

Clotilde Thouret. *Seul en scène: Le monologue dans le théâtre européen de la première modernité (1580–1640)*.

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Seul en scène offers the reader an erudite and well-documented study of the historical, poetic, and anthropological foundations and significance of the monologue in early modern English, French, and Spanish theater. In contradistinction to structuralist interpretations and countering post-Romantic criticism of the monologue,

Clotilde Thouret grapples with the early modern monologue on its own terms. Following in the footsteps of Terence Cave (*Préhistoires. Textes troublés au seuil de la modernité* [1999]), Thouret argues that, rather than a reflection of the post-Cartesian ego, the early modern monologue allows us instead to catch a glimpse at the emergence of a new interiority of the subject on the brink of modernity. To achieve this, Thouret examines both theoretical texts coming from Italy, Holland, England, Spain, and France, as well as plays by Shakespeare, Calderón, Corneille, and many others.

Implementing a tripartite structure, which faithfully adheres to the dissertation format of which the book is the product, this book first explores the historicity of the monologue by defining the nature of its literary tradition, reconstructing the framework of its reception, and identifying its dramatic and theoretical constraints in relation to the practices of staging and playwriting (chapters 1 and 2). The second part assays the role of the monologue in the construction of the baroque performance, demonstrating on one hand that the monologue is a structural component that simultaneously acts as a mediator between the action and the audience (chapter 3); on the other, the monologue delineates its own scenic space (chapter 4). In turn, the singularity of the monologue allows it to have a privileged role in the action, making way for both aesthetic and pathetic effects (chapter 5). These analyses lead to the third part of the book, which considers the monologue as a mimetic representation of the psyche. Thouret thus reads individual and singular texts to reveal the ways in which the monologue maps out, geographically and topographically, the symbolic constructions of the interior, in accordance with the distinct modalities of each country (chapter 6). The final chapter argues that the emergence of a modern subject concomitant with new political and social orders (e.g., absolute monarchy) leads to the crisis of these very subjects. Playwrights create unique voices which act as prisms of paradoxical identities of becoming (*devenir*); alternatively, monologues by Auguste (*Cinna*), Macbeth, or Brutus, for example, raise questions regarding the nature of willpower and blur the representations of choice.

The author must be applauded for the mastery of her topic and the depth and breadth of her sources. Still, although she explains why she does not discuss Italian or German theater — not to mention Dutch or Flemish theater — it would arguably have been advantageous, as a comparative study, to include them so as to gesture toward the emergence of the modern subject's psyche as a trans-European phenomenon. Moreover, the book's corpus of plays is limited to canonical texts and authors; however, this reader would have liked to see more variety from lesser-known playwrights who make up the fabric of early modern theater. For instance, in regard to French theater between 1580 and 1630, the book privileges Robert Garnier and Alexandre Hardy, yet there were many other active French playwrights — professional and amateur — who were having plays performed and printed during this period, such as Antoine de Montchrestien, Nicolas Chrétien des Croix, Pierre Troterel, and Théophile de Viau (to name just a few).

Despite these minor criticisms, Thouret's first monograph is executed with authority and is a fructuous contribution to scholarship. *Seul en scène* reinvigorates interest in the monologue, convincingly showing how this dramatic form offers

insight into the evolution of the early modern psyche. There is a useful index and a detailed table of contents. Written entirely in French, the English and Spanish texts are quoted in their original and translated in footnotes for easy reference. This is a book with a relatively narrow focus, whose audience will include researchers interested in the theoretical and practical developments of the monologue, and of theater in general, during the early modern period.

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