

Les amours romanesques de la fin des guerres  
de religion au temps de l'Astrée (1585-1628):  
fictions narratives et représentations  
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 ***Les Amours romanesques de la fin des guerres de religion au temps de L'Astrée (1585-1628): Fictions narratives et représentations culturelles (review)***

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

Reviewed by:

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Frank Greiner. *Les Amours romanesques de la fin des guerres de religion au temps de L'Astrée (1585-1628): Fictions narratives et représentations culturelles*. Bibliothèque Littéraire de la Renaissance 72. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2008. 556 pp. index. append. bibl. €89. ISBN: 978-2-7453-1609-7.

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Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French novels are numerous, widely diverse, and full of surprises. Although Gustave Reynier and Henri Coulet have cleared the way, barely two-dozen titles are familiar to modern scholars. Vocabulary is the first difficulty modern critics may encounter: in French, the words *roman* and *romancier*, until the end of the seventeenth century, applied mainly to medieval texts and authors of chivalric novels. Novels were then "livres d'amour" (255). Giving the priority to love over war has been such an important step in the evolution of narrative fiction that *les amours* means "the story." The genre itself, called *roman sentimental* (sentimental novel), includes short novels considered, in theory at least, as different from the *histoire tragique*.

The Herculean task of Frank Greiner has been to gather texts published between the end of the religious wars and the publication of *L'Astrée's* fifth [End Page 1279] volume. This fifth volume is a posthumous apocrypha that does not deserve the rank it is given, although *L'Astrée* (first volume published in 1607) rightly stands as the first modern novel.

Greiner searched for a common trend that could unify these texts. His objective was to complement Ellen Constans' recent synthesis, *Parlez-moi d'amour. Le roman sentimental d'Hélisenne de Crenne à Jean-Pierre Camus* (2005), while offering a definition of *histoire sentimentale* based not only on the novel content, but also on its morphology, its social origins, and its societal implications (19). Greiner himself has already published an important book that is the ideal companion to *Amours romanesques: Fictions narratives en prose de l'âge baroque. Répertoire analytique. Première partie (1585-1610)* (2007).

The results of Greiner's work are presented in five parts: "History and

Fictions," "Love Story," "Moral and Immoral Love Stories," "Adventurous Love Stories," and "Romances." A general conclusion complements the five preceding shorter conclusions. Greiner shows that the combination of exacerbated and repressed eroticism contributed to the emergency of love stories where desire is censured, compensated, and exalted. Beside the three invariant topics analyzed by Constans, love, obstacle(s), and marriage, there is also a typical hero as well as a setting that reflects the protagonist's situation. Authors describe a conflict between love and figures of authority that often ends with the victory of "honnête amour," or honest love (406); novels are therefore civilizing tools. Christian doctrine has deeply modified the medieval concept of *amour courtois*. Wedding, the lovers' goal, is indeed a sacrament for Catholics (494). Drawing on recent related criticism, Greiner concludes that love stories illustrate conflicts and concessions between society and individuals. Little by little, however, these narratives lost their prestige because readers, often belonging to lower social classes, did not identify with the protagonists. Furthermore, around 1620, people were again looking for heroic models.

Frank Greiner offers generous appendices that are extremely valuable. After a list of 113 authors with dates of birth and death, the bibliography includes almost 200 novels beside a list of works consulted. An index of names is followed by an index of novels' titles. Greiner indicates which novels enjoyed multiple editions and the happy few that have a modern critical edition. Two small clarifications: *Le Monophile* (514) is generally attributed to Étienne Pasquier, and *Les Thuilleries d'amour* (516) indeed has an author (513).

Although Greiner builds his work around a good and valuable selection of love stories, given the importance attributed to Christian values and to Catholic literary influence, the absence of several of Camus's novels is unfortunate: he was, after all, a bishop who called his novels "histoire dévotés" and treated them as sermons. The cursory handling of Protestant writers, like Des Escuteaux (405), is also unexpected. Despite these minor shortcomings, *Amours romanesques* stimulates the hope

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