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# THE RURAL ECONOMICS OF RENÉ DE GIRARDIN: LANDSCAPES AT THE SERVICE OF *L'IDÉOLOGIE NOBILIAIRE*

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René Louis de Girardin (1735-1808), Marquis de Vauvray and Vicomte d'Ermenonville, is remembered for having invited Rousseau at Ermenonville estate, near Senlis, in spring 1778. Known as the Marquis de Girardin, he spent his early career as a military officer. In 1762 he inherited his mother's fortune including the 850 hectare estate of Ermenonville. Four years later, Girardin began transforming his property into a fashionable *jardin paysager*. He created one of the most important sites of intellectual pilgrimage for the majority of the educated and the curious of Europe in the years following Rousseau's death –this is where Rousseau died on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1778, and where he was buried until his body was moved to the Panthéon on 11<sup>th</sup> October 1794.<sup>1</sup> Scholars present Ermenonville as a virtuous landscape overseen by an “open-mind patriarch”. A. Martin-Decaen described the estate as a paradigm that could have prevented the Revolution; D. Wiebenson suggested that, unlike other defenders of the landscape garden, Girardin was interested in social as well as cultural reform; M. H. Conan wrote that his work on landscape gardening published in 1777, *De la composition des paysages*, expounded a conception of landscape with reformist political aims and M. Baridon underlined that the novelty of Girardin was to present landscape as an art that transformed the countryside and the nation.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps because Girardin wrote no books or articles specifically on political economy –his economic thinking is expressed mainly in the final chapter of his *De la composition des paysages*, published in France in 1777 and translated partially into English five years later<sup>3</sup>, his economic ideas has been neglected in the literature, which have settled for just linking his defence of the primacy of agriculture to physiocratic theses.<sup>4</sup> Although he exposed the thesis of exclusive productivity in agriculture –e.g., Girardin states that “the advancement of agriculture” is the “only support of population, commerce, and real and lasting strength [...]”. The wealth of France consists in land.”<sup>5</sup>– and clearly he owed a lot to the physiocrats, we

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Calder, “Promenade in Ermenonville,” in *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Martin Calder, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 112.

<sup>2</sup> André Martin-Decaen, *Le dernier ami de J.-J. Rousseau. Le marquis René de Girardin (1735-1808) d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Perrin et C<sup>ie</sup>, 1912), 93; Dora Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1978), 93; Michel H. Conan, *De la composition des paysages, ou Des Moyens d'embellir la Nature autour des habitations, en joignant l'agréable à l'utile*, (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 1992), 209; and Michel Baridon, *Les jardins* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998), 894.

<sup>3</sup> René de Girardin, *De la composition des paysages, ou Des Moyens d'embellir la Nature autour des habitations, en joignant l'agréable à l'utile* (Geneva: Dalaguette, 1777); *An Essay on Landscape; or, on the Means of Improving and Embellishing the Country Round our Habitations*, trans. Daniel Malthus (London: J. Dodsley, 1783). In our article, we quote as much as possible the English edition. When a passage of the original edition in French is not in the English edition, we specify that its translation is our own.

<sup>4</sup> Baridon, *Les jardins*, 901 and *Le jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle* (Dijon: Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2000), 54; and Conan, *De la composition des paysages*, 207–208 and 248–249.

<sup>5</sup> “Les progrès de l'agriculture [sont l']unique fondement de la population, de tout commerce certain et de toute puissance solide et durable [...]. La richesse de la France consiste en fonds de terre.” René-Louis de Girardin, “Réponse de l'Auteur de la composition des Paysages à la question proposée dans le Journal du 5 Juin, page 1836, au sujet de le Notre,” *Journal de Politique et de Littérature*, 25 June (1777): 158 and 269 (our translation).

consider that Girardin developed an original contribution that sets him apart, like many others, from physiocratic and also from agronomist movements.

Several points should be clarified before going further into the text. Firstly, Girardin's work is part of the debate on 18<sup>th</sup>-century gardens that contrasted the French geometric model with the English landscape model.<sup>6</sup> Although critical of the French model, Girardin believed it was necessary to further this debate on the basis of a relationship between a sensualist theory of knowledge and the structure of the landscape garden.<sup>7</sup> This epistemological *credo* then leads to the conclusion that landscapes must be created to reveal a vast uniformity with endless variety, allowing sensory impressions to be multiplied. Secondly, physiocrats are not the only authors defending the exclusive productivity in agriculture. In fact, numerous defenders of the primacy of agriculture (e.g., Pierre-Louis Goudard and Jean-Baptiste François Rozier) or toward the agronomists' "new system" (e.g., Giovanni Fabroni, Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron or Laurent-Benoit Desplaces) have a critical attitude toward the physiocratic doctrine.<sup>8</sup> Besides, an unpublished « lettre-mémoire » of Girardin to Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours<sup>9</sup> –the main responsible for spreading François Quesnay's thought and who forged the term *Physiocracy* within his anthology *Physiocratie ou constitution naturelle du gouvernement le plus avantageux au genre humain* (1768)– makes clear the differences between both authors. Moreover, in this manuscript, Girardin stands on his economic ideas in a more convincing and incisive way than he did in his book because Dupont advised him to remove the final chapter.<sup>10</sup>

As we will see, Girardin's intellectual network is *l'idéologie nobiliaire*. The term evokes a system of opinions which, based on the desire for civic and moral virtues to be developed, determines the attitude of a patriotic nobility towards the target of restoring the greatness of a nation by increasing economic resources.<sup>11</sup> The task of differentiating *l'idéologie nobiliaire* from other groups or views that gave primacy to agriculture (agronomes, physiocrats, or political economists) is complex. Only the physiocratic circle was well defined.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the interaction among these groups was intense –e.g., it is well-known the influence of agronomists Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau, Charles de Butré and Henri Pattullo on the Quesnay agricultural model, the references of Turgot to Duhamel when explaining decreasing performance of agriculture or Duhamel's use of the term "net product" in his writings from 1750 have all been recognised.<sup>13</sup>

This article has, therefore, three aims. First, it seeks to show that Girardin's economic ideas about agriculture deserve special attention. The uniqueness of Girardin's thought

<sup>6</sup> One can find an analysis of this debate in Baridon, *Les jardins*, 697-937; Virgilio Vercelloni, *L'invention du jardin occidental* (Rodez: Le Rouergue, 2009), 81-145; and José M. Menudo and Nicolas Rieucou, "Une apologie des physiocrates par Condorcet," *Dix-huitième siècle* 46 (2014): 657-672 [a extended version is available at [www.inventaire-condorcet.com/articles/2014\\_Menudo\\_Rieucou.php](http://www.inventaire-condorcet.com/articles/2014_Menudo_Rieucou.php)].

<sup>7</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 2; *An Essay on Landscape*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> For a broad review of former authors see John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 113-117, and André Bourde, *The Influence of England on the French Agronomes, 1750-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 68.

<sup>9</sup> We found this manuscript –dated August 14, 1775– in the Hagley Museum and Library of Wilmington (Delaware), shelfmark W2-1683. In this article, quotes of this manuscript are modernized.

<sup>10</sup> Girardin, *Letter to Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours*, 5v-6r.

<sup>11</sup> See Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La noblesse au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: de la féodalité aux Lumières* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 2000, 25-38); and Renato Galliani, *Rousseau, le luxe et l'idéologie nobiliaire: Étude socio-historique* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> See Nicolas Baudeau, *Nouvelles éphémérides économiques, ou Bibliothèque raisonnée de l'histoire, de la morale et de la politique*, (Milan: Feltrinelli editore, 1969), 3:111.

<sup>13</sup> On the connection between physiocrats and agronomes, see Lluís Argemí, "Agriculture, Agronomy, and Political Economy: Some Missing Links," *History of Political Economy* 34 (2002): 449-478.

stems from his way of fitting together three key topics of the French enlightenment: patriotic regeneration, compact farms and grain market policy. According to Girardin, landscape gardens contributed to the return of “enlightened citizens” to the countryside. [Part I]. Secondly, we demonstrate that Girardin wanted to propose an agricultural model called by him *culture complète*. While the development of landscape gardens enabled the gentleman's return to the country, in order to succeed, the rise of moral and civic virtues stemming from this was to be accompanied by the unification of the dispersed lands. This aim of reunifying land was mainly the creation of a picturesque rural environment for the gentlemen cultivator more than the reduction of costs or the introduction of modern cultivation techniques [Part II]. Thirdly, the article investigates the position of Girardin on economic reform and grain policy in 18<sup>th</sup>-century France. In Girardin, the market was the best mechanism for dealing with the conflict of interest between owners and workers but it was not enough to guarantee a socially appropriate price. Girardin justified the intervention of legislators to allow the monopoly in grain sales to be broken [Part III].

## I. GIRARDIN'S INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL NETWORK

The term *économie rurale* used by Girardin to describe his studies on agricultural activities is at this time relatively recent. It was not used in economic literature until the 1760's, when it replaced the term *économie rustique*, used especially in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.<sup>14</sup> In 1750, France was still, as is well known, an agricultural nation. The richest citizens were agricultural landowners, and in some regions the sale of wheat was the basic resource which allowed money to be distributed, and it was, in the country as a whole, the sustenance of the population. Most of the provincial nobility managed their properties directly and almost the half of them still lived on their land or in nearby small cities. This was not the case with the wealthy nobility, who were ever more distant from and independent of their agricultural holdings.<sup>15</sup> When Girardin inherited his mother's estate of Ermenonville, he refused to be one of the “urban nobles”.

Before moving to his properties in the mid-1760s, Girardin had a military career, serving as a musketeer in the Seven Years' War and later as a bodyguard in the Polish court of Stanislas Leszczyński at Lunéville until the death of the Duke in 1766. This decade at Leszczyński's court helps us to understand Girardin's intellectual and social network. After the “Grand Prince”, as Rousseau referred to him, had lost the War of the Polish Succession, he settled in Lorraine in 1737. His programmes of reforms and improvement were accompanied by a range of architectural constructions as well as the creation of cultural institutions –the *Bibliothèque Royale de Nancy* and the *Société Royale des Sciences et Belles-lettres de Nancy*– as an attempt to establish a representational kingdom in Lorraine.<sup>16</sup> Two economic ideas are underlined in King Stanislas' writings: the primacy of agriculture and the corrosive power of wealth and luxury. Stanislas claimed that agriculture was “the first source of opulence and prosperity to empires”<sup>17</sup> and proposed “to moderate

<sup>14</sup> On the use of *économie* in the *Encyclopédie* see Christophe Salvat, “Les articles ‘Économie’ et leurs désignants,” *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 40–41 (2006): 107–126. Grimm also refers in a derogatory way to the Physiocrats as the “économistes ruraux.” See Maurice Tourneux, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister, etc.*, (Paris: Garnier, 1879), 8:15.

<sup>15</sup> On noble proprietors in the second half of the eighteenth century in France, see Mathieu Marraud, *La noblesse de Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 2000), 25.

<sup>16</sup> See Renata Tyszczyk, *The Story of an Architect King: Stanislas Leszczyński in Lorraine 1737-1766* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> “c'est [l'agriculture] la première source de l'opulence et de la prospérité des empires”, Stanislas Leszczyński, “De l'agriculture et des greniers d'abondances,” in *Œuvres choisies de Stanislas*, ed. Laure de Saint Ouën, (Paris: J Carez, 1825), 281.

our burning desire for wealth, and this insatiable ambition which inflames it.”<sup>18</sup> Stanislas’s prescriptions can be placed alongside a series of writings that the literature has grouped under the term *idéologie nobiliaire*.

The writings of Claude Fleury, François Fénelon and the Duke of Beauvilliers built up a noble criticism of luxury, based on its responsibility for rural depopulation and ruin. As a result of the defeats suffered by France during the Seven Year War, an exacerbated outpouring of patriotism sought to restore the greatness of France by increasing economic resources. And so, throughout the second half of the 1750s and during the 1760s, a patriotic nobility intensified the connection between the regeneration of agriculture and moral regeneration, as highlighted by Girardin, based on the desire for civic virtue to resolve many problems and on the belief in the moral corruption of the nation brought about by trade –e.g., in *Le Gentilhomme cultivateur* (1761-63), Jean-Baptiste Dupuy-Dempportes recalled the tragic destiny of the nations that had abandoned agriculture in favour of the immediate pleasures of luxury. Girardin uses the habitual counterposition between the country and the city in this literature to explain the beacon effect that attracted the “enlightened citizens”; to the natural pleasure brought by contact with nature was added the sadness caused by the sight of the deplorable living conditions of the urban population.

[C]an there exist a more delightful habitation for man, than a neat farm house in the centre of a pleasing landscape? [...] Perhaps when every folly is exhausted, there will become a time, in which men will be so far enlightened as to prefer the real pleasure of nature to vanity and chimera.<sup>19</sup>

In his popular work *L’ami des hommes* (1757), the Marquis of Mirabeau called on landowners to return to their land and take an active part in its management. In *Les Intérêts de la France mal entendus* (1756), while Pierre Ange Goudar called on the government to provide incentives for the nobility to return to the country.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the physiocrats, *l’idéologie nobiliaire* does not trust wealthy agricultural entrepreneurs. The enlightened citizens were gentlemen and they were the moral individuals who were the agents of change and, consequently, responsible for agricultural progress.

Arriving back from his 1763 trip to England, Italy, Switzerland and Germany, Girardin believed he had found how to bring back the nobles from the cities. He discovered that landscape gardens contributed to the return of “enlightened citizens” to the countryside.<sup>21</sup>

A virtuous citizen, called back to the country, by the real enjoyment of nature, will soon feel that the suffering of humanity makes the most painful of all spectacles; if he begins by the admiration of picturesque landscapes which please the sight, he will soon seek to produce the moral landscape which delights the mind. Nothing is more touching than the sight of universal content.<sup>22</sup>

In return, these gentleman cultivators were to bring with them greater resources for rural activity and, above all, “reflections and experiments.” It would thereby be “provid[ed] for

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<sup>18</sup> “modérer en nous cet ardent amour des richesses, et cette insatiable ambition qui sert à l’enfermer”, Stanislas Leszczyński, “Du commerce et du luxe qu’il entraîne,” in *Œuvres choisies de Stanislas*, ed. Laure de Saint Ouën, (Paris: J Carez, 1825), 286.

<sup>19</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 159 and 160; *An Essay on Landscape*, 159–160.

<sup>20</sup> For a broad review of these authors, see Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 65–79.

<sup>21</sup> Girardin, *op. cit.*, 158.

<sup>22</sup> Girardin, *op. cit.*, 150.

the subsistence of those, whose bodily labour supports the men [the gentleman cultivators] of more intellectual employment, who are to instruct, or defend society.”<sup>23</sup> Baridon holds that the relationship between sensualist theory of knowledge and landscape gardens can easily be grasped. The word “sensualism”, derived from the Latin *sensualis*, would have appeared for the first time in Joseph Marie Degérando’s writings in 1804.<sup>24</sup> This term is often used nowadays to designate Étienne Bonnot de Condillac’s theory of knowledge and, occasionally, John Locke’s. Condillac’s famous statue is presented as support for sensations; the senses that provide the individual with impressions of four operations (perception, attention, conscience and reminiscence) will become the material required for the formulation of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> From here on, a theory of knowledge based on sensualism was progressively extended by French authors, imposing a new view on the conduct of life.

After the death of Stanislas, the entire Girardin family moved to Paris from Lunéville, although René and his wife spent a lot of time in the countryside.<sup>26</sup> On over 200 hectares of land, Girardin aimed to demonstrate that landscape gardens were able to modify their behaviour in such a way that the gentleman cultivators would not hesitate to put “their hand to the plough.”<sup>27</sup> For ten years, Girardin endeavoured to create the “farm ornée” which was the way to achieve the return of “enlightened citizens” to the countryside.

## II. THE “FARM ORNÉE”: ERMENONVILLE

Taking inspiration from the Ancient Roman *villa*,<sup>28</sup> Girardin conceived the agricultural domain of the *ferme ornée* as land that was both cultivated and embellished, as proclaimed in the subtitle of his work: *Means of Improving and Embellishing the Country Round our Habitations*.<sup>29</sup> The French expression *ferme ornée* was popularised in England by the poet William Shenstone, who used it to describe his land in Leasowes, admired by Girardin during his English stay *circa* 1763.<sup>30</sup> In this land of picturesque gardening, non-cultivated terrain had to display veritable artistic compositions. In this respect artistic activity had to guide gardening: “It is precisely to prevent that it puts [...] the gardener instead of the painter [...] that I felt it necessary to give the public the result of my observations.”<sup>31</sup>

We are going to divide the presentation of Girardin’s project into two parts. Firstly, Ermenonville demonstrated that it was possible to turn Girardin’s ideas into reality. Secondly, Girardin wanted his project to spread widely throughout the country and a land divided into plots was the major obstacle. He advises a new organisation of the land called ‘culture complète’.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the defenders of the landscape garden, such as Jean-Marie Morel, Girardin proposed a new organisation for the countryside. Morel joined in the execution

<sup>23</sup> Girardin, *op. cit.*, 149-150

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Marie Degérando, *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, vol. II (Paris: Henrichs, an XII-1804).

<sup>25</sup> Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines: ouvrage où l’on réduit à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l’entendement humain*, in *Œuvres de M. L’Abbé de Condillac*, vol. 1 (Paris: Libraires associés, 1787).

<sup>26</sup> Stanislas Girardin, *Mémoires de S. Girardin*, (Paris: Michaud, 1834), 1:11.

<sup>27</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 116; *An Essay on Landscape*, 158.

<sup>28</sup> On this point, see Denis Lambin, “Botanique et jardin anglais,” in *Jardins et paysages: le style anglais*, dir. André Parreaux and Michèle Plaisant (Villeneuve-d’Ascq: Publications de l’Université de Lille III, 1977), 290.

<sup>29</sup> See also the title of the last chapter: “Of the means of uniting pleasure with utility, in the general arrangement of the country” (Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 135; *An Essay on Landscape*, 148).

<sup>30</sup> On this point, see Conan, “Postface,” 207.

<sup>31</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 321; *An Essay on Landscape*, 321.

<sup>32</sup> René-Louis de Girardin, “Réponse de l’Auteur de la composition des Paysages », 209.

of Girardin's project on the land at Ermenonville, until a conflict arose regarding the use of buildings.<sup>33</sup> Morel wanted no artificial elements, and so he only accepted buildings with forms and functions related to the surroundings. To Girardin, the imitation of natural beauty was insufficient since its object was to bring back to nature individuals who had involuntarily been distanced from it. Landscape creation could not, therefore, be limited to a garden, but to the organisation of the countryside. This differentiation is explicitly expressed in the first French edition of *De la composition des paysages*:

These sheets were printed at the beginning of 1775; however a series of circumstances suspended their publications when this book was going to appear. A few works [including Morel's *Théorie du Jardin* (1776)] about several types of Gardens have appeared since then; however here we mainly deal with countryside issues, with its embellishment, with its cultivation, and with its subsistence.<sup>34</sup>

This target appears to have been neglected in the landscape treatises of Girardin's time – besides Jean-Marie Morel (1776), we can quote Claude-Henri Watelet (1774) and Jean-Roger Schabol (1774) which were particularly well known in France. These treatises limited the activity of gentlemen to the garden, as their action was specifically distinct from the tasks of the farmer.<sup>35</sup>

Girardin proposed a moral organization of the countryside, where impressions could be multiplied unpredictably because landscapes had a power “over the senses, and, through their interposition, over the soul.”<sup>36</sup> Henri Roddier noted that Girardin was the first who used the word *romantique* in France in order to study the power of landscape and picturesque beauty over our senses.<sup>37</sup>

I have preferred the English term *romantique* to our French word *romanesque* because the latter indicates more specifically the fable of a novel and the former particularly indicates the place of the scene, and the touching feel that we get from it.<sup>38</sup>

If we add a sensualist theory of knowledge to the power of nature over the senses, a change of behavior in enlightened citizens seems more likely. Girardin considered that the more sensation he felt, the more his thoughts would be filled. The walkers in a landscape garden “begin with picturesque landscapes which delight the eyes, just to give rise to philosophical

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<sup>33</sup> For a good discussion on this disagreement, see Catherine Dumas, “Ermenonville : un paysage philosophique,” *Géographie et cultures* 37 (2001): 61–62.

<sup>34</sup> “Ces feuilles étaient imprimées dès le commencement de l’année 1775 ; elles allaient paraître, lorsque les circonstances en suspendirent alors la publication. Plusieurs Ouvrages ont paru depuis sur plusieurs sortes de Jardins ; mais ici on traite principalement des Campagnes, de leur embellissement, de leur culture, & de leur subsistance...” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, iii (our translation). In the letter to Dupont de Nemours, Girardin explain that one of these circumstances were the Flour War riots of 1775.

<sup>35</sup> On the distinction between gentleman and farmer in Schabol, see André Bourde, *Agronomie et agronomes en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Sevpén, 1967), 1:202.

<sup>36</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 95; *An Essay on Landscape*, 134. On the influence of sensationist philosophy in the theory of garden, see Brigitte Weltman-Aron, *On Other Grounds: Landscape Gardening and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (New York: Sunny Press, 2001), 126 and ff.

<sup>37</sup> Henri Roddier, “Rousseau et le marquis de Girardin ou comment l’art des jardins conduit du romanesque au romantisme,” in *Les Rêveries Du Promeneur Solitaire*, (au.) Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960, 215-218.

<sup>38</sup> “J’ai préféré le mot anglais, *romantique*, a notre mot français, *romanesque*, parce que celui ci désigne plus spécialement la fable du roman, et que l’autre désigne particulièrement le site de la scène, et l’impression touchante que nous en recevons.” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 150 (our translation).

landscapes which delight the soul”.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the transformation of the noble into a gentleman cultivator required him to settle in different places in order to let them observe a range of scenes. The walker educates himself sentimentally by reacting to the slightest variations in the environments. In short, a *jardin-paysager* can re-educate the noble proprietor, in theory. Now Girardin wanted to demonstrate that this particular statement may in fact be true in practice.

On over 200 hectares of land, Girardin created different scenes which a walker discovered as he progressed along a designed itinerary.<sup>40</sup> But the impressions are not sufficient and Girardin adds philosophical inscriptions on the buildings in order to elucidate the composition. On leaving the area of Arcadia and entering into the forests, there was a small obelisk on which each face was dedicated to a poet: Virgil, Theocritus, Thomson and Gessner. From this point on, there was a series of inscriptions. For example, in a grotto next to the waterfall, Girardin inscribed a verse of Virgil’s *Georgics*: “*Speluncae, vivique locus, hic frigida Tempe.*” On a dolmen, we read “Between the gloomy forest, there studious let me fit, / And hold high converse with the mighty dead,” and in Thomson’s Grotto: “Shower make ‘em both get under the cliff or grove / Thunder they hear no more but only the sweet love.”<sup>41</sup> Specifically, the agricultural area was organised with a variety of different crops and complemented with picturesque motifs –a winery based on the temple of Bacchus, or a Swiss house– so as to bring together the agreeable with the useful, since “it is impossible to alter one without essentially hurting the other.” To Girardin, the general system of nature was a union of relationships in which “any disunion tends directly to weakness” and where “all improvement, whether moral or physical, arises from the relation of objects with each other.”<sup>42</sup>

With the creation of this picturesque rural environment, Girardin believed that he had found a relationship between the agreeable and the useful that had a positive influence on the motivation of the individual and on productive activity. He therefore hoped that “this change of things [...] will brings us back to a true taste for beautiful nature, tend to the increase of vegetation, and consequently to the advancement of agriculture, [and] the propagations of cattle.”<sup>43</sup>

However, we cannot say that agricultural progress was simply a question of aesthetics for Girardin. According to Girardin the institutional structure found by the gentleman cultivators at the start of their enterprise, namely, a land divided into plots, was the greatest hindrance to prosperity. Eighteenth-century farms in France were a miscellaneous collection of dispersed parcels.<sup>44</sup> Within this type of small-scale farm, a vast uniformity with endless variety, allowing sensory impressions to be multiplied, cannot be created. The “natural arrangement” of the land defended by Girardin cannot be achieved without combining parcels of land together.

When Girardin started writing *De la composition des paysages* to repeatedly praise English agriculture in the mid 1770s he was expressing the same admiration as agronomes and physiocrats. We know that they were indeed great admirers of English agricultural

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<sup>39</sup> “commencent par des paysages pittoresques qui charment les yeux, ils passeront bientôt à des paysages philosophiques qui charment l’âme,” Girardin, *Lettre to Dupont*, 1v. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 137.

<sup>40</sup> For a description of the four landscapes of Ermenonville —the big park, the wasteland, the small park and the rural area—, see Dumas, *op. cit.*, 66–76.

<sup>41</sup> See Conan, “Postface,” 135–148 for material regarding the inscriptions on this walk.

<sup>42</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 35; *An Essay on Landscape*, 134.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>44</sup> Peter M. Jones, “The Challenge of Land Reform in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France,” *Past & Present* 216 (2012), 110.



prosperity.<sup>45</sup> However, it would be risky to think that Girardin took direct inspiration from these two groups, especially as he did not refer to them. His admiration for English culture appears to stem from personal experience, and his 1763 trip to England, rather than from possible readings.<sup>46</sup> Girardin's main reference to English agriculture focused on one particular element that unified by law land which had been separated in the past. This consisted in the redistribution of plots through a land exchange that regrouped plots belonging to the same owner. It should be noted that this aim to reunify land fits in perfectly with Girardin's aesthetic principle of continuity –Girardin describes this principle, which falls within an aesthetic perspective, as “the fundamental principle of nature” consisting in “the unity of the whole, and the connection of the parts.”<sup>47</sup> And, by wishing the redistribution of plots, he joined the experts on agricultural reforms –agronomes, physiocrats and anti-physiocrats– who, in the 1760s, had listed the drawbacks of a subdivision of parcels: increased cultivation costs, increased fertilizer costs, soil wastage and so on. Girardin adds another argument to support *la réunion des terres*. It was necessary to redistribute land to allow gentlemen more contact with nature and thus imbibe more of its moralising and civic effects.

Girardin explained that “this land reunification, known in England as the *Compact*, has been gradually established in different provinces through Acts of Parliament since the last 50 years.”<sup>48</sup> Girardin was referring to the *Enclosure Acts*, promoted by the English Parliament from 1604. Up until then it had been the norm for owners to reach a collective consensus in the form of *Enclosure by agreement* although this normally resulted in only part of the land being enclosed. Although both mechanisms coexisted the enclosure laws were imposed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century given their speed, reliability and guarantees for the distribution of all the common land among the owners –from the 13<sup>th</sup> until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the *Enclosure by agreement* reached 47% of English land, while the *Enclosure by act* covered a further 37 % in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup> The process consists of three stages. In the first phase the owners of at least three quarters of the private land of the parish agreed to the enclosure and requested Parliamentary approval for a law regulating this. The second phase marked the start of the parliamentary stage, where a commission was created to study the initiative and to hear the claims, replacing the traditional assembly debate in the parish. Following this phase in the House of Lords and its transformation into an *Enclosure Act*, the third phase developed the management process for the enclosure through the preparation of an arbitration process that, supervised by commissioners dispatched to the parish, mapped the reorganised plot, distributing gains and loads, setting timelines for the work and delimiting the obligations of the owners.

The need for a regrouping policy for agricultural properties in France, usually separate as a result of inheritance divisions, and with a shape that did not adapt to modern cultivation techniques, was proposed by Henri Pattullo, who opted for legislators to intervene through the *Enclosure Act*, forcing owners to exchange plots.<sup>50</sup> Duhamel du

<sup>45</sup> In that regard, several passages from the first writing on political economy by Quesnay, the well-known article *Fermiers* (1756), may be cited.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding Girardin's travels, see Martin-Decaen, *op. cit.*, 8 and 71.

<sup>47</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 28; *An Essay on Landscape*, 35–36.

<sup>48</sup> “Cette réunion des terres, qu'on appelle en Angleterre le *Compact* y a été établie successivement depuis 50 ans dans les Provinces différentes par actes du Parlement.” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 107 (our translation).

<sup>49</sup> On this point, see J. R. Wordie, “The Chronology of English Enclosure, 1500-1914,” *The Economic History Review* 36 (1983): 494–495.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Pattullo, *Essai sur l'amélioration des terres* (Paris: Duran, 1758), 193-200. On this point, see Alek A. Rozental, “The Enclosure Movement in France,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 16 (1956): 55–71.

Monceau preferred the *Enclosure by agreement* system given the spatial situation in some French parishes of houses forming a block that nobody wanted to abandon.<sup>51</sup> Given the State commissioners' lack of information or honesty, Duhamel rejected an intervention.

Girardin's solution was different. As the process of regrouping and enclosing land was born from an agreement it was essential to concentrate on the mechanism to allow owners to become involved in finding solutions for the exchange of plots. Firstly, Girardin justified the intervention of legislators to force and order land exchanges. Freedom is not an alternative when it is poorly understood:

But to call for the much-needed unification of infinitely disperse and subdivided land placing agricultural workers in the centre of the land, a location that is as important for general interest as it is for private interest, we must first move aside a ghost; that of the whim of a few individuals, disguised by the imposing name of freedom. This word has long been abused and confused with capriciousness and licence and it would not be out of place to define it once and for all.<sup>52</sup>

A mistaken interpretation of freedom put property above the law, thus preventing the unification of land. Girardin proposed that: “To do what can be done is natural liberty; to do what one desire is caprice or despotism; to do what harms others is licence; to do what has to be done is civil liberty, the only one suited for social order.”<sup>53</sup> The freedom that legislators must respect and promote is civil liberty, which procures “the general benefit to which all individuals, especially owners, are interested in contributing” and this “because the essential condition of society is the sacrifice of individuals of part of their interest” in exchange for “protection of the common force for the defence of their possessions, the fruits of their work and their personal security.”<sup>54</sup>

Driven by “personal whims” and without respecting civil freedom, land exchanges with no legal framework “do not offer any of the advantages of a lasting agreement arising from enclosures or subsequent improvements” and “cause many disagreements, generating further problems and confusions in properties at the end of leases.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore legal backing was necessary for the unification of land. However, unlike the model applied in England, Girardin did not recommend the incorporation of State-appointed commissioners to the process: given “These commissioners are therefore independent of what the parties

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<sup>51</sup> Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau, *Éléments d'agriculture*, (Paris: H.-L. Guérin et L.-F. Delatour, 1762), 1:376–377.

<sup>52</sup> “Mais pour rappeler les terres éparses et subdivisées à l’infini à la réunion nécessaire à cet établissement des cultivateurs au milieu de leur champ, établissement dont l’avantage est si important pour l’intérêt général et particulier, il s’élèvera d’abord un fantôme qu’il faut commencer par écarter ; c’est celui de la fantaisie de quelques particuliers, déguisée sous le nom pompeux de la liberté. Il y a si longtemps qu’on abuse de ce mot, et qu’on le confond avec le caprice et la licence, qu’il ne sera pas hors de propos de le définir une bonne fois.” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 140 (our translation).

<sup>53</sup> “Faire et qu’on peut, c’est la liberté naturelle ; faire ce qu’on veut, c’est le caprice ou le despotisme ; faire ce qui nuit aux autres, c’est la licence ; faire ce qu’on doit ; telle est la liberté civile, la seule convenable dans l’ordre social.” *Ibid.*, 140 (our translation).

<sup>54</sup> “... l’avantage général auquel tout individu, à plus forte raison tout propriétaire, est intéressé à concourir [...] parce que la condition essentielle de la société, c’est le sacrifice que chaque individu fait d’une portion de son intérêt à la volonté générale [...] la protection de la force générale, pour la défense de sa possession, du fruit de son travail et de sa sécurité personnelle.” *Ibid.*, 141 (our translation). On this analysis with clear inspiration taken from Rousseau see also R. Girardin, *Discours sur la nécessité de la ratification de la loi par la volonté générale*, (Paris: Imprimerie du Creuset, 1791).

<sup>55</sup> “...fantaisie particulière [...] n’offrir[ai]ent] aucun des avantages d’un arrangement durable, soit pour la clôture, soit pour une amélioration suivie [...] [et] occasionner[ai]ent] beaucoup de discussions, en jetant du trouble et de la confusion dans les propriétés à l’expiration des baux.” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 142 and 143 (our translation).

choose; they can arbitrarily set their fees, and for this reason favor the rich, discourage the poor, and by fear of considerable costs, restrain the desire or the chance to get the advantage of the Compact, and hence the benefits of fencing lands.”<sup>56</sup> In this respect owners themselves were to establish “the choice of their arbiters in order to pay the surplus value that should be as money or as a larger amount of lands of similar quality as the land exchanged.”<sup>57</sup> However, Girardin was not aware of how high these transaction costs were. In fact, the cost of the unification of land acted as a major obstacle.<sup>58</sup> As Peter Jones has noted, only a small number of reunifications were carried through successfully in eighteenth-century France because it required mathematical knowledge in order to draw up scale maps, agronomic knowledge and high transaction costs.

This new organization of the land is attainable only if properties “were gathered in adjacent pieces” and if it is given “to the locals the preference for the location in the exchanged lots. The poor own only their time, we thus should prevent them from spending it in exchange of nothing.” Girardin adds that “Rich farmers by means of money and horses can run from a plow to the next; on the contrary the sharecropper has to farm his enclosure, which supplies him of his grains, but also vegetables to feed his family, dairy, and cattle to feed his beasts.”<sup>59</sup> However, the main objective of the “Compact” was to allow the gentleman cultivator to place himself at the centre of his properties. The novelty of Girardin’s ideas stems from the moralising effect of the countryside on the “enlightened citizens” was greater due to the comfort brought by proximity to the land and because the *jardin paysage* exercised a greater influence on the observer.

The dwelling of the happy and peaceful husbandmen would soon rise up in the middle of their compact farms; their fields would be as easily cultivated as their gardens [...]. A narrow path cross the enclosure, and under the shade of the hedgerows, might successively lead to the different openings of the picture, and the ever animated view of cultivation, so as to produce the most pleasing variety.<sup>60</sup>

Girardin joined the experts on agricultural reform –e.g., Antoine-Pierre Chaynit de La Galaizière, son of Leszczyński’s chancellor of Lorraine– who supported *la réunion des terres*.<sup>61</sup> However, his main objective was not technical or economic but physiological.<sup>62</sup> *La réunion de terres* also produced different positive effects, whose identification Girardin claimed had “been the purpose of my work and the sole merit I attribute to it.”<sup>63</sup> There are

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<sup>56</sup> “Ces commissaires se trouvant dès lors indépendants du choix des parties, ont pu fixer leurs vacations arbitrairement, en conséquence favoriser les riches, décourager les pauvres, et par la crainte de frais considérables, leur ôter l’envie ou la faculté de se procurer l’avantage du Compact, et par là le bénéfice d’enclorre leurs terres.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4v. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 144.

<sup>57</sup> “le choix de leurs arbitres, pour régler la plus-value qui devrait être fournie en argent ou en plus grande quantité comparativement à la qualité des terres de l’échange.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4v. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 144.

<sup>58</sup> See Jones, “The Challenge of Land Reform”, 132.

<sup>59</sup> “il faudrait d’abord qu’elles fussent réunies en pièces contigües, et donner comme de raison la préférence de la situation dans les lots des échangés. Les pauvres n’ont que leur temps, il est nécessaire de leur en épargner une dépense en pure perte. [...] Les gros fermiers à force d’argent et de chevaux peuvent courir d’une charrue à l’autre ; mais le paysan doit cultiver son enclos, qui lui fournit en outre des grains, les légumes pour la nourriture de sa famille, le laitage, et des bestiaux”. Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4r. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 145-6.

<sup>60</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 159; *An Essay on Landscape*, 159.

<sup>61</sup> On La Galaizière’s *réunion de terres*, see Jones, “The Challenge of Land Reform”, 123-129.

<sup>62</sup> See Philip T. Hoffman, *Growth in a Traditional Society: The French Countryside, 1450-1815* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28-35.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

three consequences: (i) a reduction in the cost of plots, (ii) an increase in production and (iii) a harmonisation of the interests of owners, tenant farmers and society as a whole. ‘*Culture complète*’ is therefore:

the only way to save on costs, [...] to diversify crops, to reduce consumption by horses which are very expensive and do not contribute anything; to increase the number of livestock which fertilise the land, feed man and supply factories; to unite the interests and approvals of the owner with those of the agricultural worker and of the State; to finally be able to maintain eighteen million men who from one day to the next have to face the possibility of not having enough money to buy the basics or are in too much distress to get by without money.<sup>64</sup>

The first two results are the direct consequence of the new agricultural management. The involvement of gentleman cultivators in management improves results because his new location reduces operation costs –a lower transport cost, a saving of time and motions, a more active surveillance on farms–, increases the production due to the introduction of modern cultivation techniques –crop rotation, stronger fertilisers or improved livestock reproduction– and the long lease contracts made it easier to amortise investment. Lastly, *la réunion des terres* can also improve the distribution of agricultural production and, more specifically, grain harvests. However, this third result has nothing to do with the management of the farm.

In Girardin, the market is the mechanism of distribution. Therefore, there is a conflict of interest between owners and workers. The interest of the former, the owners and tenant farmers, is to sell for a high price, while the interest of the latter, the traders and manual labourers, is to buy cheap. *La réunion des terres* also contributes to establishing a socially appropriate price of grain. As Girardin suggests, “Like you [Dupont], I have looked for what I believe to be the safest means [...] in order to reach a fair balance of the price of grains, that is also suitable to the State interest, to the interest of owners and farmers, and to the subsistence of laborers; because I think this is the precise issue at stake.”<sup>65</sup> We will see below how having used certain descriptive elements of literature on freedom of trade, Girardin finally focused on the hoarding of land as he believed that this was the origin of the monopoly in the grain trade.

### III. ENDING THE MONOPOLY IN THE SALE OF GRAIN

Since the Seven Years War, the French government decided to try new political solutions and considered reforming the grain trade. The aims of the general controllers were mostly to give way to free trade but their projects did not really materialize.<sup>66</sup> Girardin tackled the matter of grain commerce by opposing to the economic policy models of Sully and Colbert, who

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<sup>64</sup> “... le seul moyen d’épargner les frais, [...] de varier les cultures, de diminuer la consommation des chevaux qui coûtent beaucoup et ne fournissent rien ; d’augmenter au contraire le nombre et la quantité des bestiaux, qui engraisent la terre, nourrissent l’homme, et fournissent aux manufactures ; de réunir l’intérêt et l’agrément du propriétaire, celui du paysan, celui de l’Etat ; enfin de parvenir à assurer la subsistance de dix-huit millions d’hommes, qui, d’un jour à l’autre, sont exposés à n’avoir pas assez d’argent pour acheter le nécessaire, ou assez de nécessaire pour se passer d’argent.” Girardin, “Réponse de l’Auteur,” 269 (our translation).

<sup>65</sup> “J’ai cherché ainsi que vous les moyens qui m’ont paru les plus sûrs [...] pour parvenir enfin à cette juste balance du prix des grains, également convenable à l’intérêt de l’État, à l’intérêt des propriétaires et [des] cultivateurs, et à la subsistance des manœuvriers : car tel est à ce qu’il me semble l’état précis de la question.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 2r. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 148.

<sup>66</sup> On the issue of the debates on the policy of grain trade, see the classic study of Steve Kaplan, *Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976).

defend respectively the interests of farmers and manufacturers without resolving the situation of the employees, –expensive cereal in the case of the former and low salaries in the case of the latter.<sup>67</sup> The cult of M. de Sully, minister for finance of Henri IV, was revived by l'abbé de L'Ecluse Des Loges (1745). Following this trend, Quesnay praises Sully and criticizes Colbert, giving rise to an extensive literature comparing both ministers.<sup>68</sup> In the second half of the 1770s, the differences between Turgot and Necker, the author of an *Eloge de Colbert* (1773), over the reform of the grain market gave rise to texts which compared both authors with Sully and Colbert, respectively –e.g., *Entretiens de Périclès et de Sully aux Champs-Élysées sur leur administration, ou Balance entre les avantages du luxe et ceux de l'économie* (1776).<sup>69</sup>

Girardin adhered to the system of free commerce of grain promoted by the edict of freedom of trade of grain of September 1774, during the ministry of Turgot. Positive results, just as they were announced, were indeed numerous: the price of grain was moderated, purchase was easier, grain was provided to the less fertile provinces and the costs of commerce were reduced. However, as had happened in the case of Sully's policy, the drawback of this system was its inability to guarantee the subsistence of field workers in the event of bad crops, such as those of 1774. In this case, Girardin attributed the problem to the unsuitable relationship between *commerce des travaux* and *commerce des subsistances*:

When subsistence is expensive, there are fewer jobs and more needs, as *commerce des travaux* is inversely related to that of *subsistances*. In the case of the former, too many sellers and too few buyers; hence the drop in the daily wage. In the case of the latter, too many buyers and too few sellers, hence the monopoly in the sale of subsistence goods.<sup>70</sup>

Even with the implementation of free trade for grain, families required higher incomes to acquire subsistence goods when these became more expensive as a result of bad crops. Therefore, workers sought more work just at the time when fewer field employees were needed on the land due to poor production. The result was an excessive labour supply that reduced salaries.

The distinction proposed by Girardin between *commerce des travaux* and *commerce des subsistances* probably stems from literature critical of free trade in grain. François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais made the distinction between *concurrence du travail* and *concurrence des articles* in order to present the wage assimilated to the price of goods, and consequently, influenced by abundance and scarcity.<sup>71</sup> Although Du Pont already used the term *commerce des subsistances*, Necker popularized it for his part when presenting grain commerce as a special case requiring specific regulation given the type of good exchanged. Although the term *commerce des travaux* did not appear in this work, Necker refers to the

<sup>67</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 148–155.

<sup>68</sup> On the debate between Turgot and Necker in the context of the debate over the pre-eminence of agriculture, see Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 142–150.

<sup>69</sup> On the latter point, see Georges Weulersse, “Sully et Colbert jugés par les physiocrates,” *Revue des doctrines économiques et sociales* 10 (1922): 234–251; and Laurent Avezou, *Sully à travers l'histoire. Les avatars d'un mythe politique* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2001).

<sup>70</sup> “... lorsque la subsistance est chère, il y a moins de travaux et plus de besoins ; car le commerce des travaux est précisément en raison inverse de celui des subsistances. Dans le premier, trop de vendeurs, trop peu d'acheteurs ; de là le rabais du prix de la journée. Dans le second, trop d'acheteurs, trop peu de vendeurs ; de là le monopole dans la vente des subsistances.” Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 150–151 (our translation).

<sup>71</sup> See also François Véron Duverger de Forbonnais, *Principes et observations économiques* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1767), 1:34.

“concurrence des hommes pressés de travailler pour vivre.”<sup>72</sup> The imbalance between wages and the price of grain and its dire consequences for the population was a common theme among critics of the liberalisation of the grain trade that occurred in the 1770s. As is well known, the physiocrats believed a free grain market would lead to the *bon prix*, that is, a price that covered the costs of production, generated significant revenue for the proprietor and was not too high for the consumer. To increase consumption, it was necessary to find a *bon prix* that enriched the farmer, who would increase his investment in order to generate a greater net product—i.e., public revenue increased as well—and higher income that would increase the consumption of manufactured goods by the landowners.<sup>73</sup> This is how, in the end, the activity of the nation as a whole increases.

Criticism of this liberalisation theory was wide and varied. Galiani believed that the grain market did not operate under the same laws as others because people are not been accustomed to take care of their own subsistence. A gradual transition from the policy of ‘royal paternalism’ to a free market was necessary until the people became accustomed to the operation of a commercial society. Necker’s view was that the grain market needed special treatment since the prices did not reflect the real market situation—to understand the price, it was necessary to consider negotiating power, the information available to the agents and the time dimension of the trade. Clear market regulation rules were needed to allow everyone to subsist (producer, trader and consumer). Linguet thought that the law on free exportation increased the incomes of landowners and impoverished the workers. If the landowners and the government did not maintain cereal prices at a reasonable level, the consequences would be generalised chaos arising from a revolt by the poor. With less confidence in the market as an assignation mechanism, Mably suggested that it was not the spending of landowners, but the spending of the population that drove agriculture. With liberalisation, the dominance of the landowners (owners of the means of production) and the merchants (owners of the commercial capital) increased the misery. Interests had to be reconciled by creating citizens’ assemblies where they would find a common interest to compensate the unequal division of labour.<sup>74</sup>

Girardin’s criticism of the liberalisation of the grain trade was different. He believed that the price of grain was at a level that was structurally too high due to “there are fewer people capable of employing unnecessary workers, and there is a large number of miserable people who urgently need to get a job.”<sup>75</sup> Girardin’s explanation focused on monopolistic behaviour on the production side, since it was there that he found the cause of the high price of cereals under a free trade system and specifically, there was a monopoly in the sale of grain caused by the unsatisfactory land distribution. Girardin thus writes that there is a “disproportion between the salary of the workers and the price of the food”, and that “the

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<sup>72</sup> Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours, *Éphémérides du Citoyen* (Milan: Feltrinelli editore, 1979), 200; and Jacques Necker, *Sur la législation et le commerce des grains*, (Paris: Pissot, 1775), 1:157.

<sup>73</sup> See J. Cartelier, “L’économie politique de François Quesnay,” in *Physiocratie: droit naturel, tableau économique et autres textes*, ed. Jean Cartelier (Paris, Flammarion, 1991), 41–47.

<sup>74</sup> For a comparison of the objections to grain trade liberalization in the 1770s in France, see Gilbert Faccarello, “Galiani, Necker and Turgot. A debate on economic reform and policy in 18<sup>th</sup> century France,” in *Studies in the History of French Political Economy. From Bodin to Walras*, ed. Gilbert Faccarello (London: Routledge, 1998), 124–140; Julie Ferrand, “Mably and the liberalisation of the grain trade: An economically and socially inefficient policy,” *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 20 (2013): 886–895; and Steve Kaplan, *Raisonner sur les blés: Essais sur les lumières économiques* (Paris: Fayard, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> “qu’il y a moins de gens en état de faire travailler des ouvriers superflus, et qu’il y a un grand nombre de malheureux qui ont le besoin le plus urgent d’obtenir de l’ouvrage.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 3v. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 151.

cause” of this disproportion is “the tiny number of farmers and the huge number of workers that is a consequence of the distribution of our lands and from our rural economy.”<sup>76</sup>

Unlike the proposals from agronomes such as Pattullo or Duhamel du Monceau, which were relatively detached from concerns regarding the behaviour of the market and were essentially motivated by the adaptation of land to modern cultivation techniques, Girardin suggested that the unification of land made it possible not only to increase production but also to overcome the problem of monopoly by increasing the number of plots worked. However, Girardin considered that more numerous farms were not possible without the intervention of legislators. Girardin justified the intervention of legislators to force landowners to rent their lands to tenant farmers. Thus, he states:

In order to ensure this condition both fair and necessary ‘the subsistence for everyone’ [...], I first suggest the use of the Compact or contiguity through a law, as has been made in England, and then to force the owners, when they do not derive themselves their profit from their lands, to distribute them in small parts among the locals. If you [Dupont] feel that the term force is questionable, I could dispense with it. Just let me stress that the matter is not really to discuss whether the law should force, but to examine whether it is fair. I agree, sir, that the plan which I just sketch requires a long preparation nevertheless in political harmony, as in anything else, it is necessary to prepare for dissonances, and sickness demands lasting diets.<sup>77</sup>

The issue was proposed in terms of unification of agricultural properties and dispersion into small plots which a single agricultural worker could manage.<sup>78</sup> Even if the disagreement on measures to force landowners between he and Dupont is complete, Girardin's work does not include any of the physiocratic problems of *grande culture* and *petite culture* as there is no confrontation between rich tenant farmers and sharecroppers. It is well-known that Quesnay, in his articles in *The Encyclopédie* “Fermier” (1756) and “Grains” (1757), proposed the social reorganisation of the country through the replacement of small-scale cultivation in the hands of sharecroppers by large-scale cultivation managed by wealthy agricultural entrepreneurs. The introduction of capital into the operations of these wealthy farmers brought increased productivity to the land, as production techniques were modified, allowed the hiring of labour and brought greater negotiating power in the market since the urgency to sell no longer existed.<sup>79</sup> However, in Girardin the growth in production is not provoked by an increase in capital stock but by the new system for the management of production

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<sup>76</sup> “la disproportion entre le salaire du journalier, et le prix de sa nourriture, après en avoir aperçu la cause dans le trop petit nombre de cultivateurs, et le trop grand nombre des journaliers résultant de la distribution de nos terres et de notre économie rurale.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4r. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 151–152.

<sup>77</sup> “Pour assurer cette précaution juste autant que nécessaire, « la subsistance de tout le monde [...], je propos[e] d’abord d’opérer le Compact ou contiguïté par une loi, comme on a fait en Angleterre, et ensuite d’astreindre les propriétaires, lorsqu’ils ne feraient pas eux-mêmes valoir leurs terres, à les distribuer en petites parties parmi leurs cohabitants. Si ce terme d’astreindre vous a paru répréhensible, je n’y tiens pas. Vous me permettrez seulement, monsieur d’avoir l’honneur de vous observer, que le véritable point de la question est moins de discuter si la loi doit astreindre, que d’examiner si la loi est juste. Je conviens, monsieur, que le plan que je ne fais qu’indiquer exige une longue préparation mais dans l’harmonie politique, comme en toute autre, il faut bien préparer les dissonances, et les maladies invétérées demandent nécessairement un long régime.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4r. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 153–154.

<sup>78</sup> Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 154n.

<sup>79</sup> See for example Georges Weulersse, *Le mouvement physiocratique en France, (de 1756 à 1770)* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1910), 1:333–351; and Catherine Larrère, “L’analyse physiocratique des rapports entre la ville et la campagne,” *Études rurales* 49 (1973): 42–68.

within his *culture complète*. Fewer farms meant both an excess of labour in the countryside, since agriculture is seasonal, and also a rise in the price of wheat, as competition between producers was not guaranteed. In short, Girardin can be placed between anti-physiocrats, who describe manouvers to manipulate competition, such as Galiani, and physiocrats, who cry out against the administrative initiatives that limit trade and infringe natural Laws.<sup>80</sup>

To Girardin, it was preferable to increase agricultural production through a scenario of numerous farms than to make a few latifundia highly productive. The increase in producers heightened competition among sellers in the grain trade, reducing the price. Girardin also argued that the positive effect of a greater number of farms would benefit owners. The lower price of cereal affected their rents but not their revenues which were guaranteed by a greater number of rental properties. As regards farmers on small plots, the lower price of cereal affected their surplus but not their subsistence which was guaranteed by crops. As regards workers, the higher number of farms available meant that employees became farmers, reducing the labour supply and increasing salaries.

The owner certainly benefits from a greater number of small rental properties; he saves in constructions, in risks and in the maintenance of the main buildings of the farm; small scale parcels are always better cultivated and better improved, especially when they are fenced, and cattle graze or coop up in the fallows; therefore the State benefits from a larger quantity, and does so without the risk of an increase in prices since farmer's families can keep his own subsistence before selling the surplus, and because a smaller quantity of workers can sell their work proportionally to the price of their subsistence.<sup>81</sup>

The combination of wealthier and fewer buyers and numerous sellers meant that prices came to depend solely on scarcity or abundance, never on the market power of its participants. This is how the natural distribution of the land, recovered through reunification, made the different interests of members of society compatible. Precisely this social harmony is what justifies the intervention of legislators to force landowners. As he explains to Dupont, Girardin was aware of a gradual transition was necessary until landowners became accustomed to never leave their lands uncultivated. Until then, the sacrifice of individuals of part of their interest by law is fair because the freedom that legislators must respect is civil liberty.

#### IV. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The estate of Ermenonville, acquired by Girardin in 1762, was used to experiment with his ideas.<sup>82</sup> Reorganised after 1766 and destroyed during the Revolution, this space was conceived as a *ferme ornée*. Shenstone's name was inscribed in the garden of Ermenonville on an obelisk close to the altar of the *Révêrie*. Girardin considered himself to be a gentleman cultivator living on a property where cultivated land and garden land

<sup>80</sup> One can find an analysis of this debate in Kaplan, *Raisonner sur les blés*, 224-225.

<sup>81</sup> “Le propriétaire gagne certainement à louer en petits marchés ; il épargne les constructions, les risques et les entretiens des gros corps de ferme ; les terres en petite culture sont toujours mieux cultivées, et mieux amendées, surtout lorsqu’elles sont encloses, et que des bestiaux pâturent ou parquent sur les jachères ; par conséquent l’État gagne au résultat général de la quantité, et peut gagner sans risque à la hausse des prix, puisque chaque famille de cultivateur peut garder sa propre subsistance avant de vendre son excédent, et que les journaliers devenus beaucoup moins nombreux, sont dans le cas en conséquence de leur rareté de vendre leur travail en proportion du prix de leur subsistance.” Girardin, *Letter to Dupont*, 4r–5v. See also Girardin, *De la composition des paysages*, 154–156.

<sup>82</sup> A description of Girardin’s reorganization can be found in Dumas, *op. cit.*, 60–70; and Martin-Decaen, *Le dernier ami de J.-J. Rousseau*, 52 and ff.



were continuous. Both pleasant and useful, Ermenonville mixed its agricultural buildings with those for accommodation and rest. In addition, Girardin leased some small plots to agricultural workers. In general, *De la composition des paysages* is an excellent representation of how 18<sup>th</sup>-century gardens were not limited to the strictly ‘horticultural’ domain. Girardin's unique treatment of this issue fits into an economic perspective. This can be compared with trends encouraging architecture, art, theatre, literature, philosophy of knowledge and music.<sup>83</sup>

The thinking of Girardin has only been commented upon by landscape specialists, both contemporaries and later, because his work dealt mainly with gardens. This may be the reason why his economic thinking has been neglected. In this paper, we have attempted to explain how Girardin incorporated leading elements of an *idéologie nobiliaire* which, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in line with the primacy of agriculture, represented economic thinking that was distinct from that of physiocrats and agronomists. Girardin's ideas on gardens and agriculture were largely derivative of a number of writers and practitioners of the 1760s, 70s and 80s. Even though he owed a lot to the physiocrats, Girardin's project was substantially different. Unlike the physiocrats, Girardin and a series of writings that the literature has grouped under the term *idéologie nobiliaire* do not trust in wealthy farmers. Gentlemen were the enlightened citizens and they were the moral individuals who were the agents of change and, consequently, responsible for agricultural progress.

The novelty of Girardin's ideas stems from the moralising effect of the countryside on “enlightened citizens”. Arriving back from his 1763 trip to England, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, Girardin believed he had found how to bring back the nobles from the cities. He discovered that landscape gardens contributed to the return of “enlightened citizens” to the countryside. These gentleman cultivators were to bring with them greater resources for rural activity and, above all, “reflections and experiments.” Nothing more is required for agricultural progress but the institutional structure found by the gentleman cultivators, namely a land divided into plots. Girardin joined the experts on agricultural reform who supported *la réunion des terres*. However, his main objective was not technical or economic. Girardin trusted in its moralising and civic effects on gentleman cultivators.

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<sup>83</sup> On these different questions see especially Baridon, *Les jardins*, 801–937. For theatre specifically see Martial Poirson, “Le théâtre, côté jardin: scénographie et dramaturgie du parc paysager dans le théâtre français du second 18<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Dix-huitième siècle* 45 (2013): 413–432.