From the Editor's Desk

ARTICLES

PEDAGOGY

This article describes an innovative approach to teaching a survey course. The course unites delivery of content with development of skills using techniques from the Oral Proficiency Interview. The article presents strategies that improve both research and language skills while teaching students about French literature and culture from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century. The article provides specific examples of how research skills and language development are integrated into all tasks. Films, the Internet, and newspaper articles give the historical material a contemporary feel that also emphasizes its relevance.

Cet article a pour but de guider l'enseignant/e qui souhaite proposer à ses étudiants une étude comparative film français/remake américain mettant en lumière les différences culturelles entre les deux pays. A l'aide de suggestions de films et de textes, d'analyses comparatives d'affiches, de films et de scènes, d'exemples de cours et de questions, on y offre des pistes de travail pour une comparaison ponctuelle comme pour une étude plus suivie dans le cadre d'un cours sur le remake.

Lars Erickson

"Skills and Content: New Designs for the Survey Course"

Brigitte Humbert

"Films français et remakes américains"
of his authority" (85). Les troisième et quatrième chapitres abordent la difficulté à définir et à catégoriser le diplomate en Europe ainsi que la problématique de la représentation diplomatique, de la médiation et du rôle que purent tenir les intendants, les ambassadeurs, toujours dans le contexte de la légitimité du souverain. L'étude de ces diplomates transmettant l'autorité et représentant leur roi exactement comme celui-ci joue le rôle de médiateur entre Dieu et le royaume (7) permet à l'auteur d'approfondir les contradictions et les implications inhérentes des théories sur l'autorité royale du dix-septième siècle (7). Le dernier chapitre, sur la médiation et le théâtre français au Grand Siècle, analyse la relation entre le spectacle, la critique théâtrale, l'acteur (lui aussi ambassadeur de l'auteur), la diplomatie et la monarchie pour conclure sur la nécessité politique de la médiation mais aussi sur "l'impossibilité de la médiation parfaite" (impossible parce que s'avérant tragique du point de vue personnel, 249), une contradiction qu'exemplifient Suréna de Corneille et l'Andromaque de Racine. La conclusion place le débat sur la médiation dans une perspective bien plus large, qui s'observe dès la fin du règne de Louis XIV et au dix-huitième siècle, celle de la question du transfert de la souveraineté au peuple, dont la possibilité a ses racines dans les contradictions explorées par McClure tout au long de son ouvrage (263).

Dense, méticuleux, admirable de précision, Sunspots and the Sun King constitue une contribution importante et originale à l'histoire des idées tout comme à l'histoire politique, culturelle et littéraire française.

University of Alabama, Birmingham

Catherine Daniélou


Since its inception in May 2001, the series "Women and Gender in the Early Modern World," published by Ashgate and edited by Allyson Poska and Abby Zanger, has already made several solid contributions to scholarship on early modern women in France. The present book continues that trend, analyzing a very particular segment of the early modern Parisian population, namely the widows of master craftsmen, that is to say, women whose husbands had reached the status of master within their guild at the time of their death.

Janine M. Lanza has successfully transformed her 1996 dissertation into From Wives to Widows in Early Modern Paris: Gender, Economy, and Law. Through her study of the lives of master craftsmen widows from the late sixteenth century up to the French Revolution, she challenges existing assumptions about French history in the areas of gender, economy, and law, arguing that these widows "in their actions, [. . .] broke away from a conception of gender as binary opposition and were able to occupy a spectrum of acceptable gendered roles" (9–10), that the idea of the "family economy" needs to be reconsidered in light of these widows running the family business, and that the law was not just imposed on them, but also strategically used by them. The author substantiates her arguments with overwhelming evidence from painstakingly researched archival manuscripts regarding these women's marriages, remarriages, inheritances, deaths, probate inventories, contracts, police records, petitions, guild and business documents, etc. as well as numerous references to relevant research in the wider context of her subject area. She proves that these widows, despite challenges in many areas, did a
remarkable job of remaking their lives in various ways. Although the target group of the study is quite limited and its implications do therefore not appear to be immediately far reaching in scope, the study constitutes an important contribution to history through its focus on a thus far commonly overlooked segment of the population, and to early modern women's and gender studies in that these women managed in various ways to defy traditional society-imposed gender roles, whether this be as business women, as objects and especially subjects of the law, or as remarrying widows.

The book contains an introduction, a conclusion, and six chapters organized by theme and not according to the various life stages through which the women pass, so as not "to ground them in their biology" (13). The first three chapters analyze how women and widows functioned within the French law, church, and guilds, respectively. In each case, Lanza demonstrates that although these institutions all attempted to control widows in their own way and subject them to their respective rules, widows importantly used the institutions in return to consolidate and improve their legal, social and economic status. The last three chapters each study a potential path for women turned widows and analyze its effect on their lives: working in their husband's business, remarriage, and poverty. An extensive bibliography followed by an index conclude the book. The bibliography lists a significant number of sources as well as the series the author used most extensively for manuscript sources, having cited the individual boxes in her footnotes.

In addition to historians of the early modern period in general and France in particular, this book will also interest readers with more literary backgrounds, such as this reviewer, who can gather from this detailed, fact-based study information on a class of widows usually overlooked in literature. Its language is easily accessible to non-specialists.

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Marijn S. Kaplan


In June 1816, the frigate Medusa left France to repossess the French colony of Saint-Louis in Senegal from the British. On 2 July 1816, under the command of the indecisive and incompetent captain Hugues Duroy de Chaumareys, the Medusa crashed into a reef on a stretch of the African coast between Cap Bojador and Cap Blanc. When various attempts to float the frigate were unsuccessful, the passengers of the Medusa scrambled aboard lifeboats while 147 people boarded a raft that was to be towed behind the captain's barge. The towrope connecting the two vessels was soon chopped, leaving those on the raft adrift in the ocean. While the passengers of the lifeboats endured horrific conditions as they were forced to march through the Sahara without food or water, those abandoned on the raft endured a worse fate: almost two weeks of chaos, butchery, riots, murder, and barbarism that would claim the lives of all but fifteen of the original 147 passengers before they were rescued.

In his book The Wreck of the Medusa, historian Jonathan Miles uses details of the shipwreck that were collected from published accounts and survivors' journals to reconstruct a shocking tale of corruption, mutiny, and survival. However, more than a simple retelling of the gruesome shipwreck and the ghastly experiences of