

Vuillermoz, Marc. (Sous la direction de)

Dictionnaire analytique des oeuvres théâtrales françaises du XVIIe siècle. Collection *Dictionnaires et références* 3. Paris: Champion, 1998. 864 pp. 750 F.

Vuillermoz sees this dictionary as a modernization of H.C. Lancaster's *History of French Dramatic Literature in The Seventeenth Century* and as an illustration of the drama theory outlined in Jacques Scherer's *La Dramaturgie classique en France*. Although its scope cannot match Lancaster's, *Le Dictionnaire* is an invaluable research tool for *fous du théâtre* interested in the construction of plays and in the transition from text to stage.

The distinguished team of over twenty contributors analyzes 166 plays according to a five-part outline, preceeded by a reference to the modern edition consulted. Indeed, the plays chosen were only those that existed in a modern critical edition as of 1992, when the dictionary project began. The first category, "Type," gives the play's designated genre as well as the "internal genres" it contains, for example letters, oracles, *stances*, songs, and various *divertissements* such as those found in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and other *comédie-ballets*.

The second rubric is "Personnages," presented in three parts: the list of *dramatis personae* is followed by a *schéma relationnel* wherein family relations, love relations and relations of dependence are illustrated. This section ends with a chart indicating in which scenes each character appears (including mute ones and the invisible, like Corneille's Pompée). Needless to say, the chart can become quite complex, but explanatory remarks are given where appropriate.

The dictionary's third main category is "Structure de l'intrigue." A summary of each scene is provided, along with comments on simultaneous actions taking place off stage, including those impossible to show for material reasons, because of *bien-séance*, actions that lack interest, or those that will be revealed in the denouement. Category four is "Lieux," divided into *lieu généra*

and *lieux particuliers*; we can see the acceptance of the unity of place as the century progresses, as well as the increasing variety of *didascalies*. Extensive commentary is often included. In category five, "Temps," we are given the number of lines per scene as well as an outline illustrating *la liaison des scènes*, an estimate of the total time accounted for in the action, and detailed remarks on textual indicators of the passage of time in the play.

Besides the useful indexes of authors, plays, characters and places, there is also an index of the *liaison des scènes*, listing breaks in *liaison* starting with those plays that have none, all the way up to *Tyr et Sidon*'s 18. This index and the one listing plays by length of time of the action (1-6 hours, 6-12 hours, up to more than a week) allow the reader to identify quickly the number of post-1660 works that stretch the rules of classical composition.

This impressive quantitative structural analysis and its accompanying commentary beautifully illustrates the tension inherent in staging plays whose authors sometimes concentrated on the poetic effect of the text to the neglect of spectacle. To have this number of snapshots of individual plays at hand provides a perspective on seventeenth-century theatre previously unavailable.

Claire Carlin