Marius Warholm Haugen

"Plus de loterie!" – Cultural Responses to the Abolition of the French State Lottery

In January 1836, after several years of gradual dismantling, La Loterie Royale de France was finally abolished.[1] The French royal lottery, based on the Genoese lotto, was established in 1776, replacing the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire, the very first lotto in France, which had been drawn for the first time in 1758.[2] From 1758 to 1836, then, the lotto institution not only produced considerable incomes for the French state, but also strongly affected every-day lives, and put an imprint on the urban landscape and the cultural imagination.[3] If the decision to abolish the institution effectively put an end to the game itself, its cultural impact did not disappear overnight. The abolition provoked a rich and diverse response in the cultural sphere, in the form of plays, poems, songs, paintings, and prose fiction. It was as if the lottery, as a financial institution and a social practice, had been so important in French public life over the seventy-eight years of its existence that its disappearance warranted a cultural processing.

On 16 March 1836, two months after the abolition had taken effect, the satirical magazine *Le Charivari* printed a drawing by the political cartoonist Honoré Daumier, depicting two poor, elderly women standing outside a closed lottery office, deploring the disappearance of their beloved game (see figure 1). Underneath the print, the legend reads: "What shall become of us, Lord God! Who will now

1 Claude Bruneel, "Les Loteries de l'Europe méridionale", in *Loteries en Europe: Cinq siècles d'histoire*, ed. Bruno Bernard and Michel Ansiaux (Loterie nationale; Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1994), 112; Stephen M. Stigler, *Casanova's Lottery. The History of a Revolutionary Game of Chance* (The University of Chicago Press, 2022), 192–193.

2 Giacomo Casanova is to have played a major role in the establishment of this first French lotto. See Stigler, *Casanova's Lottery*, 9–22, and, *infra*, Angela Fabris, "The Ambivalent Perceptions of the Genoese Lotto", section 3.

3 For more on the history of the Loterie de France, see: Jean Léonnet, *Les Loteries d'État en France aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Imprimerie Nationale, 1963); Stigler, *Casanova's Lottery*; Elisabeth Belmas, *Jouer autrefois: essai sur le jeu dans la France moderne (XVIe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Editions Champ Vallon, 2006); Francis Freundlich, *Le Monde du jeu à Paris: 1715–1800* (Albin Michel, 1995); Marie-Laure Legay, *Les Loteries royales dans l'Europe des Lumières: 1680–1815* (Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2014); Robert D. Kruckeberg, "The Royal Lottery and the Old Regime: Financial Innovation and Modern Political Culture", *French Historical Studies* 37, no. 1 (2014); Robert D. Kruckeberg, "'A Nation of Gamesters': Virtue, the Will of the Nation, and the National Lottery in the French Revolution", *French History* 31, no. 3 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/crx035.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111445540-015

support the poor, when there is no more lottery?"[4] The cartoon can be read as a satirical critique of an institution that had been accused of exploiting the poor.[5] It might also, however, be read as a critique of those who abolished the lottery without taking positive measures to improve the lives of the poor.

A third reading is possible, moreover, in which the cartoon conveys a perception of the lottery as a support for the poor, not in material terms, but as a consolation from the toils of everyday life, as a temporary, imaginative escape from poverty, which Michael Scham refers to as the "compensatory function" of the lottery.[6] In other words, Daumier's cartoon can be seen as deploring the disappearance of the lottery fantasy as a remedy, as the production of a hope that makes life bearable. In fact, all three interpretations of the cartoon are symptomatic of the cultural processing of the lottery.

1 The lottery fantasy as consolation for the poor

"Maintenant qu'y a plus de loterie" – now that there is no more lottery – the final words of Daumier's legend echo the title of a vaudeville-comedy staged two months earlier, on 14 January, at the newly inaugurated Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Antoine: *Plus de loterie!* by the brothers Hippolyte and Théodore Cogniard. That a vaudeville-comedy commented on the abolition was not surprising, considering how the comedy in general, and the vaudeville in particular, were genres that readily commented on current events.[7] *Plus de loterie!* is, as the title indicates, a direct response to the event of the abolition, which constitutes the central plot twist. The comedy comments on its own topicality by referencing the press coverage of the abolition, a notice in the newspaper being what launches the crisis:

4 Honoré Daumier, "Qu'allons-nous devenir, Seigneur Dieu!", *Le Charivari*, 16 October 1836, 6. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from French are mine.

5 On the moral and political critique of the lottery, see Kruckeberg, "A Nation of Gamesters"; John Dunkley, *Gambling: a Social and Moral Problem in France, 1685–1792* (Voltaire Foundation, 1985); Bruno Bernard, "Aspects moraux et sociaux des loteries", in *Loteries en Europe: Cinq siècles d'histoire*, ed. Bruno Bernard and Michel Ansiaux (Loterie nationale; Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1994). For a comparison of the lottery debates in France and Britain, see James Raven, "Debating the Lottery in Britain c. 1750–1830", in *Random Riches: Gambling Past & Present*, ed. Manfred Zollinger (Routledge, 2016), 96–98. For more on the lottery debate in England and Britain, see also James Raven, "The Abolition of the English State Lotteries", *The Historical Journal* 34, no. 2 (1991), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00014187, and *infra*, James Raven, "Imagining Trust and Justice".

6 See, *infra*, Michael Scham, "The Failed Promise", section 1.

7 Roxane Martin, "Mélodrames et vaudevilles", in *Le Théâtre français du XIXe siècle*, ed. Hélène Laplace-Claverie, Sylvain Ledda, and Florence Naugrette (L'Avant-scène théâtre, 2008), 74.

Figure 1: Honoré Daumier, “Qu’allons-nous devenir, Seigneur Dieu!”. *Le Charivari*, 16 October 1836. Musée Carnavalet, Histoire de Paris, G.6280.

> Roussillon: The newspaper... the newspaper that I usually never read and which punishes me for my indifference. (*He reads.*) ‘31 December 1835. Those who follow the legislative sessions have not forgotten that the royal lottery will cease to exist on the 31 December this year’.[8]

8 Hippolyte Cogniard and Théodore Cogniard, *Plus de loterie! Vaudeville en un acte* (Imprimerie Dondey-Dupré, 1836), XV, 12.

The title, with its exclamation mark signalling an emphatic outburst, reflects the cry of despair with which the M. Roussillon, one of two compulsive lottery players in the comedy, reacts to the news:

> No more lottery, mother Guérin!... no more lottery!... We are ruined, murdered! Those vandals!... They had the nerve to lay a sacrilegious hand on such a philanthropic institution !...[9]

The ironic epithet "philanthropic" resonates with the decades-long political debate on the lottery, commonly perceived as anything but philanthropic, and it has the effect of presenting Roussillon's reaction as hyperbolic. However, the reaction might also reflect a genuine popular outcry against the abolition. In any case, the outraged player plans to protest the decision, together with what he claims are thousands of angry citizens from all "classes":

> Calm down, take courage... I will run to get information... and besides, all the regulars are assembled at the café next door, where they are writing a petition to the chamber of deputies, which is already covered by signatures from more than three thousand taxpayers from all classes, from the eligible to the simple porters who are in outright insurrection !...[10]

Roussillon finishes his harangue with a vaudeville song that parodies the political chant and presents the abolition as an affront to the principle of freedom:

> No more lottery!
> God! what immorality!...
> Oh France, oh fatherland!
> For you, no more freedom.
> Certainly, the most beautiful,
> Is the freedom of money;
> I must have [the freedom]
> To enrich the government.[11]

Through the ridiculous figure of M. Roussillon, who descends from a position of wealth to near ruin by selling off properties to "invest" in the lottery, the comedy seemingly treats the now bygone institution with little nostalgia, mocking the hyperbolic reactions against the abolition.

This impression is further strengthened by the denouement, in which the play's second lottery player, the blind widow Guérin, is saved from ruin. Her niece Thérèse reveals that, for the last three years, instead of taking Mme Guérin's

9 Cogniard and Cogniard, *Plus de loterie!*, XV, 12.
10 Cogniard and Cogniard, *Plus de loterie!*, XV, 13.
11 Cogniard and Cogniard, *Plus de loterie!*, XV, 13.

savings to the lottery office, she has brought the money to the bank. This allows the family to restore their former social position. As such, *Plus de loterie!* repeats a plot structure found in Mazères and Romieu's earlier comedy *Le Bureau de loterie* (1823), by establishing an opposition between saving and gambling that reflects the rivalry between the lottery and the new institution of the caisse d'épargne, the savings bank.[12] *Plus de loterie!* sounds the horn of the latter's victory over the lottery.

However, there is a nuance to be observed in this response to the abolition, voiced by Mme Guérin's son Michel, who perceives his mother's relationship with the lottery as not purely negative:

> Now she is happy until the next draw.[13]
>
> [...]
>
> The poor woman, she has so few pleasures, distractions... Let her at least keep the pleasure of hoping.[14]

The lottery-playing widow thus reminds us of Daumier's two elderly women outside the closed lottery office, with both the comedy and the cartoon expressing a certain ambiguity towards the abolition and the lottery: the game had provided the poor with a form of consolation and distraction from the toil of existence.

In his seminal work *Les Jeux et les hommes*, Roger Caillois places this consolatory function at the heart of the success of lotteries.[15] Long before 1836, furthermore, the idea that the lottery provided pleasurable hope was an established commonplace. The eighteenth-century author Louis-Sébastien Mercier, for instance, called it a "consolatory balm" and a "dream of happiness", which he warned against taking away from the poor.[16] The idea seems to have gained further strength in the years following the abolition, as if this aspect of the lottery had become even more striking once it was gone. In Émile Souvestre's two-volume novel *Riche et Pauvre* [Rich and Poor], published in 1836, the question of whether hope is a positive force or an obstacle for social change is an overarching theme.

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12 Édouard-Joseph-Ennemond Mazères and Auguste Romieu, *Le Bureau de loterie, comédie-vaudeville en un acte* (J.-N. Barba, 1823). For more on this, see, *infra*, Marius Warholm Haugen, "Staging Lotteries".

13 Cogniard and Cogniard, *Plus de loterie!*, VII, 7.

14 Cogniard and Cogniard, *Plus de loterie!*, XIX, 8.

15 Roger Caillois, *Les Jeux et les hommes* (Gallimard, 1967 [1958]), 225. For a further discussion of the lottery in Caillois, see, *infra*, Scham, "The Failed Promise".

16 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Motion d'ordre et discours de L.S. Mercier sur le rétablissement d'une Loterie nationale* (Conseil des Cinq-Cents, Séance du 26 Brumaire, an V [1796]), 7–8, note no. I.

The lottery plays a central role in the novel, as a key motif in this discussion of hope. In a conversation between two characters who have both transcended their working-class origins – the novel's protagonist, the lawyer Antoine Jarry, and his friend Doctor Randel – the latter pleads for the importance of the lottery as provider of hope for the proletarians and the poor:

> – Let us suppose that it is nothing but winning a hope: for some time, they have railed against the lottery without considering that it is the poor man's only speculation. Without it, how could he dream of becoming rich, of having a cook and as much tobacco he could want? For three francs, he buys a dream that makes him happy for eight days; where else could one sell him as much happiness for the same price? To abolish the lotteries would be to nail the proletarian's imagination to reality, to deny him the only thing he shares with the rich man, the world of pipe dreams; it would be to engrave above his hell Dante's fatal inscription: *Beyond this, no more hope!*
> – From which you conclude that we have to preserve the lotteries?
> – Or abolish misery; I leave you the choice.[17]

The doctor defends the lottery institution as a form of consolation that prevents despair of Dantean proportions. The lottery also becomes a metaphorical figure in the novel, in the sense that "le hasard de la naissance", the accident of birth, appears as an inescapable determinator of social existence.[18] References to Dante's *Inferno* precede the lottery discussion, as a grandiloquent expression of the protagonist's despair confronted with an inescapable social condition.[19] Randel's quote thus contributes to an overall theme of the novel: the impossibility for the poor to ever really escape their initial condition, even when experiencing an apparent upward mobility. In a proto-Bourdieusian confutation of meritocracy, the novel depicts how the protagonist, born into modest circumstances but given the chance to study to become a lawyer, is unable to succeed, not possessing the *habitus* – the confidence, the educational background, and the financial means – that assures the success of his upper-class rivals. Thus, within this deterministic universe, the hope of the lottery appears as purely consolatory, without real transformational power.

At the same time, the novel illustrates how the cultural memory of the lottery was inscribed into new political concerns and discourses. The decades leading up to the abolition had seen a renewal of the moral and political critique of the lottery, which Bruno Bernard explains by an increase in faith and piety combined

17 Émile Souvestre, *Riche et Pauvre*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Charpentier, 1836), 123–124.
18 Émile Souvestre, *Riche et Pauvre*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Charpentier, 1836), 16.
19 Souvestre, *Riche et Pauvre*, 1, 40–41.

with the emergence of liberal-progressive and socialist movements.[20] Central to this renewed critique was the argument of having to protect the poor against the passion for gambling.[21] Souvestre's novel can be read as a response to this anti-lottery discourse, pointing to the hypocrisy of a decision that had removed the consolatory hope of the lottery without addressing the causes of poverty.

The accusation of hypocrisy is even more pronounced in a popular song entitled "La Loutarié" [The Lottery] (1838), written in Provençal dialect by the songwriter Victor Gelu. In this song, the idea of the lottery as consolation for the working class is the central element, which the author integrates with a violent critique of finance capitalism and the ruling classes. Gelu was a fervent supporter of the popular culture of his native Marseille, to which he opposed the modern, financial culture of Paris.[22] The disappearance of the lottery is presented as the result of double standards, as the poor are deprived of their "speculation", while the rich are allowed to continue their aleatory game of sudden wealth on the stock market.[23] The song conveys the anger of the "commoners", who found in the "espoir doou gro lo" [the hope of the big prize] a way of bearing the burdens of misery.[24]Addressing his fellow workers and people of Marseille, he expresses rage against the hypocrisy and paternalism of the "law makers" who ruined the lottery fantasy in a "decree stuffed with errors".[25] The song's refrain resounds with what is by now a familiar outcry – plu gé dé loutarié ! – there is no more lottery! –, thus echoing, with pathos, the popular despair of the working man who saw his hope of happiness disappearing. Gelu goes as far as to link this despair with the prospect of suicide. A common argument in the anti-lottery literature was that the game pushed desperate players to end their own life; Gelu

20 Bernard, "Aspects moraux", 80.

21 As James Raven has pointed out, the protection of the poor had also been key in the abolitionist discourse in England, where the state lotteries were abolished in 1826. Raven, "The Abolition of the English State Lotteries", 375.

22 Edgar Leon Newman, "Colloque Victor Gelu: Marseille au XIXe siècle, Université de Provence-Marseille", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 31 (1987): 93–95, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547900004142.

23 Victor Gelu, "La Loutarié", in *Chansons provençales et françaises, par Victor Gelu* (Imprimerie Senés, 1840 [1838]), 74–75. My translations into English are based on the French translation published in Victor Gelu, "La Loterie," in *Œuvres complètes de Victor Gelu. Avec Traduction littérale en regard*, ed. Frédéric Mistral and Auguste Cabrol (G. Charpentier, 1886), 43–48.

24 Gelu, "La Loutarié", 75.

25 Gelu, "La Loutarié", 71–72.

thus cleverly turns this central argument of the lottery's critics against themselves.[26]

Gelu's song resonates with Doctor Randell's arguments in *Riche et Pauvre*, but it also conveys a more direct political critique by presenting the abolition as part of a class conflict. The ruling classes are held responsible for worsening the conditions of workers by "disturbing the only joy / [t]hat [they] have had the pleasure of cherishing", in other words, by depriving them of the lottery fantasy, described as a "dream of overabundance" and a "sacred hope that brings life".[27] For Gelu's worker, the lottery had not been, as many of its critics had argued, a means of exploiting the "credulous popular classes",[28] but rather a beacon of hope in an otherwise bleak existence. The worker carries no illusions about the game and seems aware of the minute chances of winning; the existence of a chance, of a "perhaps", nonetheless constituted a "sacred hope" that made it possible to endure poverty. As in Souvestre's novel, the exploitation of the poor by the rich appears as a fact of existence, which the abolition of the lottery did nothing to alleviate.

On the contrary, the song indicates, the decision to abolish the lottery was not only hypocritical, but paternalistic, disregarding the people's agency and political participation: "They did not ask my opinion / Before announcing their cursed law".[29] This point seems to have been particularly important for Gelu, as he highlights it in the introduction to the 1840 publication of the song:

> The lottery, which had already undergone rather significant modifications at the beginning of 1830, was definitively abolished, as everyone knows, from 1 January 1836. Everyone justly applauded this abolition, except the common people, for whom it was made. Thus, this song is not an anachronism, as its date might suggest. The regrets it expresses are only the echo of the daily complaints of our workers.[30]

The irony with which Gelu addresses the general approbation of the abolition – approved, that is, by all except those for whom it was allegedly made – strongly

26 Examples of the commonplace are found, always without supporting evidence, in numerous texts of various genres, from the politician and reformed gambler Jean Dusaulx, via the statesman Talleyrand, to the economist Jean-Baptiste Say: Jean Dusaulx, *De la Passion du jeu, depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (L'Imprimerie de Monsieur, 1779), 233; Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Des Loteries. Par M. l'évêque d'Autun* (Barrois l'aîné, 1789), 32; Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique*, vol. 6 (Rapilly, 1829), 126. Far from being a purely French phenomenon, the commonplace existed in other European contexts, for instance in the German-speaking area. See, *infra*, Tilman Haug, "Selling Like a State", section 5.

27 Gelu, "La Loutarié", 73–74.

28 Kruckeberg, "A Nation of Gamesters", 314.

29 Gelu, "La Loutarié", 74.

30 Gelu, "La Loutarié", 71.

resonates with a phrase from Raymond Brucker's short story, "Une Capitulation de conscience", published the same year under the pseudonym Michel Raymond: "the tax of the lottery only has those grumbling, who do not pay it".[31] As for Gelu's introduction, it also comments on the lottery's place in the cultural memory of "our workers", by insisting on their continued regret at seeing it disappear. His song appears as a testimony to the allure that the lottery continued to have in the cultural imagination in the years following its disappearance.[32]

2 Imagining histories of the lottery

The material examined so far, whether in visual form, on stage, as song lyrics, or in prose fiction, deals with the abolition as a recent event, speculating on the effect that the lottery's disappearance had or would have. However, certain authors took a more historiographic view of the lottery, examining its origins and social impact in a now bygone era. In Brucker's "Une Capitulation de conscience", the focus is on the role played by the Enlightenment thinker and chronicler of Paris, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, in the history of the lottery. Mercier was initially a fervent critic of the royal lottery, attacking it in his *Tableau de Paris* (1781–1788) and in the utopian novel *L'An 2440*.[33] During the Revolution, he changed his stance, arguing in 1796 for the reestablishment of a national lottery, as a member of the legislative Council of Five Hundred.[34] He subsequently accepted a position in the administration of the new national lottery in 1797.[35]

Bruckers's short story establishes Mercier's earlier anti-lottery discourse as having permeated the social imagination of early nineteenth-century France, to

31 Raymond Brucker [Michel Raymond], "Une Capitulation de conscience", in *Henriette* (Werdet et Cie, 1840), 156.

32 In 1839, Gelu also wrote a song based on the popular anecdote of a figure called Vint-un-cen-fran, a Marseillais worker who won 2,100 francs in the lottery and spent it all in a few days, before peacefully returning to work. Victor Gelu, "Vint-un-cen-fran", in Victor Gelu, *Chansons provençales et françaises* (Imprimerie Senés, 1840 [1839]), 19–25.

33 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 2 vols., vol. 1, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet (Mercure de France, 1994), notably chapters CCLXXII and CCCXCV, 690–692, 1083–1085; Mercier, *L'An 2440. Rêve s'il en fut jamais*, ed. Christophe Cave and Christine Marcandier-Colard (La Découverte, 1999 [1771]), 258.

34 Mercier, *Motion d'ordre et discours*.

35 Gustave Desnoiresterres, "Mercier: sa vie et ses œuvres", in Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* (Pagnerre; V. Lecou, 1853), XL; Guy Thuillier, "Louis-Sébastien Mercier devant l'Administration de son temps", *La Revue administrative* 10, no. 55 (1957): 21.

the point of becoming "engraved" in people's consciousness and marking an entire generation:

> The cutting remarks with which he pierced this institution through and through took such a large place in the recollection of my generation that, wit aside, you believe you are hearing Mercier anytime, anywhere, that some humourist puts the subject back on the table. Mercier's reasoning has, it seems to me, been engraved in our backbone.[36]

Brucker gives Mercier a major role in the process leading to the abolition, despite him having, from 1796 onward, worked to reintroduce it (and despite him having passed away in 1814). From this starting point, the text develops a fictional account of Mercier's conversion, or, as the title indicates, his "capitulation of conscience". In this account, the fervent lottery critic is persuaded to abandon his principles by accepting an appointment from his enemy Napoleon as "head of the personnel division" of the Imperial lottery.[37] The story mainly takes the form of a dialogue between Mercier and his landlord, M. Picard, who has an interest in seeing the tenant accept the job so he can pay his rent. Losing this rhetorical duel, Mercier transforms from a fierce adversary of the lottery institution into its submissive clerk.

Before this dialogue, the narrator presents Mercier's earlier views on the lottery, offering a multisensory depiction of its presence in the urban landscape of pre-revolutionary Paris:

> The lottery was among Mercier's absolute antipathies, which he attacked from all angles; for its means of advertising above all! for the coquetries of seduction it deployed in the street for the eye and ears of the crowd. These numbers, a foot long, adorned with satin ribbons and displayed on sumptuous placards, tempting ten or twenty thousand dupes by offering them the chance to contemplate the lucky *terne* dawning for one privileged by chance; these morning serenades whose ringing woke the busybodies and the philosophers; servants freely lining their pockets; a whole branch of booksellers specialised in the systematic interpretation of dreams; and the wheel of fortune, alone against so many players, but possessing the chances of a calculation grandiosely organised against mean and incoherent greed; everything, even the innocent little blindfolded fellow plunging his hand in the box that brings forth the predestined numbers.[38]

36 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 64–65.

37 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 117. On Mercier's political stance and opposition to Napoleon, see Marcel Dorigny, "Du 'despotisme vertueux' à la République", in *Louis Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814): un hérétique en littérature*, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet (Mercure de France, 1995), 276–277.

38 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 67–68.

An entire ecosystem of the lottery is presented in a picturesque manner, mimicking the tonality and the richness of detail typical of Mercier's urban tableaus. The passage includes the most important figures and motifs of the lottery's cultural imagination: the stealing cook, the blindfolded child, lottery dream books, and the public display of winning numbers. Arriving at the rhetorical duel, the text develops a string of arguments in favour of the lottery, voiced by Picard. These arguments appear intentionally hyperbolic, forming a counter-discourse to Mercier's vehement critique.

Central to Picard's discourse is a now familiar argument, which echoes the other works examined so far, as well as Mercier's own 1796 speech,[39] namely the lottery's capacity to produce an imaginative future that provides consolation to the poor:

> – You laugh, monsieur le philosophe! while this question, so offhandedly settled by those whom it concerns the least, essentially touches the very happiness of the poor – of whom you see yourself as the defender –, and, I daresay, touches their most precious interests. By removing the lottery, what would you replace it with?[40]

Again, the lack of an alternative to the lottery's consolatory function is at the core of the argument. It is as if the Enlightenment author was debating with his *alter ego*, incarnated by Picard. For an informed reader, there is a considerable degree of irony in seeing Mercier being defeated with what had been his own arguments.

However, Picard's discourse goes further than Mercier's speech, introducing elements that reveal a conflict between, on the one hand, an idealistic and Romantic worldview and, on the other, Enlightenment materialism. This conflict has a particular bearing on the perception of the lottery, highlighting the central role attributed to the imagination in accounting for the institution's value. Picard accuses Mercier of being a materialist, ignoring the importance of the world of ideas and imagination. The lottery concerns the player's soul, he argues, not his body.[41] That is why, to the question of what replaces the lottery, Picard has only one answer, religion:

> – The people need a religion, or the lottery. They need hope from above or hope from below! You have killed religion, let the lottery live; if you topple the lottery, then restore religion. The people need to indulge in their passions, for their passions give back equally. There is always money for these kinds of taxes, for love is nurturing by nature.[42]

39 Mercier, *Motion d'ordre et discours*, 7–8, note no. I.
40 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 137.
41 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 138–139.
42 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 155–156.

The argument presented here is two-fold. Firstly, people need hope, regardless of material circumstances. Secondly, the text develops an idea resembling what will later be called the safety valve theory.[43] Hope, created in this case by either lottery or religion, relieves the pressure from the worst social desperation, thus hindering conflict (or real change). In Picard's reasoning, abolishing the lottery could mean provoking violent reactions:

> Take heed! If you close the outlet of this flame, it will come back and hit you. I admit that the players are mistaken; in Heaven's name, do not disabuse them! They are dreaming, I grant you; let them do it, it is a blessing! Do not shout to them that, in the eyes of pure reason, there is nothing real, nothing more solid and legitimately palpable than the begging bowl filled with gold that sparkles in the money changer's display; do not tell them that the banquets their imagination hungers for are held at five o'clock every evening at Véry, or that the rivers of diamonds that they swim across in their daydreams are only found at the jewellers of Palais-Royal. This belief, if you ever gave it to them, would signal the end of the world. Strike faith, hope falls, and kindness disappears: the virtues are upheld by a universal element. By closing paradise, you open hell. Their dream extinguished, their illusion dead, all at once they would throw themselves on everything! and this world, like a straw, would be contorted by the fire.[44]

This passage appears as profoundly ambiguous, subscribing, certainly, to the idea of the lottery as consolation, but also perceiving it as a form of politically useful diversion and tool for enforcing docility. The idea was not new: the political theorist and revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat had, for instance, presented the lottery as a tool for governmental abuse of power, a means for the state to distract the people and prevent them from reflecting on their condition.[45] In Picard's discourse, the dreams of the poor console them from social inequity. Readers knew, moreover, that no violent uprising had ensued from the abolition. As such, Picard's arguments read primarily as a rhetorical exercise aimed at converting Mercier.

Another novelist interested in the imaginative force of the lottery was Honoré de Balzac, who included a part-satirical, part-nostalgic narrative of the abolished lottery in *La Rabouilleuse*, published as daily instalments in *La Presse* in 1840, before being reworked into book form in 1843. In the first part of the novel, Balzac introduces a quintessential lottery player: "La Descoings – any woman who gam-

43 For an introduction to the safety valve theory in lottery studies, see Roberto Garvía, "Syndication, Institutionalization, and Lottery Play", *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 3 (2007): 605–606.

44 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 148–149.

45 Jean-Paul Marat, *Les Chaînes de l'esclavage* (Imprimerie de Marat, 1792–1793 [an I]), 83.

bles on the lottery should be referred to in this way".[46] Aspiring to use the lottery to lift her family into wealth, the widow Descoings instead plunges them into further poverty but continues to play hoping to remedy the situation.[47] For over twenty years she "nourishes" the same three numbers (the *terne*). Right before a drawing on which she has placed all her hopes, the inveterate gambler Philippe Bridau steals her money, thus hindering her, for the very first time, from playing her beloved *terne*. The player's worst fears come true when the three numbers are drawn, and she misses out on a fortune. As a result, Descoings loses her mind and passes away shortly after.[48]

Balzac's portrait of Descoings is not merely individual but also appears as a typological portrait of the lottery player, which is both gendered and socially determined. As Daumier's cartoon and the Cogniards' comedy also illustrate, the elderly, poor, and naïve woman, often a widow, constitutes an emblematic lottery player. The widow Descoings, mother Guérin, and Daumier's two elderly women are variations over the same figure.[49]

In Balzac's novel, the lottery brings to the fore the ultimate consequences of an affective attachment that the common practice of playing regular numbers created between the players and the institution. "Nourrir un terne" [nourish a terne] was a recurring expression describing the practice of playing regular numbers over longer periods of time. As is characteristic for Balzac's *œuvre*, the literary and the sociological are here inextricably linked, and the novelist seems intrigued by the lottery for both its individual and social effects. In a passage often cited, Balzac analyses the lottery as a social and imaginative force:

> The passion for lotteries, so universally condemned, has never been studied. No one has realized that it was the opium of poverty. The lottery was the most powerful fairy in the world: did it not nurture magical hopes? The spin of the roulette wheel which flashed mountains of gold and enjoyment before the gamblers' eyes was as rapid as lightning; but the lottery gave five whole days of existence to this splendid flash. Where is there today a social power that, for a mere forty sous, can keep you happy for five days and provide you with all the delights of civilization in an ideal form. Tobacco, an addiction that is a thousand times more immoral

46 Honoré de Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1976 [1843]), 281. The English translation is taken from *The Black Sheep*, trans. Donald Adamson (Penguin Books, 1970 [1843]), 35.

47 Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse*, 282–283.

48 Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse*, 339–342.

49 Daumier's caricatures are frequently presented as the visual counterpart to Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, both being sharp portrayers of contemporary types and customs. See Takao Kashiwagi, *Balzac, romancier du regard* (Librairie Nizet, 2002), 146–149.

> than gambling, destroys the body, attacks the mind and stupefies a nation; whereas the lottery did not cause the slightest misfortune of this kind.[50]

What is striking with Balzac's text is how it represents the temporality of the lottery, imbuing it with a particular kind of magic that prolongs the player's experience of happiness. Although less politically explicit than Souvestre and Gelu, Balzac's use of the term "puissance sociale" [social power] highlights the sociopolitical importance of the lottery fantasy, appearing as a consolatory force for the poor. Despite the tragic end of Madame Descoings, this literary representation reads as a nostalgic lament of the by-gone era of the lottery and as a testament to its imaginative power.

Also interesting is Balzac's use of the opium metaphor.[51] The metaphor highlights the ambivalence with which the novelist depicts the lottery. Inspired by Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), Balzac frequently used opium as a motif, both literally and metaphorically.[52] Notably, he compared the lottery to opium in "La Comédie du Diable" [The Devil's Comedy], a burlesque story co-written with Frédéric Soulié, in which the reputedly voluptuous monarch Louis XV (under whose reign the lottery of the Royal military school had been established) defends the lottery by indicating that its value emerges from the hope and the suspense prior to the drawing: "But the money lost provided immense pleasures; a lottery ticket, is it not opium? The loss is an awakening".[53] In line with the era's ambivalent perceptions of this drug,[54] Balzac's metaphor seems to draw upon the ancient Greek conception of the *pharmakon*, both remedy and poison. Applied to the lottery, the metaphor pri-

50 Balzac, *La Rabouilleuse*, 325; *The Black Sheep*, 88.

51 The passage allegedly inspired Marx's famous phrase of religion as "the opium of the people". See Antonio Gramsci, "La Religione, il lotto e l'oppio della miseria", in *Opere di Antonio Gramsci: 4: Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sulla stato moderno* (Einaudi, 1949), 289. Marx's phrase appears in the "Contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law", in *Collected works: Vol. 3: Marx and Engels: 1843–1844* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), 175.

52 Cecil Don McVicker, "Narcotics and 'Excitants' in the 'Comédie humaine'", *Romance Notes* 11, no. 2 (1969): 296–299.

53 Honoré de Balzac and Frédéric Soulié, *La Comédie du Diable*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Œuvres diverses, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1996 [1831]), 1116. In an article published in *Le Figaro* on 11 June 1835, arguing for reform of the lottery rather than abolition, the opium metaphor reads as distinctly negative, used to describe the creation of illusory and "fatal" hopes among players.

54 See Esther Oluffa Pedersen, "Religion is the Opium of the People: An Investigation into the Intellectual Context of Marx's Critique of Religion", *History of Political Thought* 36, no. 2 (2015).

marily conveys the idea that the lottery produced happiness and pleasurable hope, creating an "addiction" less harmful than tobacco.

Balzac's interest in the lottery is also evident in other novels, notably in *La Maison Nucingen* (1837), *César Birotteau* (1837), and *La Cousine Bette* (1846), although it never plays an equally important role as in *La Rabouilleuse*. These novels primarily take an interest in the effects, and the futility, of the abolition. As the journalist Émile Blondet exclaims in *La Maison Nucingen*, abolishing the lottery and the gambling houses did not remove the passion for gambling: "'France is now morally improved', the fools shout, as if they had abolished the *punters!* One still plays! only now the State no longer profits from it".[55] A recurring topic is the opposition between the old institution of the lottery and the new institution of the savings bank, established in 1818. The savings bank was envisioned to encourage the modest classes to save any spare money instead of throwing it away at gambling and drinking.[56] For Balzac, however, it did little to render the people any more virtuous:

> In every home, the financial burden caused by servants is the heaviest of all financial burdens. [...] Where formerly these women [cooks] used to try to steal forty sous for their lottery tickets, today they take fifty francs for the savings bank. And those cold-blooded puritans, who amuse themselves by carrying out philanthropic experiments in France, think they have made the working classes moral![57]

Domestic theft was a vice and symptom of moral corruption associated with the lottery. But the phenomenon did not disappear with the lottery, indicating that the latter was only a symptom of a much deeper-rooted problem. Compared with the works of Émile Souvestre and Victor Gelu, Balzac has a very different political and moral perspective, and he also treats the lottery with greater ambiguity. However, the conclusion regarding the abolition seems to be the same: in terms of alleviating the conditions of the poor, it did not really solve anything.

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55 Honoré de Balzac, *La Maison Nucingen*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1977 [1837]), 378.

56 Carole Christen-Lécuyer, *Histoire sociale et culturelle des caisses d'épargne en France: 1818–1881* (Economica, 2004), 236–239.

57 Honoré de Balzac, *La Cousine Bette*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1977 [1846]), 197. The English translation is taken from *Cousin Bette*, trans. Sylvia Raphael (Oxford University Press, 1992 [1846]), 167–168. For similar motifs, see also: Balzac, *La Maison Nucingen*, 378; *César Birotteau*, ed. Pierre-Georges Castex, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, 1977 [1837]), 226.

3 A world disappearing: the lottery and the fallen dowager

If the cultural responses to the abolition are characterised by a strong ambivalence, or even a nostalgia, towards the lottery, there were of course many who expressed little regret. In a collection of poems entitled *Paris aujourd'hui. Poème historique* (1844), written in praise of the reign of Louis-Philippe, the poet pays tribute to the abolition of the lottery and the gambling houses. The text recycles tropes from the moralist critique of gambling, perceiving it as leading to crime, suicide, ruin, and the dissolution of families. While the state lottery is presented as a "scandal" and an "ignoble industry", the act of abolition is portrayed as a "monument" that does honour to the king.[58]

A more extensive critique of the lottery is found in a text by the conservative writer and historian Alfred Nettement, "Les Douairières" [the Dowagers] (1841). This typological portrait forms part of a collective work entitled *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, containing humoristic portrayals, visual and verbal, of recognisable figures or types from contemporary society.[59] A legal term of the Old Regime, a dowager was a widow of the aristocracy entitled to a *dower*, i. e. a provision accorded to a wife at the time of marriage, to be paid out as life interests should she become widowed. Nettement portrays the figure of the dowager, depicted as a remnant of the Old Regime, who lost her prerogatives in the Revolution. He divides the figure into two categories, according to how they responded to the adversity of their social and financial fall: the "douairière déchue" [fallen dowager] and the "douairière transfigurée" [transfigured dowager].[60] Among several drawings of the "fallen dowager" included in the chapter, the first shows her fainted in a chair, holding a newspaper that announces the abolition of the lottery.[61] Thus, the event of the abolition and the dowager's reaction to it open the text, depicting the same despair expressed in Daumier's cartoon.

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58 Pluchonneau aîné, "Abolition de la Loterie et des jeux publics", in *Paris aujourd'hui. Poème historique des monumens érigés, achevés ou embellis de la capitale et de ses environs, pendant quatorze années du règne de S. M. Louis-Philippe 1^er^* (Edouard Proux et Ce, 1844), 6.

59 See Anne-Emmanuelle Demartini, "Le Type et le niveau. Écriture pittoresque et construction de la nation dans la série provinciale des *Français peints par eux-mêmes*", in *Imaginaire et sensibilités au XIXe siècle. Études pour Alain Corbin*, ed. Annie Stora-Lamarre (éditions Créaphis, 2005).

60 Alfred Nettement, "Les Douairières", in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes: encyclopédie morale du dix-neuvième siècle*, ed. Léon Curmer (L. Curmer, 1841), 163.

61 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 163.

Like Balzac's *La Rabouilleuse*, Nettement's text portrays the institution and its cultural impact through the portrait of a quintessential player. The figure of the dowager is presented as historically contingent, specific to "our era",[62] and representing "a world that is disappearing",[63] to which the lottery also belonged. Thus, her existence appears as inextricably linked with the history of the institution:

> It would be just as impossible to talk about the fallen dowager without mentioning the lottery, as to write the life of Alexander without pronouncing the names of Gaugamela and Issus. For thirty years of her life, the fallen dowager played the lottery; and ever since they destroyed it, she mourns it in her heart, like a childhood friend nastily murdered by perverted men. It was for her the daily application of a passion that survived anything, even its own idol; a passion that is the very foundation of this woman's nature, the passion for gambling, this religion of the unknown, the cult of chance, which, in this recently abolished institution, had systematically exploited public credulity.[64]

A product of the French Revolution, which abolished her right to a dower, the fallen dowager was also shaped by the lottery: "There she is as the game made her".[65] She is bound to disappear, as her lifespan overlaps with, and symbolises, the final decades of the lottery. More critical than the authors previously discussed, Nettement nonetheless acknowledges the sorrow resulting from the abolition. As for the reference to the lottery as a "cult of chance", this resonates with Brucker's comparison of religion with the lottery quoted above, with both texts testifying to a perception of the lottery as having a quasi-sacred function.

As in all our previous examples (excluding Pluchonneau's poem), the notion of hope is central to Nettement's depiction of the lottery, but in a distinctly negative way, as the product of a system of deception and trickery:

> The fallen dowager did not wait to discover this ocean of chance, which a legislative decree has recently closed; we are talking about the lottery. The lottery with its eternal Mississippi represented by the *quaterne* toward which one always sails but never reaches; the lottery, which until recently opened its dirty and foul offices in all districts of Paris, its boutiques of fortune crowned by a dull and miry lantern, under whose stained-glass window shone a deceiving ray of hope; the lottery became the asylum of this woman.[66]

Note how Nettement evokes another cultural memory as a point of comparison with the lottery, namely the system of John Law, the famous and infamous project

62 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 163.
63 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 177.
64 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 166.
65 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 167.
66 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 166.

by the Scottish banker to introduce fiduciary money in France, which led to the financial crisis of 1720, also known as the Mississippi bubble. Law's system made a great impact on the French collective memory,[67] with "Mississippi" becoming a shorthand for the system, as well as a signifier for the dream of speculation and effortless wealth. By presenting the lottery as an "eternal Mississippi", Nettement associates the lottery with financial speculation, insisting on the historical persistence of the dream of easy money. However, he also presents the lottery as particularly nefarious because of its constant renewal: whereas the Mississippi scheme only lasted for a few years, the lottery's lure was regularly repeated for almost eight decades.

In line with the previous examples, Nettement is highly interested in the effect of the lottery on the imagination of the players:

> The imagination of the fallen dowager thus threw itself into the limitless field of series; it calculated the force of the *extrait*, the *ambe*, and the *terne*; it entered, by this low and muddy door, into a world of illusions where the horizon withdraws as you advance; it became accustomed to seeing châteaus, high forests, magnificent coaches, a sumptuous mansion on a piece of greasy and dirty paper; it added to the narrow and limited realm of the real, the infinite perspectives of the possible.[68]

With the fallen dowager, the lottery fantasy becomes a tool that transforms a prosaic and dirty reality into a magnificent dream. The dowager is not your ordinary lottery adventurer, however, but constitutes an exceptional type of player:

> It is the [female] lottery player, but the lottery player in all her might, in all her poetry. She has nothing of the ordinary [female] player throwing into the abyss some poor coins collected from the sweat of her brow, or bringing to the office every week a tribute provided from domestic theft. The dowager is a grand player. Gold and bills go from her desk to the counter of the saleswoman. She does not ask alms of the lottery; she has declared war on it.[69]

On the one hand, Nettement's lottery player – an elderly widow, endowed with a spirited imagination and a dream of recreating past splendour – is in line with the gendered and socially determined representations in Daumier, Cogniard, and Balzac. On the other hand, the antagonistic attitude toward the lottery described here also situates the dowager within a different category of literary players, one primarily gendered as male: the figure of the pseudo-cabbalist seeking to beat the institution at its own game, of which the ridiculous M. Roussillon in *Plus de lo-*

67 See Florence Magnot-Ogilvy, ed., *Gagnons sans savoir comment: représentations du Système de Law du XVIIIe à nos jours* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

68 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 166–167.

69 Nettement, "Les Douairières", 167.

terie! is a typical representative.[70] This antagonism signals a form of obsessive and delusional playing, highlighting the fundamental inequality of chances between the institution and the players. The dowager's declaration of war betrays the affective bond tying her to the game, leaving little room for regret in the reader at seeing it disappear.

4 Lottery, reverie, poetry

As will be clear by now, a common denominator of the retrospective cultural processing of the lottery is its intimate connection with the imagination and dream-worlds of players. However, some authors went further than others in exploring the lottery's imaginative force. Two short stories, "La Nièce de Vaugelas" (1836) by the popular novelist Frédéric Soulié, and "Fabien le Rêveur" by the Romantic poet Amable Tastu, delve deep into the mechanism of the lottery fantasy and provide elaborate representations of the creative processes enabled by the game.

Soulié's text has two distinctive parts. The second and main part is a piece of historical fiction set in mid-seventeenth-century France, involving the grammarian and lexicographer Claude Favre de Vaugelas, known for engaging in various financial schemes, including the establishment of a *blanque* lottery in 1644.[71] It provides a comic glance at the roots of the lottery institution and a figure central to its history, similar to Brucker's fictional representation of Mercier. However, the first part of the text is most interesting in our context, as it deals directly with the abolition of the Loterie de France. This part takes the form of a preface in which the narrator reflects on what is lost after the abolition:

> The gods are leaving, or to be precise, the great god is leaving; chance is being exiled, the lottery is abolished. In a few months, this chance at sudden fortune will be taken away from us. Oh! How many innocent pleasures, how many beautiful illusions, how many golden dreams will be destroyed by the legislative article that was thought to only kill an abuse.[72]

70 Similar characters, treating the lottery institution as an antagonist, are also found in earlier lottery comedies: Jacques-André Jaquelin and Philidor Rochelle [Joseph-Henri Flacon], *Le Hasard corrigé par l'Amour ou La Fille en loterie* (Fages, 1801); Mazères and Romieu, *Le Bureau de loterie.* For more on this, see, *infra*, Haugen, "Staging Lotteries", section 2.

71 Michael J. Call, "Fortuna Goes to the Theater: Lottery Comedies in Seventeenth-Century France", *French Forum* 40, no. 1 (2015): 2, https://doi.org/10.1353/frf.2015.0012.

72 Frédéric Soulié, "La Nièce de Vaugelas", in *Un été à Meudon* (J.P. Meline, 1836), 13.

Once more, the lottery is presented as a source of pleasures, nourishing sweet dreams of sudden wealth, but destroyed by legislators who had not grasped the creative essence of the game. Soulié's narrator goes on to present an elaborate depiction of how this creative power operated, giving particular attention to its social dimensions:

> And when these dreams are shared by two, how intoxicating they are, how many beautiful pleasures they contain! A house in the country [...]; travels across Europe to visit all its regions [...]; and then, what a sweet and lazy inner life.[73]

These lottery reveries have a social aspect that can enhance their pleasure, an effect that anyone who has played the lottery might have experienced when sharing their lottery fantasies with a friend. The text explores the mechanism of a social reverie in an imagined dialogue between two lottery-playing friends: the social aspect not only enhances the pleasure but also creates an effect of acceleration and amplification, as the dynamic of the dialogue pushes the interlocutors to dream increasingly bigger. Initially quite modest, the fantasy quickly expands, and with it, the sums that the interlocutors imagine having to venture:

> – We will go once a week to the Opera, and in summer to the baths, and in autumn to our estate. – But, but... – What? – Thirty-six thousand *livres* of annuity, that is quite small for all of this. – Is that not enough? Let's make it twenty francs on the *quaterne*... Twenty francs, you hear, twenty francs that will give me seventy-five thousand *livres* of annuity, and then I will have all I want, for if twenty francs are not enough, here is forty, and I will have an income of a hundred thousand *écus.*[74]

If there is an element of critique or satire aimed at the institution in this text, it is embedded in this playful representation of imaginative overbidding, which identifies a social and mental mechanism produced by the lottery fantasy; abandoning yourself to the fantasy of sudden wealth, the text indicates, it is easy to be carried away into increasing dimensions of "what if...?", in a way that also demands increasingly higher stakes.

What sets Soulié's text apart from the previous examples discussed is not only the elaborate examination of this mechanism but also the sociological character of the representation. The text does not depict a proletarian illusion or the fabulations of a poor widow but the deployment of a distinctly bourgeois version of the lottery fantasy. This is further emphasised in the end by a comparison with the dreams of the narrator's cook, Rosalie:

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73 Soulié, "La Nièce de Vaugelas", 14.

74 Soulié, "La Nièce de Vaugelas", 15.

> For they killed it, our lottery; they killed it for all of us, for me, for you, for him, and for my cook also, for Rosalie, who dreams neither of palaces, nor parks, nor carriages, but who dreams of having a cook and that this cook will not steal. Noble illusions, I bid you farewell from her and from me![75]

This farewell to the lottery mixes pathos and humour in a way that resembles the farewell ballads to the Dano-Norwegian lotto examined by Inga Henriette Undheim in the present volume.[76] But it also reads as less satirical compared with these ballads, as the narrator seems to genuinely deplore the abolition. As for the commonplace of the stealing cook, also present in Balzac, it is primarily comical, as Rosalie validates the stereotype while hoping to avoid it herself. At the same time, her dream betrays an aspiration towards upward mobility that remains relatively modest, contrasting with the more exuberant fantasies of the narrator. As such, this farewell to the lottery points to the broad sociological profile of the game, while also distinguishing between sociologically different versions of the lottery fantasy.

The text ends on an emphatic note, accentuating the creative and imaginative powers induced by the game. While Balzac uses such metaphors as magic, the fairy, and opium to describe the lottery's imaginative force, Soulié turns to the notion of poetry:

> May you pardon me these regrets and not rush to rebuke them; I must be allowed, as someone who writes poetry, to shed some tears at this poet that leaves us, for the lottery was a great poet. Neither Byron, nor Lamartine, nor Victor Hugo, have ever created such magnificent palaces and such pure retreats; never did they give to the soul such brilliant ambitions, such fruitful raptures and sweeter reveries.[77]

Somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Soulié describes the lottery as "a great poet", highlighting its creative potential as a catalyst for daydreaming. Considering the link that Soulié establishes with literary creation, as well as his detailed depictions of the players' dreams, one could perhaps even argue that the author is outlining a *poetics* of the lottery. In any case, it is clear how, as Paul Goring observes in the context of British fiction, "writers of this period could become engrossed in the lottery itself".[78]

The idea of the lottery as producing a form of poetry also appears in Brucker's "Une Capitulation de conscience", where it is favourably compared with Mercier's

75 Soulié, "La Nièce de Vaugelas", 16.
76 See, *infra*, Inga Henriette Undheim, "Lottery Dreams", section 6.
77 Soulié, "La Nièce de Vaugelas", 16.
78 See, *infra*, Paul Goring, "The Lottery in British Prose Literature", 385.

materialist poetics.[79] However, the lottery's creative potential is explored most elaborately in Amable Tastu's short story "Fabien le rêveur". The eponymous protagonist is a Romantic spirit, who lives in complete disaccord with his time, described as dominated by a spirit of utilitarianism.[80] Living primarily in the realm of dreams and imagined futures, conceiving grandiose projects that he never finishes, Fabien incarnates the lottery's creative power.

Imprisoned for not being able to pay his debts from the commission of a painting he never completed, Fabien discovers in his prison cell a method for predicting the winning lottery numbers.[81] This sparks an extensive daydream, a reverie in which he imagines his life after the big win. The text explores how the lottery can inspire a poetic imagination and gives extended literary form to the lottery fantasy. Over fifteen pages, the protagonist creates images of the future, depicting in detail not only the mansion that he will commission but also social situations, dialogues, and scenes, in which he gives a tour of the building to an imagined visitor.[82] This is an exceptional form of lottery fantasy, illustrating what happens when its creative potential encounters an exceptional mind, capable of constructing vast and elaborate images from a small spark of inspiration.[83]

This exceptional dreamer is not, however, the only lottery player presented in the text. An "ordinary" player, Fabien's prison guard, enters the cell announcing the event of the abolition and cursing the government for their decision:

> – And what did it [the government] do? Fabien responded laughingly. – By God! It has just abolished the lottery. – Abolished the lottery!!! And Fabien fell back into his chair with the despondency of a man from whom a sudden stroke took away an immense fortune.[84]

As in previous examples, the event of the abolition forms a framework for the text but also has an important narrative function, as the guard's announcement shatters the monumental dream palace of our exceptional player. Moreover, the passage highlights how the player has lived his lottery fantasy as something real, which the abolition effectively takes away from him.

Tastu also uses the appearance of the guard to generalise the creative force of the lottery. The guard sees the charms of chance and the possibilities of imagining a different life disappearing with the game:

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79 Brucker, "Une Capitulation de conscience", 141–142.
80 Amable Tastu, "Fabien le rêveur", in *Prose par Madame Amable Tastu* (Allardin, 1837), 3–4.
81 Tastu, "Fabien le rêveur", 53.
82 Tastu, "Fabien le rêveur", 54–69.
83 Tastu, "Fabien le rêveur", 70.
84 Tastu, "Fabien le rêveur", 77–78.

> I am asking you what I now will spend the forty *sous* on that I placed on every Paris draw? [...] They tell me that not everyone wins the *quaternes.* It is true, but, you know, why not me as well as another? Instead, now, I don't even have the charms of chance; I am quite sure that nothing will happen to me.[85]

"Why not me?" The question succinctly articulates the entire premise of the lottery: it gave a chance, a minute one, certainly, but a chance nonetheless, to make the big win that could change one's life. The elaborate reveries of Fabien appear as an extraordinary variant of the same mental mechanism that explains much of the lottery's allure, namely its imaginative, creative power, which projects onto the future an alternate version of one's life, and which, according to Fabien's prison guard, was well worth the forty sous spent.

5 Conclusion

Plus de loterie! – No more lottery! This outcry of despair and sorrow at seeing the lottery disappear is symbolic of the immediate cultural responses to the abolition. The retrospective representations of the lottery focus on the reactions to its disappearance while also seeking to understand the significance of the game as a historical and social phenomenon. The divergent political viewpoints of the authors resulted in different assessments of the game, but all seem to have had one thing in common, namely a fascination with the effect exerted by the lottery on the imagination of players. In positive and in negative terms, as a provider of hope and consolation, as a creative force, or as a seductive lure, the lottery is consistently presented as operating in the realm of dreams and the imagination. In other words, the immediate cultural memory of this financial institution is primarily focused on the impact of the lottery fantasy.

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