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Salon der Autorinnen: Französische dames de lettres vom
Mittelalter bis zum 17. Jahrhundert (review)

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decontextualized reading of “De l’art de conferer.” However, this does not substantially detract from the chapter’s greatest strength, which is to show how Montaigne, dancing around the term itself, offers to the reader a far more profound and complex sense of the *je-ne-sais-quoi* — especially with reference to the sudden, irrational, inarticulable experience of friendship — than any subsequent writer. The final chapter suggests that the *je-ne-sais-quoi* is in a sense the lexical representation of what literature does in describing human experience, and moves to universalize that notion into a critical method, promptly applied in a global reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This is rather less persuasive than what precedes it, and the book might have just as easily — and more elegantly — concluded with its discussion of Montaigne. I applaud, however, Scholar’s willingness, throughout the book, to attempt to explain something that by definition cannot be explained; as his own argument clearly shows, if you know what it is, it’s not what you’re looking for.

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Margarete Zimmermann. *Salon der Autorinnen: Französische dames de lettres vom Mittelalter bis zum 17. Jahrhundert.*

Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2005. 296 pp. index. illus. bibl. €49.80. ISBN: 3-503-07957-2.

Margarete Zimmermann sets out to respond to a slightly revised version of Villon’s question “où sont les dames d’antan?” (“where are the women authors of yesteryear?”), and to provide a German-speaking audience with a broad overview of French women writers from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the seventeenth century. In so doing she has written a work in the best tradition of feminist literary history. Her metaphor of the salon, although usually associated with the seventeenth century and writers such as Madeleine de Scudéry, calls up a locus in which women played multifaceted roles — as writers, critics, and patrons — and allows Zimmermann to explore these roles in the preceding centuries.

Some thirty women ranging from Baudonivia, a seventh-century nun, author of the *Vita Radegundis*, an early piece of hagiographic literature, to Marie de Gournay, whose protofeminist tracts were published in the 1620s and 30s, appear in this volume. Most students of French literature will know a few of these writers: for example, Marie de France, Christine de Pizan, Louise Labé, and Marguerite de Navarre. Specialists in French literature will certainly be familiar with others: Hélisenne de Crenne, Catherine and Madeleine des Roches, and Gournay. And certainly, medievalists or Renaissance scholars will recognize the others, such as Anne de Marquets and Nicole Liébault, even if they may not be able to cite their works. Zimmermann also paints with a wide brush to allow a variety of genres, including, but not limited to, writers of memoirs, letters, poetry, and philosophical tracts.

What makes this study particularly useful in terms of the range of French women writers during this period is the contextualization of these writers within a history of women and writing. Some of these problematic areas are dealt with in the first two chapters, "Auf der Suche nach den Autorinninnen vergangener Zeiten" and "Männliches Mittelalter?" The former offers a brief overview of the history of works dealing with French women authors, many of which could be counted as mere catalogs. She notes the women who themselves contributed to the tradition before the twentieth century, citing in particular Madame de Genlis's *De l'influence des femmes* (1811) as an early critical study of this topic. Zimmerman places more recent works within the context of feminist criticism. In "Männliches Mittelalter?" Zimmermann examines issues in medieval misogyny, including the *Roman de la Rose* and Christine de Pizan's critique of this text. She also explores roles women played outside of the household, reminding us of the importance of woman patrons, such as Marie de Champagne, and the significance of convents as cultural sites. Similarly, the introduction to the sixteenth century deals with many major issues of the period: for example, the rise of print culture and women's roles in publishing, the *Querelle des femmes*, and humanism, among others, while a second chapter is devoted to the beginnings of literary salons.

Given the scope of Zimmermann's study, most of her sections are relatively brief. It is clear that the goal of the work is not to present each of her subjects in depth, but rather to offer a cogent, sophisticated assessment that treats major issues related to the author, and to pique the reader's interest. Whenever appropriate Zimmermann also delves into the vagaries of literary history — how women writers celebrated during their lifetimes often disappeared from the canon. Not surprisingly, longer discussions are devoted to the more well-known writers, who have made their way back into the mainstream of French literature: Marie de France and Christine de Pizan for the Middle Ages, and Marguerite de Navarre and Louise Labé. To this group Zimmermann adds Marguerite de Valois, whose letters and memoirs, as well as her role as patron, were overshadowed by what Zimmermann refers to as the black legend surrounding Marguerite's life. She remarks that with the possible exception of Louise Labé, no sixteenth-century author had been so maligned for reasons pertaining to her sexual adventures. Zimmermann's method here is one that is replicated in her discussions of other figures. She debunks the myths and revalorizes writers unjustly overlooked.

I note that even if one does not read German, thumbing through the pages of this book can prove worthwhile. Zimmerman has included numerous plates, including images of the authors and of their texts, as well as other images of women from the period. Especially telling are the manuscript illuminations of Baudonivia, Marie de France, and Christine de Pizan, among others, that emphasize a woman's role as writer and reader. Further, the appendix includes quotations in the original French and Latin. Here, the non-German reader can find short excerpts, introducing them to the writers — excerpts that may not be easily available in every library. Finally, the extensive bibliography — some thirty pages — provides sources for anyone interested in pursuing further research in this area.

Zimmermann's volume provides an invaluable tool to access French women writers from the medieval and early modern periods.

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François Rouget. *Pierre de Ronsard*.

Bibliographie des Ecrivains Français. Paris: Memini, 2005. 528 pp. index. bibl. €85. ISBN: 88-86609-48-5.

Renaissance poetry has been well served by the ambitious new bibliographical series, *Bibliographie des Ecrivains Français*. Volumes on Tyard, Du Bartas, La Ceppède, Baïf, and d'Aubigné have already appeared since the project was initiated in 1997. Others on Scève, Théophile de Viau, and Du Bellay have been announced for the near future, with many more to come. The most recent volume on Ronsard, prepared with immense care and erudition by François Rouget, is the longest and most complex to date. Like all volumes in the series it is beautifully produced, printed, and laid out on the page, making it a real pleasure to consult. Separate sections are devoted to editions of Ronsard's works — including all extant autograph and allograph manuscripts, partial and complete original editions, musical editions and settings, publications in collective volumes, critical editions, and translations into fifteen different languages — bibliographical studies, biographical studies, general studies, focused studies, and a catalogue of reviews of the most important books on Ronsard. Rouget has sensibly chosen to organize the enormous section on focused studies by dividing these into four large subsections: (1) Ronsard's poetry, further subdivided into the twelve more-or-less generic categories corresponding to the eleven sections of the 1584 *Œuvres* and the "derniers vers"; (2) Ronsard's prose and Latin works; (3) poetry and music, including not only scholarship but also a discography of musical settings by composers from Clément Jannequin to Francis Poulenc; (4) reception. No system for organizing such a vast and variegated field is perfect, of course, and many items could reasonably have been classified otherwise or included in more than one of Rouget's far-from-watertight categories. But the system adopted by Rouget is as adequate as any that can be imagined and an index of key words helps readers locate books and articles on virtually any subject they might want to look for. Subject searches will presumably be even easier with the CD-ROM version that is promised for all volumes in the BEF series, but because no such version has yet appeared (at least none was included with my review copy) I was unable to put this to the test.

There are bound to be some omissions in such a vast record, but the impression of exhaustiveness is overwhelming and the references contained in all entries are complete and detailed and appear to be highly accurate. What makes this new bibliography especially useful, however, is the astonishing fact that every one of its 2,901 entries is accompanied by a brief summary or commentary. Some of these, understandably, are rather general, but a surprising number are remarkably full,