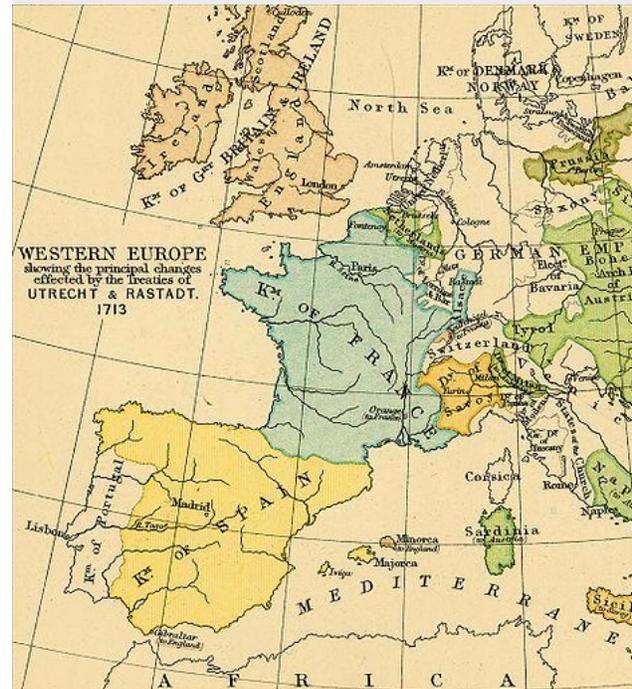


# Primary Source:

## *A Refugee in the Dutch Republic, 1670s-1690*

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### Introduction

Below is the writings by someone presenting herself as a refugee who was living in the Dutch Republic in the 1680s. She fled from France in 1685 to The Hague and later wrote a memoir of her experience. As you read, first consider these questions:

- Was the author a refugee? Why or why not?
- How does the goals of the author in writing this text shape our understanding of their situation? What information might they be leaving out?
- What evidence, if any, did the author want to leave behind for others to access?

When you are done, go back over the text and review Reading 2.

Make a list of all the push factors compelling them to escape and all the pull factors that might have drawn her to the Dutch Republic.

Then list all the preexisting structures that you can identify that shaped their travel.

### PRIMARY SOURCES

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#### INTRODUCTION

#### A HUGUENOT WOMAN RECOUNTS HER ESCAPE

# Primary Source 1: *A Huguenot Woman Recounts Her Escape*



**Anne Marguerite Petit**

Anne Marguerite Petit (1663–1719) was born in the French city of Nîmes to a Protestant family. After her mother died, only a year later, she was raised by her maternal aunt, Marguerite Cotton Saporta. In 1685, after King Louis XIV revoked the law permitting limited religious freedoms to Protestants, Anne Marguerite and her adopted mother were among the tens of thousands of Huguenots who fled France. In this account, she describes her escape to Geneva. From there, she travelled north to the Dutch Republic. The following year, however, she returned to France, was imprisoned, converted to Catholicism, and married a Catholic military commander (Guillaume Du Noyer), with whom she had four children. But by 1701, the marriage had turned sour, and Anna Marguerite fled (with two of her children) again to the Dutch Republic, where she re-joined the Reformed Church and became a noted author and editor. Starting in 1707 she began writing her memoirs, which she intended for publication, to combat the distrust she faced among fellow Huguenot refugees in the Netherlands. The final version appeared in five volumes, published in 1710 and 1711. This account, thus, appeared about twenty-five years after the events it describes.

Source: *The Huguenot Experience of Persecution and Exile: Three Women's Stories*, ed. Colette H. Winn, trans. Lauren King and Colette H. Winn (Toronto: Iter Press, 2019), 81–90.



**Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by Louis XIV, 1685**

"I agreed to leave as quickly as possible, judging from the tone of my uncle's letter, and his conviction that we could reach salvation by way of the Roman [i.e., Catholic] religion, that we could no longer count on his protection. I had written some time before to the Dutchman of whom I have already spoken [who] had retreated to Holland... The Dutchman pleaded with all his heart for me to come: he told me that he had urged his father and his friends to request passports from the French Ambassador for Madame Saporta and myself, but that it was not possible. He thought that I would need to be clever and leave in disguise. He also indicated the areas where he believed it would be less risky to travel through, and especially urged me not to appear surprised if I was questioned, and not to have an expression on my face that could give me away. He also recommended that I go to mass if I found myself in the company of others, if I could not avoid it; I was to do everything I possibly could to leave a country from which it would be more difficult to depart with each passing day. After giving such advice, he offered me his humble services upon my arrival in his country.



**Map showing Nimes, Lyons, and Geneva 1700**

I convinced Madame Saporta to rent a sedan chair\* from Nimes to Lyon, and we finally departed on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1685... In Bagnols, we found a minister named Monsieur Perin with his supposed wife, and Mademoiselle Durand, wife of the minister Jean Durand, with four children. She was going to join her husband in Switzerland... after developing a mutual sense of trust, we agreed to travel together to Lyon. The minister told us that the demoiselle who was accompanying him was not his wife, but that he was willing to have her pass as such in order to save her; since, as I already noted, ministers were allowed to emigrate with their wives and their children who were under seven...

I was very frightened, because we had to pass through Valence, and I was terrified to fall into the hands of the vicious La Rapine,\*\* who gained notoriety due to his brutalities... Suffice it to say that God kept us from falling into his hands, and that after five days of walking we were fortunate enough to arrive in Lyon with more fear than pain.

There, everyone parted ways... Madame Saporta and I stopped by the house of a tailor near the St. Pierre Abbey; his wife once served one of my relatives. We told these people that we were going to Paris, and that we were waiting for some money to be delivered to us before we could continue our journey, and after agreeing upon a fee for our lodging, we urged them not to speak about us to anyone. These people had always been Catholic, and so we were in great security at their house. Because Madame Saporta and I were unknown in Lyon, we went out every day hoping to find a way to travel to Geneva. Many people were involved in this business, but it was difficult to know whom to trust... We heard countless stories of women like us being murdered. A merchant woman from Nimes was robbed, raped, and assassinated by the guide who was accompanying her. Everywhere we heard nothing but stories of people who had been killed or arrested after having been betrayed by their guides ...



**Huguenots Fleeing France, 1696**

\*This is a form of wheel-less transport in which the riders are carried in a covered wagon by other people, usually servants or people hired for the task.

\*\*This is the nickname for an official known for his use of torture to convert Huguenots. The word means the 'pillage' or 'plunder.'



**View of Seysell, a town through which  
Anne Marguerite Petit fled in 1685**

However, our stay in Lyon began to arouse suspicion amongst our hosts... when we were informed of an opportunity... An innkeeper from Seissel<sup>†</sup> ...had a passport from Monsieur de Villeroy, archbishop of Lyon, to go to his house, with a young cook's apprentice. Since he could only provide a spot for this apprentice, he could only take one person, and that person needed to be young in order to pass for a small boy...I was perfect for the spot. Madame Saporta did not come around to it easily; she could not bear being separated from me, but I made her feel guilty, which ultimately forced her to consent to my departure. We agreed with this man on a fee for my transport; we gave him half of the money in advance, and the other half was to be given to him ...in Geneva as soon as I arrived there. Aside from that, I was bought a horse that I had to give to him as well....After everything was taken care of ... we went to a second-hand clothing shop to buy boy's clothing: a shirt, a tie, shoes, a hat, and so forth. My hair had already been cut to my ears, and because it was naturally curly, I really looked like a boy. Madame Saporta broke down in tears as I put on my new disguise: as soon as I finished getting dressed, I asked for her blessing and left her in a heartbreaking state almost impossible to describe ...

It was the afternoon of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1686....my guide took me to spend the night five miles outside of Lyon...As soon as the hostess saw me, she found me to be pale and said that my voice was very weak. This scared me, and I feared that I had been discovered; but I pretended that I had quartan fever,<sup>‡</sup> and so my supposed master brought me close to the fire and allowed me to eat with him. Because I feared long discussions, as soon as I had eaten a morsel and had warmed up a bit, I asked to go to bed. An alert little servant girl whom I had asked for a bed in order to sleep alone because of my fever, provided me with a wretched pallet. My greatest concern was that I would have to undress in front of this young girl, as she remained there to provide light for me. Finally, believing that in order to pass for a boy I would need to be daring, I resolved to be forward with her to the best of my ability; and in order to be more persuasive, I took an ecu<sup>§</sup> out of my pocket which I offered to her, and which she refused at first. As I did not want to be taken at my word, I did not insist. She left the room, and I quickly removed my shoes and my coat and got into my bed with the rest of my clothes.

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<sup>†</sup>Seyssel was a small town in the Catholic duchy of Savoy, about 45 kilometers (roughly 30 miles) southwest of the Protestant city of Geneva.

<sup>‡</sup>A form of malaria.

<sup>§</sup>A gold coin.

## A view of Geneva, 19<sup>th</sup> century

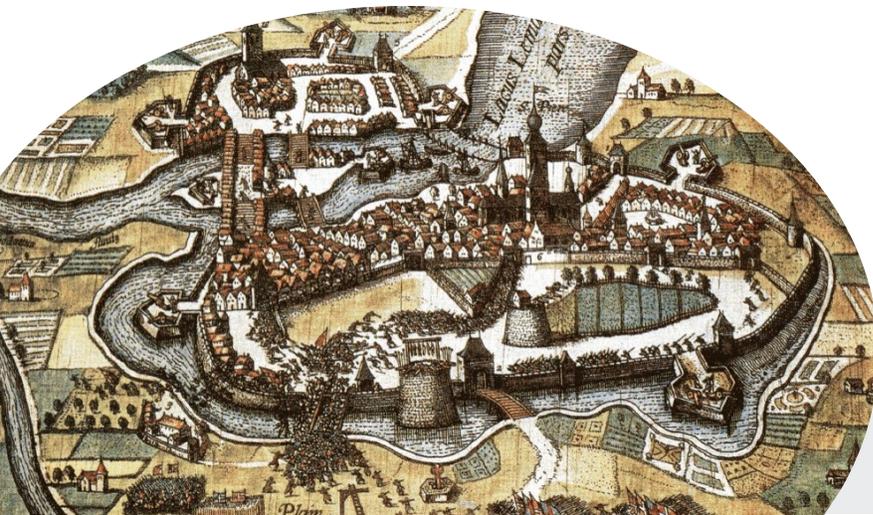
A moment later, the young girl came back quietly, which worried me greatly. I had put myself into a situation that I had no idea how to resolve. I finally found no better option than to pretend to already be asleep, and to appear to wake up suddenly. When she approached the bed, I screamed and she said to me: "Do not be afraid, sir, it's me." I replied that it was not a good time, and that she should leave me to sleep in peace.



This girl, offended by my rejection, complained to her mistress about the propositions I had made to her, which eliminated the suspicions she might have initially had about my sex, given my paleness and the tone of my voice. This is how I got myself out of trouble on the first night.

The next morning, my master demanded money from me and said that he would take it into account when we arrived in Geneva, and I was forced to give him all the money that I had. After that, he took me up a high mountain, and because I was disguised as a boy and there were no inns around that area, he took me to a monastery of Carthusians who lived there in solitude. In the afternoon, we entered a large forest with paths so perilous that there was no way to travel through on horseback...after much difficulty we found ourselves in Seissel...

Friday evening ... I boarded a small boat to travel across the Rhone River (because crossing the bridge was too risky)...When we arrived at the other side of the river and I asked for my horse, he told me that he had sold it and that I could travel to Geneva on foot since there were only fifteen miles left to go...I was so overtaken by the cold, fatigue, poor nutrition, and all the fears that I had, that when we arrived in that village, I did not even have the strength to take another step: I pleaded with my master, in the name of God, to rent a horse of any kind...after I begged incessantly, he said that it would cost money. I responded that he was well aware that I had already given him my last penny, but he replied that he had seen my watch and that I needed to hand it over, or continue on foot. I was forced to consent because, as they say, those with power make the rules...we traveled steadily until reaching Geneva, where we did not arrive before three o'clock in the afternoon, as the distances in this country are terribly long, and the paths, which are difficult, were made even worse by the snow...I suffered all of these conditions in the hope of soon finding peace, and I can say that I had never in my life felt a greater joy than that which I felt when I saw the bell tower of Geneva, the city of which I had dreamt for so long...



Everyone congratulated me, and I believed myself to be already in heaven where, they say, after penance comes joy... The next morning, I was given girls' clothes while I waited for my own, which had been given to a messenger from Lyon; after they arrived, I reassumed my sex that I had left eight days earlier."

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