

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

literary and musical allusions and explaining their pertinence. However, there are some that he fails to identify. These include the direct quoting of the hymn to liberty from Lully and Quinault's *Isis* (III.5) at the start of the comedy's final *divertissement*, and there are interesting structural and thematic parallels between the two works. The expression "la folle enchère" (III.12) must have been intended as a reference to the comedy by Mme Ulrich and Dancourt, performed just three years earlier. And the series of theatrical allusions in I.4 needs elucidation. As Lancaster noted, the recently deceased actor and playwright was probably Raymond Poisson, and the authors of two comedies dealing with the Phaéton myth were Boursault and Palaprat. I suggest that the playwright who, after a series of tragedies set in Rome, chose a Byzantine subject is Campistron. The reference to a "prodigue Boisset" in the passage from Colombine's comedy that she reads aloud presumably was a topical reference, as well. If, as Assaf suggests, Colombine's compositional activity was meant to refer to Mme de Villedieu, who had died ten years earlier but whose novels still retained their popularity, this could conceivably allude to her lover, Antoine de Boësset de Villedieu (whose name she would adopt, though they were never married).

The well-researched introduction combines relevant background information (about the author, the history of *commedia dell'arte* companies in France, the makeup of the Italian troupe in 1693, the play's initial reception) with a detailed, scene-by-scene analysis of the play. It could have been expanded to relate this dramatic debut to La Motte's dramatic career as a whole. *Les Originaux* is in many respects a first draft of his *Moderne* position, especially given the praise of liberty, originality, and preference for contemporary writers and taste.

The text, presented in original spelling, is carefully presented and annotated. Typos are rare, but three of them risk confusing the reader: a speech attributed to a wrong character (II.5), a faulty listing of characters in a scene heading (III.5), and a stage direction that is centered and printed in all capital letters (III.9). The bibliography is short but helpful, and the illustrations, showing the frontispieces and some of the original music, are a delight.

Francis Assaf is to be commended for reintroducing this charming and historically significant comedy to modern readers. The volume definitely belongs in every university library.

**Perry Gethner, Oklahoma State University**

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Delehanty, Ann T. *Literary Knowing in Neoclassical France: From Poetics to Aesthetics*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 209. \$80.**

The great merit of Delehanty's book is to challenge a pervasive myth responsible for the *grand siècle's* monolithic isolation from the general flow of French cultural history: the notion of the era's near universal subscription to *la doctrine classique*. Whether articulated in terms of neo-Aristotelian unities, the system of *bienséances*, or the rigid separation of "higher" and "lower" genres, the French seventeenth century's poetic output and the critical apparatus deployed to describe and evaluate it are said to have been the subject of fixed rational rules grounded in the putatively objective properties of the poetic work of art. It sufficed to set a given work alongside the timeless archetypes of the ancient past and apply the infallible laws those archetypes teach in order to determine its character and worth. True, especially dating from the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* touched off by Perrault's "Siècle de Louis le Grand" of 1687, the discourse of classical rules was increasingly confronted by the emergent, sentiment-based discourse of taste: an enigmatic organ of appreciation possessed of an ineffable *je ne sais quoi* impervious to rational legislation. The rise of taste is nonetheless said to have marked the beginning of the end of classical doctrine, ushering in a defiantly modern, unapologetically *anti-classical* culture whose triumph coincides with the transition to the *siècle des Lumières*. Where, then, *les classiques* asserted the primacy of a rational poetics of objective rules, enlightened *modernes* explored an aesthetics rooted in private feeling that licensed the eighteenth-century rejection of eternal verities in favor of the contingencies of empirical experience.

Delehanty opens her counter-narrative by showing how the discourse of feeling was decisively at work at the very moment classical culture reached its apogee with the inauguration of Louis XIV's personal reign in 1661. As she notes in her introduction, on "mimesis and transcendence" in neoclassical France, the noontime of the poetics of rules is largely confined to the decades from 1630 to 1660, when the order of the day was perfection of the dramatic and especially tragic *vraisemblance* required to achieve a fully convincing imitation of affecting human action. So long as poets focused on the representational technologies needed to create the emotional impact associated with a well-wrought tragic plot, the discourse of rules held sway. However, even at this stage the rules aimed not simply to convince but above all to *please*; and the pleasure involved was consciously emotional—a pleasure, moreover, that, as the tragedies of Pierre

### **BOOK REVIEWS**

Corneille in particular demonstrate, was readily described as *sublime*. As Delehanty remarks, the emphasis on mimesis, creating a persuasive representation of human action, inevitably constrained dramatic poetry's reach: "Tragedies present the human condition, allow us to see ourselves, and move us to reform ourselves, if necessary. They do not go beyond the limits of our world or our understanding" (16). Nevertheless, especially in the *vraisemblance extraordinaire* that Corneille claimed for his own productions, poetic mimesis could and did strain the confines of ordinary experience by inducing readers and spectators to swallow feats of self-sacrificial nobility they would have choked on in the natural course of things.

It is, though, only in the years following Louis XIV's seizure of personal power that the ersatz transcendence in which Corneille specialized became a dominant public theme. As Delehanty puts it, "In the late 1660s and early 1670s, the aspirations for the literary work changed significantly. No longer was the goal of the literary work only to show us the human condition, but also it aspired to something beyond that condition. Literary criticism took a turn toward the transcendental realm" (18). In making this turn, poets and their critics laid claim to a mode of knowing as transcendental as poets' newfound aspirations. Where the rule-based poetics of mimesis set limits roughly coincident with those of ordinary experience, the self-conscious transcendentalisms of the nascent Ludovican age pushed beyond; and the vehicle of transcendence was the *je ne sais quoi* of aesthetic feeling.

The most obvious signal of this change is the publication of Boileau's 1674 translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*. In the perspective of the traditional interpretation of *la doctrine classique*, this presents an apparent paradox. For, on the basis of the simultaneous publication of *L'Art poétique*, Boileau is conventionally identified as the very embodiment of the theory of classical rules. The turning point in Delehanty's counter-narrative is accordingly chapter 3, "Boileau and the Sublime," in which she not only argues for the emergent role of transcendence in *L'Art poétique* itself but goes on to discuss Boileau's increasing abandonment of a poetics of rules throughout the rest of his career, culminating in his last three *Réflexions*, where analysis of the objective properties of literary works yields to talk about the effects the sublime produces on readers in the domain of transcendent feeling.

What gives Delehanty's ground-breaking reading of Boileau still greater weight is the way she anchors that poet's evolving transcendentalist speculations in the antecedent writings of Pascal and Bouhours. Pascal

**BOOK REVIEWS**

supplies at once the warrant and model for the story the book tells. As Delehanty argues in chapter 1, Pascal captures not only the underlying conflict between the human condition on which literary mimesis fastens and the transcendence of God but also the key appeal to inchoate feeling, the famous Pascalian “heart,” as the one true means of achieving knowledge of the absolute. As Delehanty subtly demonstrates, Pascal’s model poses problems. If the chief organ of literary knowing is the heart, enabling poets and readers to escape the confines of mere mimetic reason in the way Pascal urges it does in our relation to the divine, then literature arrogates creative powers reserved for God alone. Moreover, as Pascal sees it, the only means of provoking the conversion of flesh-bound creatures like us is the kind of direct, personal teaching modeled by Jesus Christ in the gospels and provided by private reading of scripture conceived as the living word of God. Whence, in chapter 2, Delehanty’s analysis of Bouhours’s efforts to thread the needle of “divine and human creation” in order to grant the latter the power of adducing sacred truths without falling into the sacrilege of assigning human beings a divinity they cannot possess. What Boileau finds in the sublime, then, is a creative power authenticated precisely by what Longinus had already called the more than merely human origin for which the sublime serves as the medium. In the encounter with the sublime we discover both truths that transcend ordinary human experience and our own equally transcendent power to do so. The *je ne sais quoi* of sublime feeling thereby enables us to have our cake and eat it, too, in that what sublime poets create and readers feel is our own only insofar as we become vehicles of the transcendence sublimity presents.

In a sense, Delehanty’s story reaches its high point with Boileau: the rest reads like a tale of inevitable decline. With chapter 4, on Rapin, the rigorous transcendence Pascal, Bouhours, and Boileau aim for fades into the sentimentality of moral emotion. What had given access, however imperfectly, to knowledge of the divine becomes a means of teaching virtue; and while virtue makes us better beings, it does not change our natures as carnal inhabitants of the world of lowly mimesis. Rapin’s disenchanting emphasis on virtue grows still more limiting in his English successor, Dennis, the subject of chapter 5. For though Dennis seeks to ground literary experience in scriptural religion, he can only do so on the basis of a theory of mind that reduces both literature and scripture to an empty occasion for the manifestation of mental powers that have, in the end, nothing to do with either. A distinctively literary mode of knowing ceases to be literary at all, opening the way for the aesthetic theories of Du Bos, where, as Delehanty argues in chapter 6, the focus on the psychology of human

**BOOK REVIEWS**

emotion drives out not only detailed analysis of the works of art that prompt it but transcendence as well.

In one sense, Delehanty's version of the shift from classical poetics to Enlightenment aesthetics brings us back to what has always seemed its retrospective moment of inception, namely the emergence of eighteenth-century aesthetics seen as at once a triumph and consequence of Enlightenment secularity. To the absolutism of classical rules enlightened moderns oppose the relativisms of human experience; and a prime articulation of this contrast is the doctrine of the aesthetic and the primacy it awards pure private feeling. However, by showing both how deeply the antecedents of Enlightenment aesthetics reach back into the neoclassical age and how the proto-aesthetics of the sublime are linked to a thirst for transcendence Pascal's and Boileau's early eighteenth-century descendants reject, Delehanty enables us to begin to think about the underlying historical dialectic by which, in the aesthetic writings of Kant and the Romantics if not of Burke and Hume, transcendence makes a comeback. What I most heartily recommend in the book is thus the renewed sense of dynamism it brings both to the *grand siècle* and to its contribution to the larger patterns of French and more broadly European intellectual and artistic culture.

**Christopher Braider, University of Colorado, Boulder**

**McLeod, Jane. *Licensing Loyalty: Printers, Patrons, and the State in Early Modern France*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2011. ISBN 978-0-271-03768-4. Pp. 312. \$74.95**

Jane McLeod's *Licensing Loyalty* is a clearly written and cogently argued study of state-media relations in the *ancien régime*. Tracing the evolution of the French state's regulation of the printing industry from 1667 through the Revolution, McLeod examines the "mutually beneficial" relationship existing between royal authorities and provincial printers through a presentation of case studies and archival data (8, 123). Whereas previous scholars have analyzed printers as operating outside of and in opposition to the state, McLeod convincingly demonstrates their agency in lobbying government officials for favorable policies. In their dealings with royal officials, printers adopted five distinct but overlapping identities: as university men, as clients engaged in patronage networks, as businessmen,

**BOOK REVIEWS**

as guildsmen, and as loyal officers of the king. The latter role constitutes the central focus of the book (35), as McLeod meticulously investigates the ways in which printers self-fashioned an identity as “pillars of monarchy” and thereby positioned themselves as loyal subjects of the crown as they vied for the limited number of printing licenses permitted in the kingdom. Far from advocating for freedom of the press, McLeod maintains that the printers themselves—initially in Paris but ultimately throughout the countryside—clamored for increased regulation of their industry by insisting upon the dangers presented by those who would seek profit from the publication of seditious works. While provincial printers favored regulation in order to reduce competition, to protect the dignity of their art, and to solidify their own wealth, royal officials considered the use of licenses, quotas, and permissions as a means to limit the subversive potential of the printed word in the aftermath of the Fronde and the rise of religious heterodoxy. Beginning with the 1667 order in council requiring a license to print in provincial towns, the French government expanded its regulation of the book trade throughout the eighteenth century, creating a *Bureau de la Librairie* with its own inspectors and enhancing the role of the chancellor, lieutenants of police, and *intendants* in enforcing the quotas that limited the number of printers in France. As McLeod argues at several junctures, the interaction between the provincial press and the French crown was the site of endless lobbying and bargaining, and in highlighting the state’s struggle to license loyalty, McLeod demonstrates that absolutism was “negotiated rather than imposed” (8).

The first comprehensive evaluation of the French state’s licensing policy, McLeod’s study shifts the field of the history of the book in two important ways. First, *Licensing Loyalty* centers on the network of printers in the French provinces, rather than emphasizing the book trade in Paris or the importation of forbidden books from abroad. In this respect, McLeod both challenges and complements work by Henri-Jean Martin, Robert Darnton, and others who have overlooked the complications arising from the government’s efforts to establish its authority throughout French territory. Second, McLeod diverts attention from the clandestine “literary underground” and sheds light instead on the authorized, state-sanctioned press. By analyzing the ways in which provincial printers alternately cooperated with *and* subverted royal officials, McLeod’s work paints a more complete picture of the public sphere in early modern France. In this regard, one wonders why McLeod waits until Chapter 7 to examine the reality “Behind the Rhetoric”—the extent to which licensed printers were responsible for the production and distribution of clandestine texts. Characterizing the printers’ allegiance to the crown as a “grudging and

**BOOK REVIEWS**

contingent loyalty” in the study’s final pages (210), McLeod ultimately qualifies her own assessment of provincial printers as “pillars of monarchy” in a pretty significant manner. The fact that France’s own elite printing houses disseminated texts previously believed to have originated from Grub Street merits fuller consideration, and McLeod could have integrated this material throughout the study to add further nuance to one of her book’s central arguments.

McLeod’s social and political history evokes the fascinating characters populating the world of book production in early modern France, emphasizing the material concerns driving their motivations and the complexity of their interactions with royal officials. Well-researched and written with verve, *Licensing Loyalty* is a valuable contribution to the history of the book, to the study of state-media relations, and to the history of French administration.

**Kathrina LaPorta, New York University**

**Krüger, Annika Charlotte. *Lecture sartrienne de Racine: Visions existentielles de l'homme tragique*. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2011. ISBN: 978-3-8233-6620-1. Pp. 275. 74€**

In the introduction to *Lecture sartrienne de Racine*, Krüger indicates that her goal is to juxtapose Sartre’s and Racine’s “conceptions de l’homme et de la condition humaine” as well as “leurs stratagèmes dramaturgico-psychologiques” (11), in order to demonstrate the modernity of Racine. More concretely, this comparatist study has two objectives. First, Krüger demonstrates the similarities between Sartre’s ideas and those emanating from Racine’s circle, primarily Pierre Nicole and Pascal. Second, the author traces in great detail the manifestation of these ideas in Racine’s *Britannicus*, *Bajazet*, and *Andromaque*. The ideas in question come primarily from several of Sartre’s philosophical texts (above all, *L’Être et le néant*) and from two of his plays, *Huis clos* and *Les Mouches*. Major points of contact between Sartre and Racine include the importance of the other/*autrui* for both, the close tie between Racinian *amour-propre* and Sartrian *mauvaise foi*, and the proclivity that both demonstrate for closed spaces in their plays. She works through these ideas with great care and perseverance. The notion of the *regard* is extremely important for both, and Krüger discusses numerous variations: “le regard d’autrui,” “le

**BOOK REVIEWS**

regard supérieur” (for example Amurat in *Bajazet* and Agrippine in *Britannicus*), and “le regard regardé.” Other subjects include role-playing, hatred of the other turned against the self, the urge to possess the other, and the effect of death on how one is judged. As my listing indicates, there is considerable breadth in subject matter.

While the author presents careful, thoughtful work, and shows great promise as a future scholar, the *Lecture sartrienne de Racine* exemplifies why a dissertation should not be published without revision. Many dissertations have been turned into books, but in order for the gap between the two to be bridged, certain important adjustments need to be made. There are four areas in this study where the absence of such modifications is problematic. The first concerns the audience for the book. Since a dissertation is above all a demonstration of one’s intellectual accomplishments, thought is given to impressing the public with one’s erudition, rather than to drawing in and engaging the reader. This 252-page book contains 1,118 footnotes and literally hundreds of quotes from Racine’s plays. It is virtually impossible to read a paragraph without the flow of the argument being repeatedly interrupted by footnotes and quotes. The second dissertation-like feature, while not as off-putting for the reader, instead compromises the value of the study as a whole: discussion is limited to only a few texts by each author. Krüger examines only three of Racine’s twelve plays and only two of Sartre’s eleven. Similar limitations are placed on Sartre’s philosophical texts. Such a strategy makes perfect sense for a dissertation, but a book that contains only two tiny mentions of *Phèdre* should not be entitled *Lecture sartrienne de Racine*. It is never made clear whether the ideas expressed would function equally well in discussions of other plays by both playwrights. The author makes two half-hearted attempts to justify her choices among Racine’s plays, but one does not apply well to *Andromaque* (the centrality of the struggle for freedom [21]) and the other—the conception of love—is in no way limited to *Britannicus*, *Bajazet*, and *Andromaque*. Third, there is a decided tendency to include tangential work, so that we find all of Pascal’s mentions of flies; a lengthy and ill-fitting examination of the baroque that includes Dionysius, melancholy, the camp, and cross-dressing; and an exposition of Sartre, Calderón, and Pirandello that excludes Racine entirely. Chapter IV, in particular, reads like a grab bag of tangentially related material. The fourth problem with the book is its structure. As is typical of dissertations, the first chapter deals with the scholarly and theoretical background, but no concrete reference is made to Racine’s theater until page 100, and none to Sartre’s theater until page 129. All four of these areas should have been addressed before publishing this

**BOOK REVIEWS**

dissertation as a book, and all four make the book less engaging for the reader.

I would like to emphasize that whatever problems there are here, Annika Krüger shows enormous promise as a scholar. The careful manipulation of detail in conjunction with wide-ranging abstract thought is impressive. The patient intelligence and care that went into producing this study are evident on every page. In conclusion, this is a careful study by a young scholar who shows much promise for the future, but the book should have been reworked before publication.

**Nina Ekstein, Trinity University**

**Racevskis, Roland. *Tragic Passages: Jean Racine's Art of the Threshold*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8387-5684-3. Pp. 221. \$47.50.**

Racevskis's excitingly fresh interpretation of Racine's secular tragedies focuses on their "liminary esthetics"—that is, their exploration of "identity in suspension. . . . the human predicament of being caught in between states of being" (15). Drawing insights from Derrida, Nietzsche, and especially Heidegger, the author identifies a "poetics of the threshold" in Racine's plays and convincingly argues that the tragedies' distinctive quality lies in their illumination of the psychological anguish of characters self-consciously poised between past and future, action and inaction, subjection and sovereignty, life and death.

The book's nine short chapters analyze Racine's nine secular tragedies from *La Thébaïde* to *Phèdre*, examining their dramatization of characters poised at the thresholds of power, love, and existence itself. These thought-provoking readings exemplify Racevskis's call for a flexible approach to Racine's work that recognizes each play's singularity while exploring their shared engagement with the problem of liminality. Among the book's rich and varied discussions, Chapter 3's exploration of "temporal construction" in *Andromaque* is one of the stand-outs. Here, Racevskis breaks from traditional interpretations emphasizing the way characters are haunted by the past and shifts his focus, subtly but crucially, to how they express the "paltriness of the present" (81) and the "radical ambiguity of the future" (90). In addition to teasing out *Andromaque's*

**BOOK REVIEWS**

complex temporal structure, this reading brilliantly analyzes how the play imparts feelings of terrifying uncertainty to its spectators. Indeed, throughout the book, Racevskis makes the case that “in-betweenness” not only serves as a major fictional theme but also generates the plays’ emotional effect on audiences. For example, he usefully compares *La Thébaïde* with *Rodogune* to illustrate, by way of contrast with Corneille’s depiction of power’s dangers, how Racine derives terror from its revelation of the throne as an unresolved void. Other readings elegantly synthesize analyses of Racine’s poetic language with attention to the plays’ inscription of dramatic space, time, and movement; this is especially true for the chapters devoted to *Britannicus* and *Bérénice*, which demonstrate how the idea of the threshold permeates all aspects of Racine’s dramaturgy up to and including set design.

Racevskis’s stated ambition in tackling all of Racine’s tragedies in this streamlined book is to articulate a new basis for understanding the coherence of the playwright’s work. While the book accomplishes this goal, one drawback to its comprehensiveness is that it sometimes leaves the reader wanting more on a particular play. For example, Chapter 4’s skillful reading of Néron’s court in *Britannicus* as a Foucauldian panopticon concludes with a tantalizing gesture to the thresholds occupied by an excluded Britannicus and imprisoned Junie (103), leaving the reader eager to know how Racevskis would interpret the play’s expression of these characters’ suspended states of being. In other respects, the completist approach is a strength. By proceeding chronologically through the tragedies, Racevskis succeeds in demonstrating the evolution of Racine’s liminary aesthetics throughout his career. The thresholds structuring earlier plays often delimit a space of worldly power. By the later tragedies (*Mithridate*, *Iphigénie*, and *Phèdre*), the characters’ articulation of their suspended state points toward the “ontological threshold” between existence and non-existence. In these chapters, the book also returns to a Heideggerian interrogation of poetic language, as when Chapter 9 considers *Phèdre*’s sustained examination of language’s failure to communicate innermost truths. The book concludes with a brief analysis of the resolution of the liminary aesthetic in sacred tragedies *Esther* and *Athalie*, where ambivalence dissolves under the certainty provided by an omnipotent Judeo-Christian god. This coda effectively throws into relief the secular plays’ reliance on the aesthetic of the threshold, which, Racevskis argues, is especially compelling for today’s audiences who are grappling with the biological and ecological limits of existence.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Precisely by setting aside well-worn, more narrowly historical concerns for Racine's relationship to Jansenist theology or the development of French national consciousness, *Tragic Passages* succeeds in articulating the play's relevance for modern audiences and opens new lines of inquiry without foreclosing the ambiguity of the plays' meanings. Very occasionally, the desire to liberate the plays from narrow historicism goes a little too far. For example, I wonder whether "self-actualization" is really the best term to designate the state to which Racine's characters aspire, loaded as it is with the particular assumptions of twentieth-century American psychology. Yet such a minor anachronism is a small price to pay for *Tragic Passages*' refreshing point of view on Racine's tragic *œuvre*. Throughout the book's pages, Racevskis articulates theoretically sophisticated readings with such lucidity that they could be employed in many undergraduate classrooms. This is no small advantage for a book that aims and succeeds at offering richly insightful new ways to appreciate Racine's works in our era.

**Ellen R. Welch, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

**Woshinsky, Barbara R. *Imagining Women's Conventual Spaces in France, 1600-1800. The Cloister Disclosed.* Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. ISBN 978-0-75466754-4. Pp. 344. \$119.95.**

Barbara Woshinsky has authored a thoroughly researched and fascinating study of how early-modern conventual spaces figure in contemporary culture and literature. While other scholars have studied the convents themselves or the literature their communities produce, Woshinsky instead examines works that reference enclosure but were written by those who live outside convent walls. Her objective is "to illuminate the unique place the convent occupies in the early modern imaginary, in the context of space, gender and power" (6), and she fulfills this objective through an analysis of a broad spectrum of both canonical and rare literary works published in France between 1600 and 1800. At the same time, her study is truly intermural in its approach to chronology and geography with references to Michel de Certeau (13, 24), the Shinto religion (33), Sue Monk Kidd (84), Humpty Dumpty (243), Norman Rush (245), Jane Austen (247), Nathalie Sarraute (257), Typhoid Mary (277) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (295), among others.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

The metonymic readings that serve as a framework for the book's organization render the latter somewhat forced in places, but this attests to the complexity of the subject matter and its theoretical underpinnings. In the first chapter, Woshinsky focuses on the allegorical images of the body in Counter-Reformation writings and its imprecise relationships to gender and the soul. (For some reason, this chapter has a decidedly different feel from those that follow, as though it were not part of the same thesis.) In the second, she addresses Jean-Pierre Camus's conflicted attitude toward the female body and the sensuality associated with it that leads him to advocate for its enclosure in his stories. Following these initial chapters devoted to religious writings that feature metonymic and allegorical readings of the female body, Woshinsky guides us ever deeper into the convents themselves, beginning with more secular and feminocentric representations of thresholds (Chapter 3), parlors (Chapter 4), cells (Chapters 5 and 6) and, finally, tombs (appropriately, Chapter 7). This well-written analysis weaves in and out of convent grilles, gates, corridors, chapels, and cells and demonstrates that the convent of early-modern France, like the female body and its coverings (veils, gowns, bed sheets) that it contained, were considered alternately hermetic and penetrable.

Woshinsky deftly guides the reader through this labyrinthine reading with a healthy dose of humor. I would often find myself blindsided by a sly aside ("And what does it mean for a soul to have nipples?" (55)), ("Finally, what is accented by the title is...the fact that the narrator is...*Portuguese*: hence doomed—or free—to enjoy a degree of southern and female unreason not properly displayed in the country of Descartes, even by women" (247)); dry sarcasm ("However, there is a consistency in the women's treatment, in that both Deucalie and Nerée are seen most positively once they are dead" (90)); a play on words ("Resurrected for the wedding, he fails to come up to conjugal expectations" (179)); or an honest criticism of her subject ("The next morning, he writes a triumphant (and bad) poem" (227)). Woshinsky is obviously having fun with her subject, and her readers cannot help but do the same. When she declares in exasperation that "[t]he vulgarity of the ending [of a poem written by a monk] taxes the translating skill of this scholar" (231), we should not be surprised that her subsequent translation is just as double-edged and naughty as the original.

Another unexpected quality of this book is its bibliography. While Woshinsky engages with seminal works by senior scholars, she does not limit herself to these studies. Instead, she also demonstrates a broad collegiality infrequent in published academic works. Her bibliography includes

**BOOK REVIEWS**

conference papers and unpublished dissertations as well as other references to works by less-established academics. This approach, combined with the intertextual citations throughout, creates an overall impression of a current and well-balanced study.

I have very few criticisms of this work. There are some errors of proofreading: the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes occurred in 1685 and not in 1696 (162); there is no English translation for two quotations on the bottom of page 92; the English translation should precede the French original in the middle of page 270. Content-wise, I was surprised not to find a discussion of Mlle de Scudéry's "Histoire de Sapho" in the section on femintopias (124-34) nor a reference to Daniella J. Kostroun's work on the Port-Royal nuns in Chapter 5. Finally, there is no mention of the *Querelle des femmes* which deserves at least a *clin d'œil* from the author. Nevertheless, these minor points do not detract from what is otherwise an excellent analysis and a thoroughly enjoyable read.

**Jennifer R. Perlmutter, Portland State University**

**Review of Siefert, Lewis C. and Domma C. Stanton (Eds and Transl).  
Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century  
French Women Writers. The Other Voice in Early Modern  
Europe: The Toronto Series, vol. 9. Toronto: CRRS, 2010. ISBN:  
978-07727-2077-1. Pp. 362. \$32.**

The purpose of this volume is to translate a sample of eight seventeenth-century French fairy tales into English. All the fairy tales included are authored by women, none have previously been made available in English, and all are representative of fairy-tale production during the late 1600s and of the authors' unique styles. The volume is divided into a comprehensive introduction and five sections for each fairy-tale writer and her tales. It is followed by two sample critical texts of the period, introduced briefly, as a way of exemplifying the contemporary debate on the genre. At the end of the book, the reader will find a useful appendix listing the *conteuses* and their tales (the ones included in the volume are in bold-face), a comprehensive editor's bibliography, and an index.

In their introduction, the editors start with an accurate background of the production of literary fairy tales in the late seventeenth century, contextualizing these tales within the long historical and critical contexts of

**BOOK REVIEWS**

women's history from ancient Greece to modern feminism. They then retrace the role of women in the production of the literary fairy tale, revealing the intertexts of these stories as proof that the fairy tale tradition was created and dominated by women who promoted themselves as individuals within a growing literary field, legitimizing themselves in the process as authors. As the editors reveal, these fairy tales share significant references and motifs not only with Greek and Roman mythology, but also with medieval romances, with the pastoral and heroic novels of the early seventeenth century, and with the short novellas of their Italian predecessors, Straparola and Basile. Despite these influences, however, late seventeenth-century French *conteuses* distinguish their works both by refusing the restrictions imposed upon the novel after 1660, and those of the "compact" fairy-tale model of Perrault—rejecting the imposition of verisimilitude and instead relying heavily on the marvelous. As such, the late seventeenth-century *conte de fées* reveals itself as a predominantly "feminine" genre, one whose relationship to "modern" literary aesthetics is predicated on ideas that "natural," intuitive eloquence is uniquely reserved for women.

The editors also offer a lengthy explanation for how this corpus of late-seventeenth-century French fairy tales has been received from the moment of their production to the present. Between 1690 and the eve of the French Revolution, women authors dominated the *conte de fées* genre; in addition to being widely read throughout France, England, Germany, and North America, their fairy tales were imitated and parodied in eighteenth-century chapbooks. But after the late eighteenth-century *conteuse* Marie-Jeanne Le Prince de Beaumont began to compose fairy tales in accordance with the "compact" Perraultian model, the dominant fairy-tale aesthetic began to shift. As a result, during the nineteenth-century, the long and complicated plots composed by earlier women authors were excluded from the genre until the 1980s and 1990s when North-American feminist critics and literary historians renewed the interest in the forgotten genre, followed later by French scholars.

The editors have chosen samples of tales from each of the five leading *conteuses* of the 1690s, Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Charlotte-Rose Caumont de La Force, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon and Henriette-Julie de Murat. The tales were selected to be—and are—a representative sample of the most prominent thematic and narrative features of each *conteuse*, while simultaneously showcasing the variety of approaches each writer adopted with respect to length and tone. The tales are chosen with particular attention to the plots, characters and situations,

**BOOK REVIEWS**

all of which complicate many stereotypical assumptions about the fairy tale as a genre.

Each section focuses on a particular author, starting with an accurate biography and overview of the individual's writing strategies. Each tale is carefully annotated in the footnotes, which include clarifications about the specific meanings of certain words, as well as explanations of social, cultural, and literary norms and ideals relevant to the time period. The tales' translation itself is precise, and apart from the repunctuating of long sentences and paragraphs, the original text is rendered meticulously.

In conclusion, this book, with its ample introduction and its interesting and relevant choice of tales, is of extreme value not only for scholars and students, but also for any lover of fairy tales wishing to rediscover and understand the origins of the French literary fairy tale tradition. I hope that the editors will consider more translations of this kind in the future.

**Charlotte Trinquet du Lys, University of Central Florida**