

of scholars who have been more inclined to take seriously the public professions of orthodoxy by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers and *libertins érudits* while deemphasizing counterevidence for countercurrents of atheism and heterodoxy lurking just beneath the surface. Whether such secret atheism was a massive iceberg beneath the surface of seventeenth-century thought will continue to be a matter of spirited debate for some time. Gianluca Mori's study will assuredly reignite such important considerations (277–78).

Rori Bloom. *Making the Marvelous: Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Henriette-Julie de Murat, and the Literary Representation of the Decorative Arts*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. 250 pp. \$65.00. Review by PEGGY SCHALLER ELLIOTT, GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY, EMERITA.

Rori Bloom's new publication on the writings of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Henriette-Julie de Murat places the physical aspects of their fairy tales—items such as castles' decor, accessories, food, and art—on par with the action of the tale. Setting aside the traditional dissection of narratives most often used to critique this literary genre, Bloom moves furniture and fashion front and center in her analysis, portraying d'Aulnoy and Murat not only as “chroniclers of material culture but also as explorers of aesthetic issues including the relationship between art and power, word and image, the technical and the magical” (1). Bloom's text brings to light the transformation of tales from the *ancien* in which bucolic scenes emphasized their “folksy” aspect to the *moderne*, uncovering images of exquisitely wrought opulence adorning “an ornately furnished room or a gorgeously clothed body” (3). What these two women writers create, Bloom argues, is a new way of evaluating beauty, ornamentation, and the marvelous that appreciates them as man-made constructions rather than creations of nature or—even less believably—of magic. And in returning the creative focus to the skilled craftsmanship of French artists, Bloom stresses that both d'Aulnoy and Murat express their patriotism, guilefully criticize the king's aura of powerful omnipotence, and subtly make the case for their own skilled production, “a call for acknowledgement of the

authors' own creative labor" (9).

The first three chapters plunge deeply into these material representations of the marvelous in both d'Aulnoy's *Contes* and Murat's collected fairy tales. Using broad categories of places, people, and things, these chapters provide close readings of the tales that unveil and then unravel the presence of creative—and created—marvels. In Chapter 1, palaces and boudoirs suspend the narrative, becoming more than just settings. As Bloom's examples make clear, "the décor of the tales is a marvel in itself." Just as significant, the intricate descriptions "do not destroy the marvelous but instead redefine it as man-made" (27), a point reiterated throughout the study.

When she moves to illustration and painting in Chapter 2, Bloom identifies the cultural shift exemplified in these women's tales. "Instead of emulating Scudéry's analysis of sentiments in her portraits, Murat plays with qualities of surface" (60). The chapter examines portraiture, coloring, and makeup as they apply not only to human subjects but also to objects and *singeries*. Detailed descriptions of animals flaunting their beautiful feathers and fur establish how human intervention, when done with artisanal accuracy, creates a marvelous outcome.

Arriving at Chapter 3, the objects of study become smaller still. Here, in "Essential Accessories," Bloom gathers descriptions of the smallest *objets* of beauty fabricated by these fairy tale authors, objects she identifies as "bagatelles" or baubles. Her examples go to such familiar accessories as jewels, boxes, and—in the case of d'Aulnoy—toys to demonstrate the role they play in emphasizing the artisanal craftsmanship their fabrication requires. In Murat's "Le Palais de la Vengeance," for example, the heroine "finds an emerald which opens at her touch to reveal a rose petal on which her admirer has written a love poem" (117). Bloom also points out the beautiful miniature toys detailed in so many of d'Aulnoy's tales: "little scissors," a "little silver tea set," and even a "little carriage all of gold," each of which "draws our attention to the metal-worker's skill as a miniaturist" (118).

Equally significant is the emphasis placed on d'Aulnoy and Murat as distinct authors. In her introduction, Bloom challenges the recurrent categorization of all women fairy tale writers as "interchangeable practitioners" (13), demanding more: "My aim is to acknowledge their relation to a shared cultural context while recognizing them as

individuals" (14). Once stated, she lets the intelligence of their work affirm this objective throughout the text. Each author is recognized for her writing initiatives and innovations, and each is celebrated for the unique qualities of her work. This essential thread emphasizes repeatedly that it took skilled artisans to produce the spectacular creations of the late seventeenth century, whether furnishings, fashion, or the fictional tales that documented them. For example, when describing beautiful baubles in one of d'Aulnoy's tales as "admirable," Bloom also accentuates "the ingenuity with which these modest materials are transformed into exquisite accessories" (116). By highlighting the artistic acumen of the creators of these material items, d'Aulnoy's skillful fairy tale creation is unquestionably highlighted as well.

The final two chapters address authorial contributions at an individualized level. Chapter 4 explores the earlier work of Madame d'Aulnoy, positioning her novel *Relations du voyage d'Espagne* as a springboard for the later tales, "a site where d'Aulnoy explores aesthetic, cultural, and ideological issues that she will continue to treat in her *Contes*" (131). Bloom relates accounts of Spanish food, fashion, and even aesthetic discernment as unfavorably contrasted against those same categories of French production. In *Relations*, Bloom reveals an author who "affirms the importance of French manufacture, with a patriotic pride that will persist in the *Contes*, where beautifully made French products are celebrated as modern marvels" (141).

Chapter 5 highlights Madame de Murat, whose fairy tales preceded her novels. Those novels solidify Murat's initial assertions that occurrences of the beautiful, the supernatural, the mysterious are all man-made. In documenting these phenomena, Bloom stresses, "whether physical or psychological, she ultimately demystifies the marvelous by exposing it as artifice" (171). Chief among Murat's sources are theatrical prompts on which she relies heavily to exemplify the man-made creativity that produced the marvelous in seventeenth-century France and captured her admiration.

Bloom's wide array of examples and connections affirm that the skill of these two authors far exceeds a dismissive categorization of them as simple purveyors of folk tales. Her carefully crafted text provides insight into the culture and atmosphere of the period, and Bloom takes us on an intricate exploration of these women's subtleties.

Bloom's study is its own small gem, prompting readers to reconsider the influential role of d'Aulnoy's and Murat's fairy tales in the expansion of literary innovation, and in documenting seventeenth-century French society and its culture.

M. Vuillermoz, S. Blondet, eds. *Les idées du théâtre. Paratextes français, italiens et espagnols des XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, Genève: Droz, 2020. 1384 pp. 98€. Review by DENIS D. GRÉLÉ, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS.

*Les Idées du théâtre* is a lengthy book that regroups many introductory texts of French, Spanish, and Italian plays from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The work of nearly 100 specialists, this volume includes introductory texts of 162 French, 37 Spanish, and 26 Italian plays. Ordered chronologically, the volume mixes all sorts of texts—compilation of prefaces, prologues, epistles, forewords, short introductory plays, poems—and exposes a rich body of texts placed at the beginning of plays by the authors in order to defend, explain, or justify their work. *Les Idées du Théâtre* is devised as a series of short articles that include a short introduction written by one of the many theater specialists recruited for this project and the various introductory texts accompanied by a solid system of footnotes. For the most part, each introduction limits itself to a commentary on the text chosen and not on the play that would follow. In many cases, these short introductions describe the context in which the play was written and present a short history of the various editions. They also offer explanations on the importance of these editorial, authorial, and dedicatory texts in the history of genre, focusing on the various aspects of the development of a theory of theatrical genre during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For the Italian and Spanish authors, the texts are translated into French. This volume replicates much of the content of the *I.d.T.* (*Idées du Théâtre*) website (<http://idt.huma-num.fr/>) which includes a larger number of introductory texts of the same period.

Marc Vuillermoz (the editor/director of the volume) and Sylvie Blondet (the coordinator) have chosen to include texts from France, Italy, and Spain exclusively and understandably, first because of the close relationships between these three countries, and second because