society, he was, according to the astute observations of Grimarest, a philosopher at heart who could not seek pleasure in contemplating the world because of the turmoil in his private life: a young, unfaithful wife to monitor; a theatrical troupe to manage; and a king to please.

Jeffery N. Peters. *The Written World: Space, Literature, and the Chorological Imagination in Early Modern France*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. 2018. xii + 260 pp. + 9 illus. $99.95. Review by Thomas P. Finn, Ohio Northern University.

With his *The Written World: Space, Literature, and the Chorological Imagination in Early Modern France*, Jeffery Peters assumes the unenviable task of discovering what and where literary art is and how it comes into being. The result is a rigorously researched work, providing rare and penetrating perspectives on a number of prominent texts from the titular era. With abundant references to works from classical antiquity to today, in an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion, Peters discusses the ineffable Greek concept of "chora," defined several ways, (often describing what it is not) to explore its possibilities as a "locating principle" (17) that leads to "an event of language" (25) without having any location or existence itself.

In his introduction, Peters explores the neglected role of space in literary art. He explains Early Modern texts are thought to extract readers from their particular "physical world" because it is secondary to the universal values these works convey (6–7). Countering this notion, Peters reminds his readers of new discoveries in astronomy during the era, which made authors and readers more mindful of the notion of space. Stating that space's essence is neither matter nor "absolute nothingness," and therefore unknowable (10), Peters shows readers a path to approaching the Greek concept of "chora" using Plato's *Timaeus*.

A complex discussion of what Plato thinks "chora" is—a kind of "betweenness," "the excluded middle," "'a Kind invisible'"—and is not—"space, a place," a material substance, "an idea" (16–17)—ensues, and it is here Peters could have made a clearer connection to subsequently discussed texts so readers could better follow the complicated

notion he elucidates. Indeed, the author says Timaeus admits it is a "baffling'" and "perplexing" concept, seemingly violating "the law of noncontradiction." Peters agrees, admitting that "the complexities of this problem" return often in his book (17).

In chapter one, Peters uses Boileau's *Art poétique* to enlighten readers on the "*event* of language" (Peters's emphasis, 25) that is "chora," describing it as a convergence of "the poetic and the cosmological" (29). While Peters notes the "verticality" of Boileau's text—Boileau insists one must be "born a poet" (33), as if appointed by God on high—he highlights the *Art poétique*'s dual status. For example, still attached to the here and now, Boileau stresses the importance of the rules of good poetry. Yet Peters also affirms Boileau would undoubtedly agree with the importance Bouhours attaches to the sublime, the "je ne sais quoi" (48) that comes into being with "chora." Thus, Boileau emphasizes "the rule of breaking the rules" (45) so as to move poets' audiences while eschewing an overly rules-based style. Consequently, Peters believes Boileau's work embodies the conflict between opposites (e.g. part/whole, universal/particular, 48–49) despite its reputation for poetic reglementation and prescriptive solutions.

Peters includes a section on La Fontaine's *Fables* in chapter two, but his analysis of Molière's *La critique de l'École des femmes* better illuminates the return to the idea of the je ne sais quoi's power to conjure literature. Peters features Dorante's comments asserting dramatic art has its embryonic stage through very different audience reactions to each performance. He suggests Molière believed dramatic art's very being is born among those differing reactions (77). Although Peters cites Donneau de Visé's *Nouvelles nouvelles* as a depiction of contemporary audience responses to *La Critique* or *L'École des femmes* (77–78), he offers surprising little historical evidence about them, which may have helped contextualize such an important claim.

Using "distance" and "proximity" figuratively, Peters shows that Molière plays on this dichotomy to generate comic portraiture, the playwright's form of art. In *L'École des femmes*, Agnès is hidden from society, meets Horace while Arnolphe is travelling, and is reunited with her father who has spent years in America (79). Whereas tragedy traditionally maintains distance from spectators due to its royal characters or affairs-of-state themes, Molière's creations not only "resemble us,"

but "often *are* us" (Peters's emphasis, 80). The characters are replaying a discussion spectators probably had after seeing *L'École des femmes*. For Molière, this resemblance eschews universal literary rules, preferring "the local" and the precise to bring art into being (80).

In chapter three, Peters references Pierre Macherey to remind us that discovering "the literary thing," identifying the rapport between poetry and place in Corneille's theater, seems impossible (90–91). Stipulating that conventional criticism finds "le grand Corneille" between *Médée* (1634) and *Horace* (1640) (88), Peters chooses *L'Illusion comique* (1635) because its "*betweenness* of beginnings," (Peters's emphasis, 89) its engagement of the nature of "poetic invention," its treatment of the literary and location prove fertile ground for hypotheses crucial to his book (89). Peters claims Corneille's "dramatic invention" comes forth from the "seams and sutures" between the multiple genres that make up the play (104–105) while authorial origin is disguised in the characters dialogue. (111). Thus, *L'Illusion comique* generates a "'hidden art'" that, much like "chora," "locates [Corneille's] art without itself having location" (111).

Peters chooses Racine's *Andromaque* and *Bérénice* in chapter four as exemplars of a kind of "thirdness" (128) necessary for the birth of art. Although Astyanax and "chora" offer intriguing comparisons in *Andromaque*, his stronger argument is with *Bérénice*. Recalling contemporary critics' denunciation of Antiochus as unnecessary, Peters defends his "crucial structuring role" that "partakes of both extremes" (128)—Titus and Rome vs. Bérénice and the East—but belongs to neither. Only Antiochus can express the secret thoughts Titus and Bérénice dare not utter, yet he cannot influence their fate.

Chapter five includes an Early Modern mapmaking lesson. Peters says, under Henri IV onward, cartographers shifted from "verbal description" of their subjects to more "visual language" (164). This resembles geography as seen in d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* where pastoral landscape is always a place and an idea (151) in between which "chora" finds itself. Peters claims that d'Urfé never aspires to an accurate depiction of the place his shepherds inhabit, but rather sets a scene appropriate for their talk of terrestrial love and of "the divine heights" of which they dream (156). Thus, *L'Astrée*'s "chora" is not a place, but rather a "soothing 'elsewhere'" opposed to city or court life (147). It is a "gen-

erating principle" and "unlocated creative force," (145) unfolding a landscape where the novel "becomes" (174). Closing the chapter, Peters highlights the dual and sometimes contradictory characteristics of this novel that is "local" and "grounded" yet "cosmic" and "abstract" (175).

Repeating twice a chapter five passage (164–165) in chapter six (191, 203), Peters affirms that "atlases" were called "theatrum" during much of the seventeenth century, a change in nomenclature key to understanding geography's function in Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*. He stresses Lafayette's more grounded geography, also seen in Madeleine de Scudéry's *Promenade de Versailles*, to show how "literary art [reflects] on the origins of art" itself (205). Accordingly, he analyzes the scene where the princess gazes at the portrait of Nemours, probably *Le siège de Metz par les troupes impériales* by Antoine Caron, ca. 1560 (186). As in much of Lafayette's novel, the painting's description, what the princess sees, is kept from the reader. Rather than an opportunity to share her vision, Peters claims the tableau stands as a point of contact between history (the siege is historical fact) and fiction while diluting the ties holding them together (186).

Noting this narration-over-description style replete in Lafayette's novel, Peters suggests the author heeds Tacitus's admonition against overdescription when it serves only to highlight writers' talents. Consequently, she privileges her characters' actions and interior psychology—the novel's real plot—over the geography they occupy. Paradoxically, then, the representation of the princess's surroundings convinces because of its absence, redirecting the readers' attention to the action of the characters' inner worlds (191).

Peters's brief conclusion references Sainte-Beuve's definition of a French "classic": an exemplary work but one with a "conceptual absence" (210), since a true classic defies definition. He uses this concept to offer, in negative terms, perhaps his clearest definition of "chora," which "is neither place nor space," nor an organizer of opposites (213). Indeed, Peters proffers the seventeenth century itself as a sort "chora" as it deals with seemingly incompatible concepts (e.g. idea and its manifestation) (211). Reinforcing his point, he cites Patrick Dandrey's claim that the seventeenth century prolongs the Renaissance while anticipating the Enlightenment, seeing it as a dialectical "intermediary period" known only, Peters underlines, by "its effect" (212–13).

The uninitiated, like your reviewer, may require more than the usual number of rereads, but Peters's tome, with a helpful index and copious biographical notes, is an astute and insightful journey into an immensely significant era. Its esoteric subject can lead to wording that could lose the reader (cf. Aristotle's idea of topos 102). And some potentially appealing parallels between Peters's work and Barthes's reader of a "texte scriptible" from *Le Plaisir du texte* remain unexplored. Nonetheless, *The Written World* is a rich and enriching book, offering a fresh and illuminating approach to some of France's most influential Early Modern works. It is well worth the time of any serious researcher of the period.

Émilie Picherot. *Les Musulmans d'Espagne dans les littératures arabe, espagnole et française, XVème–XVIIème siècles*: Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2019. 591 pp. €59. Review by Daphne McConnell, Benedictine College.

In the introduction to this examination of the place of the Muslim in the literary imagination of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain and France, Picherot draws a comparison between the early history of the "Espagne des trois cultures," which experienced eight centuries of religious tolerance and a resulting cultural richness ("culture de mixite"), and the role of Islam in contemporary Europe (7). The author underlines the very different literary perspectives of Grenada, the Alhambra, and the Muslim presence in Spain, depending on the literary context. In French romantic literature of the nineteenth century, the "Maure de Grenade" is an exotic figure, without nuance. From the perspective of Spanish literature, the representation of the Muslim in Spain is much more complex, ranging from the noble characters and brilliant culture represented in the *romancero*, to the "Other" that figures in the literature of the period of the Reconquista (8). For the Arab-Muslim reader, the Muslim of Spain was a figure who was chased from the land that he loved above all else, a paradise that was praised by generations of poets, and Al-Andalus serves as a symbol of the injustice of Christianity (8), but also as a symbol of a period of decadence in the Muslim-Arab world (9).