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Gianluca Mori. *Athéisme et dissimulation au XVIIe siècle: Guy Patin et le "Theophrastus redivivus,"* avant-propos par Antony McKenna. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2020; Genève: Éditions Slatkine, 2022. 414 p. including liste d'abbrev., appendices, bibliographie, index de personnes citées, et table des matières. Review by JEFFREY D. BURSON, GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY.

In the winter of our recent pandemic-related discontent, Gianluca Mori has published a book that boldly and convincingly revisits a question largely abandoned and considered nearly impossible by scholars of heterodox freethinkers and clandestine texts to answer. Just who was the author (or were the authors) of *Theophrastus redivivus*—the earliest openly atheistic manuscript treatise to emerge within a European scholarly culture then transitioning from late humanism to early Enlightenment? Professor Mori's landmark study written in spirited, forceful, and often suspenseful prose, and standing on impressively artful and intricate philological and historical erudition, convincingly proposes that the work's final form, achieved in 1661, can soundly be attributed to Guy Patin (1601–1672), a regent or Regius Professor of the Collège Royal de France (17). Beyond advancing this claim for attribution, Mori has uncovered impressive evidence favoring a highly probable theory that Patin was the last man standing after his more famous collaborators, Gabriel Naudé and Pierre Gassendi, died. Much like the *Theophrastus redivivus* itself, Mori's book was undertaken very much in the spirit of admirable scholarly collaboration. He released portions of this book in the form of pre-print working papers on *Academia.edu* during 2020, and solicited the expert advice of a truly impressive array of experts on clandestine texts and radical texts of the seventeenth-century—the partial list includes (but is not limited to) Antonio Della Prete, Guido Canziani, Christine Jackson-Holzberg, David Wooton, Jonathan Nathan, Jonathan Israel, Martin Mulso, Gianni Paganini, Winfred Schröder, Anna Maria Vileno, and Anthony McKenna, who wrote the helpful forward to Mori's work (25n., and "Avant-propos par Antony McKenna, 7–12). In this reviewer's judgment, this book stands as a monumental scholarly achievement under unusually trying scholarly circumstances for many of us.

In the introduction to *Athéisme et dissimulation au XVIIe siècle*, Professor Mori details the manuscript genealogy and citation history by which *Theophrastus redivivus* became known to later eighteenth-century figures, and later, to scholars. Just four copies of the treatise have ever been known to exist: two are housed in Vienna, one in Paris, and another in Belgium in the manuscript collection of Jeroom Ver-cruysse (13). The reader is referred to Appendix II (329–81), in which Mori details his evidence for why there is no need to posit other lost versions to explain discrepancies among the four extant versions (14). Only in 1706, did the mercurial existence of the *Theophrastus redivivus* surface thanks, ironically, to Jesuit Father René-Joseph Tournemine, whose then anonymous preface to “Remarques” appended to *De la connoissance de Dieu* by his fellow Jesuit Louis Ferrand, cited several passages from the manuscript version soon to be purchased by Prince Eugene of Savoy (it was Prince Eugene who identified his manuscript as the original). *Theophrastus redivivus* also informed *Réflexions morales et métaphysiques* by Camille Falconet, grandson of Patin’s friend, the late André Falconet, and son of Patin’s pupil, Noël Falconet. But, with the exception of cryptic references to the manuscript in posthumous book inventories in the 1720s, which lacked any author or provenance details, another citation of the manuscript is not known until *L’Art de despoiler la rate* (1754) by André-Joseph Panckucke. Then in 1758, in note 85 of Propser Marchand’s article on the *Treatise of the Three Impostors* for *Dictionnaire Critique*, Marchand spoke of the work as having been infected by Spinozism. Gianluca Mori notes that this is unlikely since Spinoza is scarcely mentioned. Only once more, in 1770 was a portion of *Theophrastus redivivus* published in French translation (and without any authorial attribution) as *Fausseté des miracles des deux Testaments*. After that, the work fell into oblivion, only to be studied seriously again in the twentieth century (15–17).

Mori contends that Ira O. Wade’s pioneering work on the clandestine manuscript circulation in 1938 merely complicated the question by speculating that the *Theophrastus redivivus* was a later compilation of textual fragments associated with earlier controversial manuscripts. It was left to J.S. Spink, in his *French Free Thought from Gassendi to Voltaire* (1960) to discover and study the complete Parisian version of the manuscript, which, Spink posited, had been written by a regent or

professor of one of the colleges. At this point, however, Mori indicates that productive work on the manuscript stalled for a number of years—a development attributed to what Mori considers the deleterious effects of René Pintard's thesis that most mid-century thinkers were *libertins érudits*—disenchanted gentlemen scholars whose philosophical works constitute an overcorrection to the age of confessional conflict in an era of calcifying absolutism. However much these seventeenth-century *érudits* may have been private free-thinkers, Mori contends that Pintard and others such as Henri Busson nevertheless concluded that they were not atheists who made any enduring contributions to the reemergence of free-thinking during the eighteenth century. Only with the appearance of Tullio Gregory's monograph, *Theophrastus redivivus: Erudizione et ateismo nel Seicento* (1979), followed by the magisterial and still indispensable critical edition of the manuscript by Guido Canziani and Gianni Paganini in 1981 did serious work on this atheistic treatise resume. But, as Mori contends, in 1981, it remained largely impossible to seriously undertake examinations of the texts' paternity (18–20). Thanks to the advent of many more searchable databases and digital editions of both published and unpublished clandestine material, and to the forty-year proliferation of interest in the role of clandestine manuscript circulation in the origins of radical Enlightenment discourses (begun in earnest by Margaret Jacob and continued by numerous others including Gianluca Mori himself), it is now, Mori insists, possible to return to the question of the manuscript's paternity (19–25).

Mori's method of attributing *Theophrastus redivivus* hinges on several important observations detailed largely in the introduction (13–25), and in the first two chapters (37–61, 63–93), but reiterated throughout the book. First, while the manuscript does not betray details of its author's life, there is in places a strong first-person authorial presence, especially in the manuscript's *Proemium* (prologue)—something that enhances the likelihood of a single author. Second, numerous citations very clearly place the manuscript in France, if not in Paris in the middle of the seventeenth century (14–15). Third, and with the exception of less frequent citations to Hobbes, Gassendi, and LaPeyrère, the manuscript virtually never cites a more contemporary seventeenth-century author: the manuscript treatise is

almost entirely anchored in the Greco-Roman classics (e.g. Cicero, Diagoras, Protagoras, Theodorus), as well as controversial sixteenth-century humanists (Vanini Pomponazzi, Cardano, and occasionally, Jean Bodin)(14–15). Those contemporary works that are cited refer to works published or known to the republic of letters only between 1630 and 1659. But, as Mori observes, there is one notable exception: the numerous, often quite favorable references to obscure medical theses by one Guy Patin, who otherwise published very little. The body of citations throughout the manuscript versions, Mori further notes, comports well with favored patterns of citations found in Patin's correspondence, his medical theses, and his small, published output (23). One is left wondering why, if one is trying to avoid detection as closeted atheist, Patin would praise himself openly throughout the work? Hypothetically but plausibly with reference to other contemporary examples of the phenomenon, Mori suggests that this tactic would actually deflect suspicions for precisely that reason (and of course, as Mori suggests, it's a way of quietly praising and promoting one's worth without accusations of arrogance [24])! But, Mori does not stop with presupposition. Thanks to his own indebtedness to digital versions of Patin's *Correspondance* online (most notably that edited by Loïc Capron), and to the online edition of the Vienna manuscript version published by a research team directed by Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, Mori has uncovered an impressive array of conceptual and semantic correspondences now known to exist between the texts of Guy Patin and the *Theophrastus redivivus*, as Mori details in Appendix I (24, 91–92, and see Appendix I: 281–328).

Accordingly, in chapter 3 (95–113), and again in chapter 8 (241–61) where he respectfully but painstakingly responds to his leading critics (Loïc Capron, and Jonathan Nathan, author of a recent and, as of 2020, still unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis on *Theophrastus redivivus*, cited on page 389 of the bibliography), Mori elaborates his evidence for the differences that exist between Guy Patin's secret atheism and his publicly expressed professions of orthodox Catholic doctrine. Mori argues that the fideism found throughout portions of *Theophrastus redivivus* “n'est que la prolongation de cette écriture codée dont Patin s'était servi dans ses cahiers de notes pour transmettre son message radical à ses fils, à ses élèves (Noël Falconet

surtout) et à une poignée d'amis" (99). Anchored in scholarly practices inherited from the sixteenth-century humanism by which an author's originality emerges through the choice of copious citations, as well as the textual fragments excerpted and skillfully woven together (13), Patin (with considerable inspiration from Naude and Gassendi) amassed an encyclopedic summa of various arguments against favoring atheism (or critiquing theism). Though *Theophrastus redivivus* contains perfunctory assertions of orthodoxy designed to insulate against censorship, it nevertheless powerfully elucidates its thesis in coded language that Mori believes to have been readily decipherable by likeminded philosophers and érudits who might have seen the clandestine manuscript (97, 99). While at times, this argument that seventeenth-century thinkers were privately heterodox but only publicly and disingenuously orthodox can at times be exaggerated, Mori makes his case for Guy Patin's atheism on the basis of monumental and skillful archival research, and further notes that no less than Pierre Bayle articulated some of the very strategies of dissimulation employed by seventeenth-century philosophers, and in so doing, directly underscores Patin as an example of a secrete libertine or even atheist (112).

But the nature of Patin's radicalism and heterodoxy is a complex one, for among the most interesting chapters of Mori's work is its fourth chapter in which he details how fundamentally "anti-modern" or one might say for the time, conservative, Guy Patin was. A devotee of Aristotle, Patin rejected many findings and methods of the new natural philosophy including the circulation of blood, Copernican Heliocentrism. In philosophy, as evinced by the ensemble of his known writings and by the text of *Theophrastus redivivus*. Guy Patin's more radical thought or even atheism emerged from his extensive reverence for the ancients (Aristotle, Epicureanism, Cicero) as often filtered through Pomponazzi, Cardano, Vanini, and Campanella. Guy finds no direct influence of Cartesianism in any of its varieties (see for the diversity of Cartesianisms in France in Tad M. Schmaltz, *Early Modern Cartesianisms* [Oxford, 2017]), and with the exception of manuscripts from Gassendi, passing references to Hobbes, and a rather more extensive engagement with *Praeadamitae* by Isaac LaPeyrère detailed in chapter 6 (185–205), no meaningful engagement with moderns (nor even with Spinoza). Guy Patin was, moreover,

very much in the camp of the ancients in the quarrel of the ancients and moderns (115–146). That (for want of a more appropriate term) a proto-Radical Enlightenment atheism derived, in the case of Patin's contribution to the *Theophrastus redivivus*, entirely from its author's reverence for the ancients without reference any radical Cartesianism, Newtonianism, Socinianism, or Spinozism is a potent and indispensable reminder of the diverse origins of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century free thought, and the fact that a writer's radicalism in one area could and did coexist with far less innovative perspectives in other areas (see, for example, contributions by Margaret Jacob, Harvey Chisick, Beth Lord, Falk Wunderlich, and Winfred Schröder in Steffen Ducheyne (ed.), *Reassessing the Radical Enlightenment* [2017], and by Rienk Vermij, Susana Seguin, and Jeffrey D. Burson in Pagannini, Jacob, Laursen (eds.), *Clandestine Philosophy: New Studies on Subversive Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe, 1620–1823* [2020]). Mori's fourth chapter also paradoxically affirms Alan C. Kors' recent argument that "orthodoxy began heterodoxy from its own substance," ironically because all manner of materialistic, naturalistic, and outright atheist arguments abound in the pages of the Greco-Roman ancients with which educated European scholars were intimately familiar (see *Epicureans and Atheists* [Cambridge, 2015], 3, also *Naturalism and Unbelief in France, 1650–1729* [Cambridge, 2015]) Kors' arguments are an important but far from contradictory counterpoint to the present volume under review, attesting as they do that Epicureanism and other creative borrowings from the ancients constituted important building blocks of free thought in both religious and philosophical matters. Clandestine and subversive manuscripts, such as *Theophrastus redivivus*, may not have been solely responsible for philosophical innovations in early modern Europe on the eve of the Enlightenment. But Mori's work on a vital clandestine manuscript treatise is an extensive exposé of an important mechanism by which orthodoxy gave birth to what would later be its more public expression by the late eighteenth century—through the "laboratories of modernity" (Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment*, trans. Elisabetta Tarantino [Princeton, 2015], x–xi) which quietly emerged in secret from the pages of clandestine texts and their circulation. More radical implications of the ancients abound in the pages of works such as

the *Theophrastus redivivus*, as Patin and his circle of even more silent (if more famous) collaborators synthesized and reproduced them, and ultimately in death, he lost control of their secrecy and limited dissemination. Sometimes, clandestine texts combined the insights of the ancients, moderns, and luminaries from beyond Europe (Ann Thomson, “La Mettrie et la littérature clandestine,” *Le Matérialisme du XVIIIe siècle et la littérature clandestine*, ed. Olivier Bloch [Paris: Vrin, 1982], 240); sometimes, their innovations derived, as they did for Guy Patin, entirely from late humanist reflection on the philosophy and the religious praxis of the Greeks and Romans.

But, as noted earlier, Patin did not work alone, and Gianluca Mori’s Conclusion presents an intriguing, and to my mind, well-researched hypothesis concerning the genesis of the *Theophrastus redivivus* and its title. In a letter from Patin to André Falconet from 27 August 1648, Mori posits that in coded language, Patin referred to a meeting in which he, Naudé, and Gassendi began work on a “*summa* de l’athéisme qui en traite les aspects historiques, philosophiques, politiques, moraux et son rapport à la science de la nature de l’homme, avec un grand étalage d’érudition ancienne” (263, 265–68). This *summa* would ultimately culminate in the *Theophrastus redivivus*. While Mori concedes that Gassendi’s atheism is not fully conclusive, he notes that Guy Patin’s correspondence indicates that he was convinced that the professions of Catholic orthodoxy by the famous Epicurean atomist were not to be taken seriously (267). Nevertheless, it was likely Naudé who initiated the project as a way of committing to writing a secret manuscript capable of preserving and elaborating arguments for atheism among heterodox free-thinking authors. Naudé concocted the plan after attaining several unpublished manuscripts from Capanella and relocating to Paris during which, after 1627, his zeal for obtaining obscure and prohibited manuscripts was “deviant obsessionnelle” (269). Naudé, in turn, spoke with Gassendi, exhorting the latter to further pursue his research on Epicurus around 1630. By 1636, Naudé proposed to Gassendi the composition of a manuscript to be circulated among a circle of like-minded writers—one that would allow them both to secretly elaborate and circulate their heterodox notions without fideistic scruples (270-2). At the same time, Naudé began a correspondence with Guy Patin, in which he sent to him various “*libelli*... que Patin

tient pour des oeuvres cheries des Muses” (273). After a dozen years in Italy, Naudé came back to Paris with several other manuscripts and memoirs from Pomponazzi, Campanella, Cardano, and Machiavelli, *inter alia*. Soon, Naudé would introduce Patin to Gassendi, and the three would begin to compile and synthesize the material during various secret meetings along the lines of the one spoken of in the letter of 1648. But, altogether too soon following his departure for Sweden, Gabriel Naudé died in 1653. Patin continued to work closely with Gassendi as the latter prepared his complete works, but by 1655, Patin alone remained alive to complete the clandestine treaties using the hundreds of pages of citations left in his friends’ notebooks, and the documentary materials left by his friends. Following an intense decade of work, Patin at last completed the manuscript begun by the three collaborators nearly two decades before, and conceived by Naudé in the 1630s. It was Guy Patin, Mori theorizes, who dreamed up the title, *Theophrastus redivivus* (“Theophrastus Revived”) under the joint inspiration of an alchemical work of the same title published in Germany and a revival of the cynicism of Diogenes’ by Comenius in 1660 (274–76).

What Gianluca Mori has achieved with his *Athéisme et dissimulation au XVIIe siècle* is a remarkable achievement that will continue to inspire spirited debate on important historical issues such as the nature and significance of clandestine and heterodox manuscript circulation, the genesis of the Enlightenment (and its more radical manifestations), the importance of public dissimulation versus private free-thinking among seventeenth-century *libertins érudits*, and the endurance of scholarly and textual practices associated with late humanism until the seventeenth-century and beyond—a topic intriguingly and copiously revived by Dmitri Levitin’s extensive prolific and extensive works, including most notably *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of New Science: histories of Philosophy in England, c. 1640–1700* (Cambridge, 2015). While some might plausibly take issue with Professor Mori’s perhaps overly polemical insistence that there was a pervasive countercurrent of secret seventeenth-century atheists masquerading beneath a thin veneer of nominal orthodoxy, Mori’s most recent study of the genesis of *Theophrastus redivivus*, like many of his earlier works, mounts a formidable challenge (or at least cautionary counterpoint) to a variety

of scholars who have been more inclined to take seriously the public professions of orthodoxy by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers and *libertins érudits* while deemphasizing counterevidence for countercurrents of atheism and heterodoxy lurking just beneath the surface. Whether such secret atheism was a massive iceberg beneath the surface of seventeenth-century thought will continue to be a matter of spirited debate for some time. Gianluca Mori's study will assuredly reignite such important considerations (277–78).

Rori Bloom. *Making the Marvelous: Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Henriette-Julie de Murat, and the Literary Representation of the Decorative Arts*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. 250 pp. \$65.00. Review by PEGGY SCHALLER ELLIOTT, GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY, EMERITA.

Rori Bloom's new publication on the writings of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Henriette-Julie de Murat places the physical aspects of their fairy tales—items such as castles' decor, accessories, food, and art—on par with the action of the tale. Setting aside the traditional dissection of narratives most often used to critique this literary genre, Bloom moves furniture and fashion front and center in her analysis, portraying d'Aulnoy and Murat not only as “chroniclers of material culture but also as explorers of aesthetic issues including the relationship between art and power, word and image, the technical and the magical” (1). Bloom's text brings to light the transformation of tales from the *ancien* in which bucolic scenes emphasized their “folksy” aspect to the *moderne*, uncovering images of exquisitely wrought opulence adorning “an ornately furnished room or a gorgeously clothed body” (3). What these two women writers create, Bloom argues, is a new way of evaluating beauty, ornamentation, and the marvelous that appreciates them as man-made constructions rather than creations of nature or—even less believably—of magic. And in returning the creative focus to the skilled craftsmanship of French artists, Bloom stresses that both d'Aulnoy and Murat express their patriotism, guilefully criticize the king's aura of powerful omnipotence, and subtly make the case for their own skilled production, “a call for acknowledgement of the

authors' own creative labor" (9).

The first three chapters plunge deeply into these material representations of the marvelous in both d'Aulnoy's *Contes* and Murat's collected fairy tales. Using broad categories of places, people, and things, these chapters provide close readings of the tales that unveil and then unravel the presence of creative—and created—marvels. In Chapter 1, palaces and boudoirs suspend the narrative, becoming more than just settings. As Bloom's examples make clear, "the décor of the tales is a marvel in itself." Just as significant, the intricate descriptions "do not destroy the marvelous but instead redefine it as man-made" (27), a point reiterated throughout the study.

When she moves to illustration and painting in Chapter 2, Bloom identifies the cultural shift exemplified in these women's tales. "Instead of emulating Scudéry's analysis of sentiments in her portraits, Murat plays with qualities of surface" (60). The chapter examines portraiture, coloring, and makeup as they apply not only to human subjects but also to objects and *singeries*. Detailed descriptions of animals flaunting their beautiful feathers and fur establish how human intervention, when done with artisanal accuracy, creates a marvelous outcome.

Arriving at Chapter 3, the objects of study become smaller still. Here, in "Essential Accessories," Bloom gathers descriptions of the smallest *objets* of beauty fabricated by these fairy tale authors, objects she identifies as "bagatelles" or baubles. Her examples go to such familiar accessories as jewels, boxes, and—in the case of d'Aulnoy—toys to demonstrate the role they play in emphasizing the artisanal craftsmanship their fabrication requires. In Murat's "Le Palais de la Vengeance," for example, the heroine "finds an emerald which opens at her touch to reveal a rose petal on which her admirer has written a love poem" (117). Bloom also points out the beautiful miniature toys detailed in so many of d'Aulnoy's tales: "little scissors," a "little silver tea set," and even a "little carriage all of gold," each of which "draws our attention to the metal-worker's skill as a miniaturist" (118).

Equally significant is the emphasis placed on d'Aulnoy and Murat as distinct authors. In her introduction, Bloom challenges the recurrent categorization of all women fairy tale writers as "interchangeable practitioners" (13), demanding more: "My aim is to acknowledge their relation to a shared cultural context while recognizing them as

individuals" (14). Once stated, she lets the intelligence of their work affirm this objective throughout the text. Each author is recognized for her writing initiatives and innovations, and each is celebrated for the unique qualities of her work. This essential thread emphasizes repeatedly that it took skilled artisans to produce the spectacular creations of the late seventeenth century, whether furnishings, fashion, or the fictional tales that documented them. For example, when describing beautiful baubles in one of d'Aulnoy's tales as "admirable," Bloom also accentuates "the ingenuity with which these modest materials are transformed into exquisite accessories" (116). By highlighting the artistic acumen of the creators of these material items, d'Aulnoy's skillful fairy tale creation is unquestionably highlighted as well.

The final two chapters address authorial contributions at an individualized level. Chapter 4 explores the earlier work of Madame d'Aulnoy, positioning her novel *Relations du voyage d'Espagne* as a springboard for the later tales, "a site where d'Aulnoy explores aesthetic, cultural, and ideological issues that she will continue to treat in her *Contes*" (131). Bloom relates accounts of Spanish food, fashion, and even aesthetic discernment as unfavorably contrasted against those same categories of French production. In *Relations*, Bloom reveals an author who "affirms the importance of French manufacture, with a patriotic pride that will persist in the *Contes*, where beautifully made French products are celebrated as modern marvels" (141).

Chapter 5 highlights Madame de Murat, whose fairy tales preceded her novels. Those novels solidify Murat's initial assertions that occurrences of the beautiful, the supernatural, the mysterious are all man-made. In documenting these phenomena, Bloom stresses, "whether physical or psychological, she ultimately demystifies the marvelous by exposing it as artifice" (171). Chief among Murat's sources are theatrical prompts on which she relies heavily to exemplify the man-made creativity that produced the marvelous in seventeenth-century France and captured her admiration.

Bloom's wide array of examples and connections affirm that the skill of these two authors far exceeds a dismissive categorization of them as simple purveyors of folk tales. Her carefully crafted text provides insight into the culture and atmosphere of the period, and Bloom takes us on an intricate exploration of these women's subtleties.

Bloom's study is its own small gem, prompting readers to reconsider the influential role of d'Aulnoy's and Murat's fairy tales in the expansion of literary innovation, and in documenting seventeenth-century French society and its culture.

M. Vuillermoz, S. Blondet, eds. *Les idées du théâtre. Paratextes français, italiens et espagnols des XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, Genève: Droz, 2020. 1384 pp. 98€. Review by DENIS D. GRÉLÉ, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS.

Les Idées du théâtre is a lengthy book that regroups many introductory texts of French, Spanish, and Italian plays from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The work of nearly 100 specialists, this volume includes introductory texts of 162 French, 37 Spanish, and 26 Italian plays. Ordered chronologically, the volume mixes all sorts of texts—compilation of prefaces, prologues, epistles, forewords, short introductory plays, poems—and exposes a rich body of texts placed at the beginning of plays by the authors in order to defend, explain, or justify their work. *Les Idées du Théâtre* is devised as a series of short articles that include a short introduction written by one of the many theater specialists recruited for this project and the various introductory texts accompanied by a solid system of footnotes. For the most part, each introduction limits itself to a commentary on the text chosen and not on the play that would follow. In many cases, these short introductions describe the context in which the play was written and present a short history of the various editions. They also offer explanations on the importance of these editorial, authorial, and dedicatory texts in the history of genre, focusing on the various aspects of the development of a theory of theatrical genre during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For the Italian and Spanish authors, the texts are translated into French. This volume replicates much of the content of the *I.d.T.* (Idées du Théâtre) website (<http://idt.huma-num.fr/>) which includes a larger number of introductory texts of the same period.

Marc Vuillermoz (the editor/director of the volume) and Sylvie Blondet (the coordinator) have chosen to include texts from France, Italy, and Spain exclusively and understandably, first because of the

close relationships between these three countries, and second because those three Latin countries tended to ignore what their northern neighbors were doing even though British theater was quite prolific during those two centuries. Useful for someone interested in the history of theater, the many introductions draw attention to the role and function of the dramatist in the context of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throughout the major plays of this period. The chronological presentation is a judicious and convenient system of reference for a multitude of texts not always easily classified.

The value and importance of each introduction varies with the text presented. For example, the *Tragédie de Sophocle intitulée Electra* by Lazare de Baif or *L'Histoire de Tobit* by Gabriel Fourmennois are granted a few lines while, understandably, *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas or *Le Cid* by Pierre Corneille benefit from a more robust presentation. With the inclusion of many difficult-to-access texts, the notes are the most valuable part of this volume. These notes offer a large amount of information on the history of the plays as well as explanations of some difficult concepts as well as problematic vocabulary or sentence structures. The notes also help explain religious context such as the war between Huguenots and the Ligue or at a time of quarrel between Augustinians and Jesuits. They likewise enlighten the relationship between the texts, the authors, and the political power in place, explaining many subtleties that would be lost to the uninitiated reader. In the case of the Spanish and Italian plays, the notes are also where one can find comments on translation complexities or choices.

One of the many strengths of this volume is how it can enlighten the notion of authorship for playwrights who were very often, at that time, directors of their own plays. In addition, the numerous chosen texts emphasize a series of rich dialogues between the poet and many other institutions: the reader, a patron, a protector, or even the Theater itself in the case of Lope Felix de Vega Carpio. As one reads through the selection offered here, it is easy to understand the desire of many of the dramatic authors presented to control the understanding of their works and to reveal their own interpretation of theater. This volume is similarly a lesson in history. It exposes how those authors had to deal with major political and religious events such as wars between countries or religions as in France during the second half of the six-

teenth century, ideological or literary conflicts such as Corneille and his *Cid*, but also changing public taste from the biblical plays (with the Church control over religious plays especially after 1550) to the popular French model of comedies and tragedies with Corneille, Molière and Racine. The French plays of the seventeenth century reveal the constant debate over the classical rules, in particular concerning propriety (*bienséances*) and verisimilitude (*vraisemblance*). By reading through all those texts, it is clear how much authors had to constantly argue and defend themselves against their educated critics.

The only major issue that can be pointed out is that the book needs a more robust introduction than the few pages that are included in this current edition. A little more guidance would have been welcome at the beginning of the volume. The choice of texts as well as the time period is not really justified: why were these texts chosen in particular? Were there other texts that were excluded and why? Some choices may be challenging to understand such as the decision to include the entirety of the work of Corneille. Obviously, Corneille was an important voice in the making of French classical theater but most of his work is easily accessible and since this volume is a selection, some better options could have been made. While it is understandable that the website from which this current volume originates compiles text after text without too much guidance, in a book the reader would expect more order and meaning to what is presented. When the introduction roughly justifies the contents as well as the choices that have been made, it confers very little information on the various currents that may exist on the notions of authorship, staging or literary theory. In addition, there are a few issues regarding some of the choices, which is almost unavoidable given the ambition of this volume. For example, if the Italian and Spanish plays offer an evolutionary illustration of the theatrical practice at the time, the limited number of examples presented does not permit a real investigation of Spanish or Italian theater. It seems that the goal of this volume was more to give an understanding of French theater and to shed light on its relationship with the other two countries than to explore Italian and Spanish theater. In addition, a little more integration within a narrative of the various articles would have been desirable even if the notes help create a system of relationships between the various texts presented.

In short, this volume resembles more the website from which it comes—it is somewhat an abbreviated paper copy of the *I.d.T.* website—than a scholarly book. While it is regrettable that the introduction to the volume is rather succinct, the reader is guided by a rich system of notes that link texts with each other and can offer many ways of interpreting and understanding them. With almost 1400 pages, this volume is intended to be a work of reference for specialists.

Guillaume Chenu de Laujardière. Emmanuelle Duguay-Cobena, ed. *Relation d'un voyage à la côte des Cafres (1686–1689)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2023. 124 pp. €22.00. Review by DENIS D. GRÉLÉ, UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS.

Edited by Emmanuel Duguay-Cobena, *Relation d'un voyage à la côte des Cafres* is the latest book in Garnier's Collection *Géographie du Monde*. This short travel narrative, thirty-five pages in the present edition, is preceded by an enlightening foreword, preface, introduction to the text, with stimulating ethnological and historical specifics that help the reader understand the importance of the travel narrative presented. Following Laujardière's narration, the volume includes notes, illustrations, an afterword on the history of Laujardière and his family, a repertory of important names, a glossary, and a bibliography.

The only known literary work from Guillaume Chenu de Laujardière, *Relation d'un voyage à la côte des Cafres* retells the adventures of Laujardière, a French Protestant (Huguenot) from Bordeaux fleeing the kingdom of France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To avoid abjuring his religion, Laujardière, aged fourteen, with the help of his family, decides to go to the state of Brandenburg via the Netherlands to rejoin an older brother. Unable to obtain direct safe passage, Laujardière goes first to Madeira where, shortly after his arrival, the Governor compels the Huguenots present on the archipelago to become Catholics or leave. Laujardière then decides to embark on the first ship exiting the island, a British vessel on the way to India. After various adventures, Laujardière finds himself abandoned on the coast of southern Africa with a few of his companions. Here, they meet the "Cafres," a Xhosa tribe purportedly notorious in Europe for its

cruelty and violence. While all his companions are killed shortly after landing on the coast, Laujardière, after being badly beaten, is taken in and cared for by one of the local families. Here, he meets a few fellow Europeans with whom he tries unsuccessfully to reach Cape Town. Unable to escape, Laujardière settles in and develops a friendship with the king of this Xhosa tribe. He spends a total of one year with the Xhosas from whom he learns their customs and habits in war and in peace. He is finally found by an expedition sent from the Cape to rescue him. Left without resources, he joins the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C) for a period of three years, at the end of which he reunites with his family in Germany where he writes his adventures.

The preface frames nicely the literary problems that the narration brings forth: Could an eighteen-year-old write a narration with so much depth and perspective? Can we trust the veracity of this text? Is Laujardière the true author? The introduction to the text and the postface respond to those questions with a plethora of details. Emmanuel Dugay-Cobena goes in depth about the history of the text, its different versions, and the reasons why it is genuine. Even if this narration is probably ghostwritten by someone other than Laujardière, Dugay-Cobena explains clearly, in relation with other contemporary texts talking about this part of the world as well as the biographical elements that are known about the author, that we must believe the adventure of Laujardière and the narration that he is providing us. The postface develops in greater details the history of Laujardière's family and investigates and proves conclusively the veracity of the text by comparing it with other accounts of the same period.

The preface written by Frank Lestringant and Paolo Carile gives a precise summary of Laujardière's travel account as well as the necessary historical context in order to better understand the text. In this short introduction, the reader can learn who Laujardière was, his character, his status as a young man and a Huguenot fleeing France after the Edict of Fontainebleau, as well as his relationship with his family. Although the few value judgements can be a little too ideologically tainted by a twenty-first-century perspective, this preface gives some interesting, possible readings of the text. The perspective of Laujardière is quite revealing of a modern mind who refuses to see the African as a savage brute, but it is not, as Lestringant and Carile wants us to

believe, a condemnation of the European as the real savage. In the text, it seems that the European has nothing to envy from his African brother. For this reason, the foreword by François Moureau, which discusses the literary qualities, better reframes the text and states more accurately the fact that it has no moralizing desires: the text is a direct and clear account of lived adventure even if, at times, it seems a little too much to be true.

While this volume is the work of specialists with a solid bibliography on travel literature and naval history, it is also a great tool for teaching students. The text is short and very accessible. The choice of the text (the Berlin manuscript over the Magdeburg or Halle manuscripts), as well as the modernization of the spelling and punctuation, make the reading of this text a real pleasure for anyone interested in travel literature, the history of Africa, or the Huguenots' diaspora. This volume has a directory (*Répertoire*) which contains the proper nouns included in the volume with a short explanation for each one. There is also a glossary (*Glossaire*) with clarification of common and less common words as they were understood at the time—the use of the Furetière dictionary for these explanations is a welcome touch. A series of eight illustrations from outside sources on the habits of customs of the Cafres added at the end of this short book is a pleasant addition, especially for anyone who would be interested in studying this text with a class.

Sieur de Rayssiguier. *Théâtre complet*, Tome I. Sandrine Berrégard, ed. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021. 630pp. 59€. Review by POLLY MANGERSON, DEPAUL UNIVERSITY.

If the theatrical production of the Sieur de Rayssiguier (c. 1601–1660) has heretofore been considered as “une œuvre jugée mineure” (7), this ambitious volume seeks to bring the works of this lesser-known seventeenth-century dramaturge to the attention of a modern readership. The first of two volumes of Rayssiguier's *Théâtre complet* represents a collaborative effort by Sandrine Berrégard, Marc Douguet, Stéphane Macé, Lauriane Mouraret-Maisonnette, and Jean-Yves Vialleton. It is the first critical edition of Rayssiguier's works,

as well as the first full-length book dedicated to this lawyer-turned-playwright from Languedoc. Through their detailed research and rigorous erudition, the editors achieve their stated objectives of filling a gap in seventeenth-century literary studies, “comblent les lacunes laissées par les générations précédentes,” and bringing Rayssiguier’s œuvre into consideration with other authors of the time, “la mettre en perspective avec la production dramatique de son temps” (7). This publication successfully convinces today’s scholars that our attention to this neglected contemporary of Corneille is long overdue.

The volume opens with a general introduction by Berrégard, in which she presents the limited information that is already known about Rayssiguier and his works. Previous scholarship consists of a handful of articles from the early twentieth century and two doctoral dissertations, and these resources are largely devoted to his role in adapting episodes of Honoré d’Urfé’s *L’Astrée* (1607–1627) for the theater. Information about Rayssiguier’s life, career, and professional relationships (with the influential Gondi family, for example) is gleaned largely from the *dédicaces* of his plays. Berrégard also discusses themes and aesthetics in Rayssiguier’s dramatic corpus, which blends pastoral drama and tragicomedy. According to Berrégard, Rayssiguier’s status as a “minor” playwright can be explained by the facts that he only wrote six plays over a short span of six years, that he did not write tragedy, and that his plays were written and performed early in the seventeenth century, when theater had not yet attained a prestigious status.

Following the general introduction are four of Rayssiguier’s six plays: *La Tragi-comédie pastorale* (1630), *L’Aminte du Tasse* (1632), *La Bourgeoise ou la Promenade de S. Cloud* (1633), and *Palinice Circeine et Florice* (1634). Each play includes its own introduction by the respective editor, which provides information about the origins of the story, plot summary and analysis, character descriptions, details about how Rayssiguier adapted the text from its original source, and an *établissement du texte*. Each play is preceded by its original front matter: *dédicace*, *privilège du roi*, *argument*, *avertissement au lecteur*, etc. Spelling is modernized throughout the volume, and all changes and corrections to original editions are scrupulously noted, as are instances where text is intentionally not modernized or changed in order to preserve rhyme or number of syllables. Footnotes are integrated

liberally by all editors, and they provide a wealth of information that merits its own paragraph in this review.

This critical edition of Rayssiguier's texts is complemented by well-organized and thorough appendices, beginning with a ten-page glossary of French-to-French definitions and synonyms of words and expressions as they would have been understood in the context of Rayssiguier's plays, with page references. The reader will also find extensive bibliographies of primary and secondary sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as an exhaustive eight-page list of pertinent *études critiques* written by prominent scholars of French literature. Alphabetical indexes of names and works complete this impressive compilation.

In this reviewer's opinion, this volume's most valuable contribution to the field of seventeenth-century studies lies in the editors' extensive footnotes. For the plays that are based on episodes of *L'Astrée*, footnotes provide detailed explanations of the storyline, so that the modern reader who is not familiar with d'Urfé's novel can follow and appreciate Rayssiguier's texts. The editors also offer supporting information and context for all the of the playwright's references to ancient sources (Virgil, Plato, Greek and Roman mythology, etc.). Furthermore, the footnotes frequently cite dictionaries written by Nicot (1606), Cotgrave (1611), Richelet (1680), Furétiere (1690), and the Académie française (1694), in order to help readers understand certain terms as they would have been interpreted by Rayssiguier's audiences. The footnotes also contain numerous references to French grammar manuals, such as those of Fournier (1998), Grevisse (2016), Vaugelas (1647) and Spillebout (1985), in order to highlight variations in usage and linguistic structures between early seventeenth-century French and modern standard French. Most importantly, the editors of *Théâtre complet* utilize the footnotes to connect Rayssiguier's works with prominent authors of the time period, as well as with modern literary criticism. The comparisons to d'Urfé are apparent and expected, but the editors also refer to the works of Baro, Corneille, d'Aubignac, Du Ryer, Mairet, Racan, Rotrou, Scarron, and Viau. Regarding *études critiques*, the reader is invited to consider perspectives from Antoine Adam, Hélène Baby, Daniela Dalla Valle, Patrick Dandrey, Delphine Denis, Jean Emelina, Georges Forestier, Bénédicte Louvat-Molozay,

Charles Mazouer, Guido Saba, Alain Viala, and Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, among other notable scholars of theater, Baroque, pastoral, and narrative fiction.

As the above list of consulted sources can begin to testify, this volume demonstrates immense erudition about seventeenth-century literature as a whole, and offers unique new perspectives. The editors strive to emphasize the hybridity among the different literary genres that characterize Rayssiguier's œuvre, to establish Rayssiguier's identity as an author and to recognize certain trends in the theater of the 1630s.

Whereas Rayssiguier's plays are all designated as tragicomedies, the editors argue that his works possess elements of multiple genres, and that they are neither purely pastoral nor truly tragi-comic. He draws heavily on motifs from pastoral drama, such as the juxtaposition of light and darkness to symbolize the end of a *ournée* (141) or the importance of disguise and surprise identities (179). Yet Rayssiguier elevates his characters from shepherds to noble city-dwellers, and moves his settings to the outskirts of Paris, which respects *la distance pastorale* (485) while lending itself more towards sentimental comedy. Furthermore, because there is not enough peril to earn the qualification of tragicomedy (330), the editors propose that the term *tragi-comédie* was trendy during the 1630s, and that Rayssiguier's plays were likely labeled as such to make them more attractive to the public.

Prior to the present volume, Rayssiguier has primarily been categorized as an adaptor of *L'Astrée* and a translator of Tasso. However, the editors of *Théâtre complet* contend that he is not a mere copycat, but a creator and a poet in his own right. Given the huge following of *L'Astrée* among the French elite, plays such as *La Tragi-comédie pastorale* were in high demand. In order to adapt *L'Astrée* for the stage, Rayssiguier had to condense and re-shape this enormous novel into an appropriate length and breadth for performance. He took similar liberties in his translation of *Aminte du Tasse*, making major aesthetic changes to the sixteenth-century Italian pastoral drama by omitting the choir and re-writing many scenes completely: "Parfois Rayssiguier réécrit le texte plus qu'il ne le traduit, mais en conservant l'esprit sinon la lettre" (196). In *Palinice Cerceine et Florice*, another adaptation of *L'Astrée*, Rayssiguier reduces the number of characters, simplifies the plot, and speeds up the action for his theatrical version. He even turns

one of the young lovers into the stock character of a *vieillard amoureux* to add comic effect.

Rayssiguier's works also speak to the stylistic trends of a unique decade in literary history, before the *querelle du Cid* and before *La Pratique du théâtre*, when the rules that would govern theater during the second half of the century had not yet been solidified. Rayssiguier's works serve as evidence of a rare moment of *libertinage* in a genre that is largely characterized by adherence to strict guidelines. Unities of time and place are loosely observed, if at all. In the *Aminte*, for example, the editor determines that at least three changes of décor would be needed to stage the play. In his *avertissement au lecteur*, Rayssiguier defends his choice not to observe rules, and self-advocates for more freedom of expression (233–34). In addition to unities, the concept of bienséance remains fluid. While Rayssiguier chooses to abridge scenes with mixed bathing in his *Aminte*, he does not hesitate to include lesbian banter and feminize male characters in *La Bourgeoise*. His portrayal of gender and sexuality could provide a provocative subject for future study.

In conclusion, the present edition serves to bring much-needed awareness to a lesser-known writer, and to expand the readership of Rayssiguier's works by connecting his œuvre to other genres, authors, and literary movements of the early seventeenth century. The editors express their hope that, through this volume, Rayssiguier's plays may eventually attract the attention of theater professionals and return to the stage (28). In the meantime, this reviewer looks forward to reading the forthcoming second volume.

Aurore Evain, Perry Gethner, and Henriette Goldwyn, eds. *Théâtre de femmes de l'Ancien Régime*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022. 601pp. 39€. Review by ARIANNE MARGOLIN, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.

This anthology serves as a welcome addition to the immense body of criticism of theater and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Though the study of Francophone dramaturgy customarily centers around Molière, Corneille, and Racine and the *libertins* and moralists, Aurore Evain, Perry Gethner, and Henriette Goldwyn have presented a collection of women dramatists' works published at the end of Louis XIV's reign, during which the previously rigid social class structure,

faith in the divine right of kings, and patriotic and religious fervor were beginning to erode in prestige amongst philosophers, writers, and thinkers (7). As a liberalization not only of philosophical thought, but also of literary and theatrical participation occurred as a result, it would perhaps seem natural that an increased number of women writers would be counted among this new ground of *gens de lettres*. Yet as the editors have rightly pointed out, institutionalism as well as misogyny cast a shadow over recognizing “female authorship” in the early-modern period as well as in the subsequent centuries, the effects of the *querelle des femmes* and skepticism over “female genius” extending well beyond the Classical Period. Contemporary, even iconoclastic, playwrights such as Voltaire, Fontenelle, and the Abbé Pellegrin were not immune to prejudice against their female counterparts; they accused Catherine Bernard and Marie-Anne Barbier, both of whom feature in this collection, of having plagiarized, borrowed, or “collaborated” suggestions from major works already in print (18–19). Although commonly practiced by major writers and philosophers of the time—including Voltaire, who made the allegation against Bernard to cover his own piracy of Bernard’s work, *Brutus*—and men’s reputations suffering little to none, women writers were penalized for the same activity, and their “genius” denigrated posthumously for being mere “imitations” of men’s inspiration (19–20).

Ultimately, the *Théâtre de femmes de l’Ancien Régime* posits the questions with which early-modern scholars of women writing and feminist criticism grapple: what characterizes the female voice during the turn of the seventeenth century, and how do women’s works globally shape theater of the period? As in prose and poetry, seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century women playwrights enjoyed a certain amount of acceptance within moralistic and instructional themes—especially if they were *publicly* published or performed. But like their male counterparts, women dramatists used the stage to depict controversial and subversive themes. While men and women playwrights both took part in the criticism of religious and societal hypocrisy, the latter addressed issues specific to women—domestic life and the frequent lack of power and self-determination. Among women playwrights’ favorite subjects of discussion and debate were women’s political rule, as we note in Catherine Bernard’s *Laodamie*

(1689); the tyranny of masculine power and incompetence in Marie-Anne Barbier's *Arrie et Pétus* (1702) and *Le Faucon* (1719) as well as in Louise-Geneviève Sanctonge's opera *Griselde* (written between 1692 and 1714); and female courage and dignity as forms of valor in Madeleine-Angélique de Gomez's *Habis* (1714) and *Marsidie, reine des Cimbres* (1724). In the Classical Age, the notion of a female *protagonist* was acceptable to strict, masculine audiences, so long as she was dignified, moral, and complimentary to the male *hero*; however, a *heroine*, possessing classical traits of judgment, singularity, and sovereignty, was an anathema. Even more outrageous was female *satire*. One of the most notable pieces included within this anthology is Catherine Durand's *Comédie en proverbes* (1699), a biting, anti-*bienséance* in which she depicts characters as they *are* and not their *ideal*: the liberation of young women from parental and paternal control, the misbehavior of lovers and husbands, and incompetent, patriarchal aristocrats. Along the same lines in *La Folle enchère* (1691), Madame Ulrich ridicules the institution of marriage, exposing the woman as a mere commodity and pawn in a cynical exchange between aristocratic families. This selection of women playwrights and works successfully provides a thematic approach to women's theater and writing in the *Age Classique* and distances itself from the common methodology of female writing as merely instructive, mimetic, or moralistic, adding a satirical and critical voice to the overall conversation on women's literary invention and genius.

Clearly, the *Théâtre de femmes de l'Ancien Régime* is intended as a cursory, yet fruitful introduction to women's performative writing at the end of Louis XIV's reign and is more than adequate as a primary resource for any upper-undergraduate or postgraduate course on early-modern women's writing. Nevertheless, it is a reprint of the *Théâtre de femmes de l'Ancien Régime*, which was originally published in 2011 by the Presses universitaires de Saint-Étienne. There is very little new material or commentary added to this Classiques Garnier edition which, for interested scholars of women's writing and dramatic art, proves both frustrating and disappointing, especially with the recent interest in Madame de Staal-Delaunay's works.

Nathalie Freidel. *Le Temps des "écrivaines": L'Oeuvre pionnière des épistolières au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021. 290pp. 32€. Review by LARRY W. RIGGS, BUTLER UNIVERSITY.

This is, in every way, a superb work of scholarship. The author defines her task clearly: "C'est donc un travail de réhabilitation et de réévaluation . . ." of seventeenth-century French *épistolières* (265). The book's voluminous documentation bears witness to the admirable completion of the project. Beautifully written and produced, the book includes a clear, useful introduction and a concise, lucid conclusion. The study's two major parts—"Et Pourtant, Elles Ecrivent," and "Femmes en Réseaux," are subdivided into economically composed, tightly focused sub-sections. There are a number of images of handwritten letters, a well-organized index, and an impressive bibliography. The footnotes are numerous and informative, and they often complement the main text substantively.

Freidel has obviously mastered the book's subject; she surveys thoroughly both primary and secondary sources. She elucidates convincingly the limitations imposed on the education of young women and the role of letter writing—including the exchange of handwritten missives—in women's effort to create for themselves a space of cultural legitimacy and influence. The *écrivaines*—the epithet evokes both their lack of literary status and their determination to contribute to its achievement by women—were true pioneers in the opening and cultivation of letter writing and exchange as a literary territory for women. The book will be of interest to a wide readership: scholars and general readers in gender studies, seventeenth-century history and cultural studies, the history of information media, the origins of modern culture, and other fields.

Very early in the study, Freidel alludes to Molière's *L'Ecole des femmes*. This is appropriate to Freidel's purpose for three major reasons. First, the play's evocation of paranoiac male control of a young woman—convent education, virtual house arrest, forced reading of moralistic texts designed to inculcate female subservience—exemplifies what Freidel says about young women's education and status in seventeenth-century France. Secondly, Agnès, like the *écrivaines* studied in this book, expresses resistance to masculine control and begins to be

a *femme habile*, a subject, rather than an object, when she *writes*. Her attachment of a note to the stone that the grotesque patriarch orders her to throw at her suitor brilliantly dramatizes rebellion from within the appearance of obedience. Third, Molière himself was engaged in the battles over authorship: his detractors, out of professional jealousy, or cultural conservatism, or with some other motive, praised his skill as a theatrical performer precisely in order to diminish him as a writer, or to deny that he was an author, at all. As printed text became a nexus of power, profit, and influence, literature and authorship defined a domain in which political, personal, commercial, religious, and gender interests collided and competed.

Arnolphe, the caricatural patriarch in Molière's play, laments the fact that Agnès was taught to write, since she has used that skill to undermine his control. Freidel rightly emphasizes that, in seventeenth-century France, young women who were educated at all were typically taught to read, but *not* to write. Clearly, they were to absorb texts, not to produce them. Here, again, *L'Ecole des femmes* is relevant and eloquent. Not only does Arnolphe demand that Agnès read the lessons in female subservience taught by the *maximes du mariage*—virtually identical to an actual moralizing handbook of the time—but, he thunders, “Imprimez-le-vous bien.” It was not enough that women not write; they should be, in effect, living copies of the published strictures defining virtue as internalized misogynist ideology. The figures who vilified Molière in the *Querelle de L'Ecole des femmes* and opposed him throughout his career represented the same interests and institutions that produced documents analogous to the *maxims du mariage*. The play dramatizes powerfully the link between awakening female desire and the ability to write.

In her meticulous study of handwritten letters, Freidel describes the struggle women had to wage with the very *materiality* of writing. They had to begin by learning to use quill, ink, and paper to form the letters of the alphabet. They had to learn to leave spaces between words. Handwriting itself, in addition to being a skill women had to acquire on their own and/or in cooperation with other women, was subject to a system of rules that women were not taught. In order to serve as the basis of a feminine practice of writing, the letters had to be legible, as well as coherent and interesting. The women who pre-

pared the way for the *épistolières* who did achieve the status of authors, Madame de Sévigné most notably, had to learn from scratch how to write, and then how to write in a way that permitted, gradually, the accumulation of some cultural capital. Freidel herself, along with her fellow scholars in the study of gender in the constitution of modern culture, is continuing to work toward full critical appreciation of all the *épistolières*.

Writing itself was not the only form of cultural capital of which women's "education" deprived them. Freidel emphasizes that women were also not taught Latin, which was still the principal repository of all the elements of what counted as culture—science, philosophy, literature, etc—and they were thus denied access to all the models, tropes, genres, ideas, and the very language in which those resources were stored and from which they had to be retrieved. This was the currency in which exchanges among male scholars and writers were conducted. Skillful participation in this system of exchanges defined authorial legitimacy. It was, as Freidel shows, a *patrimony* inherited only by educated men. As she also notes, women were excluded from what were referred to as the *ars oratoires*, which were an integral element of the culture of antiquity that educated seventeenth-century men inherited. It was therefore included in the cultural capital that made them privileged subjects and "legitimate" authors.

Having evoked powerfully the obstacles that women had to overcome in order to write at all, Freidel devotes the book's second part to the networks—*réseaux*—that grew with the exchanges of letters among *écrivaines*. The collective nature of this enterprise is impressive, and it was crucial. As Freidel puts it, this was a "démarche collective qui permet à un groupe, par le biais épistolaire, de se doter de capacités nouvelles" (265). The letter-writers gradually, and in the ramifying context of a shared enterprise, took effective possession of a set of tools of which they had long been deprived. That deprivation had been essential to their oppression and their isolation as individuals without cultural participation or significance, to their non-existence as subjects of written communication. Thanks to this long collective effort, Madame de Sévigné's generation "a été la bénéficiaire de la reconnaissance sociale acquise par ces prédécesseuses et de leur affirmation d'un certain mode de présence sur la scène des lettres" (268).

Freidel's meticulously documented analysis makes two powerful and essential points: first, that the early letter-writers' practice provided models which could be emulated and improved upon by later practitioners; second, that these models eventually constituted a fund of cultural material somewhat analogous to the larger, "official" one from which male writers had always drawn.

Freidel's study permits—indeed, it pretty much demands—reconsideration of the entirety of seventeenth-century "feminine" writing. Not only letters, but novels, and, in fact, all of what we know as *préciosité*, can and should be understood as the laborious construction of a new body of significant cultural material, as an effort to create a fund of cultural capital produced by, and culturally empowering for, women. The *salons*, too, can be appreciated in this light. Models, themes, references, rhetorical tropes, discursive rules, and other tools of strategic communication were included in this fund of cultural capital. Topics for discussion in the *salons*, and the linguistic conventions governing such discussions, were derived, in large part, from the corpus of "female" writings.

Like Agnès in Molière's play, the writers studied by Freidel conducted their insurgency from within the confines of a deeply unequal, indeed a virulently misogynistic, society. Letter-writing, like being the hostess of a *salon*, was regarded as an essentially domestic activity. The presence of an acknowledged male author provided legitimacy to a salon and a kind of reflected status to its hostess and female participants. This seemingly paradoxical aspect of female ambition is dramatized in Molière's *Les Femmes savants*. The conventions of *préciosité* can be seen to define female empowerment in terms that actually inhibit the expression of female desire. However, by describing so well the trajectory of female writing in the seventeenth century, beginning with the *degré zero*, Freidel enables us to see that significant progress was achieved. She also makes it possible to perceive some of the ways in which misogyny and disempowerment of women still operate today.