

**Call, Michael, *The Would-Be Author. Molière and the Comedy of Print.* West Lafayette, IN, Purdue University Press, coll. "Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures," 2015. ISBN 978-61249-385-5. Pp. 292. \$45**

In response to René Bray's provocative question in *Molière homme de théâtre* (1954): "Molière pense-t-il ?," Michael Call, in this well-documented and perceptively argued study, repudiates the traditional image of Molière as the exemplary "philosophe/farceur," i.e., the actor, author, and thinker seemingly disinterested in the publication process. He draws attention to the ironic interplay of these roles throughout the playwright's career. More specifically, he sheds light on the multiple permutations of Molière's printing career. This results in the construction of his authorship via his continuous interactions with the Parisian publishing world, notably the legal implications underlying the workings of the seventeenth-century book trade: for example, the relationship between cultural capital and literary property in early modern France. The history of these battles is intimately linked, Call argues, to the emergence of Molière's authorial *persona*.

Jean Ribou's pirated editions of several of the dramatist's early plays constitute the major struggle of the aspiring playwright during the early part of his career (1659–1661). Taking legal action against Ribou, and beginning with *L'Ecole des maris*, Molière crafts a privilege which will protect him more effectively against illegal editions of his work. He thus establishes his play as his exclusive intellectual property guaranteed by royal authority. Having been granted a royal pension in 1663, Molière's authorship was clearly valorized and his popularity as the première court entertainer was officially acknowledged. The publication of his *Oeuvres* in 1666 represented the ultimate vindication of Molière vis-à-vis his adversaries and the triumph of his authorial strategy or, more precisely, his professional legitimacy.

Examining the evolution of the authorial *persona* in a great number of the comedies, Call highlights the problematic of reading and writing in Molière's theater. His compelling comparison between Molière the playwright incapable of exerting complete control over his script and the frustrated, solitary status of his protagonists at the end of several plays (e.g., Arnolphe, Sganarelle, Alceste) evokes the comic defeat of authority/authorship. Call thereby illustrates the triumph of the author/craftsman behind the scenes. He clearly delineates in *L'Ecole des femmes* the textual identity of both Arnolphe and Agnès, including Arnolphe's ironic reference to the authorship of the *maximes* and their religious dimension as

well. Agnès' liberation is based not only on her discursive talent vis-à-vis Arnolphe but also on her access to authorship, and her italicized letter matches Arnolphe's italicized *maximes*. Call rightly underscores the farcical dimension of the play, but also points to Donneau de Visé's contention, during the *querelle*, that *L'Ecole des femmes* exemplifies the principal tenets of *la grande comédie*. Even though Molière thus succeeded in bringing the comic genre to its point of perfection, de Visé sought to create a wedge between the dramatist and the courtly aristocrats by undermining his attempt to satirize members of the Court. Downplaying the originality of both *Ecoles*, he aimed to turn the *rieurs* into adversaries of the comic playwright. Moreover, although Molière was a superb comic actor, critics such as Montfleury called into question his skills as a writer.

As for the significance of the role of authorship in *Le Misanthrope*, Call aptly notes the complementarity of reading and writing as intellectual competencies. Given Alceste's intransigent notion of authorship, Molière no doubt projected upon his comic protagonist his own misgivings concerning seventeenth-century publishing practices. Oronte appears as a burlesque poetaster, and his sonnet is pertinently compared to Mascarille's off-the-cuff poetic reading in *Les Précieuses ridicules*. Although Alceste's "vieille Chanson" is, as Call argues, devoid of authorship, it nonetheless offers an ironic commentary on the protagonist's relationship with Célimène and a subtle foreshadowing of the dénouement. Regarding Alceste's rhetorical artifice during his altercation with Oronte (I, 2), it should be noted that he seriously equivocates ("Je ne dis pas cela") before revealing his true opinion of Oronte's sonnet. And although it is beyond debate that Célimène's choice of the epistolary form leads to her final undoing, we should not neglect the fact that her duplicity is perfectly acceptable to Alceste since he is willing to believe—"Efforcez-vous de paraître fidèle" (IV, 3)—her untruthful assertion that she has been faithful to him.

Despite these interpretive differences, Michael Call's *The Would-Be Author. Molière and the Comedy of Print* represents a significant contribution to Molière studies. It offers a systematic and persuasive treatment of the authorial strategies underlying the playwright's remarkable success. All *moliéristes* stand to benefit from this analysis of the professional side of "le premier farceur de la France."

**Ralph Albanese, University of Memphis**

**Meere, Michael, Editor. *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama: Text, Performance, Theory*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-61149-548-5. Pp. 336. \$90**

*French Renaissance and Baroque Drama* is a collection of fifteen essays that grew out of two panels at the 2012 Renaissance Society of America conference in Washington, D.C. The essays, by both early-career and senior scholars, are divided in a more or less chronological fashion. The volume's purpose, as stated in the introduction, is threefold: to introduce scholars and students to the diversity of French baroque drama, to emphasize the performative aspect of drama (rather than adopt a narrowly textual approach), and, ultimately, to return neglected drama to the stage. The volume admirably executes the first two. It covers a wide range of dramatic texts, some familiar (e.g., Garnier's tragedies), others less familiar (e.g., Puget de la Serre's theater) and a wide range of critical approaches, from Victor Turner's anthropological "social drama" (Meere and Gates) to Lacanian psychoanalysis (Guild). In addition, the term "drama" is broadly construed to mean not only theater, but also rituals, festivals, demonic possession and exorcism, trials, and other social "dramas." In turn, many of the contributions address either the material conditions of baroque performance (Chevallier-Micki), its broader cultural context (Beam, Noiro, Welch, Calhoun, O'Hara), or the interplay between politics and performance (Usher, Hillman, Cavaillé). There is, however, much less about staging renaissance and baroque plays today. Only Szabari's contribution considers (and then only briefly) recent productions of renaissance theater. There is otherwise very little about how one might bring these plays to the contemporary stage or why. Nevertheless, by bringing to light an underappreciated dramatic corpus and drawing attention to its performative aspects, the volume does represent an important first step toward the entry of renaissance and baroque drama into the contemporary repertoire. *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama* would be of interest to students and scholars of theater, theater history, and early modern France more generally.

The first essay, by Andreea Marculescu, examines the representation of demonic possession in mystery plays and prose narratives. The author notes that narratives of demonic possession adopt a vocabulary that was developed in mystery plays, but deny the demoniac the agency that he or she had in the earlier dramatic tradition in order to focus on the Church's purchase on truth. The essay draws on a wide range of critical approaches, from affect theory (Cvetkovich) to performance studies (Roach). In particular, the novel approach to representation, following Taussig rather

than Aristotle, offers a fresh perspective on mimesis in the early modern period.

John Lyons reads Théodore de Bèze's *Abraham sacrificiant* against the Biblical account and in light of Aristotelian dramatic imperatives, showing the theological consequences of dramatic adaptation. Lyons focuses especially on the introduction of Satan, whose rationalizing was meant to recall Scholastic, which is to say Catholic, philosophy. The playwright made Abraham more human by introducing an element of human reason, only to make the human disappear. This is the sense in which *Abraham sacrificiant* heralds an "end of ethics": yoked to human reason, ethical deliberation becomes the enemy of God.

Turning toward Rabelais, Carolien Gates and Michael Meere offer a close reading of the Chiquanous episode in the *Quart Livre* in light of anthropologist Victor Turner's theory of play as a creative and cohesive force. Taking to task the view that cruelty and farce are destructive, the authors show that violence and laughter together become an organizing principle for social cohesion. This contribution makes the case for the application of an anthropological approach to resolve the problems posed by violence in dramatic texts.

While we often place Protestantism on the side of antitheatricity, Sara Beam's contribution recovers the neglected role of the theater in Protestant evangelization. Beam discusses two plays written, published, and performed in Geneva in the 1560s. Neither play says much about theology, which Beam shows is strategic: by smoothing over the differences between the various Protestant churches, the plays present Protestantism as a unified front against Catholicism. Thus the purpose of the plays, Beam concludes, was not to demonstrate the finer points of Protestant theology, but rather to "intensify contempt for the Catholic hierarchy, strengthen the resolve to combat corruption, or evoke a sense of satisfaction or even joy of belonging to the party of truth" (75).

Corinne Noirot takes on the failure of erudite comedy in the Renaissance by asking who might have been the audience of Jean de la Taille's comedic plays. Through close readings of paratexts, Noirot shows that the plays suffered from a tension between pragmatism (thereby reaching a wider audience) and poetic conventions (thereby appealing to an erudite, but restricted, audience). Making the case for a tiered audience comprised of "those who can" (nobles) and "those who know" (humanists), Noirot argues that La Taille's comedies fell victim to a desire to reach both audiences.

The next essay, by Ellen Welch, similarly engages with the question of the audience. Reading court ballet in the context of diplomacy, with a particular focus on the 1573 *Ballet des Polonais*, Welch convincingly argues that the audience of court ballet (e.g., the presence of foreign observers) necessarily disperses power and thus has consequences for interpretation: multiple interpretations and constant negotiation of meaning. Moreover, court artists (e.g., Dorat), Welch argues, anticipated the multiple perspectives of the audience. Ultimately, the negotiation inherent in the performance of the ballet mirrors that of diplomacy itself. This essay, like Noirot's, shows how attention to reception bears upon our interpretation of renaissance and baroque performance.

The next essay, by Antonia Szabari, offers a fascinating contextualization of Garnier's Greek tragedies with respect to ancient sacrificial practices and contemporary religious violence. Noting "Garnier's familiarity with classical rituals" (117), Szabari examines how ritual practices function in theatrical performance, concluding that "Garnier's plays look at this 'barbarous' ritual of the past in order to allude to the return of violence in France" (134). In this way, Szabari shows how drama might reactivate ritual to give it contemporary religious or political significance.

In the second essay on Garnier, Phillip John Usher examines the association of the tragedies with the *parlement*. Considering the dedicatory letters of the tragedies as well as Garnier's dramatization of the material, Usher argues that Garnier makes the Greek material "appear as public trials worthy of the *parlement's* attention" (149) and in this way brings his tragedies into a public sphere. Garnier's tragedies thus become an appeal to negotiate for peace at a time when France was torn apart by religious conflict. Usher's approach has the great merit of overcoming the pitfalls of contextualization, where a piece of literature becomes the "expression" of contemporary events, by looking at the ways in which an author consciously and actively engages with the public sphere.

Fabien Cavaillé also considers the public sphere in an analysis of the representation of festivals in Montaigne's *Essais*. Turning, like Gates and Meere, toward Turner's definition of play, Cavaillé proposes an anthropological understanding of early modern festivals as an alternative to a "poetic" paradigm according to which the arts are useful insofar as they convey particular content. The anthropological paradigm, on the other hand, focuses on the collective nature of performance, regardless of "what one performs or not" (162).

Elizabeth Guild's contribution joins psychoanalysis and skepticism in reading Montaigne's 1562 encounter with "cannibals" in Rouen. Guild

argues that “Montaigne’s representation [of the encounter with the “cannibals”] dramatizes the significance of waiting until later for understanding, rather than—whether through the illusion of knowing already, or driven by fear of being too late—rushing to have the last word and thereby excluding other possible pasts and futures” (170). This essay is the most heavily theoretical of the volume and assumes some familiarity with psychoanalytic criticism. It nevertheless offers a compelling interpretation of Montaigne’s dramatization of his encounter with the other.

Christian Biet’s contribution, a translation of an article that some may already be familiar with, reads Jacques de Fonteny’s pastoral play *Le beau berger* (1587) as a kind of “experiment” (189) with dramatic genre. Biet reads Fonteny’s innovations, particularly the celebration of male homosexuality between the shepherds Chrisophile and Chrisalde, as nationalistic: Fonteny thus creates a specifically French pastoral, which returns to an ancient tradition the celebrated male love. The monstrous satyrs, then, become parodic figures of Italian and Spanish pastoral drama, exposing the generic limitations of pastoral drama based on heterosexual love only.

Sybille Chevallier-Micki looks at the material conditions of performance in Rouen from 1600–1620 and considers the complex relationship between stage design and the reality of public trials, executions, and other forms of spectacle. In addition, it was not only memory of real spectacles (e.g., mystery plays) that informed stage design, but also the collective memory of recent religious conflicts. Chevallier-Micki’s contribution ends on a speculative, but promising, note, asking us to consider the ways in which new dramatic forms recycled or reappropriated preexisting scenic elements and recast them according to new political demands.

Alison Calhoun considers the relationship between dignity, an essentially public affect, and emotion, which is private, in burlesque ballets by looking closely at the *Bal de la douairière de Billebahaut* (1627). Rather than enact power and control, the leaders perform their own weaknesses. Building upon recent work in affect theory, Calhoun argues that in the ballet, political problems are “felt” before they are addressed in the political, public arena (236), in much the same way that affect is “felt” before it is identified as emotion.

Stephanie O’Hara examines the “dramaturgy of poison” in the development of tragedy, noting that poison moves toward metaphor in neoclassical tragedy. Although this is not especially surprising, given the dual imperative of verisimilitude and decorum that rendered the neoclassical stage inhospitable to gruesome scenes of violent death, O’Hara also

shows that the stylized dramatic representation of poison coexisted with vivid pamphlet literature. O'Hara's contribution shows how dramatic representation offers fictional resolution to "intractable political and social problem[s]" (261) like poison crimes.

In the volume's final essay, Richard Hillman addresses the question of topical allusions in early modern drama by looking closely at two minor plays by Puget de la Serre and André Mareschal. Considering both authors' relationships with Marie de Medici at the time of her exile, Hillman looks at how both plays work with English material (i.e., Sidney). This exceptionally lucid essay demonstrates how we might investigate the "allusive operation of theatrical intertextuality" (285) in order to tease out the relationship between theater and its immediate political context.

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**Turcat, Eric. *La Rochefoucauld par quatre chemins. Les Maximes et leurs ambivalences*. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 2013. ISBN 978-3-8233-6803-8. Pp. 220.**

L'ambition d'Eric Turcat dans cet ouvrage est de dépasser les querelles sur les *Maximes* de La Rochefoucauld en analysant l'œuvre sous quatre angles différents. 1. Approche rhétorique, centrée sur la figure de l'ironie (polycentrique, polyphonique, polysémique) et l'analyse des figures oppositionnelles (antithèse, antiphrase, antanaclase, chiasme). Turcat met en doute *l'honnêteté* de La Rochefoucauld en montrant comment une figure elliptique la rapproche ironiquement de *l'habileté*. 2. Approche psychologique *psycho-vectorielle*. Dans le cadre de l'étude de la communication non verbale, la méthode d'analyse *psycho-vectorielle* est élaborée dans les années 1970–80 par le psychologue américain Shirley (*Mapping the Mind*, Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1983). Shirley distingue quatre émotions majeures : fierté, désir, affection, curiosité. À chacune correspond une variante anxieuse ou agressive. « Ces douze émotions de base peuvent alors se combiner [...] de telle sorte à former ce que [Shirley] appelle alors des psycho-vecteurs » (72). Turcat identifie les combinaisons possibles dans les *Maximes* et pose la *honte* comme pivot de l'amour-propre, plutôt que le *mépris* ou la *fierté*. 3. Approche anthropologique, centrée sur *l'amour* : E. Turcat établit un parallèle entre le « *triangle culinaire* » de Lévi-Strauss et une « *cuisine du sentiment amoureux* » où le discours « *souvent sexiste* » privilégierait un amour « *libertin* », entre « *passion* » et « *amitié* » (18). Les représentations triangulaires de John A. Lee et Robert Sternberg sont utilisées pour définir « *le discours amou-*

reux » de La Rochefoucauld. 4. Approche linguistique, centrée sur la *fortune*, à qui la modalisation des maximes donnerait une forme carrée.

L'ouvrage se veut une remise à plat audacieuse, basée sur un retour au texte analysé aux prismes de différentes disciplines. Les approches choisies sont originales, particulièrement l'approche psychologique. Turcat affirme l'importance d'un travail stylistique pour sortir des « *querelles idéologiques* », auxquelles il se dit étranger, et se livre lui-même à de nombreuses études de maximes—ce qui lui permet de dégager les motifs de l'ellipse, du triangle, du carré... La lecture augustinienne de La Rochefoucauld est tellement dominante qu'elle rend difficile une autre approche ; une recherche d'alternatives telle que celle d'E. Turcat est donc audacieuse et appréciable. Mais, d'un côté, la remise à plat l'amène à caricaturer les thèses augustinienes pour en diminuer l'influence, les présentant comme des « *préjugés* », en faveur d'un « *pessimisme gnomique* » qui n'aurait existé en réalité « *que pour ceux qui préféreraient enfermer La Rochefoucauld dans un ordre classique* » (19) ; d'un autre côté, Turcat favorise les hypothèses libertines ou épicuriennes, pour les mettre au même niveau que les premières. Il présente de façon expéditive les deux écoles, ce qui lui évite de procéder à une réfutation en règle de la première, pourtant la plus établie. Il la sous-estime et donne parfois l'impression qu'il la méconnaît, déplorant par exemple que le parti augustinien ait occulté l'humour de La Rochefoucauld... « *Pourquoi [...] ce déni d'ironie ? En un mot : l'augustinisme. En effet, [...] même la critique, certes surtout française, des dix dernières années, de Lafond à Plazenet en passant par Sellier, reste fortement influencée par le travail de Sainte-Beuve, et donc par l'hégémonie culturelle du jansénisme au Grand Siècle. Saint Augustin ne rime apparemment pas avec boute-en-train* » (12). C'est ignorer les travaux de J. Lafond (notamment), qui a analysé l'ironie et le trait d'esprit de La Rochefoucauld dans un chapitre entier de son ouvrage de référence (III, « *L'ambigüité et la transparence* » in : *La Rochefoucauld, augustinisme et littérature*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1986). Paradoxalement, Turcat prend lui-même au sérieux des affirmations évidemment ironiques de La Rochefoucauld. Il tombe dans le travers des travaux de Louis Hippeau (*Essai sur la morale de La Rochefoucauld*, Paris, Nizet, 1967): ce qui est « *une pure constatation de fait* » est interprété de façon discutable comme « *une morale pragmatique du succès* » (Lafond, *op. cit.*, p. 99). Turcat expose longuement l'influence de Faret mais ne mentionne pas Castiglione ou Della Casa, écarte d'autres influences possibles, niant carrément celle de Port-Royal : La Rochefoucauld n'est plus que légèrement influencé par un *amor sui* augustinien « *culturellement incontournable* » (105). C'est prêter bien peu



d'esprit au moraliste que de lui refuser la capacité à accueillir diverses influences à différents degrés... Et une duplicité peu commune que de lui supposer un double visage radical, de janséniste et d'épicurien, comme L. Hippeau en son temps. De plus, Turcat ne prend pas en compte l'évolution du texte à travers les éditions successives et s'en justifie légèrement, par une continuité lexicale essentiellement (105). En même temps, il convoque quelquefois des maximes supprimées en les mettant au même plan que les autres. Ce mélange entretient un certain flou que l'on retrouve dans l'ensemble de l'ouvrage. Ainsi, dans le deuxième chapitre, E. Turcat ne définit pas clairement s'il analyse le point de vue de La Rochefoucauld sur la psychologie humaine, ou s'il prend le texte comme un témoignage permettant l'analyse de la psychologie de l'auteur. Dans la troisième partie, le jargon spécifique à l'anthropologie culinaire qu'E. Turcat ré-utilise pour classer les maximes et définir leurs « *ambivalences* » rend la lecture fastidieuse.

En conclusion, E. Turcat tente courageusement de réhabiliter un point de vue libertin sur La Rochefoucauld, remis en cause depuis longtemps. Il ébranle les certitudes et, à elle seule, cette entreprise fait toute la valeur du livre. Malgré de bonnes idées, toutefois, il échoue dans son projet en raison d'une justification insuffisante qui contredit les travaux précédents sans les réfuter. La diversité des approches est intéressante, mais elle finit par être instrumentalisée pour servir à une démonstration forcée. E. Turcat évacue toute dimension spirituelle, théologique, philosophique de l'œuvre, au profit d'un travail de classement considérable mais qui donne à l'ensemble un air parfois scolaire, avec un certain excès dans l'utilisation des étiquettes *classique / baroque*. Néanmoins, on trouvera dans son ouvrage une source d'inspiration précieuse pour explorer le texte insaisissable de La Rochefoucauld à travers de nouveaux angles d'interprétation.

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