

in the late sixteenth century; Antoinette Gimaret focuses on the corporal significance of Christian relics; Dominique Brancher examines the significance of importing Egyptian mummies to France; Audrey Duru examines Jean Edouard du Monin's *Phénix* (1585) and how Monin's poems fit in the genre of the *blason*.

The volume concludes with essays treating the satiric possibilities of the *blason*. Diane Robin, Hugh Roberts, Guillaume Peureux, and Louise Deholdt each offer examples of the lasting influence of the *blason* and the *contreblason* in the seventeenth century, most particularly in farces and satirical poetry. In addition to the illustrations and charts that accompany many of the essays the volume also includes three appendixes: the musical scores for the *Blason du beau tétin* and for the *Blason du laid tétin* (Annex 1A and 1B) and examples of the *blasons* and *contreblasons* of the mouth from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. In sum, the editors have put together a collection of essays that redefines scholarship on the *blason*.

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Early Modern French Autobiography. Nicolae Alexandru Virastau.
Egodocuments and History Series 12. Leiden: Brill, 2021. 206 pp. \$118.

Brill's Egodocuments and History series focuses, as its title suggests, on exploration and analysis of sources written by their authors about themselves. Previous volumes have dealt with Germany and Switzerland, the Netherlands, and even the recent war in Afghanistan. The twelfth volume, authored by Nicolae Alexandru Virastau, focuses on three major examples of printed early modern French autobiographical writings. The book, which stems from Virastau's doctoral research at Columbia University, is divided into five chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion, and analyzes the way that early modern memoirs and autobiographical notes were constructed by various actors—authors, their family and other proxies, and publishers and printers, both contemporary to the authors and later ones, all the way down to the nineteenth-century editions that made these works accessible to wider readership.

The introduction presents a critical overview of the field of autobiographical writing and its various disciplinary subdivisions, such as literary studies and history, and attempts to reclaim the genre from being considered an unreliable source. Virastau aims at broadening the definition of "autobiography" and draws parallels to Adam Smyth's *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (2010). The four major examples of autobiography are supplemented with references to other early modern autobiographies. Three out of four examples in this book are taken from the sixteenth century, while the fourth one is from the first half of the seventeenth century, which presents a good overview of the tendencies of the time.

The first chapter is dedicated to the tradition of writing and publishing memoirs in the early modern period. The author examines the titles of memoirs and the provenance of the word in relation to the actual content, and asserts that the majority of French memoirs were written by prominent noblemen for the purposes of national history (in the earlier stages) to personal glorification and family history. One important message is that the editorial processes of the time stripped these autobiographical writings of the personal elements that sometimes appeared in the original manuscripts, and, as the example in chapter 3 shows, even more was removed in the subsequent editions. Therefore, the published form was often significantly different from the original intention of the author or even the first editor.

Chapter 2 deals with the father of French memoirs, Philippe de Commines. After a brief examination of a well-known model for Commines's text, Virastau focuses on its desired readers of courtiers. A curious moment in the book refers to the early modern idea of privacy, which surely could be explored further in a separate study. Commines slept with Louis XI of France either in the same room or in the same bed, a sign of great proximity to the king. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the so-called diary of the mother of Francis I, Louise de Savoie, and the memoirs of the nobleman Philippe Hurault de Cheverny. Virastau presents both as creations of the authors' editors and family. The analysis done by the author is detailed and convincing, revealing the various layers of editorship these diaries and memoirs went through. The last chapter examines the diary of François de Bassompierre as an example of an autobiographical text as fiction writing; this diary was published, just like the two previous, examples after the death of the author. In addition to the fictitious accounts, however, de Bassompierre gives a detailed account of his early life.

The seven-page conclusion provides additional examples of the fictional or dubious path that memoirs took, with those of Pierre de La Porte and the pseudo-memoirs written by Gatien de Courlitz de Sandras for various personages. Virastau, having asserted once again that the majority of printed memoirs were written by courtiers, attempts to bridge the gap with the memoirs that remained in manuscript and did not meet the broader public. Yet it seems that the gap between the edited, reworked, and printed memoirs in question in the book and the manuscript memoirs needs a deeper and clearer analysis. This book offers an excellent overview of early modern practices of the publication of autobiographic writing, and could be used as course material for students. For scholars, this book could be used as a starting point for further research into the domain of early modern privacy.

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