

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.