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Colette H. Winn, ed. *Teaching French Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2011. vii + 431 pp. Works Cited and index. \$25.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-1-60329-090-6.

Review by Julie D. Campbell, Eastern Illinois University.

This collection makes a valuable contribution to current studies of early modern women's writing. The works considered in the essays serve as particularly important markers of literary and cultural developments during this period, and they also act as key, but hitherto often overlooked, sources of intertexts for more canonical works. With the ease of accessibility to editions of works by early modern French women, thanks in part to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* at CRRS, Droz, Champion, and numerous online sources, incorporating such works into courses is more viable than ever before. These essays illustrate a variety of ways to include them in contemporary curricula.

As Winn notes, for students, "It is imperative to begin with an introduction to the political, religious, and sociocultural background and to place gender issues in their historical context" (p. 5). In her introduction, Winn provides a concise overview of legal and social views of gender that incorporates discussion of marriage patterns, convent life and the educational opportunities it offered, the all-permeating religious practices in the lives of women during this period, attitudes toward sex, and presumed connections between sexuality and authorship. She then sets up the four divisions of the volume surveyed below.

Part I gives backgrounds and contexts. In it, Brigitte Roussel writes about the controversy over marriage in the second half of the sixteenth-century, focusing on Nicole Estienne's *Les misères de la femme mariée* (ca. 1573) written most likely in response to Philippe Desportes' *Stances du mariage* (1573). Situating this work within the context of the literary quarrels of the sixteenth century, as well as within the evaluations of marriage and the family unit espoused by Erasmian humanists, Roussel notes that "[i]nstead of underscoring her previous defense of marriage, Estienne invites her readers to witness the consequences of the absolute domination of husbands over their wives, not only when that domination is obtained by force but also when it is secured by appealing to women's sense of moral obligation" (p. 27). She observes that by "contrasting the natural law that ought to prevail between husband and wife with the unnatural laws created by men," Estienne "shows that the situation of married women was cultural and not natural and was, therefore, changeable" (p. 32).

In "Picturing Great Ladies of the Renaissance Who Helped Pave the Literary Way," Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier considers powerful women whose intellectual legacies helped to shape literary culture in France, and she includes thirteen illustrations. She notes that though "they were not the sole tutors of their progeny, princesses and great ladies occupied a privileged place in the transmission of knowledge, not only down bloodline generations but also out into the world beyond" (p. 35). Beginning with the library of Queen Charlotte of Savoy, Wilson-Chevalier shows how those books were tools for shaping the education of her daughter Anne of France, who would be the regent for her underage brother, King Charles VIII. To Queen Charlotte and Anne of France, she adds Anne of Brittany and Louise of Savoy, observing that these women helped turn the royal house "into the 'supreme academy...of the realm'" (p.

35). She traces instances of these women's influence regarding traditions of education and literary and artistic patronage in the succeeding generations. She also includes Catherine de Médicis and her influence in these areas.

Next, Carrie F. Klaus writes about the Genevan Poor Clare, Jeanne de Jussie (1503-1561) and her *Levain du Calvinisme* (1611). Klaus notes that Jussie's narrative of her experience of the Reformation "provides teachers and students with an extraordinary opportunity to observe the lives of early modern monastic women and to consider these women's understanding of the Reformation and of the world" (p. 58). The *Levain* includes, for instance, a description of Reformers breaking into the convent with axes to vent their fury at having been repeatedly denied access to speaking with the nuns (pp. 61-62). Klaus points out that Jussie's chronicle provides many areas of discussion that would stimulate discussion in the classroom and lists several topics for that purpose.

Diane S. Wood and Laura B. Bergman consider the influence of humanism on the works of Hélisenne de Crenne, (aka Marguerite Briet), including *Les angoyssees douloursuses* (1538), *Les epistres familiares et invectives* (1539), *Le songe* (1540), and *Les Eneydes* (1542). They especially focus on *Les angoyssees* and argue that Hélisenne's "carefully crafted demonstration of princely humanism [in the figure of Princess Monarque]... embodies a strong feminist principle, that women are fully capable of ratiocination and of wielding the reins of power" (p. 72). In "Production and Reproduction: Contextualizing Women's Writing as Labor," Susan Broomhall makes the astute point that "when we teach courses on women who participated in publication as 'female authors,' we may be giving students a false impression that these women thought of themselves as writers, or that their contemporaries thought of them thus" (p. 73). In this essay, Broomhall introduces the larger cultural context for women who wrote, including where their works appeared (manuscripts and publication) and how they got there (sometimes without their knowledge). She then discusses how women's writing fits with notions of labor and work, considering the tensions between their participation in domestic labor and literary activities.

François Rigolot, in "The Invention of Female Authorship in Early Modern France," traces the rise and fall of Christine de Pisan's tenure as the leading "femme auteur" in medieval and early modern France. He documents changes in attitudes toward women's education in statements by Rabelais, Erasmus, and Vives, noting that they "concur in recognizing the need for a cultivated female elite, not only in the aristocratic courts of Europe...but also in the middle-class families of major cities" (p. 87). He also notes the late medieval shift toward a sense of "individual intellectual ownership" of one's work with such writers as Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, Charles d'Orléans, and Christine de Pisan, pointing out that in France the legal system began to develop its copyright system in such a way as to foster "increased awareness and desire for literary property" (p. 90). He acknowledges, however, that for women writers, print publication constituted "a transgression of the patriarchal order" (p. 91). Thus, group support played a large role in women's authorship. He then explores the examples of Marguerite de Navarre and Louise Labé, and he ultimately argues that "all signs point to consider female authorship as a male invention, which came about because an elite, trained in the classics, needed it for their own gratification" (p. 93).

Finally in Part I, Dora E. Polachek recounts her experience of teaching her course, "Laughing at Love, Sex, and Marriage: Renaissance Perspectives." With the goal of getting students to think about the fact that "women and their erotic desirability have a long literary history" (p. 95), she introduces such texts as Laurent Joubert's *Traité du ris* (1579), novellas from the *Heptameron*, sonnets by Labé, Ronsard, and Marot, and excerpts from Brantôme's *Recueil des dames*. In "Pernette Du Guillet among the *Néoplatoniciennes* of Her Time..." Ann Rosalind Jones argues that in her *Rymes*, Du Guillet courted an audience by "speaking and writing for a public" (p. 105) and by doing so, used rhetorical strategies that can also be seen in the works by other female poets, including Mary Wroth, Tullia d'Aragona, and Gaspara Stampa.

Part II is concerned with authors, works, and genres. Here, Zeina Hakim discusses Labé's use of *imitatio* regarding the works of Petrarch, Marot, and Ovid. Danielle Trudeau provides a close reading of Du Guillet's Chanson 7, in which she explores classical influences coupled with Du Guillet's innovations related to her own cultural context. In "Gender and Genres: Teaching Women and the Epistolary Genre," Jane Couchman addresses how to teach women's humanist and sociable letters, religious and polemical letters, and familiar letters. She also discusses specific considerations of the letters of royal, huguenot, and "ordinary" women. Carla Zecher examines Georgette de Montenay's *Emblemes, ou devises chrestiennes* in their facsimile internet editions. She traces the print history of this work and discusses how it is "admirably suited to helping students think about print history, about books as objects, about the interaction of visual and verbal imagery in religious books, and about female authorship of emblem books" (p. 154). Edith Joyce Benkov suggests that the pasquinade can be used to introduce students to the complexities of French politics and religious controversy. She discusses the case of Anne de Marquets (1533-1588), a Dominican nun whose pasquinades circulated during the time of the Colloque of Poissy (1561). Jean-Philippe Beaulieu suggests that Marie de Gournay's *Discours sur ce livre* (included in the collected works in the last two versions of 1634 and 1641) should be used as the starting place to introduce students to Gournay's rich but complex works.

In Part III, the authors address critical concerns regarding teaching French women's writing. Leslie Zarker Morgan outlines how she places Labé in an historical and cultural context for her students, starting with the geography and border position of Lyon and continuing with a detailed overview of Lyon's rich mercantile history. She then provides numerous Italian and French literary contexts for Labé's works. In "Reading the *Heptameron*: Feminist and Queer Approaches," Carla Freccero especially considers story 30, suggesting that it participates in a "movement from a homosocial and perhaps homoerotic space to the place where sexual difference sets incest in motion" (p. 201). Nancy Frelick makes use of Hélienne de Crenne's *Les angoisses* to teach students about transference in reading, noting that various critical readings of the text, including those that seek to read it autobiographically or consider it derivative "limit the scope of the text and lead to procrustean measures to ensure the text fits with the interpretative grid" in question (p. 207). She argues that "a transferential model inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis" (p. 209) may provide students new ways to think about reading and interpretation. Cécile Alduy considers gender in the decoding of Petrarchan lyrics, looking specifically at Labé in context with Scève, and Ronsard. She asserts, "If there was only one key notion I would like students to take away from our discussions, it would be that of codes: how gender is a complex cultural construction rather than a universal, biological fact, and how literature, and particularly Renaissance poetry, cannot be understood without a grasp of its own set of rules" (p. 219). Claude La Charité addresses the problem that students' notions about poetry are too often influenced by the Romantic preconception that the "I" of a poem is the author. She interrogates the case of Marie de Romieu and the masculine "I" that appears in her work, using the opportunity to discuss transvestism, ventriloquism, and androgyny in Romieu's poetry.

This essay segues nicely into the next, Leah Chang's "The Cross-Dressed Text..." in which she explores "texts written by men in the voice of a woman in a type of poetic ventriloquization, as well as texts in which a male author adopts the poetic rhetoric of an ostensibly female poet" (p. 24). She suggests beginning with Sappho's fragments 1 and 31 to "establish a *champ lexical*" for Sappho's theme of incessant and unrequited female desire in order to prepare students for reading Ovid's *Heroides* (pp. 244-245). Another configuration of authors she suggests is Ronsard, Catullus, and Sappho. In the same vein, she recommends John Donne's "Sappho to Philaenis" and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*. Anne R. Larsen discusses the influence that women writers had on each other in her essay on Catherine Des Roches. Larsen reminds readers that the notion of the "lone woman prodigy writing in the isolation of her study" (p. 254) is seldom historically verifiable. Instead, she points out that most women were involved in communities and networks that included other women writers and intellectuals. She considers Des Roches within the transnational humanist Latinate community, the

French Italianate court of Catherine de Médicis, and the “familial and intellectual alliances between male and female writers and among women writers” (p. 254).

Gary Ferguson recommends that students read Anne de Marquets in context with Marguerite de Navarre, the Des Roches, Gabrielle Coignard, Du Guillet, and Marie Dentièrre to allow “a comparison of the material conditions governing life in a convent with the situation of women at court and in the city” (p. 265). Mary B. McKinley writes about Marie Dentièrre’s *Epistle to Marguerite de Navarre* (1539), noting that it introduces students to the Protestant Reformation, and she discusses having students read it in tandem with the *Heptameron*. She contextualizes both works with historical background on Dentièrre’s connections to Marguerite and both women’s engagement with Reform thought. Winn looks at the love lyrics of Labé and Coignard and discusses how these women utilize Petrarchism. She provides side-by-side readings of verse by each poet to illustrate her classroom assignments. Deborah Lesko Baker discusses teaching Labé’s dedicatory letter to Clémence de Bourges and the *Debate of Folly and Love* in translation. Based on her classroom experience and her personal experience as a translator, she believes that “translation is a crucial resource for the understanding of Labé’s prose texts—not only for those English speakers who do not read French but also for most of those who do” (p. 303). She posits that reading the original French beside an English translation provides the most satisfying learning experience for students.

In Part IV on current resources, Winn provides an exceptionally useful discussion of scholarly editions of French women’s works available today. She discusses original language texts as well as English and dual-language editions. Additionally, she covers biographical and bibliographic studies, background studies, and critical studies. She also includes a discussion of the professional activities and resources available for scholars of early modern Frenchwomen. With Graziella Postolache, she gives a survey of online sources. The volume concludes with a survey of “Rare Books and Web Pages” by Karen Simroth James and Mary B. McKinley.

With its multiple treatments of such authors as Marguerite de Navarre, Louise Labé, and Hélienne de Crenne, this volume gives the sense that it documents the current state of “canonized” early modern French women writers. It is important to note, however, that the repetition does not mean stasis in terms of women writers taught. It means something much more interesting. It illustrates that certain authors are now taught widely enough that this level of comparative analysis regarding teaching approaches has become possible. One also finds here approaches to teaching Nicole Estienne, Jeanne de Jussie, and Gabrielle Coignard. It can be only a matter of time until the works of other early modern French women such as Madeleine de l’Aubespine or Catherine de Parthenay will find their way into such volumes on instruction. With its rich selection of varied approaches to teaching the women writers featured, this collection will be of use to scholars and teachers of early modern French literature, as well as to those interested in women’s literary history in general. With the current wealth of translations available, it will also be of interest to anyone teaching early modern literature in English translation, be it in a literary or historical context.

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