

nación de Bartolomé Lorenzo followed by a first-time French translation, Lefebvre's double-edged task is as effective as it is noteworthy. He delivers a much-needed new Spanish edition combined with an invaluable French translation in a functional and accessible format, opening the door for a continuing and renewed exegetical tradition around José de Acosta's work.

Coline Piot. *Rire et comédie: Émergence d'un nouveau discours sur les effets du théâtre au XVII^e siècle*. Genève: Droz, 2020. 488 pp. \$74.40/62.00 CHF. Review by PEADAR KAVANAGH, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

We generally presume, begins Coline Piot, that comedy and laughter go hand in hand, when, in fact, this association was definitively established in writings on theater in the late seventeenth century. Since the five-act plays of Molière have been praised for their morally corrective laughter, and as these pieces have been consecrated as models for comedy in literary history, common opinion in and beyond France now holds laughter as an essential feature of comedy in general. Perceiving the disagreement between early modern commentary on comic theater and this prevailing assumption, Piot sets out to demonstrate how the marriage between comedy and laughter was made in non-theoretical writings, why theorists of the theater eventually came to recognize this union, and how the modern French perception of comedy as laughter was formed through this evolution of dramatic criticism in the seventeenth century. Following a general shift in the attention from the composition of plays to their effects on spectators, a new discourse emerged that designated laughter as an essential feature of the comic genre. When, in the 1660s, this laughter assimilated a morally corrective function, the modern notion of “classic” comedy in France was founded—high comic theater is supposed to reprove vices with laughter. Piot's clear interpretation of the vast field of writings on the comic in early modern France sustains a larger movement of studies on affect in theater, after Jacques Rancière's *Spectateur émancipé* [*Emancipated Spectator*] (2008), determined not only to “repenser le théâtre à partir de la salle [to rethink theater from the

side of the audience]" (14), but also to interrogate modern perceptions of the functions of feelings, suggesting a reflexive principle which new histories of emotion and literature will require.

It is indifferent, writes Piot, whether the spectators described in these early modern writings on theater really laughed (18). Since the object of this study is, strictly, *discourses* on the effects of plays in the theater, neither the reactions nor the dramatic works themselves will be deduced from these writings. With this focus, the author avoids and works to correct complementary traps of literary history in handling paratextual works. The Swiss research project and database "Naissance de la critique dramatique [Birth of Dramatic Criticism]" (2013–2017, developed by Claude Bourqui, Lise Michel, Christophe Schuwey, and Coline Piot herself), has served as the scientific foundation for this vast and careful treatment of commentary. *Rire et comédie* represents an unprecedented cartography of early modern discourses on the comic, from theorists and spectators, designed to retrace the province of comedy as corrective laughter in relation to diverse neighboring discourses: early modern poetics on comedy written to match theories on tragedy, discourses on the *risible* [the laughable], the *facétieux* [the amusing], and the *burlesque*; writings on *galanterie* [sociability], *honnêteté* for men [civility], *honnêteté* for women [chastity], and on women in the audience; commentary on *farce*, and on Spanish and Italian comedy; as well as apologies for the moral virtues of satire.

As part of this larger critical project, Piot defines modern dramatic criticism by a paradigm shift, away from poetics, towards aesthetics, and on to pragmatics: modern criteria for the reception of dramatic works, such as laughter, were formulated in commentary written from the point of view of spectators, and have, in turn, been codified in the discourses that condition current perceptions of theater. The author replots the steps that produced a new discourse on one effect of theater in early modern France. From the middle of the sixteenth century until the 1660s, French poetics and prologues acknowledged the laughable lines of comedy as one component ensuring the pleasure of the representation of civil life, but do not designate laughter as the principal effect of the comic genre. Since laughter was already associated with vulgar *farce*, commentators carefully distinguished the moral value of comedy from a reaction that was potentially incompat-

ible with newly refined demands for expressions of pleasure in French court society (Chapter I). Influenced by the *burlesque* and Italian comedy during the 1650s, writings progressively associated comedy and laughter (Chapter II). By the 1660s, laughter became a defining effect in spectators that writers of the comic genre should produce (Chapter III). The social and moral consequences of laughing in the theater, following from the relationship between dramatic fiction and reality, were now interrogated (Chapter IV). According to the moral and aesthetic notion of *honnêteté* [civility], the polite expression of laughter was distinguished from the low effects of comedy that were likewise condemned by religious adversaries of the theater (Chapter V). Here, Piot's work intersects with the research project "La Haine du théâtre [Hatred of Theater]" (dir. François Lecercle & Clotilde Thouret), which also stresses the polemical conditions of dramatic criticism in the late seventeenth century.

The turning point in this history of discourses on the comic, the last step in the association of corrective laughter and comedy, is the controversy surrounding Molière's *Tartuffe, ou, l'Hypocrite* [*Tartuffe, or, The Hypocrite*] (1664–1669). Piot's recontextualization of these traditionally appropriated discourses on comedy is especially welcome ahead of a general review of the playwright for his four-hundredth birthday. After Molière staged *Tartuffe* at Versailles for Louis XIV, accusations of impiety forced the playwright to assimilate discourse on satire to comedy in order to defend his play on moral grounds. Molière claims to intend only to reprove the vices of his contemporaries, and that comedy serves to correct spectators through laughter (Chapter VI). Through a process of classicization, intensified after the playwright's death (Piot observes Alain Viala's model: legitimation, emergence, consecration, perpetuation), Molière's circumstantial theories of comedy have been used to rewrite his career towards a morally corrective aim. When his five-act comedies are appropriated as literary models for comic theater, then comedy, in general, is supposed to laugh men out of their vices (Chapter VII). The modern association of normative laughter and comedy thus coincides with the idea of "classic" theater prevailing in France today. At issue in *Rire et comédie* is, ultimately, "l'histoire littéraire [literary history]" (425), and "la doxa sur Molière [common opinion on Molière]" (427) it

maintains, which predetermines “la critique actuelle [current criticism]” (416) on comedy in the seventeenth century in France. Readers less informed of the cultural assumptions of French “classicism” will wish that references to contemporary discourse were specified. Had the author included citations from concurrent studies, readers would understand that the dominant French idea of morally corrective comedy, instituted by national literary history, has been elaborated and sustained in sophisticated and, indeed, persuasive arguments by French specialists of seventeenth-century literature, in a live critical field that she renews in these pages.

In conclusion, Piot delineates several paths for further research thanks to new attention to the non-theoretical commentary that has informed modern perspectives on the effects of theater. The author’s examination of writings on laughter in the theater affirms that comedies are social events with immediate and lasting effects on spectators. This early modern history of dramatic criticism warns once more against the deceptive parallel between comedy and tragedy, which has traditionally drawn attention to the poetics of comedy that should more constructively be paid to the effects that playwrights were compelled to produce in real spectators. When contemporary notions of these effects, rather than precepts for poetic form taken from ancient authors, are recognized as the real criteria for the composition of plays, then early modern theater can be reconsidered pragmatically, in relation to the tastes and presuppositions of the audience. Finally, Piot renews attention to the relation from Italian to French theater, and vice versa, anticipating further remapping of the seventeenth century through to transnational perspectives.

Furthermore, Piot’s book poses a series of reflexive questions concerning the uses of literary history. In following the critic through this history of the French institution of comedy as normative laughter, readers might ask why France needed this discourse in the 1660s, what made it rise at this historical moment, and why French culture still needs a Molière who lashed men out of their vices with laughter. Although inscribing the moral revalorization of laughter in the culture of *galanterie* [sociability] surrounding young Louis XIV may not suffice (12–14), recontextualizing apologies for morally corrective laughter in the theater within religious theatrophobic discourse (Chapter V)

does recast the figure of the satirical comedian as predicator in modern French discourse in a promising way. Such reflections recommend a general interrogation of those ideals about satire, still prevalent in France, which have defined modern discourse on comedy. These questions, however, lie beyond the bounds of a novel history that culminates convincingly in the late seventeenth century. In *Rire et comédie*, Piot has carefully surveyed and interpreted a vast discursive landscape, offering a newly and clearly delineated map that will prove as invaluable for scholars of seventeenth-century French theater as for researchers in the comic in early modern Europe. Finally, *Rire et comédie* suggests that new studies on affect call for a critique that resituates prevailing associations between literature and emotion in history.

Antoine Baudry de Saint-Gilles d'Asson. *Journal d'un solitaire de Port Royal 1655–1656*, ed. Jean Lesaulnier. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021. 395 pp. 45€. Review by ROBERT KILPATRICK, UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA.

With impressive erudition and careful attention to the manuscript texts he assembles in his edition of Antoine Baudry de Saint-Gilles d'Asson's writings, Jean Lesaulnier delivers an essential resource for scholars of political, religious, and intellectual controversies in mid-seventeenth-century France. Saint-Gilles, as he is usually known, was a "Solitary" of Port-Royal des Champs, the abbey to the southwest of Paris that, in the seventeenth century, became an important center for Jansenist intellectual activity. Along with Saint-Gilles, prominent figures such as the brothers Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy and Antoine le Maistre lived and pursued their writings at Port-Royal des Champs. Saint-Gilles was closely involved in collecting documents related to the Jansenist milieu and in editing their works, including publications connected to polemical campaigns against the Jesuits and Molinists as they moved to repress Jansenism. Although the name *Solitaire* suggests a retreat to an isolated setting, Saint-Gilles split his time during the years covered in this edition between Port-Royal des Champs, Paris, and various travels.