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Anne E. Duggan, *Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies: The Politics of Gender and Cultural Change in Absolutist France*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005. 288 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$53.50 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-87413-897-3.

Review by Katherine Crawford, Vanderbilt University.

As her task, Anne E. Duggan sets out to analyze the status of women writers and women's writing in seventeenth-century France. She examines writings of *salonnières* Madeleine de Scudéry and Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and some of their interlocutors. Duggan seeks to situate women's writing in seventeenth-century France in terms of controversies surrounding the literary output of salon women. Duggan does not serve her subject well in her characterizations of the historical context, but the issues she raises in her readings of salon texts about the gendering of the canon, education, and how writers move in and out of cultural favor are compelling.

At the outset, Duggan takes aim at feminist critics, particularly Nancy Miller and Joan DeJean, arguing that they limit the space for women writers along gendered lines.^[1] Where Miller maintained that "feminist writing" had to take women's identity as its central category, Duggan sees this as curtailing analysis of gender as a relational category. DeJean's emphasis on dissent through resistance to patriarchy, Duggan feels, unduly confines the subject matter of women writers. Duggan's rejoinder to Miller and DeJean is that women were in a far more complicated relationship to power, and her study aims to recuperate the social, cultural, and gendered complexities.

Duggan proceeds to situate women writers in seventeenth-century France in a very odd and historically unsatisfying way. She sees the period as marked by "absolutism" causing the demise of "feudalism." Both terms are highly problematic, but especially so as Duggan uses them in idiosyncratic ways. "Feudal culture" in her reading seems to mean inequality "determined by one's position—or more precisely, one's function—within society" (p. 26). She does not seem to recognize that the feudal system involved specific forms of land tenure and social relationships developed in a particular medieval context. Even allowing a more broad use of "feudalism," the hierarchical component that Duggan emphasizes is puzzlingly ahistorical. Hierarchy was endemic both before feudalism appeared and after it became moribund in the late Middle Ages. In addition, Duggan's omissions with respect to Catholicism are significant. She highlights Catholicism as a "feudal institution," but the main social, political, and cultural contexts for Catholicism were the Wars of Religion and the Catholic Reformation. Duggan says next to nothing about the former, and treats the latter as monochromatic "ideology" at several points in her study. These broad brushstrokes about "feudalism" are intended to set up the claim that the "rising bourgeoisie" in seventeenth-century France disempowered women by making marriage more restrictive. The tightening up of marriage is certainly true; the class characterizations here and elsewhere in her study are less accurate.

More compelling are Duggan's arguments about the gendering of education. The new humanist education in the *collèges* was restricted to men, and its subject matter excluded women almost entirely. Duggan argues that Cartesian philosophy shaped the content of *collège* education as well. She maintains that programs of study encouraged men to follow Descartes' method and become "self-made." Women could not do this in the formal setting of the *collège*, but they could fashion themselves in the salon (p. 41). In that context, women were the arbiters of literature and language, and they socialized upwardly

mobile men. Ignoring the claim that decaying feudalism was a primary component of the cultural context, Duggan ends her introduction on more solid ground with her picture of salon women.

Duggan gets stronger still when she analyzes her texts. Duggan reads Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clélie, Histoire Romaine* (1660) as articulating a form of aristocratic republicanism and criticizing Louis XIV's cultural hegemony. Based on the first two books of Livy's *History of Rome*, Scudéry's historical fiction also rewrites the priorities of (male) historians, who favor military heroes as appropriate subjects. Where history usually focuses on war and politics, Scudéry explicates the emotional story behind famous events. In *Clélie*, Scudéry offers sentiment and love as the driving forces behind the founding of the Roman Republic. Duggan argues that Jean Champlain and Paul Pellisson made Scudéry aware of how historical writing privileged male virtue. To change this, Scudéry developed a narrative structure organized syntagmatically, paradigmatically, and around verisimilitude (*vraisemblance*). The syntagmatic narrative is loosely the movement from chaos to order, but in Scudéry's 7,000 page story, this aspect is overwhelmed by the paradigmatic exempla. Directives toward producing a well-ordered self and society, the exempla emerge out of the emotional responses of the characters, which are the source of verisimilitude. Duggan sees Scudéry as offering a feminized model of heroism defined by the *Carte de Tendre*, the map included in the novel that provides an education toward self-control and self-knowledge as a product of rational, orderly, contractually sound love (p. 77). Duggan is convincing on the ways that the narrative in *Clélie* entered into debates on the meanings and implications of *gloire* in seventeenth-century France. Duggan could have added some depth by considering the *dévo*t or *femme forte* models of feminine glory against which Scudéry was also clearly writing. Conversely, Duggan could also have situated the ways that Scudéry's insistence on self-control and restraint played into the idea that women needed protection against male aggression.

Duggan has a different agenda. She wants to show how the gender implications of Scudéry's text support her social critique. Scudéry is critical of unrestrained monarchical authority in the figure of Tarquin, whose uncontrolled desires bring political upheaval in their wake. Duggan argues Scudéry's characterizations indicate that she favored an aristocratic republicanism steeped in virtuous self-control. While not terribly daring—Scudéry is not a radical republican by any stretch—that a woman could object to the monarchical self-presentation of Louis XIV is rather remarkable.

The institution of the salon to this point has figured in the background, but in chapter 3, Duggan focuses on the sociability of Scudéry's salon gatherings. Utilizing the *Chroniques des Samedis de Mademoiselle de Scudéry* (1653-54), Duggan explicates how the games, communication structures, and gift economy defined Scudéry's salon practices. Role-playing by adopting pseudonyms (Scudéry, for instance, was Sapho), Duggan observes, created the salon as a world apart. Duggan sees the pseudonyms as breaking with the gender order as well, but this is less compelling since men and women seem to have taken names that corresponded with their biological sex. Indeed, individuals adopted names that were meant to convey their virtues by referring to the portraits of characters in Scudéry's fiction.^[2] To remove the salon further from everyday life, Scudéry instituted rules of conversation (epistolary, poetic, and verbal) to define the salon space (pp. 96-99). The *Carte de Tendre* again served as a guide, with Scudéry emphasizing that the values of the *Carte* had to be internalized, particularly as a guide to male behavior. Women could learn to recognize a virtuous lover, but the *Carte* served a more disciplinary function for men.

The utopic space created by naming practices and conversational rules was further organized around Scudéry's definitions of friendship and gift exchange. Duggan notes that friendship was a popular topic, with texts by Michel de Montaigne, Pierre Charron, and especially Marguerite de Navarre (who allowed that women could be friends—something most male authors denied) shaping the discourse (p. 105). Friendship was based on exchanges of words, giving rise to a gift economy. The offer of a poem,

letter, or other literary production had to be reciprocated with a gift of greater value than the one received. Exchange practices could be complex, especially as the salon was a locus for establishing patronage relationships as well. The gendering of roles at first seems rather familiar: men learned how to serve noble patrons and received introductions to them, and male salon members carried out verbal duels with women looking on passively. But Scudéry/Sapho was the exception to the rule, acting at once as a patron and a principal in the gift exchange of words. Duggan is not the first to call Scudéry “androgynous” for occupying these roles, which suggests that the anxiety about women pervading Duggan’s seventeenth century sources is apparent from more than one modern angle.[3]

For all that the salon offered social benefits to those in attendance, the fact that it unsettled gender norms encouraged the likes of Nicolas Boileau and Charles Perrault to deride it. Duggan locates opposition to the *salonnières* within both the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* and the *Querelle des femmes*, arguing that “despite aesthetic and political differences, Boileau and Perrault both sought to extricate women from the sociocultural public sphere that women indeed helped create” (pp. 121-22). The *Querelle des femmes* was the unifying point. Beginning with *Les Héros de roman* (1665), Boileau attacked salon women, and especially Scudéry. *Les Héros* features Pluto, king of the underworld, calling on dead heroes to protect his kingdom from rebellion, but the heroes (most of them named after characters in Scudéry novels) speak only of love. The lovesick fools are described as mad and revealed to be bourgeois usurpers of noble status. Boileau rejects Scudéry’s revision of notions of heroism and the idea of emotion as motivating heroic plots. For good measure, he includes an anti-portrait of the *salonnière* as a monstrous fury. The misogynous elements evident already in Boileau’s thought come out more fully in his *Satire X*, which features negative portraits of women as dishonorable, coquettish, precious, hypocritical, miserly, and ill-tempered. Boileau, known for his defense of the Ancients, is mostly interested in condemning women as irrational and lusty; their weak nature makes women susceptible to modern art forms, with opera singled out as especially dangerous and corrupting. Duggan suggests that Boileau’s condemnation of the Moderns was incidental. She argues that his primary purpose was to attack women (p. 136).

Attempts by Charles Perrault, a supporter of the Modern position, to circumscribe women support Duggan’s argument. Both Perrault’s *Apologie des femmes* and his “Griseldis” (1691) exalt female obedience and abjection as positive qualities. Perrault insisted that women were innately immoral, susceptible to irrational desires, and must be contained within marriage. They should have no place in public, or in the life of the mind. Duggan focuses on Perrault’s fairy tales, such as “Peau d’âne,” which glorify female abjection. Perrault paints disobedient women as grotesque (“Les Souhaits ridicules”) or justly punished (the wife in “Barbe bleue”). Other writers such as Jacques Nicolas Pradon and Jean Donneau de Visé were more generous to women, but Duggan brings out the predominance of the woman question in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.

Duggan argues that Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, writing at the end of the seventeenth century, challenged this misogynous subordination of women by condemning both political and familial tyranny. D’Aulnoy set a number of her novels, including *L’Histoire d’Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (1690) and *Le Comte de Warwick* (1704), in England to provide some cover for her thinly veiled attacks on Louis XIV. The titular character in *Hypolite* and his adopted sister, Julie, love each other, but they are punished for maintaining their relationship against parental commands. As much as fathers, mothers are responsible for family tyranny: Madame de Douglas, for instance, tricks Julie into thinking Hypolite has abandoned her so that she will consent to an unwelcome marriage (p. 185). D’Aulnoy rejects despotic family strategies in *Hypolite*; in *Warwick*, she takes aim at political tyranny. D’Aulnoy’s Warwick is the victim of religious persecution and royal injustice because he is a Catholic in Henry VIII’s England. Warwick chooses a life of exile and adventure, rather than submit. Like other *salonnières*, d’Aulnoy privileges love over military glory, but Duggan points out that d’Aulnoy does not follow Scudéry’s lead in opening up

glory to women (p. 175). The corrupt product of parental and monarchical tyranny, glory is a dead end for both men and women.

Duggan is intermittently quite effective at articulating d'Aulnoy's cultural commentary. Duggan's analysis brings out the gendered dimensions of disputes about glory in seventeenth-century France. So often seen only from the perspective of the monarchy, glory was clearly highly contested. Duggan is also quite convincing in her emphasis on the ways that decorum, or *bienséance*, operated as a powerful, highly gendered aspect of daily life. Within the fictions of d'Aulnoy, *bienséance* is central to the ability of families and kings to get individuals to acquiesce to their own misery. Less compelling is Duggan's insistence that d'Aulnoy's position is in opposition to "Counter-Reformation ideology" (p. 201). While Counter-Reformation Europe was marked by heightened anxiety about gender and sexuality, effects were highly specific within different regions and national traditions.^[4] There is no single Counter-Reformation ideology.

More precise is Duggan's locating d'Aulnoy with a lineage of writing about love and morality. Duggan situates d'Aulnoy as the heir of such women writers as Catherine Bernard (*Eléonor d'Yvrée*) and Madame de Lafayette (*La Princesse de Clèves*). Lafayette in particular was famous for insisting that love would dissipate with intimacy. She considered love and passion to be incompatible, and her heroine privileged decorum instead. Where earlier writers insisted on the incompatibility of morality, passion, and love, d'Aulnoy depicts love and morality as harmonious, passion as persisting despite obstacles, and love as more important than *bienséance*. At the same time, d'Aulnoy rejects marriages between nobles and non-nobles in her tales, a significant departure from the tendency of fairy tales to exalt *mésalliances*. Virtue is available at any social level, but movement across class is unacceptable to d'Aulnoy. Characters fall in love with class-appropriate partners. Those who try to exceed their station, Duggan notes, are often referred to derisively as "peasants" (p. 208). Duggan reads d'Aulnoy's classism as trying to create social stability for the "feudal order" that is under attack. Whether or not the nobility was "feudal," d'Aulnoy's insistence that nobility is an essential characteristic sounds like something the dyspeptic critic of social mobility, Louis Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, might say.

On the other hand, d'Aulnoy's gender politics were expansive. Where Perrault revels in female abjection and demeaning labor, d'Aulnoy's heroines avoid domestic work unless it is strategically useful. D'Aulnoy celebrates female intellect in her tales, privileging developing the mind over devotion to domesticity. Female characters include queens who actively rule. Where critics from Boileau and Perrault to Madame de Maintenon warned women against the corrupting effects of everything from make-up to opera, d'Aulnoy's tales celebrate the positive aspects of conspicuous leisure and female self-expression.

In an intriguing move, Duggan returns to the politics of opera, arguing that d'Aulnoy's use of operatic elements is in defense of salon women. Duggan regards d'Aulnoy's use of supernatural movement, choruses commenting on events, sung verse, and references to Versailles as aspects of her defense of opera. D'Aulnoy cites spaces like the Galerie des Glaces in her tales, and Duggan argues that this feminizes them (p. 229). Perhaps, but d'Aulnoy's appropriations may well have reinscribed royal authority as much as subverted it. D'Aulnoy could be read in the sense that even powerful women in fairy tales cannot escape the markers of monarchical space. D'Aulnoy's characters privilege love and the refusal to submit to unjust monarchical authority, but Duggan needs more than internal evidence to support the claim d'Aulnoy's plot revisions actually function as oppositional to both bourgeois modernism and to monarchical authority. The notion that championing women is inherently oppositional to bourgeois, monarchical, and Counter-Reformation ideology seems a bit dubious. As Duggan has suggested throughout, textual claims create more amorphous loci of power than these oppositions allow.

In the end, Duggan makes a strong case for the dialogic production of literature and ideology in seventeenth-century France. Scudéry's aristocratic republicanism and d'Aulnoy's nostalgic noble social structure were very much a product of the debates around ideas like glory, love, heroism, parental power, and the status of women. While she raises as many questions as she answers, Duggan may be seen as continuing the dialogue.

NOTES

[1] Nancy Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: The Politics of Female Authorship under the Late Ancien Régime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[2] Duggan's claim that "women" had an interest in "neo-Platonic, Cartesian" philosophy that allowed them to imagine ungendered equality of the sexes is highly problematic. First, neo-Platonism was highly gendered. Neo-Platonists routinely considered female mental and emotional capacity to be markedly lacking. Second, Duggan short-hands the relationship between neo-Platonism and Cartesian philosophy so drastically that it is hard to reconcile the elements she sees in common between them.

[3] Leonard Hinds, "Female Friendship as the Foundation of Love in Madeleine de Scudéry's 'Histoire de Sapho'," in Jeffrey Merrick and Michael Sibal, eds., *Homosexuality in French History and Culture* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Harrington Park Press, 2001), pp. 23-35.

[4] Stephen Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Katherine Crawford
Vanderbilt University
katherine.b.Crawford@vanderbilt.edu

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