristocratic or elite) women had a role, function, and importance in public influencing that were acknowledged both as politically significant and legitimate, and defined and justified through such capacities, abilities, and characteristics that had feminine charge or connotation.

As the previous point focused on the conceptualisation of women's practical political participation, the second point focused on the manners, types, and ways of making a political decision. Here as well the processes of politicisation/depoliticisation of the female/feminine and of the trivial gained significance. The eighteenth-century writers describing the royal mistresses sought to politicise/depoliticise and legitimate/delegitimate a certain kind of political decision-making that was represented as taking place through such mechanisms that were (actively and intentionally) loaded with a gendered dimension and where gender served as an axis through which the writers created references and cross-references between parallel binary oppositional conceptual pairs. These attempts and trends were the most visible in the construction of an *evil mistress* whose power was terrible and dangerous just because it was personal, private, intimate, sexual, sensual, informal, unofficial, secret, and feminine. Such presentations politicised gender and delegitimised any rule, use of power, or influence characterised as feminine. This was so especially since simultaneously in these debates legitimate power, its legitimate basis, and its legitimate use were encapsulated in terms and concepts such as rationality, sensibility, disinterestedness, officiality, formality, firmness, honesty, consideration, justness, rational judgment, perseverance, terms which further became impregnated with gendered (masculine) charge or connotation, either explicit or implicitly, via the distinct connection to mistresses' illegitimate feminine rule. This produced and affirmed tautological images and conceptualisations of legitimate power as essentially masculine that in principle secured the king's right to the use of highest political power.

However, marking the feminine use of power or influence as dangerous and illegitimate was not the only option for eighteenth-century writers. Simultaneously there was a recurring trend to depoliticise feminine use of influence and/or power. Especially writers closely connected to the royal court, such as courtiers, ministers, and diplomats, produced imaginaries in which the mistresses' power of influence was marked as insignificant by virtue of it being personal, private, intimate, sexual, sensual, informal, unofficial, secret, and feminine. The potential for connecting the royal mistresses to the trivial and a- or non-political was greater in Britain, where there existed a contemporaneous

image of a more private and personal side, space, and time of the monarch to which the royal mistresses could be connected.

Thus, there was an interesting tension of political/trivial in understandings and presentations of pillow talk that could be turned into a tool of politicisation/depoliticisation as well as of legitimation/delegitimation. This tension enabled the politicisation of themes, issues, and narratives otherwise discarded as trivial, which further enabled their use as a tools of legitimation/delegitimation, such as, e.g. narratives about the husband of the royal mistress, or images of the mistress wasting wealth on trifles. Yet, the defining of a phenomenon or issue as trivial – or trivialising it – was also an attempt at depoliticising it, at marking it as a- or non-political, as was the case with the mistresses' power and influence. The discourse on the royal mistresses carried these tensions and made them available to eighteenth-century commentators. On the one hand, there was a possibility to mark the power defined as feminine as politically dangerous and illegitimate. On the other, there was an attempt to restrict legitimate political participation to the realm of official and formal (gendered as masculine) by excluding and trivialising feminine as personal, private, unofficial, informal, and intimate.

Thirdly, the discourse on royal mistresses contained a paradoxical tension between personal and impersonal that originated from the repetition and stereotypicalisation peculiar to it. In the discourse on the royal mistresses the eighteenth-century writers utilised, created, and affirmed strong stereotypes, even tautologies, that had strong normative dimensions, and could have long historical permanence and tradition, especially in the form of “perennial” motifs and general terms related to them (e.g. avarice, sexual misconduct, corruption). Especially anecdote and scandal provoked the transition from the personal (individual and unique mistress) to the stereotypical and impersonal figure. The repetition of themes, narratives, and anecdotes further encouraged the construction of stereotypical figures (e.g. *evil mistress*, *too expensive mistress*) and impersonalisation of the figures, as well as reinforced the air of perpetuity and universality that still further helped to solidify certain images, imageries, topics, themes, concepts, and ways of discussing the royal mistresses still further.

Moreover, just because of these long-standing trends in the debate on women's power, gendered criticism against the monarchs made gender an axis that could connect semantic fields and along which the criticism could find an alternative channel. In this study, we have seen how the same motifs, narratives, concepts, descriptions, and even anecdotes could be transferred from one mistress to another – even from a mistress to a queen: the commentators did not really distinguish the personal characters of, for example, Mme de Pompadour and Mme du Barry in their criticism. Similarly, when the British mistress was powerless and insignificant, the criticism was transferred to the queen; and further, Louis XVI's decision not to take a mistress did not protect either his wife from criticism, nor him or his monarchy from the gendered criticism that was expressed through the public woman (queen) close to the political decision-making.

Consequently, comparison between the discourse on royal mistresses and queen consorts should be an interesting subject for further study that could provide insight into differences between the influence of the queen and the mistress. After all, the mistresses were figures where illegitimate feminine rule was highlighted, and not least because they were adulterous and thus unlawful relationships. The queen consorts did not have formal and official positions in political decision-making any more than the mistresses did, and yet it seems that occasionally their use of influence had more legitimacy, or at least a sense of entitlement, than the mistresses' did. Even though the case of Queen Caroline provided us with some insight, it would be interesting to further study which themes and vocabularies were transferable between the criticised rule of a mistress and that of the queen.

The stereotypical, seemingly "perennial", and universal figure of the *evil mistress* or *too expensive mistress*, for example, was then an impersonal instrument for referring to certainty and inevitableness by historical proof. It was used to refer to the gradual deterioration of monarchy through the history that transferred criticism further towards the constitution of the monarchy, as well as to universality that made possible the transfer of criticism from one (impersonal) person to another.

To restore or to reform?

In the end, was the discourse on royal mistresses a vehicle of change, a herald of revolution, or a traditionalist machine of affirming the conventional? Certainly, the discourse on the royal mistresses and the means utilised when sharing images of the royal mistresses were not innocent: they offered means to discuss and criticise the prevailing rule. The writers and commentators did have the intention of persuading their readers and taking a stand on topical issues that were understood as political, maybe they even sought to influence royal political decision-making, especially when smearing the reputation and character of a political opponent. Still, was the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress as she was pictured in public debate an instrument of dismantling or confirming the monarchical political system or the traditional ideas behind its legitimation?

On a general level, the discourse on the royal mistresses seems traditional and conventional, even traditionalist. First, the ways and means utilised in the discourse were conventional and traditional, such as the *evil advisors* motif that shielded the legitimacy and person of the monarch (and even his ministers) by redirecting the discontent to the trivia of the royal mistress. Thus, the discourse on the royal mistresses was designed to conserve the prevailing political system. Second, scandal in general was (and is) a tool that appealed to the (assumed) impression of shared norms and moral values, which in itself makes it rather more traditionalist than reformist. Third, as we have seen in this study, the criticism of monarchy as expressed in scandalous discourse on royal mistresses seems to be rooted in a quite traditional understanding of legitimate power, its foundations, and its use. For example, we have seen the legitimation of monarchical rule by such traditional images as, e.g. the monarch as the guardian

and distributor of law and justice, as the source of favours and distinction, as the centre of political will, and even as the benevolent father of his greater family of the realm. Further, we have witnessed a set of ideals and norms upon which legitimate political decision-making should have been built, such as rationality, independence, disinterestedness, and *bien public/public good*. The writers discussing the royal mistresses (and especially their illegitimate rule) seemed to have confirmed and supported these traditional conceptualisations of legitimate rule. In other words, there was a strong underlying wish to return or restore a monarchy that had strayed from its proper path to its former, original, *right* form and practices.

However, the appeal to tradition, convention, unspecified nostalgia, and traditional values and images of monarchy did not mean that the eighteenth-century debaters representing the royal mistresses were necessarily supportive of the prevailing rule or monarchy in general. Due to the peculiarity of the discourse itself, the criticism of the royal mistresses tended to steer the attack from the personal, particular, and individual mistress (and monarch) to the impersonal (mistresses as stereotypical, the monarch as impersonal public decision-maker, monarchy with its impersonal practices). Consequently, the stereotypical *evil mistress* and the related presentation of her illegitimate rule, even though encompassing a certain air of perpetuity and seeming to operate on the premise of a rather traditional understanding of monarchy, were part of that prevailing discourse that eroded the credibility and plausibility of the prevailing monarchy and that changed conceptions of the legitimate use of power and its premises. Tied together with wider debates and criticism, by the 1770s the presentations of illegitimate royal mistresses came to question the political system and its foundations, as proposed in previous studies. However, by virtue of this study, it must be concluded that the challenge thrown against monarchy through the discourse on the royal mistresses was not as unintentional and accidental as implied in studies promoting scandal as a vehicle of desacralisation, banalisation, and demystification. By the 1770s the figure of the royal mistress was no longer a traditional tool serving in deflecting the criticism. It came to symbolise all that was wrong in the monarchical political system, and further, that everything was defined in terms of *personalness* by the writers utilising the discursive construction of the semi-fictional figure of the royal mistress.

First of all, the writers utilising the discourse on the royal mistresses eroded the plausibility of personal and secret decision-making by one person, as embodied in *Arcana imperii* or *Secret du Roi*, by depoliticising the concept *personal* and by relocating royal political decision-making in the royal court instead of the royal person. Regarding the first point, the writers seemed to affirm the *royal favour* as a concept guaranteeing the ruling monarch's rightful position as the centre of the court, government, and political will. Royal favour in itself was a concept that was inseparably intertwined in the personal preferences as well as private and mysterious will of the monarch. Yet, simultaneously, *personal* was both depoliticised and constructed as a negative concept that was used as a tool of delegitimation. It was utilised in the discourses that sketched the nature and

basis or reason for the legitimate use of power using such parallel binary conceptual oppositions where *personal* gained meanings either as a preference, relation, and/or intimacy, such as formal/informal (practices, conventions, procedures), official/unofficial (networks, hierarchies, channels), power/influence, public/private (matters, interests), male/female, masculine/feminine. Consequently, rather than affirming the legitimacy of prevailing rule, the discourse on the royal mistresses affirmed that the monarchy as a political system functioned on the premise of personal royal will – and by either delegitimising the personal element in political decision-making or depoliticising the personal completely, ended up testing the credibility of monarchy as a political system.

Regarding the second point, i.e. focusing on the court as the locus of royal decision-making and the place of origin of the royal will, the writers paraded criticism against the court, courtly life, courtly culture, and courtiers in their discourse on the royal mistresses. On the one hand, they explicitly constructed the royal court as a place of *inevitable* corruption, or more precisely, of inevitable attrition and taint of taste, sense, and principles. The inevitability of corruption denounced the court as a legitimate place for forming a political will that itself should be incorruptible and disinterested. On the other hand, the writers representing the royal mistresses utilised the language and imaginaries of *intrigue* that created images of a polycentric court – especially when presenting the circles, influence, and means of power of the ladies beside the monarch. That is to say, these discourses did not explicitly denounce the legitimacy of private and secret royal decision-making per se. However, when producing images and presentations of the royal mistresses' influence through their circles and privacy (private apartments, private sociability), the writers relocated or replaced legitimate royal privacy and secrecy with the illegitimate privacy and secrecy of the royal mistress as the place of origin of the formation of royal will. By these means, the writers created a presentation that inevitably challenged legitimation by *Secret du Roi* even without specifically attacking the theory legitimating the king's right to private, secret, and personal political decision-making.

This is a noteworthy tension: the discourses surrounding the figure of the *evil mistress* and her use of power of influence appeared as if continually affirming the justification by and ideal of *Secret du Roi* while they simultaneously redirected attention to the processes in which and by which the personal and political will of the monarch allegedly formed. By discursively delegitimising these processes, by defining them as illegitimate (on the basis of e.g. personal networks, secrecy, intimacy, informality, unofficiality, intrigue), the writers simultaneously implied that the personal will of the monarch was illegitimate due to the ways by which it was formed, and raised the question of formation of political will from the level of personal monarch to an issue regarding the foundations and structures of the political system. This was not, however, a discussion that sought to remedy the problem by transparency, by revoking personal monarchy, or by balancing the French monarchy in the British-mannered mixed monarchy (not even in Fauques' writing, though she admired

the British system). Instead, the suggested cure was to remove all things *personal* from personal monarchical decision-making, that is to say, separating the private and public body of the king and locating the political decision-making solely in the impersonal and public monarch in a formal and official space.

Secondly, besides challenging the traditional foundation of *Arcana imperii* or *Secret du Roi* of the French monarchy, the writers discussing and presenting royal mistresses participated in the process that by the 1770s had created serious friction in the understanding of the locus of the political body of the realm. Once again, there were two parallel strains participating in this process: on the one hand, the language dissolving the symbolic unity of the realm in the person of the monarch, and the rise of *public opinion* on the other. As noted in previous studies, the language of intrigue formed a threat to the ideals of unity and harmony embodied in the person of the monarch in French political theory. Through the discourse on the royal mistresses, the eighteenth-century critics associated the language and imageries of intrigue (e.g. intrigue, cabal, faction, parti) with the courtly ladies in general and with the royal mistresses in particular when they presented the mistresses as the head or centre of a power-block. This association reinforced the interconnection with illegitimate feminine rule and its juxtaposition to the ideals of legitimate masculine rule as well as corroded the symbolic unity in the person of the monarch.

To add further: this symbolical unity upon which the French monarchy was based, faced a challenge from a seemingly more innocent and trivial direction. All kinds of writers and media, ranging from newspapermen to gossip-mongers and biographers of royal mistresses, eagerly followed and shared the changes in the direction of royal preference and distinction, in access to the intimate, private, and secret space of the monarch, and in the personal relations within the networks and power-blocks, all of which were marked as political in their relation to the favour/disfavour of the monarch. This was the wider discussion to which the presentations of the royal mistresses' use of influence contributed: they affirmed the impression of the court as being disunited, both concretely and symbolically. This disunity challenged the symbolic unity of the court and the realm in the person of the monarch, and further, revealed the limits of the personal monarch's power in creating and securing unity. In theory, the monarch was in a position with the duty and power to force or create unity. However, it was presented that in practice, due to the structure, nature, and the practices of the court, he was unable to do just that. As stated many times over, Louis XV and Louis XVI have been remembered as the weak kings who lost control of their court. Rather, the court has always been disunited and to some extent out of the control of the monarch. What the last kings before the Revolution lost was control of the imageries of the unity/disunity of the court and the related symbolism: the court and the realm were longer one and united in the person of the monarch. All that was left to ask was: should it continue to exist?

The rise of public debate and *public opinion* offered a partial answer to that question. The discourse on the royal mistresses did not function in a vacuum but instead in close connection with topical political debates. The discussions on the

royal mistresses were a part of and contributed to the wider phenomena of public debate and public opinion (also as a tribunal), both explicitly and implicitly. i) On many occasions, discourse on the royal mistresses offered a platform on which to discuss policies (even without reference to the mistresses themselves). One hot topic that was directly discussed and often denounced was royal censorship of political writing and debating.

ii) When describing the mistress and the monarch at the centre of the court, the presentations of royal mistresses disseminated information on the processes and practices of the highest political decision-making. Further, cloaked in entertainment and scandal which excited curiosity and attention, discourse on the royal mistresses recycled and circulated burning discourses and topics, and popularised complex political debates from other arenas (e.g. power-struggles between Parlements and the Crown in France, and Parliament and the Crown in Britain) in simplified anecdotes. That is to say, especially anecdotes about the royal mistresses offered information in such a titillating form that they were easily noticed, understood, and repeated, and further, on the basis of which it was easy to form an *opinion*. Consequently, commentators and readers could position themselves in evaluating the situation and warning the royal person.

iii) The discourse on the royal mistresses was a vehicle of discussion that flattered the unspecified *public* explicitly and implicitly by implying that the consternation and disapproval of talking and writing audiences should affect the decisions of the monarch. This was most explicit in relation to the decision to send away the unpopular *evil mistress* – a pressure that most certainly originated from within the courtly circles. Thus, the writers intentionally fuelled the confidence in *public opinion*, in the reading audience's right to participate in its formation, as well as the *public opinion's* right to warn and advise the monarch – that is to say, to participate in the management of public and political affairs. Further, the writers discussing the royal mistresses participated in that process through which *public opinion* was constructed as an authority that existed *outside* the monarch which has been documented in previous studies. As a part of this process, also the writers presenting the royal mistresses contributed to the construction of a politically significant (imagined) collective outside the monarch. Especially the motif highlighting political disunity confirmed the interpretation that the realm was not one in the person of the monarch. Rather, it was in the process of fragmentation and dislocation, moving from the unity in the monarch to that outside the monarch.

To conclude, public discussions on the royal mistresses robbed the two-bodied monarch of the power of politics of his private body. The public debate on the royal mistresses renounced the power of royal privacy and intimacy. i) Most simply, it “revealed” the private and the secret by giving readers and commentators descriptions of the events, actions, persons, and assumed motives behind the political decisions. ii) It wrecked the monarch's power over his privacy and will by presenting the mistress as the ruler or at least gatekeeper of the royal private and intimate space. iii) It subjected the intimate, private, and personal rationality of the (semi-fictional) monarch to the gaze and judgment of

an unspecified *public* or any reader. And finally, iv) it politicised the concepts *personal* and *private* – and royal intimacy – as instruments of delegitimation as well as seeking to depoliticise them as trivial.

It would be interesting to further study the politics of royal privacy of George III and Louis XVI, who abandoned the tradition of keeping a mistress that had become both highly unpopular and was constructed as a symbol of strayed monarchical rule. Rather than understanding the act of not taking a mistress as bowing to unpopularity – which would also be an act recognising of the role and right of the *public* in influencing monarchical decision-making – there is a need to investigate what kind of politics of privacy and intimacy these monarchs instigated instead. Both George III and Louis XVI did not eradicate privateness. Instead, they raised new images of domestic masculinity as an important part of their public image. That is to say, a domestic privacy and intimacy was made public and presented as a part of their public image. This turn in itself could have been a counter-reaction to such politics of the secret private and intimate that Louis XV utilised – the kind of concealed and secret privacy that gave power to speculations and (half truth/fictional) narratives about the secret private of the monarch.

Were royal mistresses just an early modern phenomenon that the growth of the public sphere and democratisation would destroy? Certainly, the modern mistresses of politicians and powerful men do not seem to carry the same justified and important functions and roles as their early modern counterparts in royal courts. However, in terms of scandal, modern political sex scandals resemble those of the eighteenth-century in many respects. Essentially, a sex scandal is still a debate about *men* in power and their use of power, about the political system that allows such scandalous men to rise to positions of power, and about the moral qualities and ideals that relate to the use of political power. Eighteenth-century debates on the royal mistresses utilised a set of central themes that are still recognisable in modern sex scandals, such as for example the interconnections of sex, gender, power, money, and corruption. Political sex scandals still rest upon the paradoxical question concerning the private person of the public decision-maker as well as insignificant triviality and dangerous influence. Even though the mass media and wider rights of political debate and political participation have changed the nature of political publicness – or maybe just because of these changes – political sex scandals still seem to have a place to fill and function to serve in modern political cultures. In fact, these changes may have stressed the way scandal is intentionally utilised in political contests for power and in the process of forming imaginations and definitions of the legitimate use of power. However, because of the complex, even paradoxical entanglements of the private, public, trivial, and politically significant, the meanings of sex scandals are hard to grasp and their impact is difficult to estimate. Thus, the insight gained from this study may be of assistance in understanding the political significance of scandal and the trivial, and their political meanings in any given political culture, in any given time.

SUMMARY IN FINNISH

Valtaa, politiikkaa ja kuiskauksia sänkykamarissa: Kuninkaallisten rakastajattarien rooli monarkian legitimizeettiä koskevissa keskusteluissa Ranskassa ja Britanniassa, 1714–1774

Poliittinen seksiskandaali myy. Valta, politiikka ja seksi kiehtovat uteliaita yleisöjä. Sensaatiomaiset lööpit ja paljastukset valtaapitävien salarackaista ovat hetkessä kaikkien tiedossa: ne puhuttavat, huvittavat ja järkyttävät – ja samalla seksiskandaaleja pidetään yleisesti poliittisesti merkityksettöminä. Tämä tutkimus pureutuu siihen, miten triviaali, poliittinen, yksityinen, salainen, henkilökohtainen ja julkinen kietoutuivat yhteen 1700-luvun ranskalaisissa ja brittiläisissä keskusteluissa kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista. Siinä valotetaan sitä, miten populaari ja uteliaisuutta herättävä keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista nivoutui ajan laajempiin keskusteluihin oikeutetusta poliittisesta vallasta, vallan käytöstä ja hallinnon muodosta. Mistä todella puhuttiin, kun puhuttiin rakastajattarista?

Tällä tutkimuksella on kaksi laajempaa tavoitetta. Toisaalta sen tehtävänä on laajentaa ymmärrystä kuninkaiden rakastajattarista poliittisten kulttuurien keskeisenä käytänteenä ja ilmiönä. Tässä suhteen tutkimus rekonstruoi erilaisia representaatioita, tulkintoja ja käsityksiä rakastajattarista, heidän roolistaan ja tehtävistä hoveissa ja monarkkien rinnalla. Näin tutkimus syventää käsitystä rakastajattarista erityisesti sellaisena hovien käytänteenä, jonka aikalaiset mielsivät tarpeelliseksi tai jopa välttämättömäksi. Tutkimuksen varsinainen päätavoite kuitenkin liittyy siihen, mitä näillä kuvauksilla rakastajattarista *tehtiin*, eli miten aikalaiset levittivät ja käyttivät hyväkseen näitä toisinaan hyvinkin ristiriitaisia esityksiä rakastajattarista tavoitellessaan omia poliittisia tai taloudellisia etujaan. Tutkimuksessa kysytään, miten käsityksiä vallitsevasta monarkiasta ja sen legitimizeetistä vahvistettiin tai haastettiin näiden kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista käytyjen keskustelujen kautta. Tässä suhteessa tutkimus osoittaa, että rakastajattaren hahmo toimi risteyskohtana, jossa tuotiin yhteen moninaisia ajankohtaisia huolenaiheita ja keskusteluja, jopa näennäisen vähäpätöisiä ja triviaaleja, ja sidottiin ne osaksi laajempaa keskustelua legitimeetistä vallasta.

Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa huomio kohdistuu keskusteluun kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista ja aikaisten heistä esittämiin kuvauksiin ja tulkintoihin. Tavoitteena ei siis ole tarkastella sitä, käyttikö joku tunnettu rakastajatar valtaa vai ei tai miten hän kulutti rahaa. Sen sijaan keskiössä on kysymys siitä, mitä se tarkoitti, että rakastajattaren esitettiin käyttävän valtaa. Tai mitä kuvaukset hänen tavastaan kuluttaa kertoivat ajan käsityksistä kuninkaasta ja monarkiasta. Tutkimuskohteeksi otettu representatio rakastajattaresta on siis *puolifiktiovinen hahmo*, jota rakastajatar ei itse hallinnut ja joka ei välttämättä vastannut lainkaan rakastajattaren todellista persoonaa. Rakastajattaren puolifiktiovinen hahmo oli väline, jonka kautta erilaiset 1700-luvun kirjoittajat pyrkivät muihin tavoitteisiin, olipa se sitten poliittisen tiedon levittäminen,

kannanotto johonkin ajankohtaiseen poliittiseen kysymykseen, hovin sisäisten valtakamppailujen käyminen ainakin osin hovin ulkopuolisella areenalla tai pyrkimys taivutella lukijoita muuttamaan käsitystään vallitsevasta hallinnosta, poliittisesta järjestelmästä tai hallinnon muodosta ja sen oikeutuksesta – tai kaikki nämä yhdessä.

Innokkaimmin rakastajattaria ja varsinkin keskustelua rakastajattarista ovat tutkineet julkisen keskustelun historiasta kiinnostuneet tutkijat. Aiempi tutkimus on kiinnittänyt huomiota ennen kaikkea 1700-luvun jälkipuoliskoon, jolloin julkisen keskustelun kiihtyminen, laajentuminen ja politisoituminen lisäsivät myös kritiikkiä rakastajattaria kohtaan – sekä tietenkin rakastajattarien *kautta* esitettyä kritiikkiä, joka todellisuudessa kohdistui hallitsevaan monarkkiin. Aiempi tutkimus on keskittynyt tähän kriittiseen keskusteluun ja hahmottanut kuninkaallisia rakastajattaria yksinomaan skandaalina. Varhaismodernin ajan valtaa pitävien rakastajattaret eivät kuitenkaan olleet yksiselitteisesti skandaali, joka pyrittiin kätkemään katseilta.

Kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren pitäminen oli hovien käytäntö ja ilmiö, jopa instituutio, jolla oli oma paikkansa ajan poliittisissa kulttuureissa. Varhaismodernina aikana avioliitto asetti rajat lailliselle intiimille seksuaaliselle suhteelle miehen ja naisen välillä. Avioliitto oli pyhä sakramentti ja instituutio, joka sekä oikeudellisessa että symbolisessa mielessä käsitettiin sosiaalisen ja poliittisen järjestyksen kulmakiveksi. Silti eurooppalaiset prinssit pitivät tavanomaisesti ja näkyvästi avioliiton ulkopuolisia rakastajattaria rinnallaan. Kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren pitäminen oli itsessään vakiintunut käytäntö, normi ja jopa instituutio. Ranskan hovissa kuninkaan päärakastajatar nautti *maîtresse-en-titre* – tittelin turvaamasta muodollisesta ja virallisesta asemasta. Vaikka Britanniassa samaa muodollista asemaa ei ollut, rakastajattarista puhuttiin *tunnustettuina* ja *vakiintuneina*. Molemmissa maissa kuninkaallinen rakastajatar oli kaikkea muuta kuin salaisuus: hän oli tunnustettu, tunnettu ja kuninkaan julkisesti valitsema ja esittelemä henkilö. Tässä tutkimuksessa huomioidaan myös se, että rakastajattarella oli vakiintunut ja perinteinen tehtävä, jonka puitteissa sekä hän henkilönä että keskustelu hänestä ja hänen toiminnastaan palvelivat ja tukivat monarkkia ja monarkiaa. Kuitenkin 1760 Britanniassa ja 1774 Ranskassa valtaistuimelle nousivat monarkit, jotka katkaisivat ikiaikaisen perinteen pitää rakastajattaria. Tämä viittaa siihen, että rakastajattaren merkitys sekä käytänteenä että poliittisten keskustelujen välineenä oli muuttunut.

Rakastajattarista käydyn keskustelun poliittisen potentiaalın avaamiseksi tässä tutkimuksessa analysoidaan muutamaa tunnettua keskeistä teemaa, jotka nousivat esiin kaikissa aineistotyypeissä: raha, korruptio ja valta. Nämä teemat eivät olleet 1700-luvulla uusia ja ne kuuluvat edelleen keskeisesti keskusteluun valtaapitävien rakastajattarista. Erityisesti ahneus, seksuaalinen korruptio ja poikkeavuus sekä laitton vaikutusvalta voidaankin käsittää ”ikuisiksi” teemoiksi tai laajemmiksi kattokäsitteiksi, jotka tavanomaisesti liitettiin ja liitetään poliittista valtaa käyttävien miesten rakastajattariin. Näin ollen ne voivat ensi silmäyksellä vaikuttaa historiallisesti steriileiltä, eikä niiden löytymistä

aineistosta ei voida pitää merkittävänä tuloksena sinällään. Tämä tutkimus kysyy, mitä esimerkiksi seksuaalinen korruptio tai rakastajattaren oletettu ahneus tarkoittivat ja missä merkityksessä niitä käytettiin 1700-luvun ranskalaisissa ja brittiläisissä keskusteluissa. Aiempaa syvempi semanttinen analyysi asettaa keskustelussa käytetyt ja hyödynnetyt teemat, narratiivit, kuvastot ja käsitteet laajempiin ajankohtaisiin debatteihin, käsityksiin ja poliittisissa keskusteluissa käytettyyn kieleen. Lisäksi vertailevan tutkimuksen näkökulma tuo esiin paitsi yhdenmukaisuuksia keskusteluissa rakastajattarista myös eriäviä kansallisia ymmärryksiä, käsityksiä ja rakastajattaren hahmon käyttäjä.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen ja metodologinen näkökulma on saanut innoituksensa kielellisesti suuntautuneen uuden poliittisen historian, aate- ja käsitehistoria sekä gender-historian piiristä. Analyysi kohdistuu poliittiseen kieleen ja siihen, miten kieltä käyttämällä muokataan käsityksiä ja mielikuvia abstrakteista poliittisistä käsitteistä, kuten oikeutettu valta ja vallankäyttö. Nämä määritelmät puolestaan heijastuivat siihen, kenen saatettiin edes kuvitella voivan käyttää valtaa oikeutetusti, miten lainvoimainen poliittinen päätös voitiin tehdä tai keillä voitiin ajatella olevan oikeus osallistua poliittiseen keskusteluun tai päätöksentekoon. Varhaismodernin ajan ja kuninkaallisia rakastajattaria koskevan keskustelun tapauksessa sosiaalisesti ja kulttuurisesti rakennetulla sukupuolella (gender) oli keskeinen sija oikeutetun poliittisen vallan määrittelyssä jo siksi, että sukupuoli määritteli pitkälti sitä, kuka saattoi käyttää laillista valtaa. Esimerkiksi Ranskassa laillinen hallitseva monarkki ei voinut olla nainen. Tässä tutkimuksessa sukupuoli näyttäytyy ennen kaikkea historiallisena kulttuurisena ja sosiaalisena artefaktina, diskursiivisena ja jopa ideologisena tuotteena ja retorisenä välineenä, joka toisaalta kietoutui aikalaisten käsityksiin sekä miehestä ja naisesta ja näihin liittyvistä feminiinisistä ja maskuliinisista ominaisuuksista että käsityksiin vallasta, ja toisaalta, jota käytettiin kamppailuissa vallasta tai vallan määrittelmästä.

Erityisesti Ranskassa 1700-luvun poliittisessa ajattelussa ylimmän vallan hahmotettiin olevan tiukasti monarkkiin sidottu, jolloin julkinen ja yksityinen kietoutuivat erottamattomalla tavalla kuninkaan persoonassa. Ensinnäkin poliittinen päätöksenteko oli kuninkaan yksityisasia. Tämä satoi sekä poliittisen päätöksenteon että poliittisen informaation ja keskustelun kuninkaan salaisuudeksi. Tiukka sensuuri esimerkiksi kielsi julkisen keskustelun poliittisista aiheista. *Arcana imperii* - oikeutuksen puitteissa poliittinen päätöksenteko oli monarkin yksityisasia ennen muuta siksi, että vain hänen ajateltiin olevan kyvykäs ymmärtämään hallitsemisen taitoa ja näkemään koko valtakuntansa suurempana kokonaisuutena, josta muut näkivät vain pienen osan. Toiseksi kuninkaan kahden kehon teoria satoi kuninkaan luonnollisen, henkilökohtaisen, yksityisen ja kuolevaisen kehon erottamattomasti persoonattomaan, poliittiseen, julkiseen ja kuolemattomaan majesteettiuteen ja kuninkuuteen. Monarkki ymmärrettiin yhtäaikaaisesti ja erottamattomasti sekä yksityiseksi ja julkiseksi persoonaksi että yksilölliseksi ja kollektiiviseksi kehoksi. Kuningas, hänen persoonansa ja kehonsa, ilmensi ja edusti koko valtakuntaa ja

sen etua. Käsitys kaksikehoisesta henkilökohtaisesti ylintä valtaa käyttävästä kuninkaasta, joka ei selitä poliittisia päätöksiään oli myös kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista käytyjen keskustelujen perusta. Rakastajattaren puolifiktiivinen hahmo toimi kommentaattoreiden välineenä ottaa kantaa tähän perinteiseen monarkian oikeutukseen, joko vahvistaa sitä tai haastaa sitä, sekä suoraan että peiteltysti ja vihjaillen.

Lähdeaineisto on valittu siten, että sen kautta tavoitettiin mahdollisimman monipuolisia kuvauksia rakastajattarista. Mukana on sekä julkiseen keskusteluun kuuluvaa aineistoa, yksityiseen keskusteluun kuuluvaa hovimiesten kirjeenvaihtoa että salaiseen keskusteluun kuuluvaa diplomaattikirjeenvaihtoa. Näillä aineistovalinnoilla voidaan hahmottaa erilaisten keskustelevien yleisöjen näkemyksiä ja tulkintoja rakastajattarista, heidän puolifiktiivisen hahmonsä eriäviä käyttöjä sekä samankaltaisuuksia ja liukumia eri keskustelujen välillä. Tutkimuksen tärkeimpänä lähdeaineistona toimivat tunnetuista ranskalaisista kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista Mme de Pompadourista ja Mme du Barrysta 1700-luvulla kirjoitetut ja julkaistut elämäkerrat, muistelmat ja kirjeenvaihtokokoelmat.

Osin hovien ulkopuolisessa julkisessa keskustelussa rakastajattarien puolifiktiivinen hahmo palveli eri tavoitteita kuin hovien sisäisissä yksityisemmissä ja salaisemmissa keskusteluissa. Jälkimmäisessä tapauksessa keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista palveli selkeämmin välineenä, jolla ohjailtiin ja neuvoteltiin valtapositioista ja verkostoitumisesta. Kuvaukset siitä, kenellä oletettiin tai esitettiin olevan vaikutusvaltaa hovissa ohjasivat tällöin sitä, kenen puoleen käännyttiin kun haluttiin esittää toiveita esimerkiksi kuninkaallisista suosionosoituksista. Mikäli kuninkaallisella rakastajattarella koettiin ja esitettiin olevan valtaa, kuninkaallisia suosionosoituksia, kuten rahallisia avustuksia tai korkea-arvoisia virkapaikkoja etsivät hakeutuivat rakastajattaren luo, esittivät pyyntönsä hänen välityksellään, ja vastineeksi rakastajattaren avusta tarjosivat hänelle itselleen tukeaan, omien verkostojensa käyttöä tai varallisuutta. Keskustelu rakastajattaren vallasta toimi myös päinvastoin. Esimerkiksi Britanniassa Yrjö II:n rakastajattaren Henrietta Howardin vaikutusvalta esitettiin toistuvasti vähäiseksi. Tämän seurauksena yhä harvempi etsi suosiota hänen kauttaan, ja yhä harvempi tarjosi vastavuoroisesti hänelle tukeaan. Oletukset vallasta siis osaltaan tuottivat valtaa – tai vallattomuutta.

Julkisessa keskustelussa puolestaan keskustelu rakastajattarista ja heidän puolifiktiivinen hahmonsä palvelivat toista tarkoitusta. Toisaalta julkinen keskustelu palveli myös areenana, jolla pyrittiin vaikuttamaan hovien sisäisiin konflikteihin tai jopa kuninkaalliseen päätöksentekoon. Esimerkiksi kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren mustamaalaamisella pyrittiin painostamaan kuningasta luopumaan epäsuositusta rakastajattaresta. Myös kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren kalleudesta ja tuhlailusta kertovat anekdootit tähtäsivät sopivan kuninkaallisen kulutuksen määrittelyyn sekä painostivat kuningasta kanavoimaan rahaa mieluummin hoviensa aristokraattisen eliitin kuin alempisyntyisen rakastajattaren suuntaan. Toisaalta, viimeistään vuosisadan

puolimaissa hovien sisältä lähtenyt kritiikki sekoittui hovien ulkopuoliseen keskusteluun, jossa kritisoitiin hovia kokonaisuutena. Tällöin kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren puolifiktiivinen hahmo sai uusia merkityksiä. Tarinat rakastajattarista muun muassa levittivät tietoa poliittisista asioista, tapahtumista ja henkilöistä, joista keskusteleminen oli muutoin kiellettyä. Merkittävämpää kuitenkin oli se, että keskustelu rakastajattarista alkoi palvella yhä kriittisemmäksi käyvää keskustelua monarkiasta poliittisena järjestelmänä. Tällöin keskustelu rakastajattarista palveli myös pitkäkestoisemmassa muutoksessa käsityksissä legitimiä hallinnosta ja poliittisesta päätöksenteosta.

Aiemmassa rakastajattaria kritisoituna skandaalina hahmottavassa tutkimuksessa on esitetty, että rakastajattarista levitetty sensaatiohakuinen ja pöyristyttäväkin materiaali, juoruilu ja keskustelu olivat osa sitä prosessia, jonka myötä monarkin koskematon, pyhä, jumalallinen ja mystinen aura purettiin ja kuningas banalisoitui. Tämän on puolestaan tulkittu raivanneen tietä niille aatteille ja vaateille oikeuksista ja poliittisesta osallistumisesta, jotka lopulta synnyttivät Ranskan vallankumouksen. Tämä tutkimus kuitenkin osoittaa, että skandaalinhakuisella keskustelulla oli merkittävämpi ja aktiivisempi rooli poliittisten käsitysten muokkaamisessa kuin mitä aiemmin on oletettu. Kohauttava keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista ei toiminut ainoastaan tienraivaajana uusille aatteille eikä sen vaikutus rajoittunut ainoastaan kuninkaan banalisointiin. Lähdeaineiston aiempaa syvempi semanttinen ja retorinen analyysi osoittaa, miten kuninkaallisia rakastajattaria kuvaavat kirjoittajat käyttivät rakastajattaren puolifiktiivistä hahmoa välineenä, jonka kautta he aktiivisesti tuottivat ja muokkasivat mielikuvia oikeasta ja väärästä vallasta, osallistuivat oikeutetun vallan luonteen ja käytön määrittelyyn, neuvottelivat vallan suhteista ja pyrkivät vahvistamaan tai muokkaamaan käsityksiä vallitsevasta monarkiasta legitimiä poliittisena järjestelmänä. Rakastajattarista juoruja jakavat kirjoittajat olivat siis aktiivisia ajatusten levittäjiä, ja tässä keskustelussa anekdoottinen kerronta ei ollut haitta vaan itse asiassa palveli poliittisen sanoman levittämisessä.

Ensimmäinen kolmesta laajemmasta käsittelyluvusta, 2. *Mistress de rigueur* pureutuu aiemmassa tutkimuksessa vähemmälle huomiolle jääneeseen kysymykseen siitä, mitä rakastajattaren pitämisen tradition nähtiin tarjoavan monarkille ja monarkialle. Luvussa osoitetaan, että rakastajattarella oli hyväksytyjä rooleja, tehtäviä ja velvollisuuksia monarkia kohtaan ja monarkin rinnalla, esimerkiksi kuninkaan mielen ja ruumin terveyden turvaajana, poliittisen miehisen elinvoimaisuuden osoittajana ja kuninkaallisen loiston ja hyväntekeväisyyden jatkeena. Näitä perusteltiin selityksin, jotka nojautuivat ennen muuta käsityksiin toinen toisiaan täydentävistä sukupuolista ominaisuuksineen, kykyineen, velvollisuuksineen ja hyveineen sekä käsityksiin monarkin kuolevaisen ja inhimillisen kehon tarpeista miehenä. Rakastajattaren hahmo linkittyikin ensisijaisesti kuninkaan luonnolliseen ja henkilökohtaiseen kehoon. Vaikka kuningas ymmärrettiin yhtä aikaa ja erottamattomasti sekä julkiseksi että yksityiseksi persoonaksi, rakastajatar kuitenkin kiinnitettiin vahvemmin hänen yksityiseen ja kuolevaisen kehoonsa sellaisten käsitteiden

kautta, kuten *henkilökohtainen, yksityinen, suosio ja intiimiys*. Kuitenkin, koska monarkin julkinen ja yksityinen, poliittinen ja luonnollinen, henkilökohtainen ja persoonaton kehonsa olivat erottamattomia, syntyi tila, jossa rakastajattaret saatettiin käsittää välttämättömiksi hyvän hallinnon ja monarkian ylläpitämiseksi. Rakastajatar näyttöytyi ja näytettiin hallintoa, hallintomuotoa ja valtakuntaa tukevana käytänteenä, sillä hän ylläpiti henkilökohtaisesti ylintä valtaa käyttävän kuninkaan kykyä oikeelliseen poliittiseen päätöksentekoon.

Kaksi seuraavaa käsittelylukua 3. Money and the Mistress ja 4. The mistress in politics jäsenyivät rahan ja vallan teemojen ympärille. Keskustelut näistä aiheista kuitenkin limittyivät, minkä seurauksena keskustelu rakastajattarista laajeni herkästi moniin yllättäviinkin suuntiin. Esimerkiksi keskustelu rakastajattaren oletetusta ahneudesta ja odotukset siitä, miten kuninkaan tuli palkita palvelijansa, muuttui keskusteluksi aviorikoksesta ja aviopuolisoiden suhteesta, kun keskusteluun nostettiin kysymys rakastajattaren aviomiehen palkitsemisesta. Luvussa 3. perehdytään siihen, miten keskusteluissa kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista tuotettiin stereotyyppinen *liian kalliin rakastajattaren* hahmo, joka koostui sekä liian ylenpalttisista kuninkaallisista palkinnoista että rakastajattaren itsensä liiallisesta kulutuksesta sopimattomiksi määriteltyihin tai koettuihin kohteisiin ja vaurauden kanavoimisesta omille suosikeilleen, tukijoilleen ja sukulaisilleen. Erityisesti ranskalaiset kommentaattorit käyttivät tätä hahmoa, ja heidän tapansa käyttää sitä muuttui 1700-luvun kuluessa. 1770-luvulle mennessä *liian kallis rakastajatar* ei ollut enää liian kallis kulu ainoastaan kuninkaalle itselleen, sekä konkreettisesti että aineettoman kunniansa ja maineensa kannalta, vaan siitä oli rakennettu myös liian kallis kuvitteelliselle kollektiiville, oli se sitten valtakunta, kansakunta tai kansa (erityisesti verojen muodossa), ja koko poliittiselle järjestelmälle, jossa rakastajatar kuvattiin kestävämmän vaarana uskottavuudelle, legitimitetille ja hallinnon oikealle toiminnalle. Näistä kolmesta erilaisesta kuvauksesta ensin mainittu oli perinteisin, mutta myös kaikkein vähiten monarkiaa uhkaava. Se kosketti oikeastaan vain henkilökohtaisen kuninkaan mainetta ja saattoi tietenkin vaikuttaa monarkin imagon banalisoitumiseen, pyhän auran murentamiseen ja myyttisyyden purkamiseen. Toinen esitys puolestaan tuki ja osallistui sellaisen poliittisesti merkityksellisen kuvitteellisen kollektiivin kehittämiseen, joka oli monarkista irrallinen. Uhkaavin esityksistä oli kuitenkin kolmas, sillä se vihjasi, että vallitsevassa poliittisessä järjestelmässä oli jotain vikaa, ja että tämä perustavanlaatuisen vika liittyi nimenomaan poliittiseen päätöksentekoon hovinsa keskellä sijaitsevan monarkin persoonassa.

Keskustelu rakastajattaresta ja rahasta laajentui myös ylellisyyden suuntaan. Tämän teeman puitteissa keskusteluun nostettiin hovin dekadenssin ja korruption teema. Rakastajattaren kulutukseen olennaisesti liitetty liiallinen ylellisyys ymmärrettiin sekä korruptoivaksi itsessään, ulkoiseksi merkiksi jo korruptoituneesta henkilöstä että erottamattomasti naiselliseksi ominaisuudeksi. Keskusteluissa henkilön ylellisyydestä rakennettiin ulkoinen merkki hänen sisäisestä korruptiostaan. Ranskan tapauksessa tämä sisäinen korruptio tarkoitti omien etujen ajamista, ymmärryksen ja hyvän maun pilaantumista sekä

erityisesti periaatteiden vääristymistä. Britanniassa puolestaan korruptio ymmärrettiin selvästi kapeammin vain lahjottavuutena. Monarkian kannalta uhkaavaa ylellisyyden kuvauksissa oli se, että hovi itsessään oli kuvattu keskukseksi, joka väistämättä korruptoi jäsenensä ja tuotti omanedun tavoittelua ja valheellisuutta – myös kuninkaan persoonassa. Keskustelu kuninkaallisen rakastajattaren ahneudesta ja kalleudesta oli siis itse asiassa toisaalta keskustelua soveliaasta kuninkaallisesta kulutuksesta ja palkitsemisesta, toisaalta hyvin kriittistä keskustelua kuninkaallisesta hovista ja monarkista sen erottamattomana osana.

Luvussa 4. pureudutaan valtaan ja vaikutusvaltaan. Siinä missä rakastajattareen, rahaan, ylellisyyteen ja korruptioon liittyvät keskustelut loivat mielikuvia hovista kokonaisuutena, rakastajattaren valtaan liittyvät anekdootit, kuvaukset ja argumentit käsittelivät hovin käytänteitä ja tehtäviä, poliittista päätöksentekoa hovissa ja erityisesti sitä, miten kuninkaallinen poliittinen tahto muodostui hovistaan erottamattoman monarkin persoonassa. Keskustelussa rakastajattaren vaikutusvallasta tuotettiin stereotyyppinen *pahan rakastajattaren* hahmo, jonka kautta kommentaattorit hahmottelivat oikeutetun vallan ja vallankäytön ihanteita ja normeja.

Keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista 1714–1774 ei missään tapauksessa ollut avoimen vallankumouksellista. Kirjoittajat ja keskustelijat eivät pääsääntöisesti avoimesti haastaneet ajatusta siitä, etteikö kuninkaan olisi tullut olla hallinnon ylin pää ja etteikö ylin valta olisi sijainnut hänen persoonassaan. Keskustelussa kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista siis vahvistettiin monia hyvinkin perinteisiä käsityksiä kuninkuudesta. Lisäksi rakastajattarilla oli myös perinteinen tehtävä nimenomaan kohauttavana skandaalina. Kuninkaallinen rakastajatar toimi eräänlaisena ukkosenjohdattimena kritiikille ja siten suojaasi monarkin persoonaa ja jopa ministereitään ja hallintoaan epäsuosittujen poliitikkojen tai vaikeiden aikojen tuottamalta tyytymättömyydeltä. 1770-luvulle tultaessa tämä perinteinen rooli oli muuttunut ja erityisesti skandaalinkäryinen keskustelu rakastajattarista muodostui haasteeksi hallinnon ja jopa hallintomuodon uskottavuudelle. Rakastajattaret tunnetaan erityisesti kuninkaallisina seksiskandaaleina, ja tästä näkökulmasta heitä on tarkasteltu aiemminkin. Tämä tutkimus valottaa myös skandaalin toimintaperiaatteita aiempaa syvällisemmin. Nimenomaan huhujen, juorujen, vitsien ja anekdoottien muodossa käydyllä sensaatiomaisella keskustelulla rakastajattarista oli muutama erityinen piirre, jotka tekivät siitä tehokkaan poliittisen sanoman välittäjän tai poliittisten käsitysten muokkaajan.

Ensinnäkin keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista ruokki julkista keskustelua poliittisista asioista, joka varhaismodernina aikana oli useimmissa maissa tiukasti rajoitettua ja säänneltyä. Anekdootit rakastajattarista esimerkiksi välittivät tietoa sellaisista poliittisista tapahtumista, joista ei muutoin ollut saatavilla tietoa. Huolestuttavinta oli, että poliittisen tiedon välittäminen yhdistettynä herkulliseen anekdoottiin rakastajattaresta tapahtui sellaisessa muodossa, joka herätti kiinnostusta ja huomiota, ja jossa monimutkaiset poliittiset keskustelut tai ajatukset saivat yksinkertaistetun ja helposti

ymmärrettävän ja toistettavan muodon. Samalla kun sensaatiomaiset anekdootit rakastajattarista levisivät, ne edistivät kuvitteellisen kollektiivin, *yleisön*, muodostumista.

Toiseksi, skandaalinkäryinen keskustelu rakastajattarista tuotti ja vahvisti hyvin aikaa kestäviä teemoja, kuten rakastajattaren oletettu ahneus, seksuaalinen vallankäyttö ja korruptio, ja näihin liittyviä stereotyyppisiä hahmoja, kuten rakastajattaren ahneuteen ja korruptioon liittyvä *liian kalliin rakastajattaren* hahmo tai väärään ja laittomaan vaikutusvaltaan liittyvä *pahan rakastajattaren* hahmo. Koska kuninkaallinen rakastajatar oli erottamattomasti yhdistetty kuninkaalliseen rakastajaansa, kaikki mitä hänestä ja hänen toiminnastaan kerrottiin viittasi ja kuvasi vähintään epäsuorasti kuningasta, hänen persoonaansa, motiivejaan ja kykyjään sekä sitä järjestelmää, jonka puitteissa kuninkaan poliittinen tahto muotoutui. Stereotyyppisten hahmojen käytön kautta myös näennäisesti henkilökohtaiseen, erityiseen ja yksilölliseen rakastajattareen (ja hänen kauttaan monarkkiin) kohdistuva kritiikki käännettiin kohdistumaan persoonattomaan rakastajattareen ja persoonattomaan monarkkiin poliittisena päättäjänä. Persoonattomien hahmojen kautta kirjoittajat ohjasivat, osin myös tiedostamattaan, keskustelun erityisesti kysymyksiin siitä, miten henkilökohtainen kuninkaallinen poliittinen päätös syntyi hovissa. Kukaan ei kiistänyt sitä, etteikö poliittinen valta ja vallankäyttö ollut kuninkaan henkilökohtainen asia. Sen sijaan kirjoittajat esittivät, että ne mekanismit, joilla kuninkaallinen päätös syntyi hovissa, olivat perusteettomia – mikä tietenkin piti sisällään vihjauksen siitä, että kuninkaallinen päätös itsessään oli tuolloin perusteeton ja laiton.

Kolmanneksi, seksiskandaalille tyypillinen anekdoottinen kerronta tuotti ja hyödynsi yliyksinkertaistavia ja normatiivisia kaksijakoja (esim. hyvä/paha, sopiva/epäsopiva, oikea/väärä, laillinen/laiton) sekä avoimesti että epäsuorasti. Tällöin aikalaiskirjoittajat saattoivat vihjauksin rakentaa rinnastuksia, jotka tuottivat kuvaa siitä, millaista oikea ja väärä valta ja vallankäyttö olivat. Sukupuolella oli tässä keskeinen rooli, sillä sukupuoleen liittyvät käsitykset valjastettiin vahvistamaan vihjauksia ja rinnastuksia. Koska kuninkaalliset rakastajattaret nähtiin nimenomaan kuninkaan *intimiin* ja *henkilökohtaiseen* tilaan ja persoonaan liittyvinä, keskustelussa rakastajattarista politisoitiin varsinkin käsite *henkilökohtainen*. Henkilökohtaisuus liittyi paitsi laillisen vallankäytön määritelmiin myös hovin verkostoihin ja vaikutusvaltaan, kuninkaan ja rakastajattaren suhteeseen sekä rakastajattaren asemaan ja mahdollisuuksiin hovissa.

Toisaalta rakastajattaria ja toimintaansa kuvaavat aikalaiskirjoittajat vahvistivat perinteisen käsityksen monarkiasta poliittisena järjestelmänä, joka perustui – tai jonka olisi tullut perustua – henkilökohtaisesti poliittisia päätöksiä tekevän monarkin henkilökohtaiseen tahtoon. Erityisesti *kuninkaallinen suosio* (*royal favour/faveur royale*) – termin käyttö korosti hallitsevan monarkin oikeutettua asemaa hovin, hallinnon ja poliittisen tahdon keskuksena. Kuninkaallinen suosio itsessään kietoutui erottamattomasti kuninkaan

henkilökohtaisiin mieltymyksiin ja yksityiseen ja selittämättömään monarkin tahtoon.

Toisaalta taas *henkilökohtaisesta* rakennettiin negatiivinen käsite, jota käytettiin jonkin ilmiön, asian tai toimijan määrittelemiseksi joko laittomaksi, perusteettomaksi tai epäpoliittiseksi. Näissä merkityksissä henkilökohtainen (joko mieltymyksen, suhteen tai intiimiyden merkityksessä) toimi legitimoinnin välineenä esimerkiksi määriteltäessä muodollisia ja epämuodollisia käytänteitä tai menettelytapoja, virallisia ja epävirallisia verkostoja, hierarkioita tai kanavia, valtaa ja vaikutusvaltaa, julkisia ja yksityisiä asioita tai intressejä – tai miestä ja naista tai maskuliinista ja feminiinistä. Tässä mielessä kuvauksissa rakastajattaren perusteettomasta ja laittomasta vallasta rakennettiin myös stereotyyppinen ja persoonaton *pahan rakastajattaren* hahmo, joka oli täysin sidottu henkilökohtaiseen ja jonka kautta oikeutetun ja laillisen vallan sukupuolittuneita ideaaleja määriteltiin.

Pahan rakastajattaren valta oli kaikin mahdollisin tavoin väärää valtaa, jonka esitettiin uhkaavan valtakunnan tulevaisuutta. Se oli vaikutusvaltaa, joka oli hankittu laittomin keinoin, erityisesti kuninkaan seksuaalisuuden hallinnan kautta. Sitä myös käytettiin kelvottomin motiivein, kuten ahneus, oikku tai kosto. Näiden kuvausten kautta kirjoittajat pyrkivät määrittelemään legitiimin vallan ja sen ihanteellisen käytön luonnetta, keinoja, toimintoja, motiiveja ja intentioita – usein väärää valtaa käyttävän rakastajattaren implisiittisenä vastakohtana. Monet *pahan rakastajattaren* hallinnon keskeisistä elementeistä ja piirteistä olivat lähtökohtaisesti sukupuolittuneita, kuten esimerkiksi erottamattomasti feminiiniseen yhdistetty ailahtelevaisuus ja turhamaisuus. Useimmissa tapauksissa sukupuoli palveli kuitenkin välineenä, jonka kautta kirjoittajat viittasivat muihin keskusteluun kuuluviin normatiivisiin käsitteisiin. Näillä keinoin tuotettiin tautologista käsitystä siitä, että legitiimi valta oli pohjimmiltaan maskuliinista – ja naisen tai feminiininen valta puolestaan laitonta, perusteetonta ja väärää vaikutusvaltaa. Keskusteluissa kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista aikalaiskirjoittajat siis määrittelivät väärän ja perusteettoman vallan henkilökohtaiseksi, intiimiksi, seksuaaliseksi, epämuodolliseksi, epäviralliseksi, salaiseksi ja naiselliseksi. Vastaavasti oikeutettuun valtaan ja vallankäyttöön linkittyvät käsitykset rationaalisuudesta, virallisuudesta, muodollisuudesta, oikeudenmukaisuudesta ja harkitsevaisuudesta saivat vahvan maskuliinisen latauksen.

Rakastajattaren väärän vallan kuvausten esittämisen kautta 1700-luvun kirjoittajat osallistuivat siis keskusteluun, jossa toisaalta määriteltiin ihanteellisen vallankäytön normeja ja pyrittiin painostamaan ehdotetun normin mukaiseen käytökseen ja toisaalta vahvistettiin varsin perinteinen tulkinta siitä, että laillinen valta kuului yksinomaan miehille. Näitä saavutuksia merkittävämpää oli kuitenkin se, että keskustelussa rakastajattarista käsite *henkilökohtainen* kääntyi negatiiviseksi termiksi, jossa oli vahva konnotaatio sekä perusteettomaan että naiselliseen vaikutusvalttaan. Tällä termillä puolestaan haastettiin kaikki muu, mikä määriteltiin henkilökohtaiseksi, esimerkiksi sellainen poliittinen vaikuttaminen ja päätöksenteko, joka perustui henkilökohtaisiin suhteisiin.

Vaikka kommentaattorit tyrmäsivät henkilökohtaisuuden poliittisessa päätöksenteossa, tämä ei tavoitellut henkilökohtaisen monarkian kumoamista, saati kyseenalaistanut ajatusta siitä, etteikö ylin valta ollut monarkin henkilökohtainen asia. Sen sijaan kyseessä oli toive siitä, että henkilökohtainen kuninkaallinen päätöksenteko tapahtuisi kuninkaan julkisessa, persoonattomassa ja poliittisessa kehossa muodollisessa ja virallisessa tilassa. Kyse oli toisaalta kritiikistä, joka kohdistui perinteiseen aristokraattiseen hoviin, hallintoon ja hallinnon hoidon tapaan ja joka tuki aristokratian ulkopuolelta tulevien virka- ja hallintomiesten vaateita. Toisaalta taas kritiikin myötä kaksikehoisen monarkin yksityinen ja julkinen keho erottautuivat.

Tietenkään naisten vallan käsitteellistäminen perusteettomaksi ja siten vaaralliseksi ei ollut ainoa vaihtoehto. Rinnakkain näiden kriittisten näkemysten kanssa esiintyi kuvauksia rakastajattarien vallan ja vaikutusvallan poliittisesta merkityksettömyydestä, joka perustui nimenomaan oletuksiin heistä naisina. Tällöin sekä rakastajattaret että heidän vaikutusvaltansa määriteltiin triviaaleiksi, koska se oli henkilökohtaista, yksityistä, salaista, seksuaalista ja naisellista. Nämä esitykset kuitenkin kuuluivat selkeämmin hovien sisäisiin ja yksityisempiin keskusteluihin, kuten hovimiesten ja diplomaattien kirjeenvaihtoon, joissa pyrittiin ohjaamaan verkostoitumista ja neuvottelemaan vallan paikoista. Lisäksi mahdollisuus hahmottaa rakastajattaren vaikutusvalta triviaaliksi oli suurempi Britanniassa, jossa vallitsevassa poliittisessa kulttuurissa oli tilaa ajatukselle kuninkaan kahden kehon erottamisesta. Britanniassakin kuninkaalla ymmärrettiin olevan kaksi kehoa, mutta toisin kuin Ranskassa, kuninkaan henkilökohtainen ja yksityinen persoona ja tila olivat selkeämmin myös epäpoliittisia. Tästä nimenomaisesta syystä keskustelu kuninkaallisista rakastajattarista ei Britanniassa saanut samaa poliittista merkitystä ja vaikuttavuutta kuin Ranskassa, jossa kuninkaalliset rakastajattaret – kuten kuningaskin – olivat aina yhtä aikaa henkilökohtaisia, yksityisiä, julkisia ja poliittisia.

1700 – luvulla kuninkaalliset rakastajattaret eivät olleet ainoastaan skandaali, mutta heidän poliittinen merkityksensä nimenomaan skandaalina kasvoi vuosisadan jälkipuoliskolla. Triviaaliksi esitetyn poliittisen seksiskandaalin merkitys ei jäänyt ainoastaan siihen, että skandaalin kautta kohde (monarkki) tehtiin naurunalaiseksi tai edes siihen, että hänen poliittinen päätöksentekokykynsä asetettiin kyseenalaiseksi oletetuilla rationaalisin ja moraalisiin perustein. Seksiskandaalin poliittinen merkitys piili nimenomaan sen näennäisen triviaalissa muodossa, jolle on tyypillistä popularisointi, nopea leviäminen ja tarkoituksenmukainen yksinkertaistaminen. Skandaali havainnollisti abstrakteja valtaan liittyviä ideoita ja ideaaleja ja muutti vaikeatajuisia teoreettisia kysymyksiä yksinkertaisiksi vitseiksi ja anekdooteiksi. Näistä syistä poliittinen seksiskandaali oli erinomainen väline oikeutettuun valtaan liittyvien mielikuvien muokkaamiseen.

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