

Ronald W. Tobin. *L'aventure racinienne. Un parcours franco-américain*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020. 243. \$27.75/25€. Review by SUZANNE C. TOCZYSKI, SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY.

One of the most recent publications in L'Harmattan's nearly twenty-year-old *Approches littéraires* series, *L'aventure racinienne: Un parcours franco-américain*, by noted American dix-septième Ronald Tobin, presents fourteen of Tobin's many articles, thirteen of which have been published previously (between 1974 and 2017); five have been translated from English. Taken together, they offer a taste of Ron Tobin's important contributions to Racine criticism over a long and productive career, and confirming for anyone who may have doubted it, Tobin's longstanding love for the playwright Jean Racine, and his fine critical eye on Racine's theatrical production. Tobin's occasional refrain—for example, "Act IV is always intense"—makes one suspect that the scholar's gifts have been appreciated not only by his peers, but also by the many students at the University of California, Santa Barbara to have sat in his classroom over the years.

Well known for his books *Racine and Seneca* (1971), *Tarte à la crème: Comedy and Gastronomy in Molière's Theater* (1990), and *Jean Racine, Revisited* (1999), Tobin has also edited or co-edited several volumes of essays, including *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, the *acta* from the 1999 Santa Barbara conference which Tobin organized in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the playwright's death. In *L'aventure racinienne*, Tobin now turns his editorial attention to his own scholarly production. In articles ranging from ten to twenty-two pages, Tobin demonstrates his gift for fleshing out the history of an idea (*le plaisir, le secret*) or a character (Néron, Héraclès, Andromaque) or a theatrical perspective (*le lieu, les coulisses*). While limited in scope (many more of Tobin's articles might well have been included in the present volume), the collection ranges well beyond a simple mastery of the Racinian corpus, offering a wealth of information on works of Antiquity and the Renaissance as well. Useful cross references throughout, including to other essays within the present collection, and footnotes at the bottom of each page, allow the reader to navigate with ease the *parcours* referenced in its title.

Tobin's preface, "Doit-on aimer encore Racine?" (reprinted from a 2001 volume of *Biblio 17*), presents an extensive account of American contributions to Racine studies as well as a glimpse into his own history reading French scholarship on the playwright. It offers insights into various critical movements over time—from existentialism to structuralism and psychocriticism and including waves of attention to studies of Racine's Greek sources and mythology in general, philosophical and theological influences, Racine the man, Racine the playwright, and Racine the master of theatrical space, before moving on to reception studies, history, dramaturgy, rhetoric and poetics, all within the context of a more interdisciplinary approach. This short chapter is sure to prove enlightening to any new Racine scholar seeking to get her head around the vast production of criticism devoted to the playwright.

While Tobin devotes some space to virtually every play written by Jean Racine, a few plays merit special attention in the work he presents here, among them *Britannicus*, *Andromaque* and *Phèdre*. The first article in the collection, "Racine, Sénèque et l'Académie Lamoignon," furthers work Tobin published previously in *Racine and Seneca*, suggesting that while Racine clearly owed a debt to Seneca, he preferred to cite other, more impressive sources. Here, as in virtually every article in this collection, Tobin offers ample historical context for the argument he is proposing; in this case, he details the influence of Seneca in the Renaissance and early seventeenth century before his eclipse mid-century under the scrutiny of the Abbé d'Aubignac. Tobin will similarly lay out a thorough chronology of the character of Héraclès (aka Hercules / Alcide) across the centuries before turning his attention to *Alexandre le Grand* and *Phèdre*. Other articles are noteworthy for their deep look into the psychological underpinnings of Racine's characters: Tobin uses Adler's notion of the inferiority complex to better understand Créon, Néron and Pyrrhus, and reads Junie as an object of Néron's fantasies. Turning his attention to Sophocles, Tobin links love as a poison in that playwright's *Les Trachiniennes* to Racine's *Phèdre*. A study of pleasure in Racine's theater focuses most acutely (once again) on the character of Néron in *Britannicus*, while his study of *le secret* takes a broader approach, one that ranges across the playwright's *oeuvre*. Tobin's apparently heretofore unpublished article on

Esther points to the *oralité* (uses and abuses of *bouche, voix* and *langue*) targeted by the play and relating all to the notions of *festin* vs. *jeûne*, while an article on *Andromaque* questions the common wisdom that posits the character as morally perfect. Most intriguing, perhaps, are the small collection of articles devoted to *lieu, espace, scène et hors-scène*, and *coulisses* in *Britannicus, Bérénice, Andromaque* and *Phèdre*. The final article in the collection examines the fragmentation of the body, also in *Phèdre*, one which led Racine away from secular theater and the myth of a unified conscience to his final religious works.

L'aventure racinienne is not without its limitations. Occasional minor imperfections by the typesetter (an unfortunate page or line break here and there) are small distractions from a collection that is otherwise well edited and eminently readable. Surprisingly, the list of *Références* at the back is extremely limited, omitting even some critics Tobin cites as integral to his own understanding of Racine (Barthes and Picard among them), and including no works published after 1999. Given Tobin's own extensive work as bibliographer of the playwright, this much abridged list is unfortunate, resulting perhaps from a restriction imposed by the publisher. Nevertheless, *L'aventure racinienne* offers L'Harmattan's Francophone public a healthy serving of the eminently systematic and thorough work of an American critic whose scholarship has helped to shape the international trajectory of Racine criticism for almost fifty years. One hopes this volume does not represent an endpoint but, rather, a springboard from which further fruitful scholarship will follow.

Larry Silver and Kevin Terraciano, eds. *Canons and Values: Ancient to Modern*. Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2019. xi + 323 pp. + 89 illus. \$60.00. Review by LIVIA STOENESCU, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

The perception that art history demands reformulations, reconsiderations, and reinterpretations to salvage the discipline's humanistic creed in times of renewal and exchange have prompted several notable interventions in the last decade. A credible origin point for these discussions is Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's *Anachronic*