

book is the possibility that there might be a vein of plausibly deniable autobiography in the chapter titles. One wonders if Redmond, the Professor at the University of Palermo, is himself an “Italianate Englishman,” re-reading literature as an erudite scholarly Machiavel who has won his Mediterranean “dukedom,” a tenured professorship, with his runic book, and who now, as a comfortably situated expatriate, is “no more a Britain” or a Briton.

Jeff Persels, ed. *Spectacle*. Studies in Early Modern France. 13. Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 2010. xiv + 236 pp. \$49.95. Review by ANNE E. DUGGAN, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY.

Under the general editorship of Anne Birberick and Russell Ganim, the series *Studies in Early Modern France* has provided a venue for interdisciplinary research since its foundation in 1994 by David Lee Rubin. Published annually, each issue revolves around a specific theme, from *Rethinking Cultural Studies* (2000-2001), and *Modern Perspectives on the Early Modern* (2005) to *Early Modern Convent Voices* (2007). For *Spectacle*, Jeff Persels brings together essays that focus on theater and performance from different disciplinary approaches and in a variety of contexts spanning the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. Interestingly, the focus of the collection is on the earlier part of the early modern period. Five essays deal with spectacle in the late fifteenth century, moving into the early sixteenth century; three essays focus on sixteenth-century theater; three essays consider spectacle in the seventeenth century; and one essay moves into the eighteenth century. While the seventeenth century is often thought of as “the” century of spectacle, this collection makes a unique contribution to theater studies and ways of thinking about spectacle precisely by focusing on the earlier periods of early modern France.

The first five essays present a complex picture of spectacle in the decades preceding and following 1500. Theater and public performances are treated from the perspective of their political and religious function, philosophical import, financing and production, and gender. Fabien Salesse examines the role played by the *Passion d’Auvergne*, first performed in Montferrand in 1477, in the unifica-

tion of the city's inhabitants. After the pillage of Montferrand in 1388, which broke its commercial strength, the performance of the passion play symbolically allowed the inhabitants to reclaim urban space, at the same time that it reiterated the principal sacraments of the Catholic faith. In her study of medieval laughter, Andreea Marculescu situates both farces and *sotties* in relation to philosophical discourses about laughter. Since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, laughter was viewed as a quality that distinguishes man from animal, in the tradition of Aristotle. However, laughter must be controlled as well, in line with concern over mastery over the body and according to norms of decorum. Marculescu argues that farces and *sotties* from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century often use "immoderate" laughter to attack rivals, but they also incorporate more "civilized" forms of laughter, particularly in conjunction with the representation of female characters. Moving away from laughter, Matthieu Bonicel looks at the role of city finances and city planning in the production of municipal performances in Avignon from 1450 to 1550. His contribution provides us with a very concrete description of the material conditions—from the hiring of performers to the organization of security—involved in putting together grand entries, as well as occasional public entertainment sponsored by the city.

Essays by Kathleen Llewellyn and Laura Weigert have a narrower focus. Llewellyn provides an intriguing reading of Jean Molinet's *Le Mystère de Judith et Holofernès*. She argues that the apparent contradictions between Judith's transgression of feminine ideals of modesty, humility, and silence, on the one hand, and her exemplary value, on the other, can be resolved by reading the character's actions in terms of metadrama. Judith *performs* the role of seductress and executioner, only to return to her status as virtuous widow at the end of the play, when she insists that she was merely the instrument of God. While Llewellyn's piece deals with a positive Jewish figure, Weigert looks at how the mystery play *The Vengeance of Our Lord* translated into a series of painted cloth in Reims that in effect allegorically validated the Very Christian King's expulsion of the Jews from Provence.

The next series of essays deal with the influence of humanism and the preoccupation with the Wars of Religion in sixteenth-century theater. John Nassichuk's piece teases out the contemporary influ-

ences in Etienne Jodelle's *Cléopâtre captive*. He argues that Cesare De Cesari's *Cleopatra, tragedia*, Giambattista Giraldo Cinthio's *Orbecche*, and the aesthetics of the Pléiade were essential in Jodelle's reshaping of Plutarch's *Life of Antony*. Pascale Barthe examines the first French Orientalist play, *La Soltane* (1561) by Gabriel Bounin. At the same time that *La Soltane* plays on sensationalist accounts of Soliman the Magnificent, Barthe argues that it also stages the tensions surrounding Catherine de Medici's regency. In her study of Jean de la Taille's Christian tragedies, Corinne Noirot-Maguire situates La Taille's work within the context of the Religious Wars and the author's own personal losses. She contends that La Taille's tragedies are meant to arouse pity, reason, and charity in his spectators in the hopes of ending sectarian violence. As I read Barthe and Noirot-Maguire, Timothy Reiss's book, *Tragedy and Truth* (1980) came to mind, particularly his notion of tragedy as a means of working through political as well as epistemological shifts and their consequent disorders, which both essays treat in different ways.

Among the essays dealing with the seventeenth century, two focus on tragedy. Ellen McClure examines Pierre Corneille's *Horace* as a veiled critique of George de Scudéry's conception of theater. McClure approaches the character of Horace as a figure for the disembodied, stoic response to theater prescribed by Scudéry, whereas Sabine serves as an interpolated and emotionally engaged spectator, whose embodied response to theater (that is, the actions unfolding before her) exemplifies Corneille's conception of spectatorship. In *Pierre Corneille: Poetics and Political Drama under Louis XIII* (1992), David Clarke provides a sociohistorical reading of *Horace* in which he maintains that Corneille's Horace represents a critique of absolutist policy; McClure similarly reads the character of Horace in negative terms, but provides a theoretical analysis based on contemporary conceptions of and positions on theatricality and spectatorship. Bérénice Le Marchand's piece moves away from theater as such to examine the various forms of spectacle inscribed in the fairy tales of authors such as Madame d'Aulnoy, Charles Perrault, Mademoiselle Lhéritier, and Madame de Murat. Le Marchand argues that fairy-tale writers integrated elements of court culture as well as popular culture into their stories. While theater, opera, balls, and dances punctuate many

tales, so do marionettes and monkeys that could have been seen at the fair of Saint Germain. Works by fairy-tale writers, then, can be situated at the intersection of elite and popular culture.

The last two pieces return to the question of religion. Enrica Zanin's contribution looks at the problematics of representing *Oedipus Rex* for early modern playwrights. At the same time that the play is essential to one's understanding of Aristotle's *Poetics*, the very foundation of modern theater, *Oedipus Rex* proves problematic within a modern Christian culture: how can one represent the condemnation of a hero who innocently violated the law? Zanin goes on to examine how Italian and French playwrights, from Giraldi Cinzio to Pierre Corneille, worked through the moral dilemma presented by the play's subject. The final essay in the volume by Karen Taylor examines the use of theater in Saint-Cyr in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a pedagogical tool for the education and socialization of noble girls. Taylor's study is especially interesting in its focus on the ways in which theater at Saint-Cyr evolved along with secular literature; eighteenth-century notions of *sensibilité* and experiential knowledge were important concepts treated in Saint-Cyr productions.

Together the essays in *Spectacle* form a complex tapestry of perspectives on spectacle in the early modern period. My only critique of the volume is the placement of the essay by Zanin on *Oedipus Rex*, which seemed to me to work better with the essays related to sixteenth-century humanist theater, and which could have made a nice transition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. Overall, the collection provides specialists as well as students with a history of theater and spectacle in their various forms through the volume's chronological organization (i.e., moving from mystery and humanist plays to tragedy). *Spectacle* also offers insights into the material, cultural, ideological, religious, and political contexts in which plays, public performances, painted cloths, and fairy tales were produced, as well as the ways in which authors integrated different conceptions and forms of spectacle in their works.