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Michael Meere and Kelly Fender McConnell, eds., *Coups de Maître: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Culture, in Honour of John D. Lyons*. Medieval and Early Modern French Studies, Volume 18. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021. xxxii + 560 pp. Figures, tables, and index. \$72.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781789971453; \$72.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9781789971477.

Review by Esther Van Dyke, Independent Scholar.

The mark of a true master is that they inspire those around them to rise to equal heights. The book under review here suggests that John D. Lyons was just such a one. The volume is incredibly wide-ranging in its subject matter, yet the editors, Michael Meere and Kelly Fender McConnell, have organized the chapters logically and well, and in a manner that reflects both Lyons's areas of expertise and the way his scholarship contributes to and influences medieval and early modern studies. Aspects of this book that I found especially helpful were McConnell's preface, which clearly explains the editorial choices and organization, and the abstracts at the beginning of each chapter, which give the reader a brief understanding of what will follow. This book is aimed at scholarly audiences of the medieval through early modern periods. Most of the chapters are in English, but several contributions are in French. Although much of the book focuses on literature, its interdisciplinary approach offers significant observations on history, mathematics, philosophy, and art, among other disciplines.

*Coups de Maître* is organized into five parts. The first three parts engage with the canonical early modern authors who constitute a significant focus for Lyons's critical corpus. The last two parts move from an author-focused approach to more thematic essays and literary movements that influenced Lyons's research. In turn, Lyons's work on these themes allows them to be expanded beyond France and the seventeenth century.

Part one acknowledges the deep debt that early modern theater studies owes to Lyons's work on three classical playwrights of seventeenth-century France: Corneille, Racine, and Molière. Hélène Merlin-Kajman commences this section with a study of Corneille's *Clitandre*. She pays tribute to Lyons's description of the shift between fortune and chance that occurred during the seventeenth century through her examination of the role of the phantom in *Clitandre* as the tragic chance around which the play turns. Églantine Morvant continues the discussion on Corneille with an exploration of the interaction between power and clemency in *Cinna* through the lens of Hannah Arendt's notion of freedom and authority. Morvant situates her study of Auguste's exemplary clemency in light of Lyons's notion of temporality and exemplarity, observing that the emperor's remarkable renunciation of tyranny gains him legitimate authority. Ellen Welch's chapter adds Racine to the conversation on early modern theater, acknowledging Lyons's

influence in her exploration of acousmatics, or the use of offstage sound as a means of extending the stage and using nonverbal sound to increase emotion and bring the action to a climax. Michael Hawcroft shifts the discussion from sound to the unspoken, exploring the evolution and changes in roles of nonspeaking characters in Racine's *Andromaque*. Hawcroft considers multiple editions and translations of this play to highlight the complexity of placing silent characters on stage. John Campbell explores Voltaire's analysis of Corneille's *Polyeucte* and Racine's *Athalie*. While Voltaire claims to be objective in his critique of the two playwrights, Campbell demonstrates how Voltaire judged them more on poetic qualities than dramatic ones, and gave Racine the decided upper hand. The last two chapters in this section focus on the work of Molière. Georges Forestier argues convincingly that Molière's work was revised over time in order to create the persona of the playwright. He examines the complexity of creating a perception of textual authenticity based on accepted norms rather than historical manuscripts, asking the question, what is a "true" text. Noël Peacock concludes part one with a study of Molière's parody of tragedy. Peacock suggests that the modern tendency to view Molière's comedy through a dark, and even tragic, lens allows us to reconsider questions of genre and the strict rules imposed by dramatic theorists of the seventeenth century.

Part two focuses on the writings of Scudéry, Lafayette, and the *salon* culture out of which their writing was born. Kathleen Wine, using Lyons's rich work on chance and fortune, examines the role of chance in Scudéry's *Clélie* and *Ibrahim*. She argues that the characters' tendency to ascribe intentionality to chance occurrences can be a way to mark the author's presence in the story. Hélène Bilis extends an earlier discussion by Lyons on the "outside" view of Lafayette's characters, further distinguishing between interior reflections and exterior exchanges of characters. Bilis inventories every social interaction in the *Princesse de Clèves* in order to map out what she calls an economy of "social commerce," revealing the importance of characters like Diane de Poitiers, whose presence is rarely seen, yet deeply influences others (p. 145). Harriet Stone continues the conversation around Lafayette's novel, combining it with a study of Nicolaes Mae's painting *Eavesdropper*. Stone describes the importance of ambiguity in the architecture and lines of sight in the painting, and parallels it to the novel's ambiguity brought about by various interpretations and points of view that escape a single perspective. Faith Beasley concludes part two with a discussion of François Bernier, a philosopher/writer whose ten years in India are often used to construct a specific (and negative) perspective of the France-India relationship in the seventeenth century. Using Lyons's work on representation, Beasley reconsiders Bernier's work in the collaborative context of the *salon*, suggesting that many of Bernier's writings were born of conversations among a wide group of interlocutors, both male and female, a fact that both complicates and enriches our perspective on international relations in seventeenth-century France.

Part three considers the contributions Lyons made to scholarship on the philosophical writings of Montaigne, Descartes, and Pascal. George Hoffmann discusses the influence of early modern demonology texts on the understanding of the imagination as a mental faculty that interacted with, and even acted on, the material world. Hoffmann argues that these demonology texts, even more than Montaigne and ancient skeptics like Sextus Empiricus, inspired Descartes's reflections in the *Meditations* on imagination and doubt. Hall Bjørnstad, taking a cue from Lyons's discussion of exemplarity, argues that both Montaigne and Pascal demonstrated the failure of exemplarity in their metaphor of the human attempt to achieve angelic status from a beastly origin. Bjørnstad shows that, while each author mobilizes the same language, they actually have a radically different worldview. Erec Koch continues the discussion of these two authors, using citation

software to trace Pascal's use of Montaigne. Koch analyzes the notion of authorial use of elaboration and displacement of citation. Nicholas Hammond examines a conversation between Louis-Isaac Lemaistre de Sacy, Blaise Pascal's spiritual director, and Sacy's secretary, Nicolas Fontaine, which took place five years prior to Pascal's own, more famous discussion with Sacy. Hammond argues that Fontaine's conversation demonstrates Sacy's ability to adapt his style of communication to fit his audience and that, contrary to the common view, Sacy's later conversation with Pascal deeply influenced Pascal's perspective. Richard Goodkin examines the role of chance as highlighted by Lyons in the mathematical oeuvres of Pascal, Fermat, and d'Alembert. Goodkin notes the growing importance of empirical knowledge in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, arguing that the conflict between quantitative and qualitative knowledge can be found in the work of these three mathematicians.

Part four revisits, and at times challenges, the categories of Renaissance, Baroque, and the uniquely French notion of *Classicisme*. Virginia Krause questions our understanding of Renaissance authorship using Mireille Huchon's controversial hypothesis that Louise Labé was a hoax constructed by a group of male authors. Krause argues that the same collectivity that Huchon claims created Labé could show that famous male authors like Rabelais may not have been "exerting supreme authorial control from the Olympian heights of autonomous authorship" (p. 308). Christopher Braider uses art history to question the notion of the Baroque using Peter Paul Rubens's *Four Philosophers*. Braider discusses details in the painting, arguing that Rubens was aligning himself with the "'natural' philosophy of the baroque era" in a quiet stance against the stoicism of antiquity (p. 313). Michael Moriarty analyzes the early modern notion of love and friendship through the lens of Camus's treatise on the passions and his handling of the same themes in his short tales. Moriarty compares Camus with the *Moralistes* to show that love and friendship were considered incompatible. Michael Meere examines the political ramifications of Du Ryer's *Argénis et Poliarque ou Théocrine*, particularly in the character of the cross-dressed king, Poliarque/Théocrine. Using Lyons's work on disguise in theater, Meere argues that Du Ryer's dedicatory material and certain ones of his dramatic choices indicate a stance against the absolutist machinations of Richelieu.

Thomas Pavel continues the discussion on disguise in early modern works with an analysis of Thomas Corneille's *Timocrate* and La Calprenède's *Alcamène*. Pavel points to the importance of the double identity of the main characters of these works and argues that their popularity at the time (despite not being canonical works) parallels much present-day popular literature, and thus is worthy of our consideration. Emma Gilby's chapter explores the role of the popular salon genre of *bouts rimés* through Jean-François Sarasin's mock-epic *Dulot vaincu*, which satirizes the use of rhyming couplets, all while exemplifying their use. Gilby argues that Sarasin's work is not only an excellent example of early modern satire, but was also critical to the development of the work of Nicolas Boileau. Anne Régent-Susini continues the exploration of genre evolution with the seventeenth-century funerary sermon. She pays close attention to the social context of these sermons, examining letters and diaries whose discussion of the sermons helped shape them as a genre distinct from earlier predecessors. In the final chapter in part four, Guy Spielmann takes a closer look at categorizations of historical periods. He questions the restrictive limits of "Baroque," which is often pitted against a uniquely French "*Classicisme*," and argues that the boundaries between the two periods is more porous than traditionally allowed. He concludes that, in reality, much of the seventeenth-century "*classique*" is what Lyons refers to as a "kingdom of disorder" (p. 419).

Part five grapples with themes and literary questions studied by Lyons, including exemplarity, history, and imagination, but extends them beyond the borders of seventeenth-century France. For instance, Stephen Nichols considers exemplarity in the medieval period through the lens of castration. He argues that the *hypotyposis* used by authors such as Augustine, Saint Ambrose, and Isidore of Seville to describe the act of castration is so vivid that they achieve the opposite of their goal: they effectively cause their readers to imagine the “parts of shame” (p. 429). The exemplary role of silence and language is thus called into question. Kevin Brownlee continues the conversation around the role of the imagination. Brownlee examines how *ekphrasis* in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* and Boccaccio’s *Teseida* creates a tension between the imagination of the protagonist and that of the author, who uses a visual reference to depict a lyric reality. Timothy Chesters considers the fascinating role of the imagination in memoir, particularly in the *Commentaires* of the violent general, Blaise de Monluc. Using Monluc’s examples of different faces (Monluc’s face before it was damaged in a battle, or the king’s face in a dream), Chesters shows how the nonverbal power of the face communicates forcefully with the imagination. Éric Méchoulan examines the exemplarity of a writer’s voice in light of the increasingly complex place of public opinion in the seventeenth century. Méchoulan analyzes a letter to Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac in which the writer’s exemplary status becomes linked to the power of the public to proclaim him eloquent, based on their reaction. Malina Stefanovska complicates the notion of exemplarity in her discussion on the perspective of history in the writings of Machiavelli and the Cardinal de Retz. Stefanovska argues that both authors understand history and historical examples as a guide for, and even justification of, political choices. Marina Brownlee takes the discussion of exemplarity out of France and into the Spanish Golden Age. Brownlee examines the work of María de Zayas, particularly her non-exemplary and socially non-conforming tales of witchcraft, which reveal lawlessness and sensationalize violence. Finally, Katherine Ibbett’s contribution moves the reader to the problematic portrayal of the beaver in early modern Canadian texts. Ibbett shows how the beaver is simultaneously a metaphor for exemplary industry and a means to justify the enslavement and exploitation of native peoples, who were seen as a resource, just as the beaver was.

I found this book interesting and helpful. It achieved its stated purpose of honoring one of the most prolific and thorough scholars of early modern France. The breadth of material covered is staggering, indicating not only Lyons’s own scope of interest, but also how widely his perceptions on early modern literature and culture have been applied.

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