



PROJECT MUSE®

Laurent Drelincourt: Sonnets chrétiens sur divers sujets
(review)

Peter Bayley

French Studies: A Quarterly Review, Volume 60, Number 3, July 2006,
pp. 394-395 (Review)

Published by Oxford University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/208171>

than Apollo and all the Muses and politely invites Louis XIV to continue to support his work in the future. Most importantly, Molière makes a case for the political importance of theatrical entertainment, writing ‘je crois qu’en quelque façon ce n’est pas être inutile à la France que de contribuer quelque chose au divertissement de son roi’. Serroy reproduces here the original published text of 1662 (with variants from the 1682 *Œuvres complètes*). His preface stresses the original court context of the work and reminds us of the thin line that separated Molière’s fiction from Fouquet’s fanciful reality (in both, most of the action took place in an avenue in a park). Serroy draws some worthwhile parallels between *Les Fâcheux* and other better-known works by Molière, noting, for instance, that the meta-theatrical allusions of the first scene of the play will be developed further in *La Critique de l’École des femmes* (1663) and *L’Impromptu de Versailles* (1663). At the back of the volume, Serroy provides a useful ‘dossier’, which includes a detailed chronology of Molière’s life and career, a section on sources of the play and its structure, a brief performance history over the centuries and a bibliography, as well as notes on the text and a plot summary act by act. Overall this is a useful edition of a somewhat neglected work.

doi:10.1093/fs/ksn051

JULIA PREST
YALE UNIVERSITY

LAURENT DRELINCOURT: *Sonnets chrétiens sur divers sujets*. Texte établi, présenté et annoté par JULIEN GÆURY. Paris, Champion, 2004. 450 pp. Hb €75.00.

The Huguenot contribution to French literature and spirituality remains markedly under-studied. With the exception of the subtle ideologue who was their founder (Calvin) and their most extravagant epic poet (d’Aubigné), I doubt if any of their works features on a syllabus today. Yet I distantly recall that Calvinist writing was once an option in the MML Schools in Oxford, and it would fittingly adorn the teaching programme of a Scottish university. The Huguenots very quickly evolved specialist dynasties and, by the mid-seventeenth century, the Drelincourts had become one such in the field of preaching and *belles lettres*. Charles Drelin-court, Minister at the central *temple* at Charenton under Louis XIII, had half a dozen of his sermons printed (as the editor of this book would know if, instead of relying on the inaccurate nineteenth-century Haag brothers’ *France protestante* or Pannier’s pre-War works, he had consulted the catalogue in my own *French Pulpit Oratory*). Laurent Drelincourt was his son, and became the pastor first of La Rochelle then of Niort. He too was a published preacher, albeit a minor one, and we owe to Julien Gæury an edition of his sermons (2002). Now it is the turn of his poetry, several times published in the 1670s with the final edition as a *recueil* in 1677. It was reissued in 1680 and is thus the swansong of literary French Protestantism before the apocalypse of the Revocation in 1685 silenced or dispersed that community in Louis XIV’s own despotic and murderous version of the ‘final solution’ — a crime alas often unremarked by the increasing number of ahistorical *dix-septiémistes* who inanely perceive later seventeenth-century literature purely as a kind of icing on the cake of Versailles.

The poet seems to have shared with his Protestant contemporary John Milton a fondness for numerology and intricate organization. The sonnets are arranged in

four books, the first two with thirty-nine poems apiece, the second two with forty-one. The thematic arrangement is not quite so neat. Book II on subjects drawn from the Old Testament balances Book III on subjects from the New, but the first book is on Nature and her Creator, and Book IV on ‘diverses grâces et divers états’. His style is that of an older generation — Voiture, Racan, Benserade or Godeau would have recognized their influence — and he seeks to instruct by pleasing rather than by stirring. For the English reader, the notion of Christian madrigals would place him neatly. This is not, then, a major discovery like that of Alan Boase of Sponde or Herbert Grierson’s of George Herbert. But it is a useful extension of what Terence Cave has called devotional poetry into a later French period, and to Drelincourt’s own annotation of his work Gœury has added a thorough and learned apparatus of notes. Our New World colleagues would be particularly struck by sonnet 7 of Book I, ‘Sur la Découverte du Nouveau Monde’, with its reminder of the eighth-century papal excommunication of Vigilius for having taught the existence of the antipodes.

PETER BAYLEY

doi:10.1093/fs/knl052

GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Gender and Voice in the French Novel: 1730–1782. By AURORA WOLFGANG.
Burlington — Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004. 209 pp. Hb £45.00.

The last twenty years have seen many revisionary accounts of eighteenth-century fiction, and especially women’s writing, by American feminist scholars. Aurora Wolfgang’s book nevertheless makes a valuable contribution. In part this may reflect a more general recent turn away from modern revendication and towards the recognition of cultural differences and historical specificity. Wolfgang’s Introduction is still a little aggressive. We are told straightaway that the success of the new fiction, which ‘liberated authors [...] from the constraints imposed by the classical [...] style of the previous half-century’, prompted a ‘backlash’ by ‘conservative critics’ who ‘fiercely contested’ and ‘dismissed the “feminine” style found in the novel’ (p. 1). Alongside this biased binarity is reification and teleology (‘the novel’s struggle for recognition and prestige’ nevertheless may not have ‘advance[d] women’, pp. 1–3). More neutrally there are several tables of statistics, which are particularly interesting on the percentages of female-authored and of anonymously published fiction. In any case, the argument set out in the lengthy initial chapter is much more complex. First-person feminine voicing by novelists of both sexes — so uniquely prevalent in this period — reflects not just a new sensibility and intimacy but a ‘feminised’ culture of sociability. The feminine rises with ‘mondanité’ and particularly with the Modern side in the Querelle. Its expression is in conversation, correspondence and the salon as a space of discussion and of patronage. (The importance of oral performance and ‘salon writing’ is rather underplayed.) Broadly aristocratic, this ‘feminine’ culture, however, gives way increasingly from the mid-century to a new professionalism of ‘philosophes’ and authors, and a public sphere increasingly gendered as masculine. All this is well documented here, and seems to me very persuasive.

The diachronic account underlies the sequence of chapters that follow, each centred on a specific work. The first, Marivaux’s *Marianne*, serves to illustrate