

ation decrees to a religious group that its participation in national life is conditional on its members’ standardization of their appearances, particularly regarding their headgear and beards. This is not only France in 2004, but also Prussia in 1812, the year of Jewish emancipation. Europe has been here before.

The headscarf ban’s greatly anticipated entry into force last year was in the event an anti-climax. Only seventy-two schoolgirls were excluded from school; the taking of French hostages in Iraq in August last year muted the protests of even the more uncompromising organizations. This is unsurprising. Less than 1 per cent of Muslim schoolgirls wore *le foulard* to begin with; and as in previous years, government mediators did their work building such local compromises as permitting students to wear bandanas in the halls but not in classrooms. Rather, Loi 2004–228 was principally the occasion of popular introspection about the relationship between France and its Muslim community, and the proper reinterpretation of republican norms of *laïcité* laid down under very different circumstances a century ago, to shelter the public sphere against encroaching ecclesiastical domination.

The ban also provoked a startling number of books of uneven quality. Nicolas Sarkozy’s *La République, les religions, l’espérance* attempts to update the republican tradition, while *Les Islamistes sont déjà là* by Christophe Deloire and Christophe Dubois describes French fears of Muslim radicalism. In *L’une voilée, l’autre pas*, two thoughtful Muslim women, Dounia Bouzar and Saïda Kada, argue with each other about the significance of the veil.

Why was the ban necessary in the first place? There are several reasons. The French Government fears that political and civic integration in the more deprived communities is failing, and that radical evangelists from abroad have been stirring things up; hence the move to reduce religious demarcations and deal with potential dual loyalties. The veil is held to introduce religion to a public space rigorously guarded against it from 1905 onwards, and to oppress women in a way not in keeping with the principles of the Republic. There is a third particular argument about schools, holding that the young require a privileged neutral space to develop their values. Finally, the ban was seen as taking a stand against the extremist elements in the French Muslim community.

A bestseller in France late last year, *Les Islamistes sont déjà là* reflects these latter anxieties. Deloire is a journalist at the weekly news magazine *Le Point*; Dubois covers terrorism for *Le Parisien*. They have collaborated before in *Enquête Sabotée* (2003), which investigated how the Corsican separatist Yvan Colonna eluded arrest for five years after assassinating the prefect of Corsica, Claude Éricnagn, in 1998. The seventy-three chapters of their most recent book provide a series of vignettes to make the case that the Republic and Islamism are at war. They draw portraits of extremists seeking to impose shari’ah to take the place of French laws, and of disaffected youth, prey to “green Fascism”, training on French territory before travelling abroad to pursue jihad. Moderates care, in their eyes, foreign puppets, while radicals dream of founding an Islamic state in France, pursuing a strategy of conquest and taking their orders from Saudi Arabia. According to Deloire and Dubois, French Islam is a contra-

Super Sarko?

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Christophe Deloire and Christophe Dubois

LES ISLAMISTES SONT DÉJÀ LÀ
Enquête sur une guerre secrète
349pp. Paris: Albin Michel. 19.50 euros.
2 22 615149 4

Nicolas Sarkozy

LA RÉPUBLIQUE, LES RELIGIONS, L’ESPÉRANCE
172pp. Paris: Cerf. 17 euros.
2 20 407283 4

Dounia Bouzar and Saïda

Kada

L’UNE VOILÉE, L’AUTRE PAS
213pp. Albin Michel. 15 euros.
2 22 613805 6

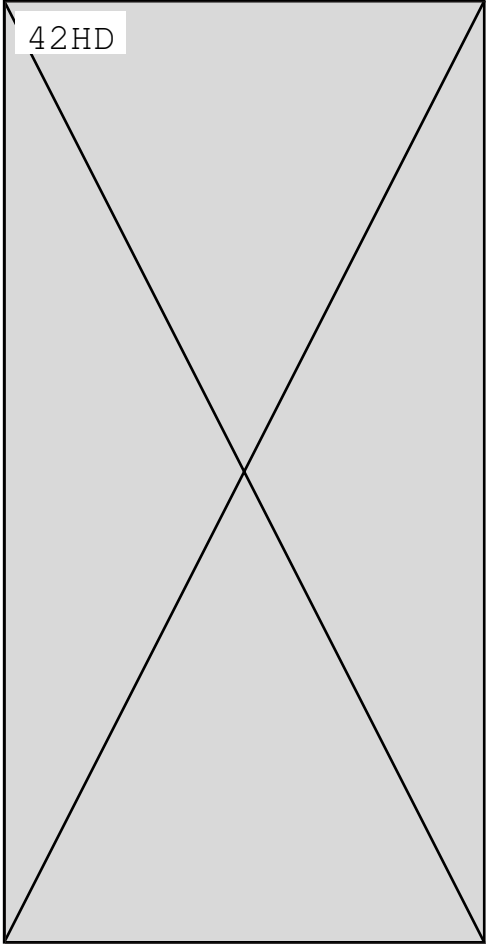
diction in terms, “a huge joke, because there is not a piece of it not under the control of a foreign power”. The authors do not mince their words: the fundamentalist offensive is strong, and the Republic is scarcely able to defend itself. They should show Saudi proselytes have been dispatched to Toulon to spread hatred of Jews and non-Muslim French; how salafists have taken over the mosques one by one, and fifth columnists used republican language to harass the Republic and wear down its resistance.

Not all the two authors’ attacks hit their intended mark. To treat as equivalent private prayer in an Interior Ministry building by the Secretary-General Fouad Alaoui of the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF), the omission of wine from the menu at official dinners thrown for visiting Muslim heads of state, and attempts by extremists to take over Parisian mosques is to miss an important distinction. The genuinely troublesome becomes mingled with the overplayed and the wholly non-problematic. And the authors’ characterization of French Islam as “fascisme vert” coheres uneasily with research that shows 78 per cent of French Muslims favour *laïcité* as aiding their religious freedom, 92 per cent decry the attacks of September 11 as “unIslamic”, and for that matter only 36 per cent practise Islam in any form whatsoever. Radicalism, if it is a disease, is a disease of the part, not the whole. Algerian influence over the moderate sector of the Paris mosque, Dalil Boubakeur is, though potentially troublesome, hardly a new story, and is not substantially added to here over earlier tellings. Perhaps more easily pardonable is the authors’ lack of the Arabic necessary for a truly fleshed-out portrait of mosque life in the *banlieues*. The story of radicalism in the French Muslim community is an important one, and requires thoughtful telling; it does not receive it here.

A point being ill made, though, does not render it wholly false. Acts of anti-Semitic violence in France have risen, from 185 in 2002 to 233 in 2003; and the first half alone of 2004 then exceeded that. (An interesting pattern they detect is that while most perpetrators eventually

Super Sarko?

convicted were of Maghrebian origin, virtually none was connected with Islamist religious organizations.) A majority of French prison inmates are now Muslim, with Islam becoming today’s successor of Marxism as the religion of the repressed. Hard-talking movements such as Lhaj Thami Breze’s Muslim Brotherhood-inspired UOIF swept regional elections to the representative body of French Islam. Both moderates and hardliners are heavily funded from abroad: Boubakeur from Algeria and Breze from Morocco, with both governments thus seeking to keep control over their expatriates. The international dimension is amplified by the fact that some 95 per cent of French imams come from overseas. Integrating *banlieusard* youth into French society and removing foreign influence from French Islam, both noble goals for which the authors call, will require better understanding than they offer.



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The sales of the book, though, reveal the nerve it has touched in French society. It might thus serve less usefully as a window into French Muslim fundamentalism than for what it says about France. The encounter with the veil and a non-Christian minority lays bare something of the complex harmony between the Fifth Republic’s attractive liberal traditions and the contradictions of memory, history, and ideology lingering under its surface. *Laïcité* has after all always had a Catholic tinge, whether in France’s bank holidays largely being saint’s days or in school cafeterias serving fish on Fridays. Nuns do not have to remove their headscarves for passport or driver’s licence photographs; Muslim women do. France’s encounter with Islam has also been more intense than that of any other Western democ-

racy, with its Muslim population larger both absolutely and proportionately (5 million, 8 per cent) than Britain’s (1.8m, 3.06 per cent), the Netherlands’ (1.0m, 6.15 per cent), or Germany’s (3.2m, 3.88 per cent).

Nicolas Sarkozy takes an entirely different tack from these authors. A charismatic politician cast from the post-ideological mould of Blair and Clinton, Sarkozy has spoken of the need to “create an Islam of France, and not just have Islam in France”. As Interior Minister from 2002 to 2004 (Sarkozy is now Finance Minister), he midwived at the birth of the Conseil français du culte musulman (CFCM) in 2003, launched under the ken of Dalil Boubakeur. As an official interlocutor with the State regarding issues of public and Muslim community interest, it has secured broad if tenuous support from rival factions; among its charges are such tasks as ensuring public school cafeterias offer non-pork dishes, negotiating the selection of Muslim chaplains in prisons and armed forces, organizing markets for Halal meat, and making certain Muslim burial practices are respected in municipal cemeteries. The press called him “Super Sarko” for this.

Sarkozy writes with passion, arguing for the state funding of mosques, and balancing a more positive republican view of religion with the more traditional position of affirming that religious and nonreligious citizens are strictly equal in the eyes of the Republic. *Laïcité* is not the enemy of religions, but rather a precondition for religious freedom, for those who would be religious. The UOIF represents a significant part of French Muslim youth; and the State must therefore reach an accommodation with it. Sarkozy argues that conservation on the part of the State, rather than foreign influences, is the root cause of fundamentalism. What troubles the authorities is not the minarets, but rather the caves and garages which give rise to clandestine cults; the Republic’s rules are more likely to be respected within the grand mosques. France’s Muslim community, unlike other religious denominations, also has not inherited a patrimony from history, being relatively new on French territory. Not only is it thus poorer, but wealthy donors are more frequently from outside France. An obvious solution is to provide more state funding to support the growth of an indigenous French Islam. When the State finances thousands of cultural associations, sporting clubs, and other groups, why should religious associations not receive any aid? Occasionally Sarkozy disappoints, as when he responds to a question about foreign governments’ influence on French mosques with the lukewarm retort that the Vatican selects France’s bishops. But his book is generally persuasive, and his effort to update the republican tradition with creativity and courage ought not to be underestimated.

Republican citizenship as enshrined in the schools’ secular temples is the result of an unfinished rebellion against Catholic domination that left little space for recognition of religious beliefs as a personal choice, or for religious pluralism. The headscarf affair reactivated this rebellion, but this time it was also against *communautarisme*, enclosure within a community in preference to French public life and its shared republican values and identities. Under the Republic’s ideology, there can be no intermediate body between it and the citizen. But it is precisely the tricky no man’s land between these two alternatives, fraught with the wreckage of past symbols, that gives rise to a new ver-

sion of a familiar question: when is a headscarf just a headscarf?

The answer, of course, is never. And so the headscarf has become an ambiguous metonymy, what Harvey Simmons compares to a black hole, drawing into its vortex all the concerns and fears of the French regarding their Muslim population: violence, crime, terrorism, integration, citizenship, *laïcité*, and painful memories of the 1954–62 Algerian war for independence. But what of the French Muslims themselves? In a remarkable volume, Dounia Bouzar and Saïda Kada debate at length on the headscarf’s significance. Bouzar is a sociologist and until recently a member of the Conseil français du culte musulman. She is the “unveiled” of the pair; her counterpart, Kada, is an activist and the president of Femmes françaises et musulmanes engagées. They enlist twelve further female French Muslim voices; each of the testimonies is centred on particular points, such as sexism, the national schools or postcolonialism; each features young, professional Muslim women. For both authors, the veil is to the public and the Republic’s official

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe series allows little-known women’s voices to be heard, with translations of sixteenth to eighteenth-century European texts. The approach is feminist, and each volume is prefaced with a historical account of the systematic oppression and frustration of women. However, the books reviewed here feature four women who, in different ways, succeeded in carving out independent lives in a man’s world.

From the sixteenth century we have some forty pages of religious polemic by Marie Dentière (1495–1561), a fearless and wildly outspoken Protestant reformer. Mary B. McKinley, her translator, provides a full and interesting biographical introduction, which reveals the excesses of Dentière’s zeal. We see her storming into a convent to harangue the outraged nuns about the pleasures of conjugal relations, or arguing with John Calvin himself about the length of his disciples’ robes – on which occasion Calvin commented, sinisterly imprecise, “I treated the woman as I should have”. Her own writings are unsophisticated and direct, and reveal a violent hatred of the Catholic Church, “that great Roman lecheress, full of abomination and filth”: “What greater blindness can you imagine than . . . teaching [children] to turn to doctors who cure all ills, like Saint Rock for vomiting, Saint Wolf for the teeth, Saint Fox for eating, Saint Cosmos for the castrated, and Damien for the crippled on all sides?”. She is aware of the anomaly of her position as a woman daring to question the accepted religion of generations past, but the sheer force of her conviction sweeps the reader along. And those who do not dare join her crusade are “bold as slugs”.

Writing some hundred years later, Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) is a very different embodiment of the early woman writer. Though she published mostly under the name of her brother Georges, she was known as one of the most prolific novelists of her age, lionized by her contemporaries under her *précieux* pseudonym of ‘Sapho’. The writings presented here are selected from her rhetorical works, and are as polished as Dentière’s are crude. Indeed, one wishes Scudéry could have shed some of her politeness and let herself go a bit. The first part of this volume is a fictional correspondence

caste a sign of refusal to integrate, to assume citizenship, and to adopt the republic’s norms of (gender) equality and secularism. To those who wear it, it is the colonial spirit that denies them the Republican liberty to wear their headscarf with such meaning as they themselves choose to impart it. For Kada, doing so symbolizes submission to God.

For Bouzar, to put on the headscarf is to admit one will never be considered an equal as God willed. Articulation of anti-immigrant sentiment has become permissible if couched in a discourse about Islam and public secularism, she says. Kada questions the boundaries of the “public space” which must remain secular in light of the burgeoning size of the *dirigiste* French state. Both regard suggestions that Muslims are seeking to render France along a Middle Eastern model as absurdly misplaced, given the greater degree of freedom the country has provided for the religious life of Muslims than their sometimes purportedly religious, generally authoritarian countries of origin.

As Timothy Garton Ash has noted, drawing on Europe’s own better liberal democratic

The Nuns’ tales

MAYA SLATER

Marie Dentière

EPISTLE TO MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE
PREFACE TO A SERMON BY JOHN CALVIN
Edited and translated by Mary B. McKinley
110pp. \$18. Paperback, £13.
0 226 14279 5

Madeleine de Scudéry

SELECTED LETTERS, ORATIONS AND RHETORICAL DIALOGUES
Edited and translated by Jane Donawerth and Julie Strongson
174pp. \$25. Paperback, £17.50.
0 226 14404 6

Madame de Villedieu

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF HENRIETTE-SYLVIE DE MOLIÈRE
Edited and translated by Donna Kuizenga
194pp. \$21. Paperback, £15.
0 226 14420 8

Madame de Maintenon

DIALOGUES AND ADDRESSES
Edited and translated by John J. Conley
177pp. 0 226 50242 2

University of Chicago Press, distributed in the UK by Wiley.

between two lady friends, who address each other as “Madam”, and spend a good part of each letter praising each other’s excellence. Each then lists her own shortcomings – only for her correspondent to upbraid her for her excess of modesty, and in turn denigrate herself. The whole thing is like a formal ritual, which somehow fails to get anywhere. The next section seemed more promising: a series of imaginary orations given by famous historical women at crucial points in their lives – for example, King Herod’s wife Mariamme, faced with her hus-

traditions presents a more substantive route for Continental self-definition than negatively against the “others” of the United States or Islamic world. France’s Republican ideology, more explicitly enunciated and ritualized than British constitutionalism, is a promising pedagogical tool for assimilating new members into these political traditions – so long as it maintains its substantive character and does not become a legitimization for social prejudices against those who are not of French stock. Ponderously, the headscarf law’s implementation neglected several more sanguine recommendations: more Muslim chaplains, and bank holidays for Aid el Kebir and Yom Kippur, both of which failed to get support from Prime Minister Raffarin or the parliamentary Centre Right. Even so, opposition came from a minority of the Muslim population. The Grand Sheik of Al Azhar University, Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, declared that he had no problem with the law; vehement protest came only from smaller fringe organizations such as Mohammed Latreche’s Parti des Musulmans de France. By accepting the headscarf law, France’s Muslims

may have won from their neighbours the right to a fuller hearing. If voices such as Bouzar’s, Kada’s and Sarkozy’s win out, then the resulting conversation may well be as useful for the Fifth Republic in growing up, out of its adolescent rebellion against an *ancien régime* Catholicism derelict for centuries, as it is for Muslims seeking to win their place at its table.

Finally, contra the concerns voiced in Deloire and Dubois’s tract, there is another perspective, that Islam is really not a bad force at all in France, that it provides hope in the *banlieues*, that, as Olivier Roy writes in *Globalized Islam* (reviewed in the *TLS*, January 28), it is moving away from politics towards interiority. Critics respond by pointing to the increase in hate crimes on its fringes, if not by Islamists themselves then by Maghrebians who have listened to some of their more fiery rhetoric. Both arguments have some support in the evidence. But one point at least is clear: the attractiveness of fiery radical preachers will wane considerably as the Republic manages to extend meaningful opportunity under its terms to the residents of its *banlieues*.

long public liaison with the lover whose name she adopted. She travelled alone through Europe, promoting her writing. But in this book, despite the enthusiasm with which Villedieu launches her heroine into danger, the final effect is so overdone as to become mind-numbing. Donna Kuizinga opts for a literal translation, which can make the text laborious to read, for example: “In the end, after dreadful exploits (for that is the proper word for them) and after having supported like a lion those two illustrious volunteers, whom glory mixed with something else made fight, as did he, like men who were more than men, he died saving the life of the first of them”.

The last work under review is by no less than the wife of Louis XIV, Mme de Maintenon. In 1686 she founded a school for impoverished aristocratic girls, taking a great interest in its day-to-day running. She talked informally to her protégées, wrote short dramatic sketches for them to perform, and delivered lectures to the teachers. Much of this material was delivered impromptu, but the teachers took notes, and later published it. In John J. Conley’s translation one is immediately struck by how clever and articulate Maintenon was. She varied her register to suit her audience, formulating her ideas in simple, entertaining form when addressing the younger children, and enlivening her harsh message with amusing anecdotes. That the message was harsh is certain: a woman’s role is to submit, be it to God as a nun (the best option), or to a husband (though “even the best husbands tend to act like tyrants”). Because they are poor, the girls cannot hope for happiness. They must remember their noble rank, but be prepared for constant humiliation. Eyes down, chins up, she tells them. Occasionally she shows a flash of temper: “one of you pushed me rather rudely in trying to enter the classroom before me”. And once or twice we are given a tantalizing glimpse of Louis XIV, for instance amusing himself by pulling the court ladies’ chairs from under them, so that they landed on the floor. Characteristically, she tells this anecdote without a chuckle. Indeed, she views laughter (like most other enjoyable experiences) as dangerous. This is a fascinating insight into the mind of the most powerful woman of her time.