Profile of *Le mariage sous l’Ancien Régime*

**What research questions does your project want to ask or answer?**

*Le mariage sous l’Ancien Régime* is both an anthology and an on-line scholarly edition. The project’s goal is to further understanding of a crucial institution in flux during the Early Modern era (16th-18th centuries). The schism in the Catholic church in the 16th century generated intense questioning about who could marry, under what circumstances, why one should marry (or not), how couples should live, and the role of the state in marriage -- questions that still underpin basic social and cultural structures in the West.

The controversy surrounding marriage generated new textual genres, such as the Catholic marriage manual, while it renewed old ones like anti-marriage satire and its counterpoint epithalamium (verse in praise of marriage). Medical treatises focused on the married body of both wives and husbands formed another new genre. This is also the period when fiction took shapes familiar today; the marriage plot dominated the new short-form novels. These developments are particularly noteworthy in France as the State chose to confront the Church directly, interceding in matters of marriage and family life, opening Catholic tradition to more intense examination than was the case elsewhere in Europe.

The focus is on the 17th century, the period when the new genres became fully realized. In the 18th century, the transition toward companionate marriage on the one hand and the possibility of divorce on the other lead the textual and visual traditions in new directions that this project has not had the resources to pursue.

The collection brings together texts in French from these genres along with over 70 popular engravings. *Le mariage sous l’Ancien Régime* makes primary sources available and creates the stage for their juxtaposition. We have **anecdotal evidence** of its use as a research tool for literary scholars and historians, and their students.

My own work focuses on representation rather than trying to determine the “reality” of marriage in Early Modern France:

* What kind of “nuptial imaginary” (*imaginaire nuptial*) or imaginaries were in place in Louis XIV’s France, and how do they differ over the period from 1545 (the opening session of the Council of Trent) to Louis’s death in 1715?
* That is, how was marriage characterized and projected onto public discourse, what concerns (at times obsessions) emerge from reading “diagonally” across genres?
* How do the society’s preoccupations with regard to marriage manifest themselves differently in popular as opposed to elite genres – and how well does such a distinction hold up in the Early Modern era?

**What data and functions make it possible to answer those questions?**

After **transcription** and **XML encoding** **of texts**, each was meant to be **heavily annotated**, although some have only received light annotation, or none at all. In the annotated texts, persons and places are linked to an **index** containing hundreds of entries, while the medical treatises link to a separate index of scientific notions of the time. Numbered **notes** provide commentary on ambiguous, little known or difficult concepts. **Commentary** in the form of longer articles also links to the texts and images. An extensive **bibliography** is included, with links to on-line sources when available. The images are also annotated and searchable thanks to the **Image Markup Tool** developed by Martin. **Hyperlinks** to texts and images available on line but not included in the anthology extend its scope.

The **search engine**, to be optimized to perform searches using early modern spelling, will address the question of how a text collection becomes accessible through both early modern and modernized spelling. This functionality applies to any digital project dealing with historical texts.

**What is required in order for the project to reach closure?**

Proofreading texts and metadata, annotation, and the addition of links to external documents are ongoing. **Time** is needed if the project is to reach an endpoint

The initial goals and challenges were laid out in a 2005 article in *Text Technology*, <http://texttechnology.mcmaster.ca/pdf/vol14_1_02.pdf>, and the anthology as it now stands reflects them: many of the goals were met, but with no SSHRC funding since 2013, work slowed and there remains much to be done—by me or by a native speaker. Given that no qualified RAs appear to be available at UVic, we planned to request a that student from France come in the summer of 2017 using **MITACS** funding—but it seems that France is no longer part of the MITACS Globalink agreement.

Martin continues to work on the **search engine**.

The **redesign of the interface for the static build** is well on its way, fortunately!

The theory of the on-line scholarly edition has evolved since I first began working on this project over 15 years ago. In particular, the advances in theories of **linked data** and **social editing** have changed the nature of the online edition. Ideally, I could incorporate some of this evolution into the site—but that might be an illusion/delusion.

Also in a “best of all possible worlds” scenario, more **information about who is using the site and how** could help us better promote a “re-launch” of the site after it is archived definitively.

**What are your project assets?**

* Image Markup Tool
* Search engine optimized for early modern spelling
* Many hours of HCMC talent

**What do we lose if we don¹t preserve the project?**

Besides years of work and funding, a research tool that can prove useful to Early Modernists across disciplines for years to come.

**What are the challenges in preserving the project?**

The biggest one may be **link rot**.

**Project timelines and milestones.**

I’m working on a month-by-month schedule for my own work on *Le mariage sous l’Ancien Régime* into which I can insert service to Project Endings as a whole. I deeply feel the responsibility not to get side-tracked in the way I have been since June 2015.