

## FREN 900: Le spectacle dans le Grand Siècle

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The seventeenth century in France has especially visual connotations: from the court of Louis XIV and the visual props of power to the flourishing of the visual arts. This seminar uses the French notion of *spectacle* as a prism for engaging with this period, which Bertrand Russell termed the first truly modern century. We will see how subversive apparently innocuous works can be. We will analyze the memoirs of the abbé de Choisy in which he details his escapades cross-dressed as a woman and the implicit challenges this poses to early modern values. We will look at the fairy tales of Mme d'Aulnoy which present a fantastical landscape in which women not only have a voice but also do things that are not permitted in the world of the first readers, such as rule. We will read plays by Corneille, Racine, and Molière, with the majority of texts being from the MA and PhD reading lists. The core of the seminar will be a close and detailed study of Mme de Lafayette's masterpiece *La Princesse de Clèves*, the novel that set the scene for the unhappy ending in French literature. Our literary readings will be supplemented with art and music from the period as well as film (*Vatel*, *Le Roi danse*) and TV (*Versailles*).