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Sarah Alyn Stacey and Véronique Desnain, Eds., *Culture and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century France and Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004. xii + 288 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 1-85182-717-X.

Review by Brian Sandberg, Northern Illinois University.

What better way to celebrate the arrival of a new collection of rare seventeenth-century books than with the production of a collective volume on the history of the period? *Culture and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century France and Ireland* emerged from a conference in Dublin in 1999 on the occasion of Trinity College Dublin's acquisition of a large seventeenth-century book collection that had been compiled by Geoffrey Aspin. Because of the collection's emphasis on theatrical works, most of the essays delve into the history of theatre, literature, and textuality in early modern Europe.

Gender and textuality are woven into much of the book, but are foregrounded in two contributions. Véronique Desnain offers a gendered reading of Racine's tragedies *Esther* and *Athalie*. Desnain shows how Racine uses biblical sources to emphasize women's subservience to patriarchy, and to warn of the dangers women pose to society. Kate Curry's chapter recounts the life of Barbe d'Ernecourt, madame de Saint Balmont, a French noblewoman who led the defense of Neuville during the Thirty Years' War. Contemporaries referred to Barbe d'Ernecourt as *Amazone chrestienne*, and she seems to have tried to project the image of a pious, devout woman even as she dressed in masculine clothing. Madame de Saint Balmont is a remarkable historical figure--the subject of several biographies and a Claude Deruet painting. Yet Curry offers a fresh perspective by comparing early biographers' interpretations of madame de Saint Balmont with Ernecourt's own writing, principally her religious drama on the theme of martyrdom.

Moral controversies and religious crises provoked intense polemical debates over free will and sin in seventeenth-century France. The writings of moralists, such as Jean-Pierre Camus, often centered on divine order and the punishment of those sinners who transgressed that order. However, Camus' attempts to use divine providence to explain tragic events and assure readers of God's justice ultimately ran afoul of his interest in relating the human dimension of suffering, according to Mark Bannister. The Jansenist controversy sparked further debate over free will, since Jansenius was accused of imprisoning the will with sin and thus of promoting belief in predestination. Michael Moriarty analyzes Antoine Arnauld's attempts to defend Jansenius precisely by elaborating on the notion of freedom. Henry Phillips delves into religious criticisms that secular theatre represented a scandalous threat to Christianity because of its sinful subject matter, morally corrupt characters, and cross-dressing actors. While each confession focused on a different rationale for the corrupt nature of plays, Phillips discovers many similarities in various confessions' responses to theatre.

The history of medicine in early modern Europe has recently become a field of intensive research and debate, and this volume provides two interesting contributions on seventeenth-century French medicine. Rebecca Wilkin explores the seventeenth-century scientific discourse on ovism, a theoretical approach to human reproduction emphasizing the role of the female egg over the male semen. Wilkin's discussion of the "father function" demonstrates that the writings of the Scientific Revolution shared many assumptions about authorship with contemporary literary works and forces us to reappraise Michel Foucault's now famous notion of the author. Jean-Paul Pitton analyzes the limits of confessional coexistence amongst the physicians of seventeenth-century La Rochelle after the siege of 1628. Pitton

finds sharp polemical exchanges and an increasing polarization of the medical community along confessional lines in the city. Despite remarkable similarities in Protestant and Catholic physicians' practice of medicine, Huguenot physicians were eventually banned from practicing medicine in La Rochelle.

The experience of these medical doctors points to the significance of changing legal practices in seventeenth-century Europe. Pascale Feuillé-Kendall addresses judicial violence directly, presenting a case for a transformation in the French judicial system stemming from the *ordonnance criminelle* of 1670. While one can agree with Feuillé-Kendall's outrage at the use of torture, the essay's analysis seems unconvincing to this reviewer, relying as it does on a fundamentally ahistorical vision of judicial history.

Another vital institution in seventeenth-century society appears in this volume, the princely court. Craig Moyes offers a new analysis of Antoine Furetière's *Roman bourgeois*, seeing it as a comment on changing artistic patronage practices at the court of Louis XIV. Sarah Alyn Stacey presents a reading of Saint-Amant's poetry that emphasizes his paradoxical representations of nature, which highlight the tensions between life at court and life on country estates. Andrew Calder and David Culpin offer complementary readings of humor in seventeenth-century French and English writings, which reflected the ideals of courtly conversation and exposed the boundaries of acceptable humor and mockery.

The process of translating French plays into English forms the subject of Pat Short's and Deana Rankin's contributions. Both of these authors find the translators made substantial changes from the original texts of the plays in order to enhance the sense of spectacle and please their English and Irish audiences. The sorts of politicized tactics employed by the translators studied here demonstrate well why research on translation in the early modern period has become such an important area of cultural history.

Social disorder and civil warfare deeply scarred seventeenth-century Britain and France, leaving their marks in literature through depictions of rebellion. Guy Snaith delves into the theme of revolt in La Calprenède's plays, finding that the playwright structured his plays around a common plot moving from chaos to order. Marc Serge Rivière interprets Voltaire's *Le siècle de Louis XIV* as pro-monarchist propaganda that depends on a satirical portrayal of the Fronde as commedia dell'arte. Providing a counterpoint to these representations of civil war is Harman Murtagh's military history perspective on civil war in Ireland. Murtagh investigates French assistance to the Jacobite cause in Ireland during the Nine Years' War, finding that Louis XIV achieved his strategic aims in the conflict, even if the Jacobite cause failed in the end.

Although a number of the authors offer new insights into theatre history and seventeenth-century text, the book unfortunately remains disjointed and reads as a conference proceedings. It seems fitting that theatre history takes center stage here, but the theatre receives so much attention that links with other issues are sometimes obscured. The book's overwhelming geographic focus on France leaves the Irish material somewhat isolated and also limits broader European perspectives that might have materialized. The contributions could have been reorganized and molded into a more articulate book by assembling chapters around a series of focused themes, instead of relying on the poles of "culture" and "conflict" to hold the contributions together. Nonetheless, the authors' cultural history readings of literary and dramatic texts expose new aspects of seventeenth-century religious and scientific discourses, hinting at the pervasiveness of the contemporary Counter-Reformation and New Science movements. At intersections between essays, implicit discussions arise concerning the dynamics of seventeenth-century European culture and its expansive textual representations of human behavior, worldly organizations, and nature's workings.

LIST OF ESSAYS

- Véronique Desnain, “‘Aux pieds de l’Eternal je viens m’humilier’: Racine and the Bible.”
- Kate Currey, “‘By the Sword Divided’: Cultural and Confessional Conflict in the Life and Writings of Madame de St. Balmont (1607-59)”
- Rebecca Wilkin, “From ‘Ex ovo omnia’ to Ovism: The Father Function in Seventeenth-Century Treatises on Generation”
- Jean-Paul Pittion, “Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century France: La Rochelle, 1676-83”
- Craig Moyes, “‘Il n’y a plus de Mécenas’: *Le Roman bourgeois* and the Crisis of Literary Patronage”
- Sarah Alyn Stacey, “‘Ce miracle du monde’: Harmony and Disharmony in Saint-Amant’s Representation of the Cosmos”
- Michael Moriarty, “The Problem of Freedom in Arnauld’s Defence of Jansenius”
- Mark Bannister, “Free Will, Determinism and Providence: The Ideological Context of the *Histoires Tragiques* of Jean-Pierre Camus”
- David Culpin, “*Raillerie, honnêteté* and ‘les grands sujets’: Cultured Conflict in Seventeenth-Century France”
- Pascale Feuillée-Kendall, “Mutations judiciaires dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle”
- Andrew Calder, “On Humour and Wit in Molière’s *Le Misanthrope* and Congreve’s *The Way of the World*”
- Henry Phillips, “The Stage Controversy in France and England—A Confessional Convergence?”
- Pat Short, “Conflicting Cultures as Reflected in Some Seventeenth-Century English Translations of French Plays”
- Deana Rankin, “‘If Egypt now enslav’d or free A Kingdom or a Province be’: Translating Corneille in Restoration Dublin”
- Guy Snaith, “Rebel Hearts: La Calprenède’s Transformation of Political Conflict into Drama”
- Julia Priest, “Conflicting Signals: Images of Louis XIV in Benserade’s Ballets”
- Harman Murtagh, “Franco-Irish Military Relations in the Nine Years War, 1689-97”
- Marc Serge Rivière, “Voltaire’s Slanted Vision of the Fronde as *commedia buffa* in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*.”

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