

(*voyages avérés*). The former are especially compelling when events pertinent to Montaigne's life serve to clarify a briefly recorded yet arresting detail and its relevance to the larger scope of his travels (e.g., Élisabeth Schneikert on Montaigne's unfulfilled desire to see Cracow). Considering the *Travel Journal* from yet another perspective, it is fitting in a volume where this text figures as a record of critical practice that several contributors study Montaigne in various postures of essaying himself against the practices and opinions he encounters abroad. Whether Montaigne is testing his mind or his character, or using his body as a laboratory to process physically as well as intellectually local cuisine and established medical wisdom, this approach often conveys the underlying consonance between Montaigne, the *Essays*, and his journal, as imperfect as it may be (e.g., Amy Graves-Monroe on the parallels between Montaigne's authorial, apodemic, and intestinal digestion).

While Montaigne and his works may appear marginalized in the contributions that address more narrowly defined fields of inquiry, ultimately this volume offers an impressive breadth of insight into the diverse milieus that shaped Montaigne's experience abroad, and so facilitates access to the now-remote realities to which he responds and which he records in his journal. In terms of presentation, the quantitative and technical studies contain helpful illustrations and, as a whole, the volume is complemented with rich footnotes, bibliographic references, an *index nominem*, and summaries of individual contributions. Although *Montaigne à l'étranger* speaks especially to readers familiar with the *Essays*, it may well inspire readers more and less familiar with Montaigne's works to continue exploring them, in a different light.

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*Playing the Martyr: Theater and Theology in Early Modern France.*

Christopher Semk.

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Christopher Semk's elegant and economical study affords a refreshingly evenhanded treatment of the two terms of his title. This is not, in other words, a book about the theater with a few gestures in the direction of theology, but rather a serious scrutiny of the implications of different modes of representation as they are understood dramatically, liturgically, and sacramentally. After the introduction, in which he advances the broad hypothesis that martyr tragedies are a kind of staged variant on the thematics of the *Imitation of Christ* (translated into French in 1651–56 by Pierre Corneille), Semk divides the central part of his inquiry into four chapters. The first covers the broad question of the separation of church and stage, beginning with some unexpected links between the (theatrical) Hôtel de Bourgogne and the (pious) Confrérie du Saint-Sacrement, as well as such vernacular manifestations of sacred drama as the cycle of plays performed in the Burgundian town of Alise-Sainte-Reine. In so

doing he discerns what turns out, despite some notoriously antitheatrical Catholic publications in the period, to be a surprisingly porous boundary.

The second chapter then addresses the links and contrasts between the spectacle of martyrdom and that of the stage, involving as it does such intractable dilemmas as how theatrically to depict the bloody end to a martyr's life without offending the rules of *bienséance* (or decorum), resolved by the process of an "aestheticization of the martyr's suffering" (37). It is here that Semk appropriately introduces the extreme case of the 1643 tragedy *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache* by Nicolas Desfontaines, in which the victim is put to death by being roasted alive inside a brazen bull (and the inclusion of plot summaries for such little-known texts is both inevitable and helpful). But such material, alongside its potential for staged entertainment, also brings out opportunities for conversion, both dramatically, of Eustache's persecutor (Adrian), and empirically, of theatrical onlookers. All of these issues are then addressed with reference to two texts with which scholars of the period will be more familiar: Rotrou's *Le véritable Saint Genest* (1646) and Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte, martyr* (1643). The vexed question of imitation becoming belief in the Rotrou play (also present in the parallel treatment of the same material in *L'Illustre comédien* of Desfontaines [1645]) is thoroughly explored, with reference in particular to the conundrum whereby Genesius, destined to become the patron saint of actors, must have played out his role (which was to mock Christianity for the entertainment of the emperor Diocletian) in such a way as to arrive at belief in the very object of his ridicule. Imitation thus becomes reality, and the parallels drawn with sacramental theology are here both pertinent and convincing.

This dimension is then expanded in the last chapter's treatment of *Polyeucte*, with a careful and entirely persuasive reassessment of the play's denouement, in which the conversion of the martyr's wife Pauline is effected by a baptism of blood, and that of her father (and Polyeucte's persecutor) Félix by the posthumous intercession of the eponym, with only the potentially attractive figure of Pauline's former lover Sévère left unconvinced, so that "what is lost as theology is maintained as theater" (114). Semk turns in his conclusion to a contrast between classical orthodoxies and Corneille's own theoretical writing in order to show how the playwright "adapts sacramental dynamics to dramatic practice and in so doing offers a compelling alternative to Aristotelian representation" (120).

Such a synthesis reflects the detailed and scholarly attention Semk devotes throughout his study to seventeenth-century French dramatic texts and paratexts and to classical theorists, most obviously Aristotle, but also, alongside them, to patristic authorities such as Tertullian. The result is an erudite and accessible survey of the fascinating and frequently problematic overlap between two kinds of representation that coexist, both in conflict and in harmony, exploring as it does the links between the kinds of belief and disbelief that are involved as much in liturgical ritual as in theatrical performance.

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