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Mysticism in the French Tradition

Eruptions from France

Edited by Louise Nelstrop and Bradley B. Onishi

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS IN CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

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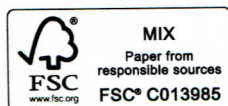
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Mysticism in Captivity:

Élie Neau, French Protestant Galley Slave

Ruth Whelan

Élie Neau (1662?-1722), a French Protestant merchant seaman, has been described by Émile Léonard as both 'the great mystic of the galleys', and the most striking representative of a mysticism that was 'new to Huguenots'¹ – an opinion I shall have some reason to revisit in my conclusion. Neau was originally from the west coast of France, from the town of Moëze in Saintonge, but he left home in 1679 in order to escape the escalating anti-Protestant legislation that was to culminate in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which outlawed the Reformed tradition in France. Neau spent some years in the Caribbean, later moved to Boston where he married Suzanne Paré, and eventually he and his wife settled in New York. In the autumn of 1692, he was in charge of a merchant vessel sailing to Jamaica when French privateers, who were active on the high seas during the War of the League of Augsburg, waylaid it. As Neau was unable to pay the 3,500 *livres* demanded in ransom, he was taken hostage and brought back to Saint Malo (his captors' port of origin), because they were hoping to exchange him for the ransom. However, the authorities discovered that Neau was Protestant and retrospectively invoked legislation put in place under Louis XIV to condemn him to the galleys in perpetuity because he had left France without royal permission.²

Neau was incarcerated for almost six years, at first in chains on the galleys and later in dungeons in the port of Marseilles, which were part of the same penitentiary system. He was one of some 1,500 French Protestant men who endured a similar fate after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, some of whom managed to write and receive letters in captivity, as did Neau.³ Léonard

¹ É.G. Léonard, *Histoire générale du protestantisme* 3 vols (Paris: PUF, 1988. 2nd edn), 3, p. 62: 'le grand mystique des galères'; 'une mystique nouvelle pour un huguenot'.

² For a more detailed biography, see R. Whelan, 'The extraordinary voyage of Élie Neau (1662c.-1722), naturalized Englishman and French Protestant galley slave', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 29 (2011), 499–527.

³ Estimates of the number of French Protestants condemned to the galleys have varied widely over the centuries; this conservative estimate, based on archival research, is that of A. Zysberg, 'Convertir et punir sous le règne de Louis XIV: l'exemple des galériens protestants',

based his interpretation of Neau's spirituality on a volume compiled in 1699 by Jean Morin, who had been Neau's pastor in Moëze during his youth, and who had corresponded with Neau while he was in detention. It is likely that Neau collaborated on the volume with his pastor when he visited Holland in autumn 1698 after his unexpected release from the galleys in July of that same year, following diplomatic intervention by the British ambassador to France.⁴ The work opens with a biographical narrative written by Morin, recounting Neau's experiences in captivity, and then provides selections (in part or in whole) from the letters and hymns that Neau wrote in captivity, and from a few of the replies he received, all linked together by Morin's comments and reflections; the book was finally published in Rotterdam in 1701.⁵ Its form, therefore, is dialogical, in as much as the different 'voices' it both contains and conveys remain distinct and retain authority, at least as far as mysticism is concerned. Moreover, the form of the work (hereafter referred to as the Neau-Morin narrative) is significant, as we shall see in conclusion, because it echoes the narrative form adopted by other mystical writings at the time. However, while it echoes that form, the Neau-Morin narrative also explicitly asserts the superiority of the religious experience of the eponymous Protestant galley slave. This means that the dialogical narrative is confessionalised, which, at another level makes it function monologically, as we shall see, because its sundry voices are united in and by their polemical deployment of the figure of the mystic, in and by their shared confessional allegiance.⁶

The perception of Neau as a mystic was obviously shared by other writers and thinkers in the early modern period who read the Neau-Morin narrative,

in L. Godard de Donville (ed.), *La conversion au XVIIe siècle. Actes du XIIe colloque du Centre méridional de rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle* (Marseille: Université de Provence, 1983), pp. 127–60 (where his estimate is 1,450) and *Les galériens. Vies et destins de 60 000 forçats sur les galères de France 1680–1748* (Paris: Seuil, 1991. 2nd edn), p. 111 (where he revised his earlier estimates upwards to about 1,550). In either case, Protestants comprised some 4 per cent of the total number of some 38,000 men condemned to the galleys between 1680 and 1748.

⁴ Hans Willem Bentinck, first Earl of Portland (1649–1709), appointed ambassador to France in January 1698; on Bentinck, see H. Dunthorne and D. Onnekink, 'Bentinck, Hans Willem, first earl of Portland (1649–1709)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, Oct. 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2160, accessed 15 Jan. 2011].

⁵ [J. Morin], *Histoire abrégée des souffrances du sieur Élie Neau, sur les galères, et dans les cachots de Marseille* (Rotterdam: Abraham Acher, 1701), hereafter *HA*. The modernised French text quoted in the footnotes is from my annotated edition of the Neau-Morin narrative, to be published in Paris by Champion in 2016. However, page references are to the 1701 edition (the spelling, punctuation and typography of the early modern period has been modernised).

⁶ On the dialogic yet ultimately monologic form of the volume, see R. Whelan, 'From the other side of silence: Huguenot life-writing, a dialogic art of narrating the self', in B. Tribout and R. Whelan (eds), *Narrating the Self in Early Modern Europe* (Bern: Lang, 2007), pp. 139–59.

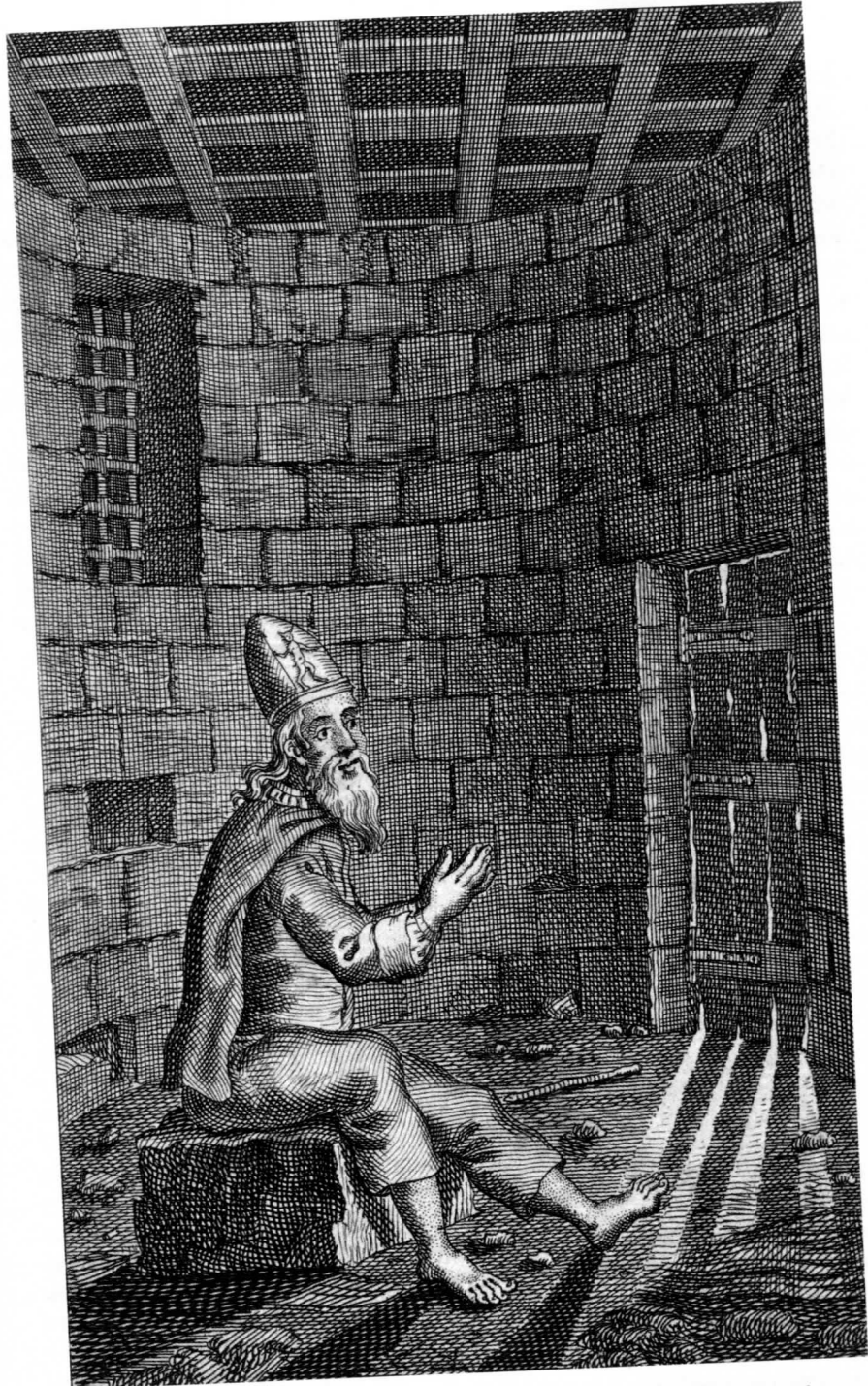


Figure 11.1 'Neau in the dungeon', 1748. © The British Library Board

judging by the engraving, titled 'Neau in the dungeon,' published in London in 1748 (Figure 11.1). The image is the only illustration in the slightly abridged English translation of the French narrative published by Johann Christian Jacobi (1670?–1750), the German-born bookseller and translator, who was associated with Halle pietism but based in London.⁷ The engraving faces page 65 of the printed text but refers to a word-picture, which Neau himself had composed in one of his letters, and which is printed on page 46. As the caption indicates, the engraving is intended to be a pictorial representation of Neau's words, but it actually interprets them, which is obvious when the two are compared. In the letter he wrote on 20 July 1696 to Pierre and Paul Laboyteaux,⁸ Neau described his situation as follows:

No, Sirs, there is no such life as this; it would require the brush of a seraphim to paint a picture of it for you. The outward portrait he would give you of our state would make you tremble. If our inward selves were not supported by an infinite power, we could not live in the sorry state to which we have been reduced. I pray you to think upon the life a man could lead in a dungeon, without any light but what comes through the door, the window being shut up. I have a sack upon my back, the cap of a slave upon my head, and the God, whom I adore, knows that I have worn this cap these three years; shirts of packing cloth; without shoes, for they give none; drawers of the same stuff as the shirts; all are forbidden to speak to us, or to give us any books, not even of the Roman religion; without fire or candle. I would tire you if I were to tell you all the strictness that they continually observe about us. Would you not admit, Sirs, that one could call this life a living death? But I tell you that for want of the light of the natural sun, the sun of grace causes its beams to shine in our hearts, and by their power they imprint a joy that can neither be expressed nor comprehended but by those who have an experience of it. If I were to tell you that this sort of life is more sweet and soft than all the most eminent temporal prosperities, what would you say? [...] It is true that there are often some vexatious moments that are terrible and unbearable to flesh and

⁷ On Jacobi, see G. Jefcoate, 'Jacobi, Johann Christian (1670?–1750)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Jan. 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53805>, accessed 13 Jan. 2011]. Jacobi's translation was first published in 1748 as part of vol. 2 of *The Book of martyrs* (see note 9), and separately the following year: *A short account of the life and sufferings of Elias Neau upon the gallies, and in the dungeons of Marseilles, for the constant profession of the Protestant religion. Newly translated from the French by John Christian Jacobi* (London: John Lewis, 1749); however the image is not reprinted in this edition.

⁸ The brothers were merchants in Amsterdam and probably joint owners with their brother Gabriel Laboyteaux, who was resident in New York, of the ship that Neau was sailing on to Jamaica when he was captured. They were actively involved in seeking Neau's release.

blood; but God is always at hand to silence the flesh and to sweeten the bitterness by his infinite goodness.⁹

Neau's word-portrait is organised as a series of contrasts that implicitly or explicitly stress the disparity between the physical and the spiritual: the outer and the inner life; weakness and power; darkness and light; slavery and freedom; deprivation and abundance; bitterness and sweetness; severity and grace; misery and joy; solitary confinement and divine presence. The engraver incorporates these polarities into the representation, but inflects them in the direction of mystical experience.

In fact, the engraving is a highly idealised representation of Neau in captivity, as is readily obvious from the appearance of the prisoner. Although he is wearing the sack on his back mentioned in his letter, and his jacket and pants seem made from the same rough cloth, his clothes are clean, and the cuff of a linen shirt is peeping out from under one sleeve. His face, hair, hands and feet are also striking for their cleanliness, and he is portrayed as being in good health. His long hair and beard and the detritus scattered around the floor of his cell are the only signs

⁹ J. Foxe, *The Book of martyrs; or the history of the church from the beginning of Christianity, to the conclusion of the reign Q. Mary I* [...] *Heartily recommended to the perusal of all those who have a zeal for God's glory, and the prosperity of the Protestant religion under the present happy government. By the Rev. Mr Bateman* (London: John Lewis, 1747–48). The title page of volume 2 (1748) also carries the following: *To which is added, An account of the sufferings of Elias Neau, upon the gallies, and in dungeons of Marseilles, for the profession of the same faith which our martyrs died for. Newly translated from the French by John Christian Jacobi*. R.T. Bateman was rector of St Bartholomew's the Great in London from 1738 to 1761; hereafter referred to as Morin-Jacobi; the above quotation is on p. 46; *HA*, pp. 108–10: 'Non, Messieurs, il n'y a point de vie comme celle-ci; il faudrait le pinceau d'un séraphin pour vous en peindre l'image. Le portrait extérieur qu'il vous donnerait de notre condition vous ferait sans doute frémir. Si l'intérieur n'était soutenu par une puissance infinie, nous ne pourrions pas vivre dans le triste état où l'on nous réduit. Je vous prie de penser à la vie qu'un homme peut mener dans un cachot sans lumière qu'au travers de la porte. On a maçonné ma fenêtre. J'ai un sac sur le dos, et un bonnet d'esclave sur la tête, et le Dieu que j'adore sait qu'il y a trois ans que ce bonnet est sur ma tête; des chemises de serpillière; sans souliers, car on n'en donne point; des caleçons de même toile que les chemises; défenses à personne de nous parler, ni de nous donner aucuns livres, non pas même de la religion romaine; sans feu, ni sans chandelle. Je vous laisserais si je vous écrivais toutes les exactitudes qu'on observe à notre égard. N'avouerez-vous pas, Messieurs, qu'on peut appeler notre vie une mort vivante? Mais si je vous dis qu'au défaut de la lumière du soleil de la nature, le soleil de la grâce fait briller ses divins rayons dans nos cœurs, qui impriment par leur vertu une joie qui ne se peut exprimer ni comprendre que par ceux qui en ont l'expérience. Si je vous disais que ce genre de vie est plus doux et plus suave que toutes les plus éminentes prospérités temporelles, que diriez-vous? [...] Il est vrai qu'il y a souvent de fâcheux moments et qui sont terribles à supporter à la chair; mais Dieu est toujours près de nous pour lui imposer silence, et pour en adoucir l'amertume par son infinie bonté.' I have compared Jacobi's translation with the original French text here and elsewhere and revised it where appropriate.

of the deprivation he and the other detainees experienced in captivity. However, in reality, as Neau informed his pastor in another letter published in the same volume, his clothes were filthy and ragged from constant use, and he and they were infested with vermin; his health had also been seriously undermined by the conditions of his detention, including light-deprivation, the foul air and the near-starvation diet that he had to endure.¹⁰ Thus, the engraving is not designed to be a likeness of the prisoner, whom the artist had probably never met, but rather to function symbolically as a representation of his spiritual experiences while in captivity.

In that respect, both the way the figure representing Neau is posed and the manner in which the scene is lit are significant. The prisoner is pictured gazing as in a vision, rapt in unspoken, perhaps ineffable, encounter with an invisible yet real presence; his arms are lifted in prayer, praise, wonder, and quite possibly embrace of that presence, who is the source of the joy that cannot be expressed, mentioned in the letter quoted above.¹¹ Note the bright light coming under the door, another unrealistic detail, as Neau mentions having only enough light to eat by (and sometimes not even that) – the light here is a sign of a world beyond the confines of captivity. However, the light leaking under the door cannot be the same light illuminating the figure of the prisoner because the barred window behind him has indeed been blocked up, as Neau remarks in his letter. The light shining on the prisoner's right-hand side, that is, the side facing away from the door, and on his head and face is coming mysteriously from a source outside and above him; although the light illuminating his face may also be coming from within, signalling the presence of an inner light. The figure has his left foot, the one nearest the door, raised as if to move in the direction of the light coming from the exterior; yet the subject remains seated on a rough-hewn stone or rock – I shall return to this last detail and the strange mitre on his head at a later stage. Suffice it to say here that the raised foot completes the portrayal of the prisoner in the process of mystical ascent, caught up in a vision that is a movement towards the transcendent Other. If we remember that the word ecstasy is derived (via late Latin) from the Greek *ekstasis*, meaning literally standing beside oneself, then what is being portrayed here is the prisoner being transported beyond self and sensible world into loving, adoring, mysterious communion and, indeed, union with the divine. The mystical journey, as Mino Bergamo remarks, is always 'a stationary voyage',¹² a journey *in situ*, an interior

¹⁰ In a letter dated 5 November 1696, *HA*, p. 141; Morin-Jacobi, pp. 53–4.

¹¹ The joy that cannot be expressed is also an allusion to 1 Peter 1:8.

¹² M. Bergamo, *La Science des saints. Le discours mystique au XVIIe siècle en France* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992), p. 149: 'un voyage sur place'; my interpretation of the engraving differs in many respects from that of N. Kamil, *Fortress of the Soul: Violence, Metaphysics and Material Life in the Huguenots' New World 1517–1751* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 402–8.

journey, which is characterised by intensity rather than physical displacement. The raised foot, the seated subject *enlightened* and enraptured by an unseen presence – these details symbolically portray the prisoner in mystical ecstasy.

The visual interpretation of the spiritual experiences that Neau mentions in his letters and hymns from captivity is accurate (albeit idealised), but it is not unproblematic – for three main reasons. Firstly, the words *mystic* and *mysticism* are completely absent from the Neau-Morin narrative, which also highlights the difference between the prisoner's religious experience and that of certain contemporary figures whom subsequent commentators have named mystics. There are reasons for such reticence. Although seventeenth-century France witnessed a great flowering of mysticism and mystical writing – to such an extent that Henri Bremond entitled the volume he wrote on the subject 'The Mystical Invasion' – by mid-century the ever-present institutional suspicion of mystics had hardened into an open and virulent opposition.¹³ By the end of the century, when Morin was preparing his volume for publication, 'la mystique' had become a derogatory, even a derisory, term, as is evidenced in the debates, conflicts and controversies that raged in France in the last decades of the century. While these conflicts were in part inspired by divergences in popular and elite religious culture and praxis, a major source of division (as far as mysticism was concerned) was the Quietist controversy and its interpretation of mystical union in terms of ontological indistinction, annihilation in God, holy indifference to any reward (whether in this world or the next), passivity and pure love.¹⁴ Consequently, as we shall see shortly, the reticence of the Neau-Morin narrative to name the prisoner's religious experience as explicitly mystical stems not from a rejection of mysticism *per se* (understood as union with the divine), but rather from a stated wish to differentiate Neau's experience of God from that promoted by Quietism.

The second reason why Neau may seem an unlikely mystic arises, of course, from his confessional origins and affiliations because, according to some commentators, Reformed Protestantism and mysticism are incompatible – indeed, mutually exclusive.¹⁵ Calvin's insistence on the radical separation between

¹³ See H. Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, 11 vols (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1916–36), 2: *L'Invasion mystique* (1916); J. Le Brun, 'Mystiques', in F. Bluche (ed.), *Dictionnaire du grand siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005. 2nd edn), p. 1075; Bergamo, p. 92.

¹⁴ See L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église. La conscience religieuse et le lieu confessionnel au XVIIe siècle*, trans. A. Posner (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 492–566; J. Le Brun, *La Spiritualité de Bossuet* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1972), pp. 441–695; R. Whelan, *The Anatomy of Superstition: A Study of the Historical Theory and Practice of Pierre Bayle* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 2013. 2nd edn), pp. 9–30.

¹⁵ See D.E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ. John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), pp. 3–6; C.A. Keller, *Calvin mystique: au coeur de la pensée du Réformateur* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), pp. 20–23, 175, agrees that union with Christ is central to Calvin's theology, while also maintaining that identity mysticism is also a

Creator and creature, and also on the radical sinfulness of human beings, rules out mystical experience that either implies any merging or confusion of divine and human, or suggests that it is possible to have unmediated communion with God. Moreover, the central importance to Reformed soteriology of the notions of salvation by grace and justification by faith alone further complicates the relationship between Calvinism and mysticism if union with God is seen as something that can be achieved by meditation, prayer, asceticism or any other means that could be interpreted as a form of works righteousness. Although Calvin, as far as we know, was not read much in seventeenth-century France, these notions, which were central to his theology, continued to shape the French Reformed tradition. If anything, they were accentuated by the ambient Cartesianism of the age, and especially its mind–body dualism, which even made conceptualising hypostatic union problematic,¹⁶ not to mention mystical union. Yet, as a minority in a society that was increasingly centralised and assimilatory, French Protestants had shifted closer in some respects to the Roman Catholic majority than was the case at the time of the Reformation, without however losing their own specificity. This is true, as we shall see, of both the experience of mystical union and the way it was interpreted by French Protestants in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The third reason why Neau and others who wrote from the galleys seem unlikely mystics is actually a question of perspective. There is a dominant discourse at work in the interpretation of French mysticism of the early modern period arising notably out of the work of Michel de Certeau.¹⁷ As is well known, mystical experience in the Christian tradition is a site of interpretative conflict over the differences between true and false mysticism, which notably focused on the understanding of union with God.¹⁸ For Certeau, and those who follow his lead, unmediated union of indistinction constitutes *the paradigm par excellence* of what it means to be a mystic. In his view, from the sixteenth or seventeenth century onwards:

one no longer designated as mystical that form of ‘wisdom’ elevated by a full recognition of the mystery already lived and announced in common beliefs, but rather an experimental knowledge that slowly detached itself from traditional theology or

feature of his spirituality. Keller’s interpretation has been roundly and rightly rejected by C. Pardee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), pp. 167–79.

¹⁶ Thereby giving rise to accusations of Nestorianism, and the polemical deployment of such accusations that I have studied in *The Anatomy of Superstition*, pp. 31–55.

¹⁷ See M. de Certeau, *La Fable mystique. I. XVI^e–XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), trans. M.B. Smith as *The Mystic Fable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

¹⁸ B. McGinn, ‘*Unio mystica*/mystical union’, in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 200–210.

church institutions, characterized by the consciousness, received or acquired, of a fulfilling passivity in which the self loses itself in God. In other words, what becomes mystical is that which diverges from normal or ordinary paths; that which is no longer inscribed within the social community of faith or religious references, but rather on the margins of an increasingly secularized society [...].¹⁹

Because of this understanding of 'true mysticism', writers and thinkers who do not conform to the paradigm are excluded by definition as not really mystics. Furthermore, as the above quotation illustrates, Certeau was convinced that 'true' mysticism developed outside of institutional structures and even over against them. Now, all knowledge and experience – whether of the mystics or their interpreters – is situated. Certeau had been radicalised by the events of May 1968 in France to such an extent that some commentators speak of it as a social and political conversion; as a result, the mystic for him was the radically different, the subversive, the disruptive other who opened up sites of experience and utterance that challenged instances of social control.²⁰ While Certeau's viewpoint is insightful, it obviously overlooks, indeed refuses to recognise, an older tradition of mystical experience that has been described as 'mediated immediacy' of the divine.²¹ Élie Neau is a case in point; indeed, his religious experience points up some of the fault-lines in the dominant interpretative paradigm. For, as we shall see, his mystical journey does not diverge from the ordinary paths, but is rather inscribed in, and shaped by, religious traditions and the social community of faith.

In the Preface to the *Histoire des souffrances*, Morin explicitly rejects what Certeau and those he has influenced believe is *the* paradigm of mysticism by contrasting it with another kind of love of God. There is a whole history of interpretation of mysticism embedded in this simple phrase and concept – 'amour de Dieu' – when it is used contrastively and, indeed, polemically as it is here. Taking advantage of the recent censure of the *abbé* Fénelon in the papal brief (*Cum alias*, 12 March 1699), which condemned 23 propositions drawn from his *Explication des Maximes des saints* published two years previously, Morin dismisses the mysticism of ontological indistinction and pure love as 'too

¹⁹ M. de Certeau, 'Mysticism', trans. Marsanne Brammer, *Diacritics*, 22 (1992), 13.

²⁰ J. Ahearne, *Michel de Certeau: Interpretation and its Other* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 102–3, 125, 190–91; M. Brammer, 'Thinking practice: Michel de Certeau and the theorization of mysticism', *Diacritics* 22 (1992), 26–37; J. Le Brun, 'Le secret d'un travail', in L. Giard (ed.), *Le voyage mystique, Michel de Certeau* (Paris: Recherches de Science religieuse, 1988), pp. 77–91 at 86; P. Sheldrake, 'Michel de Certeau: spirituality and the practice of everyday life', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, 12 (2012), 207–16 at 207.

²¹ I borrow the concept and the phrase from Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, p.10 and B.J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder, 1972), pp. 76–7.

abstract and metaphysical.²² In contrast, he proposes Élie Neau as one whose experience of the love of God is an affair not only of the heart, but also of the mind and the will, a love that is, moreover, 'within everybody's reach and easy to understand.'²³ Implicitly, Morin is rejecting the notion of the mystical as a higher or secret knowledge (according to the etymology of the word) which is confined to an elite. In contrast to this, he promotes a 'union of spiritual affection' with God (to borrow Jean Gerson's phrase), available to the common people – of the Reformed tradition to boot – which involves cognition and active ethical engagement with the world.²⁴ What was it about Neau's letters and hymns that inspired both Morin and the anonymous eighteenth-century illustrator to portray his religious experience in this way? I want to identify at least some of the discursive elements in Neau's writings that point to this interpretation, while also calling into question Morin's trenchant contrast between the two kinds of mysticism I have briefly outlined. As we shall see, at the discursive level at least, Neau's mysticism is oddly syncretic: he draws together fragments from different traditions to express his experience of divine transcendence while in captivity.

It is important to recall that Neau was a merchant seaman who had apparently received no formal education beyond that provided by the elementary school attached to the Reformed Church in Moëze. Consequently, the language and concepts he uses do not have theological depth or precision, but are rather an attempt to translate into words the 'thickness' (to use the Geertzian term) of his experience of God, which is why his writings are of interest – such sources are rare for French Protestantism in this period. In that process of translation, Neau shifts between the language of symbolical theology (imbibed no doubt from sermons, religious rites and his own reading) and mysticism – to borrow a distinction from the *Compendium theologiae veritatis* (I, 24).²⁵ So, as we might expect, he refers repeatedly to God as Creator, Trinity and Providence (thus King, Lord, Sovereign, Judge), and draws on regal and parental symbols to express his sense of God's presence (thus, Father and occasionally Mother). But, of more interest here, is the language of illumination Neau uses, especially a recurring metaphor of God as Sun, from whose face rays of light shine into the inner self, which he diversely expresses as 'heart' or 'soul', and less frequently, as 'spirit' (only once is light associated explicitly with human intelligence). The

²² On François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon (1651–1715) and the *querelle du pur amour*, see Le Brun, *Spiritualité de Bossuet*, pp. 441–695.

²³ HA, unpaginated 'Avertissement': 'abstrait et métaphysique'; 'à la portée de tout le monde et facile à comprendre', not translated by Jacobi.

²⁴ Jean Gerson (1363–1429): 'Theologia mystica est experimentalis cognitio habita de Deo per amoris unitivi complexum', quoted by Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, pp. 11, and 117, n.49.

²⁵ As quoted by H. Michon, *L'ordre du coeur. Philosophie, théologie et mystique dans les Pensées de Pascal* (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 266: 'Duplex est enim theologia, symbolica videlicet et mystica.'

metaphor of light is also used at times to express vision. In the penumbra of the dungeon, as Morin commented, 'he [Neau] saw the invisible'.²⁶ So light translates Neau's direct consciousness of God, and his sense of encounter with a transcendent Other whose presence he found not only *enlightening*, but also cleansing, consoling and uplifting. Indeed, Neau mentions experiencing a kind of ascension towards the divine that made it possible for him to contemplate God's infinite compassion towards him. The word often used in these instances to convey Neau's experience is 'admirer' or 'admiration', with the strong connotation it still had in seventeenth-century French, which was derived from its etymology: he was lost in wonder before God.²⁷ In sum, in his letters and hymns, we see Neau moving indiscriminately between a knowledge of God that is mediated discursively and an experience of God that appears, at face value at least, to be direct and immediate.

A second lexical field, associated with affect, repeats this interlocking pattern of mediated and immediate apprehension of God. Neau draws repeatedly on the traditional erotic model of the Song of Songs to express his sense of God's presence, interpreting its language of intimacy allegorically, and inscribing it into his experience, and his experience into it, by means of allusion and quotation. Although he spent many months in solitary confinement, he told his pastor in a letter written in November 1695 that he would be miserable if 'the God of my soul did not make me say with assurance: I am not alone for I have my beloved with me'.²⁸ The divine beloved is the intimate 'thou' to his 'I' ('tu' to his 'je'), to whom the prisoner speaks with words of desire: 'Thou art to me the most intimate of my heart, the beloved of my soul, and I want to take my pleasures in thy love alone and abide swooning with love in thine arms'.²⁹ Here and elsewhere, Neau structures his experience of God 'as a romantic narrative' (to quote Dyan Elliott), wherein affect is an important agent of mystical union, with consummation taking the form of ecstasy, even rapture.³⁰ Like so many other mystics who tried to find words to express the ineffable, he too appropriates the 'kiss of the mouth' from the Song of Songs to communicate the intense affectivity associated with his yearning for union with God and the

²⁶ Morin-Jacobi, p. 53; *HA*, p. 131: 'il voyait l'invisible'.

²⁷ Morin-Jacobi, p. 53; *HA*, p. 131; *admirari* (from *ad* and *mirari*): to be astonished or moved to wonder or admiration.

²⁸ Morin-Jacobi, p. 42; *HA*, p. 96–7: 'le Dieu de mon âme [...] ne me faisait dire avec assurance, je ne suis pas seul, car j'ai mon bien-aimé avec moi!'

²⁹ Morin-Jacobi, p. 16; *HA*, p. 20: 'Tu es à moi l'intime de mon cœur, le bien-aimé de mon âme, je ne veux prendre mes plaisirs qu'en ton amour, et je veux demeurer pâmé d'amour entre tes bras'; the phrase underlined is an allusion to Song of Songs 2:5.

³⁰ See V. Fraeters, 'Visio/Vision', and D. Elliott, 'Raptus/Rapture', in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 178–88 and 189–99 at 182, 189, 194, on whose insights I draw in this paragraph.

pleasure he derived from it.³¹ And, at times, he adapts strongly erotic imagery ('embrace', 'penetration', 'enjoyment' and/or 'orgasm') to reflect an experience of spiritual rapture as being both in the body and out of the body, prompting an association with the apostle Paul caught up to the third heaven.³² The word Neau repeatedly uses to describe this experience is 'ravis'. The primary meaning of the verb is to 'seize', 'lay hold of' or 'capture', similar to that of the Latin from which it is derived (*rapere*); it can also mean to ravish, usually a woman, and, in such contexts, may have troubling undertones of violence; from the Middle Ages it was used in French to express mystical transport. Neau employs the word to express his sense of being physically and emotionally overpowered by divine love, yet also to refer to beatific visions he had of the face, beauty and even essence of God. In a word, experiential exegesis of the Song of Songs (and other passages of Scripture) mediated an awareness of God that apparently, at its most intense, became a pure experience of presence and contemplation.³³

However, another lexical field present in Neau's letters suggests that his union of spiritual affection with God at times went beyond the subject-object distinction implicit in experiences of vision or contemplation and attained *henôsis mystique*, that is, mystical oneness without distinction.³⁴ In this respect, Neau is in tune with other identity mystics, who picture the human heart and God as mutual abysses. Addressing God in a Meditation, he observes:

For without thee it [my heart] cannot move towards thee, and without thee, I am but a mere nothing. But one abyss calls to another. Thy divine love wants to swallow up mine, so that I may be made one with thee.³⁵

If we take account of the passive voice Neau uses in French ('que je sois fait un avec toi'), the experience being described seems to involve a suspension of agency on the part of the human subject. A similar notion of being absorbed

³¹ Morin-Jacobi, p. 16; *HA*, p. 21 and Hymn V, p. 260; the hymns are not reproduced in Jacobi.

³² *HA*, Hymn VI, p. 264: 'Alors mon cœur tout pénétré d'ardeur,/T'embrassera de toute sa puissance;/Et tout ravi d'avoir ta jouissance,/Voudra chanter en tout temps ta grandeur'. For Paul's ecstasy, see 2 Cor. 12:1-4, mentioned by Neau with reference to himself in Hymn XIV, p. 284.

³³ I borrow the notion of experiential exegesis from Otto Langer, 'Zum Begriff der Erfahrung in der mittelalterlichen Frauenmystik', in W. Haug and D. Mieth (eds), *Religiöse Erfahrung: Historische Modelle in christlicher Tradition* (Munich: Fink, 1992), pp. 229-46, quoted by Fraeters, 'Visio', p. 185.

³⁴ My analysis in this paragraph draws on McGinn, 'Unio mystica', pp. 200-10; Fraeters, 'Visio', pp. 181-2.

³⁵ Morin-Jacobi, p. 14-15; *HA*, p. 16: 'car, sans toi, il [mon cœur] ne se peut mouvoir vers toi, et, hors de toi, je ne suis que le néant. Mais un abîme en appelle un autre. Ton amour divin veut engloutir le mien, afin que je sois fait un avec toi.'

into God is also present in a series of 'synaesthetic and gustatory metaphors' (to borrow a phrase from Veerle Fraeters)³⁶ that suggest an abandon of language, discursiveness and distinction, a sensation (that is, and is not, sensation) of mingling with or melting into the divine. At these moments, verbs associated with taste, feeling and sensual pleasure ('taste', 'savour', 'feel', 'enjoy') are present, as are nouns and epithets to do with softness, tenderness and delectation ('smoothness', 'sweetness', 'delights' 'delectable'), and they are used to express a state of being that remains paradoxically ineffable. Metaphors of liquefaction often occur in association with these words, whether verbs of pouring, spilling, filling, distilling or watering, or nouns of fluidity ('liquid', 'river', 'source'), and the related words: 'absorb', 'swallow up', 'dive'.³⁷ Some of these metaphors occur in a letter to his pastor, written in November 1696, in a comment on his experience of God while in solitary confinement: 'I was then filled with graces, and absorbed into a river of chaste delights, which made me forget all temporal things, and myself too.'³⁸ Judging by the language used to describe this experience of all things falling away except for a sensation of joyful bliss, Neau is expressing not union but fusion with the divine, a state of being in God that not only involves loss of self, an annihilation of subjectivity and individuality, but also seems to require passivity.³⁹

Yet in other letters, and at other times, Neau frames his encounter with divine love as passion mysticism wherein union with Christ is central to his experience. He speaks of Jesus as 'divine Sun', darting 'a ray of his divine face into [our] souls to kindle [our] affections with the fire of his love.'⁴⁰ On another occasion, he refers to Christ as that 'adorable victim who sacrificed himself for us', alluding to the early modern Reformation doctrines of substitutionary atonement and redemption from sin by grace alone through the passion and death of Christ, on which his assurance of salvation was based.⁴¹ Jesus is also the model whom Neau schools himself to follow; the source of his inner strength and resistance to oppression; and, above all, the mediator between him and God. Furthermore, the cruelty and resulting ignominy associated with incarceration on the galleys caused the Protestants to identify personally with the suffering Christ, to project

³⁶ Fraeters, 'Visio', p. 182.

³⁷ The lexis in French is as follows: 'goûter', 'savourer', 'sentir', 'jouir'; 'suavité', 'douceur', 'délices' 'délectable'; 'répandre', 'verser', 'remplir', 'distiller', 'abreuver'; 'liqueur', 'fleuve', 'source'; 'absorber', 'engloutir', 'plonger'.

³⁸ Morin-Jacobi, p. 58; *HA*, p. 147: 'Je me vis comblé de grâces et absorbé dans un fleuve [which Jacobi translates as 'overflown'] de chastes délices, qui me fit oublier toutes les choses temporelles, et moi-même'.

³⁹ My analysis is guided here by Fraeters, 'Visio', p. 187.

⁴⁰ Morin-Jacobi, p. 40; *HA*, p. 90: 'le divin soleil de nos âmes; un rayon de sa divine face [...] pour embraser [n]os affections du feu de son amour'.

⁴¹ Morin-Jacobi, p. 44; *HA*, p. 102: 'victime adorable qui s'est immolée pour nous'.

themselves into him and inscribe the cross into their experience as a way of giving meaning to their senseless abjection. Because they had been sentenced to the galleys for their faith, they referred to themselves as 'confessors of Christ', that is, martyrs, according to the etymology of the word (from the Greek *marturion*, meaning witness), who were called to bear witness to the One who had gone before, and to act out the cross in mimetic identification with him.⁴² Although this passion mysticism can occur in the same sentence as the love mysticism triggered by the Song of Songs,⁴³ it is different from it. Here, union with Christ is not fusional but relational; it is not absorption into Christ but interaction with him; it maintains both intimacy and distance, occurs by divine initiative, and is mediated by Word and Spirit. By definition, union with Christ as loving Saviour both enacts and maintains in Neau's experience the ontological distinction between sinful creature and righteous Creator. In this respect, he is resolutely Reformed, in tune with, although certainly unaware of, Calvin's understanding of *unio mystica cum Christo*.⁴⁴

Surprisingly for a Calvinist, however, Neau's affective union with Christ is also expressed in the hymn he wrote on the theme of divine love as 'somatic incorporation into Christ', to borrow a concept from Constance Furey.⁴⁵ In three of the verses, strongly physical images of Christ's passion occur, sometimes in conjunction with the lexical fields associated with erotic mysticism already analysed. Neau pictures Jesus' wounds 'distilling the liquor that consoles me in my great suffering'; beseeches the crucified Christ to 'open thy veins and water me with thy precious blood', and adds 'thy blood flowing in great streams causes my heart to thirst and makes me swoon'. In the final verse, he envisages his union with Christ as his being drawn to the wounded side, his soul living in Christ's heart and dwelling there forever.⁴⁶ Devotion of this kind – to the Side Wound, the

⁴² I have studied this more fully in R. Whelan, 'Résistance et spiritualité dans les témoignages des galériens pour la foi', *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français*, 156 (2010), 231–46.

⁴³ Morin-Jacobi, p. 15: 'And when I contemplate thee as my Saviour upon the cross, I do not ask where thou feedest thy flock at high noon'; *HA*, p. 19: 'Et lorsque je te contemple comme mon Sauveur en la croix, je ne demande pas où tu pais tes brebis en plein midi', alluding to Song of Songs 1:7.

⁴⁴ On this see Tamburello, *Union with Christ*, pp. 84–107; Partee, *Theology of John Calvin*, pp. 170–79; E. Howells, 'Early modern Reformations', in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 114–36 at 126–7.

⁴⁵ C.M. Furey, 'Sexuality', in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 132–40 at 339.

⁴⁶ *HA*, Hymn X, pp. 276–7: 'Et tes plaies distillent la liqueur/ Qui me console en ma grande souffrance.' 'Ouvre, Seigneur, ouvre aujourd'hui tes veines/Pour m'arroser de ton sang précieux.' 'Agneau de Dieu tire-moi dès cette heure/Vers ton côté qui fut ouvert pour moi./Fais que mon âme étant unie à toi,/Vive en ton coeur, qu'à toujours j'y demeure.'

Five Wounds, the Precious Blood, the Sacred Heart – was enormously popular in the Middle Ages, according to Thomas Bestul, and is usually associated with the Franciscan tradition of meditation on the passion.⁴⁷ However, it is important to remember that Calvin and the Reformers derided such devotion and rejected it as idolatrous and superstitious.⁴⁸ Yet, in Neau's hymn, it is not only associated with passion mysticism, but it is also woven together in the same verse with the well-known image of the soul yearning after God pictured in one of the psalms as a deer panting after flowing streams.⁴⁹ Such syncretism is odd in a French Protestant, particularly one who was condemned to the galleys for refusing to participate in Catholic worship. Moreover, it is difficult to explain, although some conclusions may be drawn.

What we see in Élie Neau's letters and hymns is a mystical relationship to the divine that draws its inspiration from different traditions without developing any of them systematically. Although he uses the language of mystical transport, the experience of divine love this language expresses is never dissociated either from desire for the presence of God or hope of eternal reward. Quite the contrary: the Reformed faith that brought him to the galleys in the first place grounds him in assurance of salvation and hope of an eternity spent in the presence of God. In other words, although he adopts the language and notion of fusion with the divine, his is not a mysticism of pure love, with its insistence on indifference to recompense, whether in this world or the next. Indeed, the eighteenth-century artist conveyed this incisively by posing the figure of the prisoner in mystical transport, yet seated on what I interpret as the rock of salvation.⁵⁰ Furthermore, while the language of light and enlightenment seems to suggest an unmediated, mystical relationship with divine transcendence, on closer examination it reveals elements drawn from biblical imagery for God.⁵¹ As a French Reformed Christian, Neau was deeply versed in Scripture, whether by means of the 'Bible of the ear' (heard in public reading of Scripture, preaching and worship) or the 'Bible of the eye',⁵² which he read even in captivity, where

⁴⁷ T.M. Bestul, 'Meditatio/Meditation', in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 157–66 at 162–3.

⁴⁸ See, for example, J. Calvin, *Traité des reliques* (1543), in O. Millet (ed.), *Oeuvres choisies* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), pp. 183–250 at 198, 246–9.

⁴⁹ Ps 42:1; *HA*, p. 277: 'Comme le cerf altéré court et brame,/Lorsqu'il entend le murmure des eaux,/Ainsi ton sang qui coule à gros ruisseaux,/Met dans mon cœur une soif qui me pâme.'

⁵⁰ My interpretation is based on the occurrences of the metaphor of God as rock of salvation in Neau's writings (drawn from Ps 62:7), which the unknown artist had obviously read attentively.

⁵¹ For example, Sun of righteousness in Malachi 4:2, or the Johannine association of Word with light, see *HA*, p. 94; Morin-Jacobi, p. 41.

⁵² I borrow this distinction from J.F. Gilmont, 'Réformes protestantes et lecture', in Cavallo and R. Chartier (eds), *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 249–78 at 277–8.

he got hold of an English translation, possibly of the Geneva Bible or the King James version. Scripture, whether recalled or read, mediated to Neau a presence and gave him a language to express his desire for God and experience of union with God. As a French Reformed Christian, he was also in the habit of singing the psalms, whether in public worship or private prayer – a habit he maintained on the galleys and in the dungeon. Psalm singing is performative exegesis; it enacts through voice and the body's energy the presence of the One to whom the psalm is sung, *realising* that presence in the temporal frame of the one who is singing. So Neau's mysticism, the I–Thou relationship that is his experience of God, is mediated immediacy, whether it is expressed as a union of indistinction or as a bond maintaining distinction.⁵³ The experiential exegesis he had learned from childhood, which trained him to hold the Word at the centre of his consciousness (a practice he continued in his adult years and with intensity in captivity), drew him into living encounter with the One speaking in and through Scripture.⁵⁴ In sum, while Neau's awareness of God seems at times to have attained a state of ecstatic immediacy, his practice of the presence of God was constructed liturgically over time by the rites of the social community of faith, the French Reformed tradition, which he had internalised and naturalised in such a way that they shaped his experience.

However, other aspects of Neau's experience of God, as we have seen (the strongly affective even eroticised language of his bridal and identity mysticism; the somatic aspects of his union with Christ), sit uneasily with the Calvinist tradition that shaped him. Although it is impossible to know exactly what influences were at work on the prisoner's religious understanding and experience, a couple of comments are warranted. Firstly, when Neau emigrated from France in 1679, he settled at first in the West Indies, in Saint-Domingue, a French colony on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola (which was to become Haiti in 1804). Officially, Protestantism was prohibited in the French colonies, but it was tolerated unofficially because the majority of French vessels were under the command of Huguenots originally from the western seaboard of France, as was almost half of the population of the Caribbean islands under French control.⁵⁵ For baptisms and marriages, Huguenot settlers could travel to one of the English or Dutch colonies, and the minister of the Dutch church on the island of Saint

⁵³ As McGinn observes, '*Unio mystica*', p. 204: 'many mystics used language and images expressing both forms'.

⁵⁴ My analysis is guided here by D. Burton-Christie, 'Early monasticism', in A. Hollywood and P.Z. Beckman (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, pp. 37–58 at 55. Monastic and early modern Protestant rites and practices of rumination on Scripture have strong similarities when viewed as ways of practising the presence of God.

⁵⁵ J.-B. du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François* Société (1667), 4 vols (Fort-de-France: Société d'Histoire de La Martinique, 1958–59), vol. 2, pp. 398–9, 433, 453; vol. 3, pp. 278–82.

Eustatius preached in both Flemish and French.⁵⁶ It is possible that Neau came under the influence of Dutch Reformed pastors at that time, who themselves may have been influenced by the identity mysticism of John Ruusbroec and his followers. Secondly, on the galleys, Neau was surrounded by predominantly Roman Catholic prisoners, and Catholic chaplains were also present on the ships, to oversee the spiritual welfare of the detainees and say Mass. We also know that Catholic devotional works were distributed to the men, and that the *Imitatio Christi* was particularly appreciated by the Protestants. Neau, as I remarked earlier, had no formal education beyond his twelfth year when he took to the seas as a cabin boy and so probably assimilated uncritically some aspects of the devotion he encountered on the galleys. In other words, his writings express a syncretic mysticism transmitted through social communities of faith that were officially at odds, but whose spiritual understanding and practices intersected in Neau's consciousness, making it possible for him to make meaning out of his experience of abjection.

Yet even more surprising than this uncritical syncretism is the fact that it meets with no censure from Jean Morin, the pastor who provides the frame narrative to the published volume, and who is not shy about expressing polemical attitudes to Roman Catholicism. Nor does Pierre Jurieu criticise 'the great mystic of the galleys' in the treatise he published the year before Neau's narrative appeared in print. Jurieu, a pastor, prolific author and eager polemicist, vituperates 'mystical theology' in that treatise, denouncing it as 'something Protestants have always thought of as fanatical, superstitious and hypocritical'.⁵⁷ His real target, however, is the identity mysticism of pure love or Quietism, which he criticises at tedious length as 'false' mysticism. Yet at the same time, he concedes that mystical transport, rapture, visions and other extraordinary graces not only can be experienced, but have also recently been enjoyed by 'Saints favoured by God', meaning Protestants imprisoned for their faith. He mentions, without naming him, one man in particular, who is almost certainly Élie Neau, whom Jurieu evidently met and carefully questioned while Neau was in Holland. Obviously convinced by what he heard from Neau, Jurieu draws parallels between the galley slave's experiences of mystical transport and that of Augustine of Hippo and his mother Monica at Ostia, as described in the *Confessions*.⁵⁸ Two things are at work here, which might merit more consideration, but on which I will comment briefly by way of conclusion.

⁵⁶ C.W. Baird, *Histoire des réfugiés Huguenots en Amérique*, trans. A.-E. Meyer and L.-M. Meschinot de Richemond (Toulouse: Société des livres religieux, 1886), pp. 165–6.

⁵⁷ [Pierre Jurieu], *Traité historique, contenant le jugement d'un protestant sur la théologie mystique* (s.l. 1700. 2nd edn), p. 3.

⁵⁸ [Jurieu], *Traité historique*, pp. 82–3; Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. W. Watts (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999). LCL 26 and 27; 1st edn. 1912. Bk. 9, ch. 10, vol. 2, pp. 47–53.

It is evident that the ecstatic experiences of the galley slaves and other Protestant prisoners of conscience at the time of the Revocation point up a shift in French Calvinist spirituality where mysticism is concerned. But a shift had already occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century towards a more affective spirituality, judging by the contents of the prayer books, devotional treatises and little works of preparation for the Lord's Supper which were published in this period – including Pierre Jurieu's own bestselling *Traité de la dévotion* (1674). In that treatise, which went into at least 22 editions and is known to have circulated clandestinely on the galleys, Jurieu reveals himself to be no stranger either to bridal mysticism based on the Song of Songs or to the ecstasy of union with God, which he expresses using the language of both of identity and distinction.⁵⁹ Clearly, Neau's mystical experiences in captivity were not new to Huguenots, as Émile Léonard believed; but rather a more heightened version of trends already present in French Protestantism, although his expression of it, as we have seen, was also shaped by Catholic popular devotion. However, the Quietist controversy made it necessary to draw a distinction between that expression of mysticism, dismissed as 'new' or 'false', and Neau's own, which Jurieu and Morin both do by framing it in terms of an older mystical tradition of union with God, which was as venerable as Augustine.

Finally, in that context (of the debates concerning 'true' and 'false' mysticism), the form of the Neau-Morin narrative is significant because it adopts the literary framework common to the fixation and dissemination of mystical writings in the period, typically by Roman Catholics. That is to say, the ecstatic experiences of an ordinary man (or woman), with little or no formal education, are authenticated and authorised for the reading public by a male mentor who belongs to the educated elite, and who is himself edified by the experiences recounted.⁶⁰ However, in this case, the narrative form is being deployed polemically at two levels. It makes the point common to such narratives, namely that the mystic has religious authority *ex gratia* (by grace), which, as Veerle Fraeters remarks, was considered to be as 'valuable as the religious authority *ex officio* (by right of office) held by clerics.'⁶¹ Yet here, the mystic being authorised by the narrative is a heretic, a fact that is not overlooked by the anonymous eighteenth-century artist. In the image of Neau in the dungeon, the figure in ecstasy, sitting on the rock of salvation, is wearing a heretic's mitre which is imprinted with a demonic figure complete with fork, ready to stoke the flames. Text and image operate by means of polemical, ironic reversal. Who precisely is the heretic here? Is it

⁵⁹ Pierre Jurieu, *Traité de la dévotion* (Rouen: Jean Lucas, 1676. 3rd edn), pp. 78, 96, 149–50, 161–2, 198, 201, 214, 232, 249, 259–60, 265.

⁶⁰ See Certeau, *Fable mystique*, ch.7, pp. 280–329, on the mystic as 'illettré éclairé'; Fraeters, 'Visio', p. 183.

⁶¹ Fraeters, 'Visio', p. 183–4.

the godly Protestant, assured of his salvation, authorised *ex gratia* by union with the divine, and true descendant of the venerable Augustine? Or is it those who consign him to the dungeon and to the flames beyond? Obviously, the mystical subject, the authenticating author, the eighteenth-century translator and artist know the answer. *Caveat lector!* Text and image are being co-opted for confessional objectives and deployed to advance the religious and political agendas of French and English Protestants, despite the differences of language and culture that separate them.⁶² In that respect, the afterlife of Neau's ecstatic experience (in its published versions) is anything but forgetful of 'all temporal things'; however, that is a story for another day.

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⁶² In fact, the galley slave narratives are structured as martyr tales, see R. Whelan, 'Représentation de soi, représentation de l'autre dans les récits des galériens pour la foi', *Bulletin de l'Institut d'histoire de la Réformation*, 29 (2007–2008), 51–70.

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