The École Royale Militaire was founded in 1751 to educate the impoverished nobility of France in its traditional roles as warriors for the French king. The institution was operated with the approval of the king and under his patronage. Within just a few years the school ran into financial problems. A key benefactor and the First Intendant of the Military School was Joseph de Pâris-Duverney—one of the great financiers of the eighteenth century and one of the most important to Louis XV. It was his duty as First Intendant to find a financial solution to the predicament. He eventually settled upon a lottery scheme that would bring in enough profit to continue the school's construction and operations. This plan ultimately came to fruition with a royal decree founding the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire on 15 October 1757.

Inherent in this lottery was a significant cultural and intellectual tension. The means of the very innovative enterprise of the lottery appeared at odds with the end of supporting the Old

---

Regime institution of the nobility in its traditional military role. The nobility was portrayed as the selfless warrior class dedicated to something larger than itself, namely, the aid of king and patrie, while the lottery stood in as a proxy for contemporary anxieties over changing patterns of consumption and luxury, which were coded by moralists as selfish and emasculating. This new lottery sat on a seismic fault line between modern commercial enterprise and traditional Old Regime culture. The new lottery would have to reconcile this tension. The goal of this essay is to explain how these tensions surrounding the Loterie de l'École Militaire were negotiated and resolved.

Rousseau and the Noblesse Commerçante

Few writers shook the intellectual foundations of the eighteenth century and had as much influence as Jean-Jacques Rousseau. And there are perhaps few people from the eighteenth century who capture the imagination more than Giacomo Casanova. These two men are almost diametrically opposed intellectually. Rousseau was the notorious moralist who disdained society and luxury. Casanova found polite society and material excess irresistible. Indeed, Casanova is almost caricaturized as the stereotypical eighteenth-century libertine. Rousseau very much tried to ground himself intellectually as a "citizen of Geneva," while Casanova was a widely celebrated itinerant "adventurer." Seeming to have no roots, Casanova traveled throughout Europe and made himself at ease wherever he was. Rousseau celebrated the genuineness of austere simplicity; Casanova celebrated the artifice of audacious luxuriance. In Rousseau's delineation of the general will, we have the most distinct articulation of selflessness. In Casanova's delineation of the ethos of libertinage, we have the most distinct articulation of egoism. It is very much the tension between these two different self-constructions which played out with the Loterie de l'École Militaire.
The Military School was founded just after publication of Rousseau's highly influential *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* in November 1750, which sharply criticized modern society and its material progress. While Rousseau never mentioned the Loterie de l'École Militaire or lotteries more generally in his essay, he did directly engage in and influence all of the most important debates surrounding the new lottery, including debates about patriotism, military service, nobility, commerce, and luxury. As David Bell has pointed out, Rousseau's essay played a role in shaping discourses about war and military service, both of which were intricately related to Old Regime notions of noble warfare. As Jay Smith has shown, Rousseau also played an important role in shaping changing notions of nobility. Smith notes that Rousseau engaged implicitly with Montesquieu's ideas of the nobility presented in the *Spirit of Laws* (1748), even using language nearly identical to Montesquieu's. Smith suggests that Rousseau is central to understanding contemporary debates about nobility, patriotism, and commerce, all of which played important roles in the debate about the nobility's proper role in commerce. Rousseau's *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* is thus central to understanding the larger intellectual and cultural context of the establishment of the Loterie de l'École Militaire.

In his *Discourse*, Rousseau attacked luxury and ostentation as great evils, but he also attacked contemporary society and political thinkers for speaking "only of commerce and of money." Rousseau argued that luxury, money, and commerce were at the root of modern moral corruption. He asked rhetorically if anyone could "deny that good morals are essential if Empires are to endure, and that luxury is diametrically

---

4 David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 78-80.
opposed to good morals?" Rousseau thus inextricably linked the political destiny of states with their economic and moral destiny. "Citizens" thought of the patrie, not their own financial well-being.

For Rousseau, military service was one of the greatest ways to show patriotic devotion, and it was one of the purest forms of selfless dedication. Indeed, Rousseau placed luxury and military service at opposite ends of his moral spectrum with egoism on one end and selflessness on the other. If only "the Sciences purified morals, if they taught men to shed their blood for the Fatherland," then no nation that had advanced science would be enslaved. Military service was the highest ideal for Rousseau because it was the most selfless devotion to the patrie. While many enlightened men of letters liked to think of Paris as the new Athens, Rousseau definitively rejected the Athenian model. Athens was a city of great poets and painters, but in Sparta, men were simple and virtuous. In Sparta, men did not concern themselves with the egotistical trappings of ostentation, luxury, and commerce but with selfless service to the patrie.

Rousseau's Discourse coincided in the 1750s with a debate about the role of the nobility in French society. Much of the Second Estate's social prestige and raison d'être had historically been its service to the king as the warrior class. By mid-century, the sale of offices and ennoblement under Louis XIV and his successors had diluted the Second Estate to the point that it had something of an identity crisis. Some writers argued that the nobility should remain within their traditional military role and be excluded from participation in commercial endeavors. They argued that the nobility was noble because it sacrificed itself through selfless military service to the king and patrie, while

---

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 8.
9 Ibid., 10.
merchants and financiers were ignoble because of their selfish pursuit of material gain.\textsuperscript{10}

The debate over the proper role of the nobility was not particularly new in the 1750s, but it took on a different tone and fervor with a publication by the abbé Gabriel-François Coyer in January 1756—the year before the founding of the Loterie de l'École Militaire.\textsuperscript{11} In \textit{La noblesse commerçante}, Coyer set off a debate that sparked a pamphlet war not only over the nobility's role in commerce, but also about the very role of nobility and even the meaning of patriotism.\textsuperscript{12} Coyer argued that there was no moral divide between commercial activities and military service. Merchants were just as virtuous as nobles. Coyer proposed judging the nobility and merchants by their utility to the patrie. He contrasted the useful merchants who engaged in commerce and thereby created wealth for the nation with the idle nobility who did nothing due to their special status.\textsuperscript{13}

Coyer's essay set off a fierce debate. Among the first and most prominent critiques was the chevalier d'Arcq's \textit{La noblesse militaire, opposée à la noblesse commerçante: Ou le patriote français}, which was also published in 1756—just months after Coyer's essay had appeared. The chevalier d'Arcq, who happened to be the illegitimate son of Louis XIV's illegitimate


\textsuperscript{11} Smith, \textit{Nobility Reimagined}, 120; on Coyer's life, see Leonard Adams, \textit{Coyer and the Enlightenment} (Banbury, U.K.: Voltaire Foundation, 1974).


son, attacked Coyer's notion that the nobility should actively take part in commerce. D'Arcq attacked commerce more generally as breeding moral corruption through selfish pursuit of gain. Merchants were "mere calculators, whose only goal is to enrich themselves while procuring for their fellow citizens all the things that weaken their courage . . . men who will do anything to increase the level of opulence, pomp, and luxury in their country and [who do] nothing to conserve its liberty." D'Arcq referred to an "idle citizen" as "useless" and "criminal" who "steals all that he consumes. The gentleman is a citizen before being noble, and the only privilege his nobility gives him is the right to choose among the important services that the state can and must expect of him." It was within this intellectual and cultural context that the Military School was formed and financed. The debates surrounding the new lottery in support of a Military School for the impoverished nobility were thus steeped in the discourses surrounding commerce, nobility, and egoism versus patriotism.

Military Reform, the École Royale Militaire, and Casanova

These debates about commerce, nobility, and general national decay spilled over into questions about reform in the French military. Venality, ennoblement, and money in general were thought to play too large a part in the military rather than the nobility in their role as warriors. The chevalier d'Arcq, for example, warned that too many officer commissions had gone to moneyed men that "should have been given to the nobility." The founding of the Military School was seen as a solution to the

14 Quoted in Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 126.
15 Quoted in Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 122.
17 Quoted in Blaufarb, *French Army*, 17.
problem of having too many wealthy men in the officer corps. The school would increase military opportunities for the impoverished nobility by providing an entirely free military education to indigent nobles, thus lessening the military's reliance on rich men. The very idea of the school was, then, to counter the pernicious effects of commerce and moneyed interests in the military by setting conditions under which the poor nobility could assert their true role as the king's warriors.\textsuperscript{18}

This very traditional mission was, ironically, overseen by Joseph Pâris-Duverney, one of the great financiers of the eighteenth century. Pâris-Duverney represented exactly the kind of man that the chevalier d'Arcq and military reformers wanted to keep out of the military. As intendant, Pâris-Duverney was responsible for operating the École Royale Militaire, including funding it.\textsuperscript{19} By 1757, the school was under major financial strain. Being an innovative financier, Pâris-Duverney ultimately settled on a new lottery. Much of what we know about the origins of this lottery comes from the memoirs of Giacomo Casanova, who played an important role in its founding. There Casanova argued fervently for the lottery; in doing so, he stood for cultural values very different than those represented by Rousseau and d'Arcq.

There are perhaps few people from the eighteenth century who capture the imagination more than Casanova.\textsuperscript{20} His memoirs recount seemingly endless stories of intrigue, libertinage, and gambling. He was a widely celebrated itinerant "adventurer," and he was entirely comfortable re-creating his own identity whenever the need presented itself. In fact, it is that very sense of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 20-23. \\
\textsuperscript{19} Shovlin, Political Economy of Virtue, 30-31, 80-81. \\
\end{flushright}
identity—or lack thereof—that is particularly interesting about Casanova in relation to commerce, luxury, and patriotism. Casanova spent most of his life traveling throughout Europe without rooting himself to any particular place, language, or religion. To be sure, he wrote his memoirs in French, not his native language of Italian. Casanova settled in a place for as long as he enjoyed the pleasures that were to be offered there or until his patrons tired of him. When either one of those things happened, he simply packed up and moved on. This rootless egoism stood in sharp contrast to Rousseau. While Rousseau and other anti-luxury moralists espoused selfless devotion to patrie, Casanova extolled the virtues of roving self-indulgence.

Casanova was unique in his lottery position. In his memoirs, which were written in the 1780s and 1790s and published posthumously, Casanova claimed to have not simply defended the lottery back in the 1750s, but to have promoted it shamelessly. The lottery, according to Casanova, was good because it was financially effective. Casanova was also intimately connected to a small circle at court tied to French finance, including Madame de Pompadour, the famed family of financiers in the Pâris clan, and Jean-Nicolas de Boullongne, who served as Controller General from 1757 to 1759. His memoirs recount conversations and interactions among these individuals. Thus, his memoirs can be broadly construed as the voice of the coterie of finance at mid-century, which in many ways opposed Rousseau and the moralists, who criticized both luxury and commerce.

Casanova arrived in Paris in January 1757—six years after the founding of the Military School and when Pâris-Duverney was searching for ways to finance the school. Casanova's story intersected with that of the Loterie de l'École Militaire at a dinner party, which included two important members of the Pompadour circle: Pâris-Duverney and Boullongne, the current Controller General. Casanova found the two men discussing financial schemes for the Military School "without burdening the

21 Shovlin, Political Economy of Virtue, 26-38.
State or embarrassing the royal treasury." Casanova, Pâris-Duverney, and Boullongne began discussing the possibility of a lottery.\textsuperscript{22} The lottery had the support of Pâris-Duverney's ally Madame de Pompadour, but some members of the King's Council were reluctant to support the plan. Their concerns were not moral but financial: They feared losses. They feared that multiple players might win, which would then require the lottery to pay out much more than it took in, ultimately bankrupting the lottery.

Casanova understood this dynamic of risk, but he embraced, rather than feared it. He also adopted a broadly commercial and consumerist approach. Rather than minimizing the lottery's potential financial exposure, Casanova suggested that the state flaunt money to whet consumers' appetites and to garner their confidence in the institution. He suggested that the Royal Council guarantee the lottery for up to a hundred million livres. Pâris-Duverney balked at such a large sum, but Casanova argued that such a measure would reassure consumers. Moreover, he suggested that just the talk of such large sums of money would fire the imagination of consumers as they would project that money in their own hands. Casanova offered the cautious men of finance a lesson in consumer psychology. As he told them, "the thing is to dazzle."\textsuperscript{23} This lottery, as Casanova conceived it, would be an aggressive, risk-seeking commercial enterprise that accepted an unabashed ethos of consumption and commerce.

Casanova went even further. He positively hoped for initial losses, arguing that, "if the King loses a great sum at the first drawing, the success of the lottery is assured. It is a misfortune to be desired."\textsuperscript{24} Making an analogy to the profitable insurance companies, another new financial and commercial enterprise of the eighteenth century, Casanova argued that purchasers of insurance did so because they saw the very real material loss

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 5:26.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 5:26-27.
when disaster happened. Because the losses were very concrete, consumers purchased insurance. The same principle, Casanova claimed, held true for lottery tickets. He argued that an initial loss by the lottery and win for the players would bridge the gap between imagination and reality, which in turn would spur their purchase of lottery tickets.

It was this concept of lotteries as commercial, financial calculation that Casanova successfully presented to the Council of the Military School—a meeting set up by Madame de Pompadour, who had long championed the idea of a lottery, according to Casanova. The Loterie de l'École Militaire was decreed on 15 October 1757. The King's Council may have approved the lottery, but the matter of whether or not such a lottery was appropriate to support the noble Military School was still to be resolved. The gap between Casanova's consumer and Rousseau's patriot was yet to be bridged.

Between Casanova and Rousseau: Defending the Loterie de l'École Militaire

An anonymous 1759 pamphlet tried to reconcile this intellectual tension. It was titled significantly *Le patriote français*, borrowing from d'Arcq's title, *La noblesse militaire*. The pamphlet defended the lottery, but it also accepted d'Arcq's fundamental point that the nobility was the source of regeneration for the French military. In defending the new Loterie de l'École Militaire, the author used language that would make both Rousseau and Casanova simultaneously comfortable and uncomfortable. There was no defense of the school as none seemed needed. The lottery, on the other hand, was a different matter. Without defending lotteries in principle, the pamphlet simply made claims for the utility of this specific lottery, arguing

---

25 Ibid., 5:32-34.
26 Ibid., 5:32-36.
that the final use of the money mitigated and cleansed the "vice and infamy of its origin."  

The author placed the nobility at the center of the French nation and its rejuvenation. It was, after all, the Military School that "prepares for it [the nation] the defenders and the support of its grandeur," and it was the nobility and their families "who have paid with their blood" for the nation.  

It was because of the past sacrifices and spilled blood of the nobility that the lottery would fulfill the most important task of lotteries: to "excite the zeal and confidence of the French Nation." The nation was thus "assuring itself of new epochs of glory" by supporting the lottery and military training for the poor nobility.  

The pamphlet ultimately justified the means of the lottery by arguing that the end was good. But it was not the nobility's military service to the king that was praised; rather it was the nobility's service to the nation that was emphasized. Indeed, the Loterie de l'École Militaire "was not established directly in the name of the king, rather it was by his authorization and under his protection." The king was simply an arbiter and regulator of the lottery, not directly involved with it. In fact, the public bought tickets for its own benefit of rejuvenating the nation by supporting the poor nobility. To some degree, the author of the pamphlet portrayed the king as irrelevant as the lottery arose out of the will of the public—and, indeed, the lottery and the nation became discursively inseparable. The pamphlet states, one "is able to see the Loterie de l'École Royale Militaire as something analogous to the taste of the nation." The entire discussion of the nobility and its sacrifice was framed in patriotic discourse, but that patriotic discourse was centered on lottery ticket consumers who supported national regeneration through consumption.

---

27 Le patriote français (Paris, 1759), 2.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 6.
31 Ibid.
The author acknowledged that many people were "disgusted about using a lottery." Despite this opposition, the larger public had become enamored with it, and the public and its consumption was the true arbiter of right and wrong.32 Despite what moralists might say about the lottery, the public's approval was worth more. In fact, the pamphlet argued that this was one of the primary reasons behind the king allowing a lottery for the Military School. It was because of the public's desire and willingness to play the game that he chose a lottery rather than some other tax measure, which would be "a direct and absolute burden on his people."33

*Le patriote français* thus attempted to reconcile the problem of wealth and virtue, commerce and nobility, and egoism and selfless patriotism. It furthermore argued that the lottery was uniquely suited to do so because of its very nature as a lottery. In other words, the voluntary nature of the lottery coupled with the ends that it supported—namely, the poor nobility destined to the patriotic cause of military service—made this particular lottery especially virtuous. While individuals might be pursuing their own personal gain, the ultimate result was support of the patrie. Even the title of the pamphlet attempted to reconcile the dichotomy between the individual and the patrie—that is, between egoism and patriotism. The title refers to a single individual in *"le patriote français,"* yet both the noun and adjective refer to a larger sense of community. The noun *"patriote"* highlighted the individual acting on behalf of the patrie. This pamphlet echoes d'Arcq's use of the term to stress the nobility's selfless devotion to the patrie through military service, though its subject was not the nobility but the consumers of the Loterie de l'École Militaire. The pamphlet turned egoistical lottery ticket consumers into "French patriots." The Loterie de l'École Militaire thus stood to democratize patriotism by making consumers patriotic through their purchase of tickets.

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 7.
To be sure, a purchaser of a ticket of the Loterie de l'École Militaire was *le patriote français*

The Loterie de l'École Militaire thus sat at an uncomfortable intersection of mid-eighteenth-century French culture. It was able to balance the tensions between the traditional nobility and the rising commercial and financial interests. The lottery did this by implicitly maintaining the centrality of the nobility in its traditional military role by supporting the new Military School, whose explicit objective was to increase the presence of the nobility and decrease that of moneyed men in the ranks. At the same time, the lottery tapped into the increasingly commercial economy with its consumerist impulses to achieve those traditional objectives of the school. Certainly the anonymous author of the *Le patriote français* sought to create a discursive field in which commerce and individual consumption could stand side by side with the nobility in its traditional martial role. The author suggested that the rise of dynamic financial capitalism, commerce, and consumption need not be at odds with traditional notions of nobility. The lottery succeeded briefly in reconciling these positions, though deep tensions remained within mid-eighteenth-century French culture.