

The volume itself is impeccably presented and edited; the text is accompanied by an extensive critical apparatus, including the identification (wherever possible) of every person the pupil and the tutor met during their trip. The publication of such a detailed and, in some respects, rather unusual account of a Grand Tour experience is of great interest to historians of mobility and of education, among many others. Reading travel narratives might be a frustrating experience as so many names mentioned are unknown to us; the interest of the publication of the Woodstock correspondence is considerably enhanced by the editorial work, including the opportunity to identify various major and minor actors.

Ruoting Ding, *L'usurpation du pouvoir dans le théâtre français du XVIIIe siècle (1636–1696)*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2021. 560 pp. 75€. Review by Denis Grélé, THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS.

*L'usurpation du pouvoir* is, as the title depicts, a study of Baroque and Classical French Theater through the theme of the legitimacy of power and its usurpation. While this type of analysis is somewhat dated, the book has many excellent qualities that merit the attention of researchers and scholars. It is first important to note that Ruoting Ding makes a conscious decision not to look at this theme chronologically—even if she makes copious references to historical events—but to organize it according to subcategories, bringing together texts published many years apart, but which take into consideration the same sub-theme. Her investigation into usurpation and legitimacy is thus organized into three modules: “the Right to Govern,” “the Duty to Govern,” and “the Will to Govern.” Within each individual module, she articulates how every aspect of the main theme is presented in the various plays dealing with governmental inheritance and the maintenance of political power. In the first part, “the Right to Govern,” Ding explores the importance of laws which give the right to kings and queens to reign, the fights that can ensue when contestation arises, and how royal power can decay to the point that a new dynasty becomes necessary. This part explores in particular the difficulties authors have in presenting dethroned kings when royal power is asserting itself in France at the same time. In the second part, “the Duty to Govern,”

she presents the conflicts between the king as a ruler and the king as a private person. Ding thus examines cases when a queen or a king has to marry. She also looks at when plays legitimize the killing of a king (for example in the case of tyranny) or when it is best to submit. The last part, "the Will to Govern," examines the theme of the conquest of power through conspiracies and intrigues.

Quoting Ding analyses situations that she finds in more than one hundred plays while tying them to current or well-known historical events such as the executions of Mary, Queen of Scots and King Charles I. Her text is copiously laden with historical and critical notes. If it makes the reading sometimes a little heavy, this attention to detail and her careful analysis of sources make this a valuable reference for other scholars. She develops an excellent historical framework for the key concept of legitimacy and legacy, and she understands the problem of political theory and what the authors of tragedies or tragicomedies knew about those theories. The large corpus of texts that she takes into consideration gives breath and legitimacy to her work. Rather than focusing on a few texts that may suit a certain point of view, she takes ownership of a corpus of all texts, taking into account the notion of inheritance and dealing with the possibility or eventuality of the usurpation of power. She is also able to bring together two methods, the poetic approach and the historical approach, to appreciate how authors understood political theories or political events and how they were able to deal with them within their plays.

It is unfortunate that *L'usurpation du pouvoir* reads very much like a dissertation and tends to be very descriptive at times; understandably since most texts are almost unknown today and need to be summarized before being analyzed. Certain notions could have been better explored in particular the role of the people in those plays and the notion of merit versus birth. If those two ideas are mentioned, they are not sufficiently investigated. The study is very precise but lacks a synthetic view. Her method and her choice of presentation make the reading a little dry. There is no sense that the reader is brought towards some kind of a conclusion. Rather, the reader is presented with every text according to its theme and sub-theme. For this reason, the conclusion is a little bit disconcerting. While she acknowledges in her introduction that her concluding remarks are not a proper conclu-

sion, her closing remarks read like any other chapter. Ding said that she wanted to systematize her study, but she could have more clearly defined general trends. By the end of her study, one would expect that she would be able to offer a better understanding of what she has studied with so much precision and attention to details. Rather, she prefers to explore the notions of dissimulation and display of power and continues to look at political authors and their theories. Only the last few paragraphs of the conclusion present a broader view and suggest wide-ranging currents of political thoughts within French theater of the time.

This being said, Ding's book is extremely valuable for many reasons. First, everyone working on *ancien régime* France understands how difficult it is to know with any real degree of certitude what the political culture of the French people was at the time. By looking at many plays over a long period of time, Ding is able to open a tangible window on French cultural thought. For example, she underlines how theater, as it evolves throughout the seventeenth century, expresses the unlikelihood of any transformative revolt. By the middle of the seventeenth century, theater ideology tends to increasingly favor absolute monarchy which leads to the impossibility of showing on stage a king guilty of any crime. She demonstrates also that it was very unlikely for a French spectator to accept the idea that a monarch would give his crown to someone else while still alive. Legally and culturally, this gesture would have broken the spirit of devotion for the king by his people, a feeling that spectators were not willing to accept. Second, she perfectly presents the creative limits of the authors at this time especially after the Fronde. For example, she shows how it is almost unsufferable to represent a son killing his father for the crown. By the same token, a king could not share, willingly or not, his power or his kingdom. All those actions would have been contrary to the rule of verisimilitude. Third, she demonstrates a real talent for exploring the link between various theories, the plays, and the culture. Her presentation of the French position regarding royal heredity and the culture that the French shared is well presented and analyzed. She describes and explains with amazing clarity the reasons for the *loi salique* but also how theater was a way of asserting French laws and asserting a political culture not only for the elite but also for the people going

to the theater.

Most of all, she does not fall into the traps of the American critique and her quest is as scientific as can be, never driven by a desire to prove a preconceived idea or an ideology. However, while her concerns about not making broad assumptions are valuable, her remarkable work has given her the authority to make such statements. Nonetheless, even if this precise and insightful analysis of French theater of the seventeenth century deserved a more elevated conclusion, *L'usurpation du pouvoir* is truly the work of a dedicated researcher and a book that should be read by every scholar interested in seventeenth-century theater.

José De Acosta. *Peregrinación de Bartolomé Lorenzo. Récit d'aventures dans les Amériques au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Richard Lefebvre, ed. and trans. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval; Paris: Hermann, 2020. 204 pp. \$25/30€. Review by MARÍA HERNÁNDEZ, ROWAN UNIVERSITY.

Editing and translating literary works is both a challenging and valuable enterprise, especially when dealing with an overlooked text from the Spanish Golden Age. In this newest edition of José de Acosta's *Peregrinación de Bartolomé de Lorenzo*, Richard Lefebvre undertakes the ambitious project of offering his own edition of the sixteenth-century Spanish text followed by a new French translation. José de Acosta is a renowned figure in Hispanic studies for two significant texts, *De procuranda Indorum salute*, a treatise on missiology published in Latin in 1588, and *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, a treatise on ethnography and morals, published in Spanish in 1590. In his introduction, Lefebvre proposes that, instead of being a minor work, the 1586 *Peregrinación*, should be viewed as part of a textual triad including the aforementioned, works. While, before 1980, *Peregrinación* was reproduced and received within the scope of the hagiographic tradition, scholars have since reevaluated *Peregrinación* and reframed its analysis through the Latin American postcolonial criticism lens; Lefebvre continues in this vein.

In Chapter 1, Lefebvre gives his readership a well-rounded biography of José de Acosta. A member of the Society of Jesus who taught in several Spanish and Portuguese Jesuit colleges, de Acosta studied philosophy and theology before being sent in 1571 as a missionary