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Anne Coudreuse and Catriona Seth, eds., *Le Temps des femmes: Textes mémoriels des Lumières*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014. 303 pp. Bibliography, index, summaries. 32.00 € France (pb). ISBN 978-2-8124-3023-7.

Review by Helen Tolson Dunn, University of Virginia and James Madison University.

Is the eighteenth-century woman's experience of time gendered? Does the way that these women represent time in their memorial writing depend on a "female" vocabulary, on "female" images? Does an eighteenth-century woman's memoir seek to create a feminine image of its author, one that constructs her as an individual female identity, or does it instead seek to position her within the larger scope of her era? Are female memoirs varied based on their intended audience? How can the insights of eighteenth-century women shed light on the most difficult questions posed by a time mired in a complex and controversial political culture? The prolific memoirs that women wrote in the eighteenth century offer answers to these questions, and the articles in this collection confront the vast and diverse breadth of feminine perspectives from a time period where women's contributions beyond fiction and salons have sometimes been forgotten.

This collection of twelve stellar articles is separated into six parts: the time of education (*le temps de l'éducation*), the time of politics (*le temps politique*), the time of *viaticum* (*le temps viatique*), the time of exile (*le temps de l'exil*), time gone by (*le temps passé*), and time to come (*le temps futur*). Each part contains two articles dedicated to female memoirs with a point of view that lands within a context that responds to some of these important questions. Catriona Seth introduces her collection with a fascinating reflection on the measure of time in the eighteenth century. She writes of the new and poetic names for months imagined by Fabre d'Églantine, the transition from celebrating name days in favor of birthdays, and the significance placed on the ownership of watches, which meant the privatization of the measure of time. In other words, the awareness of time created a desire to conquer it in writing.

Seth goes on to acknowledge the variation in memoirs of style and purpose. She writes that they are often social calendars, retrospectively meant to jog the writer's own memory of what she did on a certain date. Memoirs served to quell worries about the ravages of time and to offer a sense of preservation for the writer. Seth also notes, however, that frequently it was personal emotion driving women memoirists to write, or a desire to ensure that time would not erase certain memories from having taken place (p. 15). Regardless of the purpose of the memoir or of its destined audience, every memoir included in this collection has a place in constructing a fuller idea of what it meant to be a woman—and more generally a person—in the Age of Enlightenment.

Part one is concerned with how memoirs and education overlap with each other, and Madame de Genlis is one of the best possible examples of the quest to record pedagogical ideas from this perspective. In Philippe Lejeune's article "Le Panoptique de Madame de Genlis," Lejeune argues that Genlis's desire to observe the world and to impose herself as a model to be followed resulted in a genre of book of which she could become the heroine. Genlis used her works to build a pedagogical empire and position herself as a power in the world of education.^[1] Her memoirs were a space for debate, and a place where she attempted to neutralize her opponents. Lejeune concludes that Genlis's journals were a space for the author to exert control: over her students, who were forced to read and reread journals that led them

endlessly back to their own images; over individual tutors, who were required to detail the minutiae of their instruction; and over her pupils' mother, who was also the wife of Genlis's lover.[2]

Part one continues with Danièle Tosato-Rigo's "Espace éducatif ou chambre à soi?" in which Tosato-Rigo writes about the mother and daughter authors Catherine and Angletine de Charrière de Sévery. These women, unlike Genlis, never intended to publish their journals, creating a successful contrast between memoirs as public and private spaces. Tosato-Rigo calls these journals an "examination of conscience" thanks to their intimate nature. Catherine de Charrière explains that she started her journal in 1768 in order to preserve the traces of what she had done and thought, which would otherwise be erased from memory by time (p. 72). Thus daily writing becomes a remedy against forgetfulness in this article. While Genlis sought to exert control over others, Catherine and Angletine de Charrière hoped instead to control time and memory by memorializing shared moments in history that were of even the smallest consequence. Both articles in part one of this collection are fascinating studies on the notion that writing is an attempt to exert power, particularly for a woman in the eighteenth century who was otherwise meant to have very little.

This theme flows into part two, on politics, beginning with My Hellsing's "...Que dumoin après ma mort la vérité perse...": la duchesse Charlotte, journaliste à la cour de Suède." Hellsing shows that Charlotte, first Duchess and then Queen, kept an epistolary journal (as was the vogue of the time) to reveal her political opinions and to preserve, for posterity, control over how the public would remember the political tumult of her day. Charlotte felt responsible for documenting what she considered to be the numerous injustices perpetrated by King Gustave III. Although her journal entries were primarily personal and ostensibly destined to entertain her friend Sophie Piper, their greater ambition was clearly to preserve a historical account of events of life in Sweden. Hellsing argues that Charlotte clearly regretted the restraint that she had to show as a woman, quoting the duchess as having written of society's need for women who could provide firmness where men might lack it (p. 108). Hellsing refers to Charlotte as a "journalist" because of her insistence on making the truth shine through above all else, yet the duchess's need to give her side of the story that would endure for posterity ranks in the quest for control through intimate writing.

Similarly, in "Madame de Boigne, temps historique, temps personnel et temps de l'écriture," Henri Rossi shows that Boigne used her memoirs as a space for relief against the difficulties that she experienced during the Revolution. Her personal writing shows how private and public life came together to have an effect on the young woman, depriving her of a sense of coherence in life. Her memoirs, according to Rossi, were an attempt to regain lost time and document a social decline that came paired with a new political atmosphere that she certainly could not control.

Part three of this collection turns towards travels chronicles. In "Temps du vécu, temps de l'écriture: Mémoires et journaux russes féminins rédigés en français (fin du XVIIIe siècle)," Catherine Viollet examines personal texts written by Russian aristocratic women at the end of the eighteenth century. She posits that Catherine II and Princess Ekaterina Dachkova both wrote their memoirs as an examination of the role of women in society and of their own status as women of power. What emerges, according to Viollet, is that these women who were avid travelers and thus observers of the larger world of the eighteenth century, understood that their autonomy equated to qualities that were considered "virile," even though they sought constantly to reaffirm their femaleness.

In her travel letters from Italy, Madame du Boccage attempted to immortalize herself according to Rotrand von Kulessa's article "L'Expérience du temps dans les lettres de voyage de Madame du Boccage." Von Kulessa aptly concludes that the originality of Boccage's letters is the amalgam of philosophical and personal reflections based in her experience of time, exemplified by her admitted desire to gain access to immortality through her writing (p. 162). The social and cultural allusions that

Boccage makes in her writing serve as a link between her and the larger society of which she aspires to be a part, not only for her generation or those soon to come, but for all of literary posterity.

Part four, on exile, presents an important look into the significance of expatriation in the eighteenth century. In “L’articulation entre le temps privé et le temps de l’Histoire dans les *Mémoires* de la marquise de la Tour du Pin. *Journal d’une femme de cinquante ans* (1778–1815),” Anne Coudreuse questions whether the genre of memoir is the best one to describe Madame de La Tour du Pin’s intimate writings. She explains that the fluctuation of literary categories during the time along with their author’s shrewd analyses of the events of the day create an account with what Coudreuse calls a “feminine ethos.” Though the Marquise would never have claimed the status of historian—and she explicitly mentions that she is making no such attempt—the acuity of statements like “the telegraph, steam, and railroads have changed the world!” (p. 182), tie it to the category of history just as well as literature.

Madame de Staël writes of tragic time in her memoirs, and Souad Gouhouch recognizes both her anxiety and idealism in “Le temps tragique de Mme de Staël dans les *Dix années d’exil*.” This contribution rightly points out that Staël vacillates between weaknesses and uncertainties and obsessions and true belief in the possibilities for humanity. Her own sense of posterity, of tragic time, relates to her sense of persecution and of traumas—both collective and individual—at a moment in time where she can look back on her past as fulfilled, yet can only experience a threatening present. She does not write only from her personal perspective but also charges herself with the duty of writing on behalf of a humanity rife with uncertainty and seemingly out of control.

Parts one through four of this collection all address memoirs that reflect upon the past and the present. Part five, however, turns towards writings that concern themselves more exclusively with the past. “Mémoire et temps dans les récits autobiographiques de Madame Campan” by Geneviève Haroche Bouzinac presents the story of Campan, whose memoirs served only to help her reconcile herself with a past full of loss. For someone who watched many of her loved ones die and who herself survived the guillotine, Campan is committed to living a life of gratitude to fight against the negativity of her present.

Suzan van Dijk wonders in “Isabelle de Charrière, une romancière qui regarde en arrière” if Charrière was a credible source of information on the eighteenth century. She refers to contemporary questions regarding the possibility that the memoirist’s memory was defective. Van Dijk concludes that Charrière’s memory can be trusted because while looking back on her life’s work at the age of sixty-three, she is able to recognize the Dutch works that inspired her writings of the past. Though Charrière knew that she could not control the effects that her bad health had on her memory, she understood until the end of her life the links that existed between her work and others that were meant to have similar impacts on posterity.

This collection would not be balanced without its sixth and final part, which addresses memoirs whose eyes were on the future rather than the past. Vanda Anastácio writes “Écrire pour le futur: Perceptions de la longue durée dans les stratégies d’auteur de la marquise d’Alorna” with Newton’s reconceptualization of time as linear rather than cyclical in mind. According to Anastácio, the marquise makes herself a fixture in literary posterity not necessarily based on the content of her writing but instead on her adherence to this “new” and important scientific advancement of her time. Her interest in preserving documents serves as evidence of her awareness of the future, and her personal reflections on the present are clearly designed to fit into a future context for understanding the past.

The final contribution to *Le Temps des femmes* is Anna Tabaki’s “Une vois feminine creusant le silence des préjugés sociaux. La noble zantiote Élisabeth Moutzan-Martinengou face à l’ère des Lumières.” Moutzan-Martinengou authored the first Greek-language first-person text by a woman. Tabaki shows

that this is an autobiography characterized by a great sensitivity and literary quality that, most importantly, contains a message of female emancipation (p. 270). Writing itself seems to be an act of revolt for the memoirist, and a necessary part of her own exertion of self-control and self-expression. This review does not even begin to do justice to *Le Temps des femmes*, which anyone who is interested in memoirs, the society of the French Revolution, or aristocrats of the eighteenth century must read. This is an invaluable resource for finally acknowledging the importance of women's memoirs during the Enlightenment. Memoirs are not simply an amusing way to trace the everyday lives of aristocratic women; they are evidence of these women's perspectives on power, time, and sense of self that enable us to fill in the gaps left by literary scholars who have previously ignored this genre.

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Suzan van Dijk, "Isabelle de Charrière, une romancière qui regarde en arrière. Est-elle crédible?"

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Vanda Anastácio, "Écrire pour le futur. Perceptions de la longue durée dans les stratégies d'auteur de la marquise d'Alorna"

Anna Tabaki, "Une voix féminine creusant le silence des préjugés sociaux. La noble zantiote Élisabeth Moutzan-Martinengou face à l'ère des Lumières"

NOTES

[1] *Adèle et Théodore* (1782), *Discours sur l'éducation de M. le Dauphin* (1790), and *Leçons d'une gouvernante à ses élèves* (1791)

[2] Genlis was the governess to the children of the Duke of Orléans; she was his mistress.

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