

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

This is a study of writing of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mainly in France, but also in Britain and Russia. Its focus is on the establishing and questioning of rational, 'civilized' norms of 'politeness', which in the *ancien régime* means not just polite manners, but a certain ideal of society and culture.

Within this general context, a series of familiar oppositions, between polite and rude, tame and wild, urban(e) and rustic, elite and popular, adult and child, reason and unreason, give the initial impetus to enquiries which often show how these opposites interpenetrate, how hierarchies are reversed, and how compromises are sought. Polite society, like polite literature, needs and desires its opposite. The ideal is often the meeting of garden and wilderness, where the savage encounters the civilized and gifts are exchanged. Professor France points to the centrality, but also the vulnerability, in classical culture, of the ideal of 'politeness', and his discussion embraces revolutionary eloquence and enlightened primitivism, the value of hyperbole, and the essay as a form of polite sociability.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge Studies in French
POLITENESS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge Studies in French

General editor: MALCOLM BOWIE

Recent titles in this series include:

RICHARD D.E. BURTON

Baudelaire in 1859: A Study in the Sources of Poetic Creativity

MICHAEL MORIARTY

Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France

JOHN FORRESTER

The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida

JEROME SCHWARTZ

Irony and Ideology in Rabelais: Structures of Subversion

DAVID BAGULEY

Naturalist Fiction: The Entropic Vision

LESLIE HILL

Beckett's Fiction: In Different Words

F.W. LEAKEY

Baudelaire: Collected Essays, 1953–1988

SARAH KAY

Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry

GILLIAN JONDORF

French Renaissance Tragedy: The Dramatic Word

LAWRENCE D. KRITZMAN

The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance

JERRY C. NASH

The Love Aesthetics of Maurice Scève

For a complete list of books in the series, see the end of this volume

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

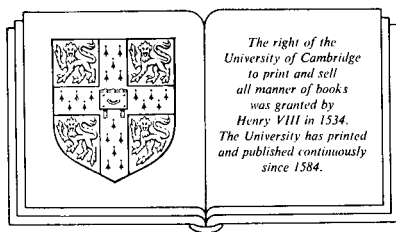
[More information](#)

POLITENESS AND ITS DISCONTENTS

PROBLEMS IN FRENCH CLASSICAL
CULTURE

PETER FRANCE

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK PORT CHESTER

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521370707

© Cambridge University Press 1992

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1992

This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

France, Peter, 1935–

Politeness and its discontents: problems in French classical culture / Peter France.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in French)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 37070 1 (hardback)

1. French literature – 18th century – History and criticism.
2. French literature – 17th century – History and criticism.
3. France – Civilization – 17th–18th centuries. 4. French literature – European influences. 5. European literature – French influences.
6. Literature and society – France. 7. Social ethics in literature.
8. Courtesy in literature. 9. Classicism – France. I. Title.

II. Series.

PQ265.F73 1992

840.9'353'09033 – dc20 91-9105 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-37070-7 hardback

ISBN-10 0-521-37070-1 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02986-5 paperback

ISBN-10 0-521-02986-4 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

To the memory of Austin Gill

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Introduction</i>	1
PART I EXCESS AND UNREASON	9
1 Hyperbole	11
2 Ogres	27
3 Myth and modernity: Racine's <i>Phèdre</i>	40
PART II ENLIGHTENED SOCIABILITY	51
4 Polish, police, <i>polis</i>	53
5 The sociable essayist: Addison and Marivaux	74
6 The commerce of the self	97
7 The writer as performer	113
8 Beyond politeness? Speakers and audience at the Convention Nationale	129
PART III CONFRONTING THE OTHER	149
9 Translating the British	151
10 Jacques or his master? Diderot and the peasants	173
11 Enlightened primitivism	187
12 Frontiers of civilization	204
<i>Notes</i>	219
<i>Index</i>	238

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Versions of chapters in this book appeared previously in the following publications, though many have been radically recast, amalgamated or translated. I am grateful to the editors and publishers for permission to use them here.

Chapter 1

'Equilibrium and Excess' in *The Equilibrium of Wit*, ed. D. Coleman and P. Bayley (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1982); and 'L'Hyperbole chez Racine' in *Racine, théâtre et poésie*, Actes du troisième colloque Vinaver, Manchester 1987 (Francis Cairns Publications, Liverpool, 1991).

Chapter 3

'Myth and Modernity: Racine's *Phèdre*' in *Myth and Legend in French Literature. Essays in Honour of A. J. Steele*, ed. K. Aspley, D. Bellos and P. Sharratt (London, Modern Humanities Research Association, 1982).

Chapter 4

'La Politesse en question' in *Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese*, 29 (1990).

Chapter 5

'Sociability, Journalism, and the Essay' in *Continuum*, 3 (1991).

Chapter 6

'The Commerce of the Self' in *Comparative Criticism*, 12 (1990); and 'Rousseau, Adam Smith and the Education of the Self' in *Moy qui me voy; the Writer and the Self from Montaigne to Leiris*, ed. G. Craig and M. McGowan (Oxford, 1989).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02986-5 - Politeness and its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture

Peter France

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgements

Chapter 7

'The Writer as Performer' in *Essays on the Age of Enlightenment in Honor of Ira O. Wade*, ed. J. Macary (Geneva–Paris, 1977).

Chapter 8

'Speakers and Audience: The First Days of the Convention' in *Language and Rhetoric of the Revolution*, ed. J. Renwick (Edinburgh, 1990).

Chapter 9

'Diderot traducteur de l'anglais' in *Colloque international Diderot*, ed. A. M. Chouillet (Paris, 1985); and 'The French Pope' in *Alexander Pope: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. C. Nicholson (Aberdeen, 1988).

Chapter 10

'Jacques or his Master? Diderot and the Peasants' in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 7 (1984).

Chapter 11

'Primitivism and Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Scots' in *Yearbook for English Studies*, 15 (1985).

Chapter 12

'Western European Civilisation and its Mountain Frontiers' in *History of European Ideas*, 6 (1985).

Note

All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Spelling has been modernized throughout.