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Janice Farrar Thaddeus was a contributor to our journal last year, with her excellent piece "Sharpening Cecilia: Frances Burney as Professional Writer," a paper she had previously presented at the Burney dinner in Boston in 2000 to acclaim. At the time, it would have seemed inconceivable that this dear friend would leave us so soon after. We mourn her loss, and we shall miss her more than words can say. Tributes to her have appeared elsewhere—here we simply bring you a last article.

Alexandre D'Arblay's Amiable Paean to Heterosexual Masturbation: *Les Doigts*

(A copy of the poem is appended to this article.)

JANICE FARRAR THADDEUS
1933-2001

In 1787, when Alexandre d'Arblay was in his early thirties, six years before he met and married Frances Burney, he published a book of poems called *Opuscules* de Chevalier d'Anceny ou anecdotes en vers recuellies et publiées par M. d'A***. The place of publication is given as: Se trouve a Metz: chez la Veuve Antoine et fils, et a Paris chez les Marchands de Nouveautés."[1] The thirty-three-year-old author of this "novelty" chose to write from the point of view of the Chevalier Danceny, one of the characters in the popular and recent novel *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, written by his comrade-in-arms Choderlos de Laclos. A reading of these poems both intensifies our understanding of the Burney-d'Arblay marriage and increases d'Arblay's rank as a writer.

So far, twentieth-century scholars have cared about Alexandre d'Arblay solely because he was Burney's husband. It is because of

Burney that we know about this man who came from a military family in France. His father was a lieutenant-colonel of the artillery, and he was educated at a military school, passing naturally into the family career, and eventually rising to the position of adjutant-General to Lafayette. It is because of Burney that we know about this adjutant-general's flight from France in 1792. A constitutionalist who had the misfortune to be chief officer on guard at the Tuileries on the night the king escaped to Varennes, d'Arblay found it prudent to emigrate.[2] His more aristocratically inclined younger brother François, so tall and thin his comrades dubbed him Don Quixote, took the easier route, and died in the service of an Empire he emphatically did not support.[3] When the more enterprising Alexandre met Burney, their love was quick and mutual. Burney's sister Susanna, who met him first, had described him to her as full of "gaieté de coeur" and the description was apt.[4] All of Burney's biographers have known that besides his military career d'Arblay was a poet, but the lyrics in *Opuscules* seemed predictable and dull, and those few who sought out a copy never read the book to the end. The d'Arblay we all visualized was the man in the handsome portrait that he commissioned in France the summer before he died. He was 63, and the point of this portrait by the father and son team of Carle and Horace Vernet was to show a man in the midst of a successful military career. D'Arblay wanted his son to respect him for his achievements. After his death, he did not want to be completely occluded by the boy's more-famous mother. Hence, the portrait was for his son to remember him by. But of course it has also affected the way posterity has seen him. He is seated in the foreground in full regalia, in a handsome uniform with a high embroidered collar and matching cuffs, a cummerbund, brass buttons, and epaulettes. Three medals hang over his heart: the Chevalier de St. Louis, the Ordre de la Fidelité, and the Légion d'honneur. He looks askance, as if something more important than the viewer has seized his attention. Still, he seems lively and intelligent, with his right eyebrow just slightly raised and his mouth pursed. His hair is greying and slightly thin, but it is combed gracefully toward his forehead. Behind his left shoulder, a horse starts at the object which d'Arblay is so calmly contemplating. The horse's eyes are wide with fear. A soldier stands behind them, next to what seems to be a cannon, and the sky, though light at the horizon, blends into dramatic and menacing clouds. This handsome man is indeed a Lieutenant-General, surrounded by the symbols of his occupation.

Though he looks animated and approachable, he also appears important, professional, and slightly stiff.[5] But this portrait is not the whole story.

Luckily, there is also an earlier likeness, less often reproduced, a sketch perhaps by William Locke, Junior, son of the couple who were among the d'Arblay's best friends. This is the much-younger man who arrived in 1792 as an emigré in England, joining a group at Juniper Hall in Mickleham, Surrey, not far from the Lockè's house at Norbury Park. The young Locke drew a man whose eyebrows are high, his mouth animated. His hair, though already receding, is nonetheless pleasing as it falls in waves over his neck. This is a man ready to smile, whose face displays intelligence and thoughtfulness. He is at least six years older than the writer of *Opuscules*, but his face implies the qualities of that writer, a striking combination of passion and laughter.[6]

In his *Opuscules* this attractive young man d'A*** masks himself with the character of Laclos' Danceny, but with a difference. The book's epigraph from Montaigne sets the tone:

> si quelqu'un me dit que c'est avillir les Muses, de s'en servir seulement de
> jouet et de passe-tems, il ne sait pas, comme moi, combien vaut le plaisir,
> le jeu et le passe-tems.

This book is light-hearted, but with the acknowledgment that light-heartedness is precious, necessary.

Since these games and pastimes are important, d'Arblay as editor begins immediately by redefining the young man he has imported. The introduction, not by Danceny, but by the "editor," who represents the true author, d'Arblay himself, emphasizes that this new Danceny is somewhat older, a wiser and better man than his namesake in *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. The original Danceny, this "editor" points out, having been deceived by the Marquise de Merteuil, hoodwinked by Valmont, and betrayed by Cécile, began as a dupe and ended as a rogue. We are assured that this Danceny is neither the one or the other. For a while, *post Les Liaisons dangereuses*, Danceny only proved to himself again and again that love after such a cruel initiation was impossible, that he was more true than his lovers. D'Arblay has not made Danceny the paragon whom Madame de Rosemonde in the final pages of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* describes as the ideal, the man who never looks

for "véritable bonheur . . . hors des bornes prescrites par les lois et la religion."[7] Nonetheless, this Danceny, though openly erotic, continues to link his eroticism to love. He regrets that those who are ignited by the flame of lust so often forget that love has wings, and though he has nearly lost hope, he keeps looking. At last, as the "editor" tells us, by the end of this book of poems, Danceny reaches a third stage when he meets a woman named Rosine. The situation changes, and this time Danceny is not betrayed: Ail a été enfin détrompé par une amie à qui il doit plus que l'existence' (vi). Danceny-as-editor emphasizes by his word-choice here that Rosine is an equal, "une amie," who is so intelligent that he asks her advice in all things. Hence, although d'Arblay retains in his persona Danceny's intensity and humility, he also adds the forceful feminine ideal Laclos depicted in *his De l'éducation des femmes* (1783), a woman who in Laclos' description after puberty reaches "l'âge viril," and naturally "jouit de trois biens . . . la liberté, la force et la santé."[8] Danceny's tendency to idealize remains, but it is shaped and refined by his more extensive experience, and by the fact that he finally meets a woman worthy of his new ideals.

Rosine is not the only woman in this volume. D'Arblay/Danceny also addresses Lise, Glicère, Zélis, Cloris, Justine--and many others. Why so many? It seems as if d'Arblay was simply enjoying the act of creating difficult and varied objects for Danceny's affection. Yet the point seems to be that Danceny himself is a faithful lover. The problem is that he is unable to convince these women to adhere to the constancy he defines as true happiness. Nor does he always secure the current object of his affections. In a footnote to one of the poems, the "editor" remarks of a woman called Aglaé, "femme charmante, à qui le Chevalier d'Anceny a fait longtems sa cour asns [sic] succès; malheur qu'il a éprouvé plus d'une fois" (p. 48). Indeed, d'Arblay the editor notes with amusement that Danceny's dominant theme is love not prospering but stumbling.

D'Arblay clearly devoted much of his spare time to writing these poems, trying his hand even at a technically correct and quite successful rondeau redoublé. He also tossed off a few literary chestnuts, even though their tone is quite different from d'Arblay/Danceny. For instance, "Les frais d'enterrement," is a story about a man whose wife is dead. When he finds out how much the curé is going to charge for the funeral he says that this outrage is almost

enough to make him wish his wife were alive again (p. 120). This reminds us of the British jest-book jokes, like the one about the man who says that the bad news is that his house has burnt down, but that the good news is that his wife was in it; or the man who when he hears that his neighbor's horse has thrown and killed his termagent wife asks to buy the horse.[9] And yet Danceny depicts himself as an enduring lover. When a friend suggests that he drop a liaison that has become too serious for his own good, he demurs.

A M. de ***.

Qui me conseillait de renoncer à une liaison qui, disait-il, devenait trop

sérieuse pour mon bonheur.
La gaîté succède au chagrin;
et le chagrin à l'alégresse;
hélas! ainsi tout voit sa fin.
Philis perd son air enfantin,
Dorilas n'a plus son adresse,
Cloé les roses de son teint,
Lise sa voix enchanteresse;
tout a son terme, et le Destin
n'en excepta que ma tendresse.

A woman inevitably loses her childish airs, her "adresse," her rosy complexion, her enchanting voice, but Danceny's tenderness endures. Of course, the women he is describing here are not the Laclos ideal. If he notices simply these superficial qualities, it is no wonder that the women avoid him. And yet he is always looking for someone to settle with. True happiness, he argues in the next poem, consists of the real "jouissances de cour" that are always mutual and enduring:

Oui: ces jouissances du coeur,
ces mutuels élans de l'âme,
doux fruits d'une constante flame,
amans! voilà le vrai bonheur.

Eventually, as d'Arblay/Danceny progresses through these nearly interchangeable descriptions, he concentrates longer on individual women. The relationship that is too serious for his own good appears to be a liaison with a married woman he calls Cloris, and she is rather horrified at the intensity of his passion. No Madame de Merteuil, she is

very kind to him, but he is evidently unable to play within the rules. His idealism, his tendency to rush after his emotions, is certainly Danceny-like. However, though he claims constancy, he does not idealize marriage. Besides the attack mode, such as the poem where the widower says that the cost of his wife's funeral makes him almost wish she had not died, there is another that mixes desire and doubt. Contemplating a friend's happy marriage, d'Arblay/Danceny is afraid that the marriage-lottery might deal him a bad ticket. The original Danceny loves, but never considers marriage, and this older Danceny, while more serious, has not yet sorted out the relationship between the two.

All of these poems are ably written, sometimes aphoristic, sometimes plangent, rhetorically capable and even inventive, and at times breaking into impressive energy. But all the other poems pale in comparison to the ones addressed to Rosine. The introduction mentions her, and the initial poem refers to her, so d'Arblay/Danceny has prepared his audience for her, but as I have shown, a lot of other women intervene. Eventually, on pages 114-17 (the size of the book explains why other scholars have not read to the end, in spite of the obvious merit of these poems), he writes "A Victoire," to Rosine's mother, "qui m'avait prié d'aller voir sa fille au au [sic] Couvent de ***." D'Arblay/Danceny has seen her daughter in the convent, as requested, and his opinion is that she should be at home with her mother. She has "un esprit vif, une ame [sic] tender" (p. 114). These seemingly pleasant attributes are dangerous, opening the innocent heart to ruinous temptations; the "flambeau de l'expérience" (p. 114) will devour her if she does not have temperate advice, which only her mother can give her. He has tried to warn her about the world, but he has discovered only that he is in danger of being burned himself. Led by her mother, she will find marriage, which will have the uncommon effect of creating two happy people.

It is to this animated young woman that d'Arblay/Danceny writes the last and longest poem in the collection, with the intriguing title, "Les Doigts." Given the title of this article, it is easy to guess what these fingers primarily signify. I have called this poem an "amiable paean to heterosexual masturbation," and I would like to emphasize the word amiable. This poem is not in the pornographic tradition where the woman is objectified and her various parts are directly named with

rarely printed words. The language is accessible, the metaphors adept, the rhythm spirited. Unlike the other poems in *Opuscules*, where the traditional alexandrine predominates, d'Arblay adopts here the octosyllabic line usually reserved for French narrative poetry written to be proclaimed. Invoking as his epigraph Hélöise's statement to Abailard [sic] that lovers invented the art of writing, d'Arblay reinvents his own line, and his poem resounds with an energy he had not elsewhere achieved, as if d'Arblay as distinct from Danceny had suddenly been truly inspired by his subject.

Further to set the stage, he gives a footnote, admitting that to some degree he owes the entire idea for this "bagatelle" to a "M. de Bussy que je n'ai pas l'honneur de connaître." He quotes a few lines that friends have told him about in de Bussy's work. These lines begin by stressing the way a gentle massage soothes the speaker. By a neat transition he assures the beauty who is massaging him, "j'aurai pour elle un doigt de plus".[10] D'Arblay/Danceny adds, "Commençant comme M. de Bussy, j'avais cru devoir finir de même: mais Rosine a trouvé que ce doigt de plus, seroit un doigt de trop, et il n'en a plus été question" (p. 143). Rosine is adamant that she will not accept this extra finger, d'Arblay/Danceny's penis, carrying as it does the double danger of lost virginity and possible conception. In reply, the author launches into his poem on fingers, always capitalizing the word "DOIGTS": "DOIGTS bienfaisans, DOIGTS enchanteurs!" (142). Here D'Arblay's Danceny takes on his true character, the one I have called amiable. These beneficent and bewitching fingers exist only for Rosine. Their chief use is to oblige her. It is not enough merely to love--a man must also please, and he pleases by using his fingers.

Always playfully, full of puns, the poem begins with the general and gradually settles on the particular. To give his poem more authority, d'Arblay/Danceny in a mock-heroic vein imagines Zoilus, fourth-century critic of Homer, in an excess of black bile attacking "LES DOIGTS." He asks love, Amour, to give Zoilus a schoolmasterly crack on the fingers. Now that Zoilus has been put in his place, the author can proceed. He begins by praising solitary masturbation. If a woman's parents sequester her in a nunnery, her own fingers can lighten the burden of solitude. In the convent, Almaïde is bored, but Hortense "au DOIGT mouillé jouant souvent, / sait gaîment faire penitence" (p. 146). Her wet finger makes her much happier.

When d'Arblay turns to heterosexual masturbation, and recreates the particular situation with Rosine, he initiates a musical metaphor to save his erotic poem from becoming pornographic. This use of metaphor is a requirement of the genre, not the persona. Rosine's body is a lyre, and with his adept fingers D'Arblay/Danceny strums that lyre. After strumming Rosine's body for a while, his rhetoric increasing in intensity, he sees himself as Orpheus, part of a duet where l'Amour and Venus, love and the senses, are fully joined. Up to this moment, he points out, true to his chosen metaphor, he has been carrying too much of the melody. Therefore, eagerly, to include more harmony, he reveals his extra finger.

> Le sein palpitant, l'œil humide,
> Rosine, sur mon instrument,
> promène ses DOIGTS lentement,
> et dans ce prélude charmant,
> c'est la volupté qui la guide.
> Grace à l'Amour. . . . Nous y voilà!
> la voix d'abord un peu lui tremble;
> je recommence, à ce coup-là,
> tout fut d'accord et bien ensemble.
> Dans le presto son mouvement
> était un peu lent . . . je le presse;
> elle chante plus tendrement,
> partage enfin ma douce ivresse
> et s'applaudit également
> de ma force et de sa foiblesse. (p. 148)

They sing together: a prelude, a presto movement, and a tender final moment, a kind of adagio.

Now that the musical interlude is over, the poem leaves this individual scene of mutual masturbation and opens out to a general paean to this activity. To give more heft to the poem, there are references to Sappho, Cythera, and Hans Carvel's ring.[11] Heterosexual masturbation, he argues, should be universal in France, where "chacun, à sa manière, / touche la lyre des Amours." In addition, d'Arblay/Danceny mock-heroically claims that he is purveying both pleasure and tolerance, not complaining that in France, "tout est soumis au DOIGT de Cour" (p. 149). This is not a complaint, says Danceny,

and a double meaning leaps out at us. The "DOIGT de Cour" is not only the finger of the Court, but a reference to the middle finger, which by current slang was known as the finger chiefly used to masturbate women.[12]

All this is very clear, but the tone is light, the relationship markedly mutual. Rosine herself has in fact initiated this "musical" interlude with their mutual fingers. D'Arblay/Danceny is always concerned that they should be in harmony, if not in unison. Rosine is the woman who has at last, as the introduction has told us, "détrompé" the speaker, convinced him that true love is possible. What is remarkable in d'Arblay's poem is the combination of excitement and innocence, the mutuality of the experience, how good-humoredly the speaker lets Rosine's fingers follow their own candid voluptuousness on his "instrument," how concerned he is that he and Rosine should be in agreement, and that she should be experiencing her satisfaction together with his. This lover retains his partner's delicacy even as he arouses her pleasure.

But d'Arblay does not leave it at that. He returns again as editor and writes a letter to the Censor. Danceny, says the editor, now fears that Rosine has become cold to him. The editor has kept his friend from collapsing. Just as the editor is about to mail this letter, he hears yet again from Danceny, who has written in ecstasy to say that his hopes have returned, that Rosine is going with him to the Opera, and that he is the happiest of mortals. The editor is an ironist, not a romantic, and he indicates that Danceny will soon awaken from this dream.

The envelope thus reinforces the cliché of the inconstant woman, as the poem itself did not. The poem is a gentle, passionate, amusing, and good-humored description of a relationship that is safe and mutually pleasing. At the end, the reader wants to believe Danceny. Rosine will be true, and she will even (eventually) be a good wife. This is the ultimate note, but we are left with the feeling that this hope may be naive. Another possibility is that this final bowing to inconstancy may be a ruse to keep the censor from bothering to read Les Doigts. After all, it has escaped the notice of twentieth-century scholars until now.

How unusual is this poem?[13] Sexual literature, which reached a crescendo in the eighteenth century,[14] fell into at least three categories:

instruction manuals, pornography, and erotic literature that ranged from Laclos' complex world to the grueling narratives of the Marquis de Sade, from, as Robert P. Maccubbin puts it, the "metaphorically indirect to the explicitly obscene."[15] Even before d'Arblay wrote his book, the pornographic attacks on Queen Marie Antoinnette had already begun, commencing early in the 1770s and escalating to the Diamond Necklace Affair in 1784-5. The Queen was presumably present at the "midnight tryst" connected with the stealing of an extraordinary diamond necklace.[16] In many hands, pornography had become the rhetoric of power, and especially political power. Although d'Arblay's poem is certainly not political, it presents a world where the sexes are aware of questions of power, where d'Arblay/Danceny emphasizes that he sees Rosine as an equal, not a sexual subordinate. Even the more good-humored tradition of eroticism subordinated women and depicted the man as a conquerer. Thus Henri-Joseph du Laurens' comic heroic poem Le Balai, published in 1761, explicitly attacks virginity, although congenially, in its eighteen cantos describing the broomstick. This implement may be "L'outil en main," but this particular tool, as compared to an unnamed other, produces an imperfect happiness.[17] The aggressive approach often uses much more explicit language than the one d'Arblay chooses, including a hefty number of words not customary in polite society. Alexis Piron (1689-1773), known for a wit so mordant that it frightened even Voltaire,[18] writes in the vernacular in his "Ode à Priape":

> Que vois-je! où suis-je!... ô douce extase!
> Les cieux n'ont point d'objets si beaux,
> Des couilles en bloc arrondies,
> Des cuisses fermes, rebondies,
> Des bataillons de vits bandés,
> Des culs ronds sans poils et sans crottes,
> Des cons, des tétons et des mottes
> D'un torrent de foutre inondés.[19]

Some of Piron's racier poems are not yet published. Many well-known authors dipped into the genre.[20] One of the most prolific writers of erotic poetry was Voltaire, who depicted in his Valentin a woman who seduces a man by manipulating her private parts through her skirt with her finger. Other poets produce work whose eroticism is soporifically indirect and predictable, like practically all the other poems in the *Opusculea*. The Chevalier Antoine de Bertin, mentioned as a possible

influence by d'Arblay's biographer in the Dictionnaire de biographie Française, pursues the same indirect and bland style in his Amours, but his poems are much less lively than d'Arblay's. Bussy-Rabutin, whom d'Arblay may be quoting in his initiating note, in some of his work has followed the genre by which women are made into generalized examples. In his maxims about love, for instance, he produces dicta like the following:

> Il faut avoir un jour,
> Belle Iris, de l'amour
> Ou comme un bein fort désirable,
> Ou comme un mal inévitable.[21]

On the other hand, he was sometimes brutally direct, as when he said in a letter to Mme de Sévigné, comparing her to a woman who would neither love him nor give him up:

> Vous êtes tout à fait belle,
> Vous avez de la vertu,
> Mais vous n'avez pas, comme elle,
> Un oignon dedans le cul.[22]

D'Arblay/Danceny differentiates himself from a M. de Bussy at the begining of Les Doigts; although he was certainly capable of earthy language, one does not imagine him as saying that a woman has an onion up her ass.[23] In comparison, then, to many of his predecessors and contemporaries, d'Arblay's poetry is remarkably fresh and original.

There does not seem to be a tradition of heterosexual and mutual masturbation in poetry. Or, if there is, the prejudices of subsequent editors have so far successfully repressed it. The ubiquitous anthologies of erotic poetry do not include celebrations of mutual fingers.[24] The case in prose is different. In spite of Samuel Tissot's L'Onanisme in 1760 and the instant acceptance in both France and England of his attack on masturbation, heterosexual masturbation figured frequently and prominently in many narratives, such as Mirabeau's Rideau levé, ou l'Éducation de Laure (1786). In erotic texts the guilt over masturbation is on the whole no greater than over coitus.[25] Usually, however, masturbation is initiation, preparation for coitus at some future time. Even in Thérèse Philosophe (1748), where mutual masturbation is a frequent activity, the final point and chief emphasis is that it can be jettisoned. Thérese's initial mentor wishes to protect her from pregnancy, and therefore insists that her lover be satisfied with masturbation. Although she fears pregnancy, she later succumbs to her

lover the Count, who convinces her that he is a master at coitus interruptus.[26] But the tone of Les Doigts is quite different even from this more philosophical approach. D'Arblay writes with a lilt that evokes laughter as much as it does lust and entirely avoids the didactic. The fingers themselves, of both sexes, are beneficent and spellbinding. The full meaning of "DOIGTS bienfaisans, DOIGTS enchanteurs!" evolves and spreads in the course of the poem (p. 142). Even when most passionate, the persona of Danceny retains his idealism. He is as concerned as Rosine is that she should keep that valuable commodity, her virginity. Both of them understand how important it is for a woman to be a technical virgin on her wedding night. The music they make together is passionate, but it is also, I must stress again, amiable and refreshingly equal.

How does the discovery of D'Arblay's rollicking poem affect our point of view toward him and his marriage with Frances Burney? Whether or not there are any grains of autobiographical truth in the Chevalier's Les Doigts, I for one feel that his youthful poem makes me understand more fully his quick success with the author of Cecilia, who was forty and had made up her mind to be a happy old maid. They were, of course, intellectually drawn to one another. Burney had always been quite susceptible to charming, intellectual men. She was particularly responsive to men who somehow opened her to conversation, where her shyness always vied with hilarity and intellectual aggressiveness. D'Arblay instantly became her teacher, and she became his. He taught her French and she taught him English. For his part, he was prepared to admire Burney as the author of Cecilia, a novel that his comrade Laclos designated as one of the four best novels ever written.[27] He often called her "Cecilia." Alexandre d'Arblay was for his time unusually appreciative of women as true companions. Margaret Doody says of Burney's choice of d'Arblay: "Of all the writing women of her era, she seems to have made the best marriage. She waited a long while, but when she married, she did it well."[28]

When Burney first met d'Arblay she mentioned to her father that he was 'a very elegant Poet', and she clearly admired him in part because he too was an author.[29] Did she know about Les Doigts? D'Arblay's volume of poetry was not among Burney's effects when she died. Did he ever show it to her? Possibly not; possibly he had been unable to save a copy in the debacle following the Revolution. Whether or not he

ever told her about Les Doigts, we can see him as an experienced lover, one who could initiate a woman who was worried that she was slightly younger than he, who had reached the age of forty without marrying. When Burney's step-sister Maria Allen Rishton heard about the marriage, she compared the couple to Othello and Desdemona, and wanted to know what sort of a man had like Pope's Abelard >raised "these Tumults in a Vestal's Veins"'?[30] The sort of a man who could raise "these Tumults in a Vestal's Veins" was d'Arblay/Danceny, author of Les Doigts.

The full text of the poem follows:

LES DOIGTS.[31]
A ROSINE.

L'art d'écrire, Abailard, fut sans doute inventé; par l'amante captive, ou l'amant agité.

(*) HONNEUR à cet Artiste sage
qui, pour le bonheur des humains;
des doigts qu'il joignit à nos mains,
daigna multiplier l'usage!

DOIGTS bienfaisans, DOIGTS enchanteurs!
un des plus doux charmes des cœurs
n'est dû qu'à vous, et mon hommage
est un tribut à vos faveurs.
Rosine du DOIGT m'encourage,
Rosine a tout pouvoir sur moi;
ma gloire est toute en son suffage,
lui plaire est ma suprême loi.
Aussi bien que personne en France
je sais aimer, et l'on me doit
sure ce point là toute croyance;
mais plaire est un autre science:
heureux qui jamais n'apperçoit
cette cruelle différence,
et, bien sûr de la préférence,
sait cet art sur le bout du DOIGT.

SI quelqu'intolérant Zoïle,
dan ses accès de noire bile,
de mon sujet blâme le choix,
je te charge de ma défense
Amour! prends soin de ma vengeance,
et fais-lui donner sur les DOIGTS.

UN DOIGT levé flatte ou menace,
demande ou refuse un grace;
enfin, dans ce vaste univers,
un DOIGT remet tout à sa place,
ou fait aller tout de travers.
Voit-on d'accord dans quelqu'affaire
l'homme de bien et le fripon?
Le premier fait ce qu'il croit bon,
l'autre ferait tout le contraire;
mais il agit comme il le doit,
de peur qu'on ne le montre au DOIGT.
Un cœur novice, mais sensible,
s'écarte-t'il du droit chemin?
contre un penchant irrésistible
il rest encore le DOIGT divin;
et la recette est infaillible!

MINISTRES de la Volupté,
les DOIGTS, de l'amante craintive
ménagent la timidité;
ils font, à l'amante captive,
regretter moins sa liberté.
Quand, éludant la vigilance
et des mamans et des tuteurs,
quand, dirigé par la prudence,
les DOIGTS sont bien d'intelligence
pour soulager deux jeunes cœurs,
tout s'embellit par leur adresse,
ils tintent l'heure du berger...
et du bonheur la douce ivresse,
de l'amant jusqu'à la maîtresse
se communique sans danger.
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Almaïde, avec indolence,
traine ses jours dans son couvent:
mais, moins dupe, sa sœur Hortense
au DOIGT mouillé jouant souvent,
sait gaîment faire pénitence.
J'aime ces jeux dits innocens...
et crois qu'en toute conscience,
celui-là, de fille à treize ans,
doit obtenir la préférence.

ON dit qu'oisiveté nous perd;
donc les DOIGTS occupés des filles
doivent souvent mettre à couvert
l'honneur chancelant des familles.

UN jour assis nonchalamment,
et tout occupé de Rosine...
Rosine arrive doucement,
derrière moi vient, m'examine,
sourit de mon égarement,
voudrait pourtant faire la mine,
et, couvrant son joli minois,
regarde encore entre ses DOIGTS.
Devant moi j'avais un glace,
mon œil s'y porte, il apperçoit
Rosine qui, du bout du DOIGT,
m'appelle et désigne un place
depuis long-tems chère à tous deux:

j'y vole, Rosine m'embrasse,
et ce baiser double mes feux.
C'est-là qu'aux doux sons de my lyre,
mariant nos tendres accens,
souvent nous peignons dans nos chants
l'Amour, Vénus, et ce délire
qui doit ses charmes tout-puissans
à l'accord du cœur et des sens.
Quelle touchante mélodie!
de cette musique chérie
pour bien compter les tems, je crois
que l'ame est préférable aux DOIGTS.
«Ah! dis-je à Rosine attendrie,
«aimons-nous, tout nous y convie!
«Ce morceau si voluptueux,
«chef-d'œuvre d'un nouvel Orphée,
«d'Amour cet éternal trophée,
«nous peint les transports fabuleux
«d'un Paladin et d'une Fée;
«aussi tendres, chantons, come eux,
«aimons-nous, tout nous y convie!
Je vois en achevant ces mots,
je vois ma séduisante amie
dans un douce rêverie:
mais du plus joli des duos,
je ne tenais qu'une partie...
Piqué de voir ainsi perdus
des momens chers à ma tendresse,
à prendre l'autre je m'empresse,
et mets bientôt le DOIGT dessus,
Le sein palpitant, l'œil humide,
Rosine, sur mon instrument,
promène ses DOIGTS lentement,
et dans ce prélude charmant,
c'est la volupté qui la guide.
Grace à l'Amour...Nous y voilà!
la voix d'abord un peu lui tremble;
je recommence, à ce coup-là,
tout fut d'accord et bien ensemble.

Dans le presto son mouvement
était un peu lent... je le presse;
elle chante plus tendrement,
partage enfin ma douce ivresse
et s'applaudit également
de ma force et de sa foiblesse.

QU'UN agréable, avec ses DOIGTS,
Mesdames, a votre fluide
imprime un mouvement rapide,
facilement je le conçois.
Vous qui d'Amour suivez les loix,
osez nier le Mes...isme!
n'avez-vous pas cent et cent fois,
dans un galant somnambulisme,
perdu, puis recouvré la voix?
Croyez donc au Pui.....isme,
de même au'au Ba.....isme,
enfin aux nouveaux Rose-crois,
tous docteurs jusqu'au bout des DOIGTS.

Riant de l'indiscrete guerre
de nos modernes Troubadours
contre les Saphos de nos jours,
qu'on ouvre indulgence plénière;
et que chacun, à sa manière,
touche la lyre des Amours.
Point courtisan, je cherche à plaire...
et par-tout prêchant, tour-à-tour,
le plaisir et la tolérance,
sans murmurer je vois qu'en France
tout est soumis au DOIGT de Cour.

Loin de l'œil jaloux du vulgaire,
qu'il garde cette bague au DOIGT.
l'heureux mortel qui, dans Cythère,
possède une petite terre,
est logé sous un petit toît,
bien recouvert de peur du froid.
Bonheur et Volupté sa mere
sont toujours logé à l'étroit.

Dan ces Palais où l'Opulence,
aux doux Plaisirs donne audience,
exact observateur, je vois
le Desir souvent aux abois,
les Ris dans une morne silence,
et l'Amour s'en mordant les DOIGTS.

DOIGTS tout-puissans! sans votre usage
que de tourmens j'aurais soufferts!
reconoissance est mon partage;
vous m'avez servi; je vous sers.
Si, grace à vous, ce badinage
à plaire pouvait parvenir,
puisse-t'il par vous, d'âge en âge,
passer aux siècles à venir!

ENVOI.

Si j'ai le bonheur de te plaire,
Rosine, songe au doux baiser
que tu m'a promis pour salaire;
des DOIGTS ne crains point d'abuser,
j'ai gardé celui du mystère. (pp. 142-150)

(*) Ces quatre premiers vers, et conséquemment l'idée entière de cette bagatelle, sont dûs à M. de Bussy, que je n'ai pas l'honneur de connaître. On m'a cité de lui, sur ce suject, une vingtaine de vers qui finissaient ainsi.

si la beauté, que je préfère,
daigne permettre au'aujourd'hui
de ses doigts la trace légère,
porte reméde à mon ennui,
je bénirai sa bienfaisance;
si mes vœux ne sont superflus,
pour prouver ma reconaissance
j'aurai pour elle un doigt de plus.

Commençant comme M. de Bussy, j'avais cru devoir finir de même: mais Rosine a trouvé que ce doigt de plus, seroit un doigt de trop, et il n'en a plus été question.

Notes :

[1] References to *Opuscules* will be given in parentheses in the text.
[2] *Dictionaire de biographie Française*, s.v. Arblay, Alexendre Jean-Baptiste Piochard d'.
[3] *Dictionaire de biographie Française*, s.v. Arblay, François Piochard d'.
[4] *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay (1778-1840)* [1846], ed. Charlotte Barrett, with preface and notes by Austin Dobson, 6 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904-05) 5: 139.
[5] This portrait appears in Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), plate III, following p. 234. For some reason, reproductions in other biographies make d'Arblay look somewhat more quizzical. At present the original is in Parham Park, Sussex.
[6] This portrait appears in *The Journal and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow et al. 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972-84), vol. 2 (facing p. x.). It is "a crayon drawing, probably by William Locke, Jr., from a photograph in the files of the National Portrait Gallery" (p. vii).
[7] Letter 171, ed. Yves Stalloni (Paris: Classique Garnier, 1995), p. 386.
[8] Ed. Chantal Thomas (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1991), p. 70-71.
[9] Anonymous. *The Female Jester; or, Wit for the Ladies*. (London: J. Bew, 1778), pp. 56, 52-3.
[10] I have not been able to track down the source of this quotation. If the writer is Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, 1618-93, cousin of Mme de Sévigné, which seems the most likely, d'Arblay in invoking a widely known and prolific writer of verse about the art of love.
[11] The lines referring to Rabelais' Hans Carvel work by implication: "LOIN de l'oeil jaloux du vulgaire,/qu'il garde cette bague au DOIGT" (p. 149). Readers of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* see this as a reference to Hans Carvel, who dreamed that he had found a ring that would keep his wife faithful if he perpetually wore it, and when he woke found that his finger was ringed by his wife's vagina.
[12] Albert Delvau, *Dictionaire érotique moderne* (Paris: Éditions 10/18, 1997), s.v. "Doigt de cour."
[13] I would like to thank Diane Brown for her advice about research in this area.
[14] Sarana Alexandrian, *Histoire de la literature érotique* (Paris: Seghers, 1989), calls the eighteenth century "L'âge du libertinage," and claims that France "exerça le monopole incontesté de la littérature galante" (p. 144).

[15] *Unauthorized Sexual Behavior during the Enlightenment*, ed. Robert P. Maccubbin (Special Issue of *Eighteenth-Century Life*, IX, n.s., 3 May 1985), Introduction.

[16] See Sarah Maza, "The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited," in Lynn Hunt, ed., *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 79. The French Revolution, as Lynn Hunt has pointed, was the zenith and also the "turning point" of pornography used for the purpose of political attack. "Pornography and the French Revolution" in *The Invention of Pornography* (New York: Zone Books, 1993), p. 302.

[17] Pascal Pia, ed., *Dictionnaire des oeuvres érotiques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1971), p. 57.

[18] Alexandrian, p. 164.

[19] Pillement, p. 111.

[20] Jean Marie Goulemot mentions this fact as one of the more surprising qualities of the genre, indicating—or reflecting—its popularity. Goulemot's exploration of the readership of erotic literature is one of the most intelligent discussions of the genre, and one of the most light-hearted. His title in French is *Ces livres qu'on ne lit que d'une main*, which in its English translation is *Forbidden Texts: Erotic Literature and its Readers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

[21] *Mémoires de Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy* (Paris: Charpentier, 1857) 2: 169.

[22] *Dits et indits* (France: Éditions de l'armançon, 1993), 2 Vols. In 1; Vol. 2, *Chansons* (autographes), ed. V. Maigne, p. 224.

[23] I have been ale to find in the Burney papers only one instance of d'Arblay's using unprintable language. When he was dying, he said to his wife that she must watch their son: "It faut le *voir* dans le merde, pour savoir par où il a besion d'une amie" British Library Egerton MS 3693, f. 92.

[24] Besides Pillement, see Pierre Perret, *Anthologie de la poésie érotique* ([Place of publication not given]: *NiL editions*, 1995; and Adolphe de Bever, *Contes & conteurs Gaillards du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1906).

[25] Twentieth-century scholarship on masturbation has mainly discussed masturbation as a history of fear and as a solitary activity. Prejudice against this activity is still so great in English-speaking countries that books about the subject use synonyms in their titles and generally discuss the great fears it has generated. One of the most complete books on the subject is Jean Stengers and Anne Van Neck, *Histoire d'une grande peur, la masturbation*

(Brussels: Institut Synthélabo 1998), which, as its title indicates, emphasizes the fear to the exclusion of the pleasure, although making clear that the fear originated in the eighteenth century, with the publication of *Onania. Solitary Pleasures*, ed. Paula Bennett and Vernon A. Rosario II (New York: Routledge, 1995), does, as its title indicates, emphasize the pleasure, but there is no discussion of mutual masturbation in any of the included articles.

[26] Anonymous, *Thérèse philosophe*, facsimile of ca. 1780 edition, (Geneva-Paris: Editions Slatkine, 1980). In addition to the prolonged period of mutual masturbation in Thérèse's life, there is a description of a manwhose predilection is to sit on the opposite side of the room and masturbate while watching his mistress doing the same. He coordinates his own climax with hers; this activity is pictured and described at 2:27. Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: Norton, 1995), mentions that there are scenes where Thérèse's mentor and his mistress "Masturbate deliciously together," p. 96.

[27] Choderlos de Laclos, "Cecilia ou les Mémoires d'une héritière," *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 469.

[28] *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*{New Brunswick: Rudgers University Press, 1988), p. 203; see also Janice Farrar Thaddeus, *Frances Burney: A Literary Life* (Basinstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 112-15 and passim.

[29] Hemlow, *Journal and Letters* 2:19. The detailed story of the Burney-d'Arblay courtship appears in this volume.

[30] 14 August 1793, to Burney's sister Susanna Phillips (Hemlow, *History*, p. 239); Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard,' "What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins'? (*The Poems of Alexander Pope* ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) p. 252). I would like to thank Patricia Brückmann for pointing out the source of this line.

[31] All spellings and punctuation marks are as written; hence, "sic" is omitted.