Divus Élançements are seen as poetic expressions of an inner reality of religious experience.

Part IV situates all that preceded in a historical perspective. Twentieth-century and earlier criticism, notably that of Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652), is brought to bear on Bourgeois's argument.

In sum, Bourgeois has set an enormous agenda in a volume that is more important as a resource for French devotional poetry of the period than as a work that answers convincingly the question of how the baroque aesthetic is expressed in that literature, if indeed it is. On the other hand, the reader is treated to a wide reaching array of intertexts, background material and textual explications that pepper the volume. It is easy to forget the author’s original goal to show the integration of theology and rhetoric in the conversion of the Muse as he leads the reader along numerous paths. This book will be valuable to any researcher already familiar with the terminology of classical rhetoric, Tridentine theology, mystical literature, the sister arts, and the devotional poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.


Michael Moriarty’s new book picks up where his last, *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion*, left off, and we are treated to the same erudition, well-crafted arguments, thought-provoking explorations, and lucid prose. This time Moriarty aims to demonstrate that in the early modern period, French thinkers, including philosophers, theologians, poets, and playwrights, were developing what might be called a kind of proto-psychology—a study of human behavioral motivation with a pronounced focus on subjective interiority. He traces his theme from its roots in neo-Augustinian conceptions of original sin to the problematic nature of self-knowledge as explicated in the works of thinkers from Pascal to La Rochefoucauld. The book is wide-ranging in scope and firmly anchored in textual analysis from a variety of primary sources, drawing on philosophical, theological, and literary work from the early modern period. Like Moriarty’s earlier book, *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves* is a finely crafted, nuanced, and well-paced work of remarkable
scholarship which should be of great interest to scholars and advanced stu-
dents interested in the period and figures it covers.

Since much early modern thinking about the self, its nature and motiva-
tions, is grounded in, or is in some way a reaction to, an Augustinian concep-
tion of original sin, Moriarty launches his discussion with an analysis of the
changes that conception underwent at the hands of thinkers like Jansenius,
Malebranche, and Pascal. These thinkers were responding, directly or indi-
rectly, to a Thomistic reading of the doctrine of original sin in which human
nature was not entirely corrupted by the fall and where human nature and
moral obligations could be understood outside the supernatural realm of
revelation or grace. Though the will can only be entirely satisfied by the
beatific vision, we may yet, Aquinas argued, pursue our natural human end of
happiness by living a life of virtue along Aristotelian lines.

What see in Jansenius, Pascal, and Malebranche, by way of contrast, and
despite their differences, is a rejection of the idea that we can somehow
pursue wholly natural human ends by the light of reason alone, or that an
account of human motivation can be given that does not start with an
acknowledgement of the wretchedness of human nature as a result of the
fall. According to Malebranche, for example, human nature as a whole was
utterly perverted by the self-induced fall that separated us from God, and
ultimately led to the perversion of our natural desires. Most importantly, the
fall and the wedge it drove between human beings and God caused human
beings to forsake what originally their natural end—the love of God—for the pursuit
of changeable, impermanent, worldly goods (109). As fallen human beings,
originally created to love God, we now “can linger over particular goods, as if
they were good for us in themselves. There is thus a permanent possibility
of voluntary estrangement from God” (139). That we are in this predicam-
ent, willing ourselves away from God, shows that our original nature has
indeed been corrupted; that reason is powerless to set things right shows that
“we are no longer as we were created: we must be unworthy now to
approach him… We were in a certain state, we are now in another that is
displeasing to God: we must therefore be guilty, as a species, of sin” (140).

As a result of our voluntary separation from God and our attachments
to and desires for worldly goods (concupiscence) we are tempted to think of
ourselves as the beginning and end of all our endeavors. This focus on
ourselves takes the form of an unnatural self-love, as a result of which our
natural drive to self-preservation, which was intended to be a reflection of our love of God, “has become the host inhabited by a new parasitic growth, a morbid attachment to self as the object of one’s desire” (178). Here is where the interiorization we tend to identify with psychology, and the modern period, gets a foothold: when self-love supplants charity (love of God) as the primary motivation for our actions, the only standard we can apply for judging the moral quality of those actions is a subjective one. “The viciousness of a sinful act or desire resides in its relation to the subject. To assess the quality of one’s own actions, one no longer compares their objects with the ideal object, God; one is forced to introspect, to query and to sift one’s own motives” (189-90). But since our nature has been so corrupted by the fall, we can never find anything inside ourselves but unnatural motives, clouded by the kinds of passions and bodily distortions of reason that Descartes so famously uncovered. Even when we appear to be acting for the sake of others, the appearance is only an illusion—a cleverly disguised effort to make others love us, and to persuade ourselves that our motives are justified. For Malebranche, though we may seek to mask our pursuit of worldly goods in our efforts to win the affections and approbation of others, the result is self-delusion (395). The recognition that self-love is a prison from which we cannot free ourselves leads Pascal to offer this shocking claim about virtue:

The true and only virtue is thus to hate oneself, for one is hateful on account of one’s concupiscence, and to seek a truly lovable being to love. But as we cannot love what is outside us, we must love what is inside us, yet not ourselves…Now only universal being meets this requirement. The kingdom of God is within us. (201)

The turn to interiority has been further entrenched, and brings with it a host of new worries for writers of the early modern period—principal among those worries was our human tendency to self-deception. As Moriarty notes, in referring to Malebranche, since self-love as we now experience it is not part of our original nature, there is “something perverse and inauthentic in self-love, and this appears particularly clearly in its liability to illusion” (271). When we recognize our fallen nature, we try to turn from it by covering our motives with what we take to be good intentions, but we thereby succeed only in making our true nature more opaque to ourselves, for “to misrecognize the
source of one’s own (interested) actions empowers one to perform them with all the more vigor and conviction” (395).

In the final section of the book Moriarty pursues this theme of self-deception in the works of La Fontaine, Pierre Charron, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Pierre Nicole, François Lamy, Antoine Arnauld, Pierre Corneille, Moliere, Jean Racine, Madame de Lafayette, and La Rochefoucauld. There are forays along the way into philosophy, theology, literature, poetry, and theatre. In each case, Moriarty points up the fact that the legacy of self-deception that issues from a recognition of our fallen nature presents formidable obstacles to our attempts to come to clear self-knowledge. Sometimes there is an attempt by these thinkers to overcome those obstacles, which takes a clear theological form. Witness Malebranche, who argues that we can only trust the outcome of our introspective self-searching where that searching is subordinated to our love of God, which can only be guaranteed by grace. Other strands of thinking about self-deception in the early modern period, which do not appeal to divine grace to extricate us from our predicament, are equally critical and suspicious of our motivations, grounded as they are in self-love. Without trying to suggest that there is universal agreement among the authors whose work he examines in this final section of the book, Moriarty successfully manages to bring into high relief a set of family resemblances that bind them all together: a self-conscious recognition of the way that self-love and concupiscence tend to obscure our true motivations and put genuinely virtuous actions out of reach, coupled with a commitment to the idea that our opacity to ourselves is the result of the fall which permanently separated us from God and perverted our true nature. Moriarty notes:

What is lastingly fascinating about so many thinkers of this period is the combination of an acute awareness of the omnipresence of the ego, in our relations both with ourselves and with other, with a steadfast refusal to treat this as a natural and justified state of affairs. Ego, suffused with illusion, appropriative and assertive, yet fragile, and elusive, can never ground any but illusory and exploitative relationships. At a fairly early state in the development towards and egoistic individualist society, it was above all the theology of the fall and of grace that prompted and enabled the writers studied here to develop this crucial vision. (404)
Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves is welcome and eminently successful companion piece to Moriarty’s Early Modern French Thought. Readers who were engaged by that earlier book will find much to like here as well—wide-ranging erudition, subtle textual analysis, and lucid, well-paced prose. The book offers a persuasive case for the claim that there was a form of psychological study emerging in the early modern period, grounded in a neo-Augustinian conception of original sin, which left a profound mark on subsequent developments leading to the kind of individualism that we recognize as one of the hallmarks of the modern period.


In this very extensive analysis of the interplay of medical and religious discourse in England, Claire Crignon-de Oliveira focuses on the complex relationship between the concepts of melancholy and enthusiasm. As the book’s title suggests, its main focus is on the works of Burton and Shaftesbury in the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, but it also contains material on authors writing in the years between: Méric Casaubon, Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Willis, John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, Nicholas Robinson, George Cheyne, and John Trenchard amongst others. Its central task is to show how Burton’s innovative classification and description of enthusiasm as a product of “religious melancholy” inaugurated a form of polemical discourse in which medical and psychological concepts supported and gave shape to religious-political concerns, and which in the hands of various authors, culminating with Shaftesbury, subsequently underwent a series of transformations with significant implications for contemporary theories of human nature and society.

The book opens (part I) with a general account of the medical, spiritual and demonological aspects of the concept of melancholy in The Anatomy of Melancholy, and proceeds by showing some of the political implications of this work by turning to Burton’s portrayal of collective melancholic pathology. Burton’s rather perplexing assertion that bodies politic may suffer from mel-