

mental Erotime, the “curieux” Périandre, the “savant” Egemon, and, last but not least, the venerable and embittered Mégaloteknès. As it turns out, Sorel’s caustic depiction of the Isle of Portraiture is also, tacitly, an intriguing and poignant self-portrait.

A final bibliographic note: the *Description de l’île de Portraiture* had not been reedited since 1788, when Charles Garnier included it in his 36-volume collection of *Voyages imaginaires, songes, visions, et romans cabalistiques*. By a curious coincidence, this little gem has suddenly sprung to life again in not one but two modern editions, which appeared almost simultaneously last fall: perhaps attracted by the “insular” element of the title, the Parisian publisher *L’Insulaire* printed its own modernized transcription of Sorel’s text, with extremely sparse annotation and an introductory essay by Pierre-Henry Frangne, a specialist of symbolist esthetics. While this inexpensive brochure (105 pp., 13 euros) may help introduce Sorel and his work to a wider circle of *curieux*, it is Martine Debaisieux’ authoritative and well-furnished edition that should find its way into all good libraries.

Catherine Marchal-Weyl. *Le Tailleur et le fripier. Transformations des personnages de la comedia sur la scène française (1630-1660)*. Geneva: Droz, 2007. 399 pp. CHF 150. Review by ROLAND RACEVSKIS, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA.

Catherine Marchal-Weyl is right to say that studies of seventeenth-century French theater have underestimated the significance of the Spanish *comedia* for early modern aesthetics. *Le Tailleur et le fripier* accomplishes the significant scholarly task of correcting this tendency while providing a wealth of information, both about the *comedias* themselves—authors include Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Carpio (Félix) Lope de Vega, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, and Gabriel Téllez a.k.a. Tirso de Molina—and about their adaptations by French playwrights. The latter include principally François Le Métel de Boisrobert, Jean Rotrou, and Paul Scarron, and more incidentally Pierre and Thomas Corneille, Antoine Le Métel, sieur d’Ouille, and Philippe Quinault. Marchal-Weyl argues convincingly that Gallic interest in the plots and characters of three sub-genres of the *comedia*—then *comedia palatina* (“palace comedy”), the *comedia de capa y espada* (adventure stories about the nobility) and the *comedia de figurón* (comedies centered on a single ridiculous character, the better to highlight

aristocratic values by contrast)—was much more than just a passing fancy. Adaptations of Spanish comedies around the middle of the seventeenth century contributed to laying the groundwork for what we have come to call classical aesthetics.

This book's greatest strength lies in the rigor and extensiveness with which the author examines individual plays, in comparative fashion, from both sides of the Pyrenees. In addition to the detailed textual analyses covered in five chapters, Marchal-Weyl also provides appendices that contain useful plot summaries for readers, enthusiasts, and teachers of seventeenth-century European theater.

The methodological sophistication, attention to detail, and sensitivity to exceptions to perceived trends in the analyses of plays do not always find an adequate counterpart, however, in the study's treatment of history. The author's overviews of seventeenth-century French society in particular follow an implicit teleology and posit direct, causal connections between politics and art that remain open to question. Particularly at the beginning of the book's first chapter, on the origins of French interest in Spanish theater, the author frequently uses terms like "évolution" to describe France as moving collectively and inexorably toward administrative centralization, political absolutism, and rationalist epistemology. Recent works of historical and literary scholarship—Daniel Gordon's *Citizens Without Sovereignty* and John D. Lyons's *Kingdom of Disorder*, to name just two—might be brought to bear on the discussion to temper the claims of linear historical process and direct influence of perceived social conditions on dramatic art.

Nonetheless, the main concepts examined in *Le tailleur et le fripiier* are presented compellingly and intelligently in a number of painstaking comparisons and close readings. The book's central paradox regarding the *comedia* and its avatars is an important one, and Marchal-Weyl explains it cogently: "C'est néanmoins sur le terreau fourni par ce théâtre délibérément non aristotélicien que va se constituer, en quelques décennies, l'esthétique classique, laquelle deviendra référence culturelle pour le reste de l'Europe dans les années qui suivront. Ce n'est pas le moindre des paradoxes, mais c'est plus qu'un simple hasard" (9). Showing that arch-Aristotelian classical doctrine came from an anti-Aristotelian creative form provides a fascinating new perspective on the *Grand Siècle*. What took place was no simple evolution from baroque to classical aesthetics.

French playwrights and theatergoers approached the Spanish *comedia* with an ambivalence that Marchal-Weyl considers “une certaine hypocrisie” (41). Whereas the French acknowledged that both Spanish and Italian playwrights were more diegetically inventive than their own, they denounced the formal openness and sociodramatic hybridity of Spanish theater as imperfect and inferior to Gallic, rules-driven dramaturgy. In other words, Marchal-Weyl argues that the French admired their Spanish models more than they were willing to admit and misunderstood much about the specificity of the *comedia* along the way.

One aspect of the *comedia* that Marchal-Weyl evokes most effectively is the genre’s musical shape and sonority. Like a fugue, the *comedia* plays out through counterpoint, leitmotifs, reprises, and energetic rhythms. It is this musicality that French playwrights, with the exception of Scarron, largely missed in their adaptations. Yet these misconstruals also led to new theatrical forms and practices that contributed significantly to the development of early modern French theater and classical aesthetics more generally. As the title of the book indicates, Marchal-Weyl uses the notion of character to draw important distinctions between Golden Age and French classical comedy. Characters in the *comedia* function above all as parts of a dynamic whole. Like pieces on a chessboard, Spanish Golden Age personæ lack depth and are defined above all by their actions. Dramatists including Rotrou, on the French side, begin to develop an understanding of characters as subjectivities, interesting and revealing in their own right.

In the *comedia*, the situation provided by the plot often exemplifies a moral principle, as evidenced in the sententious titles of many of the plays. French adaptations eliminate mottos like the one in Rojas Zorrilla’s *Entre bobos anda el juego, don Lucas del Cigarral* (“May the Hands of the Innocent Be Full: Don Lucas del Cigarral”) to focus more on the identity of the main character: Thomas Corneille’s adaptation bears the shortened and altered title *Dom Bertran de Cigarral*. While both traditions provide a vision of the aristocratic world that aims to reinforce values definitive of that world, Marchal-Weyl shows that the *comedia* undertakes freer experimentation with conventional views of social roles, even if the end result is to reinforce notions of rank, hierarchy, and social order.

With the assassination of Henri IV still fresh in the national memory, the French proved to be squeamish about disorderly, frontal conflicts onstage. Stock elements of the *comedia* like generational struggles and tensions between sovereigns and their subjects disappear by and large in the adaptations. Political theories of divine right monarchy (e.g. Cardin Le Bret) drive reflections on French politics as the Iberian dynamism of opposition gives way onstage to the stability of royal predestination and legitimacy. Similarly, master-servant relations, which can be ambiguous and unpredictable in the *comedia*, become static visions of the superiority of a master over his laughable valet in French comedy. Scarron's raucous and nervy Jodelet (and eventually Molière's Sganarelle, whom Marchal-Weyl never mentions) provides a notable exception.

Also gone from most adaptations are the contrasting scenes of court versus country life. Whereas these oppositions ultimately serve to reassert aristocratic values and the stability of social hierarchy in the *comedia*, the French *bienséances* tended not even to allow rustic life to be represented onstage. Along with an increased "purification" of language, French dramatists overall aimed for sociopolitical homogeneity in the distribution of roles—the focus remained on nobles, with the requisite valets and ladies in waiting included for their functionality. Ultimately, French comedy would move toward an ethics of *bonnêteté* that would come to supplant the dramatic articulation of the values of the landed aristocracy.

The most clearly exemplary, and thus least interesting characters, according to Marchal-Weyl, were those of Boisrobert. A founding member of the French Academy, Boisrobert practiced a predictable, didactic brand of heroic characterization. Rotrou, whose production was much more varied and nuanced, undertook among other things a true theatrical reflection on the workings of political power. But Scarron emerges from this study (along with Molière, who merely but interestingly remains on its horizon) as the most provocative, albeit socially conservative, playwright. Marchal-Weyl argues that Scarron is both an exception and a sign of his times. He was also the only French adaptor of the *comedia* at mid-century to understand and deploy its most definitive techniques. Burlesque inversions of social roles, multiple registers of language, musicality, and metadramatic winks at the audience were all comic tools that Scarron deployed fearlessly. Scarron's comedies and tragi-comedies moved the French tradition from adaptations of the *comedia palatina*

and the *comedia de capa y espada* toward a new avatar of the *comedia de figurón*. Ridiculous characters, monomaniacs, and burlesque situations increasingly occupied the stage to expose a society rendered vulnerable by the regencies and the Fronde. We can already see Molière coming, and before him Corneille's cynical early comedies. In Scarron, biting satire that questions the underpinnings of French social mores ultimately raises doubts about the capacity of language to represent reality.

In his own way, Scarron participated in a meta-theatrical trend whereby French dramatists shifted the focus of comedies from the quest for perfection in the social world portrayed onstage to a quest for perfection in the very processes of dramatic representation that construed that world. Tailoring the *comedia* to the unities, the *bienséances*, and the overarching criterion of verisimilitude left out much of what gave the Spanish art form its particular flavor. While Marchal-Weyl chides French dramatists for misunderstanding so much, her erudite approach consistently succeeds in bringing out the complexities of the similarities, differences, trends, and exceptions observable in this bilingual corpus of plays. Largely thanks to this important book, the significance of the dramaturgical dialectics between the *comedia* and early French comedy can no longer be underestimated.

Christophe Bourgeois. *Théologies poétiques de l'âge baroque: La Muse chrétienne (1570-1630)*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006. 864 pp. 130 €. Review by LEONARD MARSH, LE MOYNE COLLEGE.

The very title of this work captures the substance of a problematic perspective that never ceases to challenge literary critics of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century French literature. In a period that witnesses simultaneously the cultivation of poetry as a vocation and the reaffirmation of faith, how does a poetic voice translate or give witness to religious experience? How can one conceptualize the relationship, if there is one, between the poet and the theologian as interpreter of the scriptures? In anthropomorphic terms, how does one conceptualize the Greek goddess of music and poetry as the Muse converted to Christianity? Are such phenomena identifiably characteristic of a period of time that one can call baroque, a term that straddles art and literature as sister arts and one that French literary historians do not find particularly