

yond discursive meaning. Certainly the silent women succeed in establishing a space that is beyond stable definition, but this “escape” from rhetoric and discourse itself also effectively exiles them from the realm of social circulation in which they are understood, albeit in terms of the dominant discourse, and contribute to the production and negotiation of meaning. Luckyj’s provocative work invites scholars to investigate the complex implications of silences—both theoretical and cultural—and should prompt questions about whether multivalent silences also inform other early modern cultural discourses such as treason, Protestant spirituality, witchcraft, race, and class.

Marie le Jars de Gournay. *Apology for the Woman Writing and Other Works*. Edited and translated by Richard Hillman and Colette Quesnel. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002. xxi + 176 pp. \$49 cloth, \$17 paper. Reviewed by ALISA PLANT, TULANE UNIVERSITY.

Marie le Jars de Gournay is perhaps best remembered today for being Montaigne’s self-proclaimed “adoptive daughter,” who published the first definitive edition of the *Essays* (1595) after his death in 1592. For the remainder of her life, she worked to fulfill “her self-appointed role as custodian of Montaigne’s intellectual legacy” (7-8). Yet Gournay was prolific in her own right, publishing in a wide range of genres up to her own death in 1645. Splendidly edited and translated by Richard Hillman and Colette Quesnel, *Apology for the Woman Writing and Other Works* brings together four relatively short works: “The Promenade of Monsieur de Montaigne,” “The Equality of Men and Women,” “The Ladies’ Complaint,” and “Apology for the Woman Writing.” The result is a volume that will not only help to strengthen Gournay’s literary reputation—long moribund, and revived only in the twentieth century—but will also contribute to a greater understanding of intellectual life in seventeenth-century France.

As the title piece indicates, Gournay was acutely aware of the inferior status that her gender conferred upon her. The eldest daugh-

ter of a minor (and impoverished) noble family, Gournay resisted what must have been substantial pressure to marry; instead, she secretly taught herself Latin and, with the aid of a tutor, some Greek as well. Reading the *Essays* in her late teens sent her “into ecstasy” (7); at her invitation, Montaigne spent three months at the Gournay estate in Picardy, where he and Marie cemented their “adoptive” relationship (Gournay’s own father had died when she was young). Upon her mother’s death in 1591, Gournay “definitively settled into a Parisian existence of genteel poverty . . . relieved by regular intellectual stimulation” (9). Her ambition to be taken seriously as a woman of letters was realized only with difficulty, but Hillman and Quesnel contend that “she succeeded to a surprising degree” (9), eventually counting Louis XIII and Richelieu among her patrons.

Still, Gournay had many detractors—indeed, her growing literary reputation only sharpened attacks by hostile (male) critics, who subjected her to ridicule and caricature—and her works are colored by resentment of the fact that her gender prevented her from participating as an acknowledged equal in all aspects of the contemporary intellectual scene. “The Promenade of Monsieur de Montaigne,” written in her late twenties and her only work of fiction, is a wildly dramatic tale of love turned into tragedy. A royal Persian princess, Alinda, is reluctantly on her way to marry the elderly king of the Parthians when she falls prey to the honey-eyed words of young, handsome Leontin. The pair elope, are shipwrecked, and find refuge in the house of a Thracian lord, who himself falls madly in love with Alinda. The lord persuades his sister—who lusts after Leontin—to seduce one of his guests in order to have the other for himself. Leontin duly repudiates Alinda; but while pretending to assent to a change of husbands, Alinda privately resolves upon her death. In a bloody finale, Leontin commits suicide upon seeing Alinda’s corpse. Gournay repeatedly interrupts the narrative to comment on her larger theme of women’s constancy and men’s infidelity. As Hillman and Quesnel note, Gournay seems to be asserting that “to celebrate women in the

context of courtly love . . . is a very different matter from promoting their interests as human beings" (23).

Her feminist beliefs emerge more fully in "The Equality of Men and Women" (1641), which challenges both the prevailing ethos of male superiority and a minority view that held women to be the superior sex. Gournay draws on a wide range of classical and Christian authors to prove that women were seen as men's equals in earlier times, often reading her sources with astonishing selectivity. (St. Jerome, among other authorities she co-opts, was hardly an advocate of women in any sense!) Despite this flaw, the "Equality" offers an intelligent, carefully reasoned indictment of the misogyny she saw everywhere around her and a corresponding plea for women to be taken seriously as thinking beings. To ensure improvement on this score, Gournay believes, education is of paramount importance. As she argues, "If . . . women attain less often than men to the heights of excellence, it is a marvel that the lack of good education—indeed, the abundance of outright and blatantly bad education—does not do worse and prevent them from doing so entirely" (81).

Gournay rails against the inferior status of women far more passionately in "The Ladies' Complaint," which first appeared in her introduction to the 1595 edition of Montaigne's *Essays*. It met with an overwhelmingly negative reception; in response, she cut it from later editions, eventually revising it as a companion piece to the "Equality." One can easily see why it caused such a sensation. Echoing the Beatitudes, Gournay writes, "Blessed art thou, Reader, if you are not of that sex to which one forbids everything of value, thereby depriving it of liberty; indeed, to which one also forbids almost all the virtues, removing it from public duties, responsibilities, and functions—in a word, cutting it off from power, by the moderate exercise of which most of the virtues are formed—with the object of setting up as its only happiness, its crowning and exclusive virtues, ignorance, servitude, and a capacity to play the fool if a woman likes that game" (101). Hillman and Quesnel emphasize the "skillfully contrived literary effect" (97) of Gournay's *cri de coeur*, but there is no mistaking its genuine bitterness.

This bitterness is also evident in “Apology for the Woman Writing,” a “profuse autobiographical self-justification” (107) dedicated to a prelate, possibly a cousin. As Gournay defends her carriage, her infrequent dinner parties, and her modest outlays upon alchemical experiments, one is forcibly struck by the difficulties she faced in maintaining her social position; as she defends her reputation against the calumnies of false friends, one can’t help but be saddened. Gournay’s prose is characteristically vigorous, lucid, and persuasive, but the “Apology” is a melancholy read.

Hillman provides a thoughtful general introduction, recounting Gournay’s life and intellectual preoccupations, the influence she had on contemporaries, and the reception of her works. The four works are individually prefaced by brief introductions that contextualize them more completely. Moreover, as part of “The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe” series published by Chicago, the book is enhanced by a series introduction that gives a historical overview of misogynist attitudes toward women. This wealth of informative and stimulating commentary—along with a full measure of equally useful textual notes—makes *Apology for the Woman Writing* extremely suitable for classroom use. Hillman and Quesnel deserve praise not only for producing such a fine edition, but for amplifying the intense and compelling voice of a woman who deserves to be heard more widely.

Isabella Andreini. *La Mirtilla: A Pastoral*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Julie Campbell. Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002. xi + 105 pp. \$26.00. Review by NANCY BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

*La Mirtilla: A Pastoral* by Isabella Andreini, translated and introduced by Julie Campbell, is available for the first time in English. Campbell’s comprehensive introduction situates the playwright within a highly cultivated and cultured circle, which included her friendship with Torquato Tasso and correspondence with Erius Puteanus, Milanese professor of classical languages. In *La Mirtilla*,