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intricate exploration of often pestilential odours, sometimes offset by perfume as ‘un puissant vecteur de poésie’ (p. 51). Given the potential invasiveness of the external world, characters’ survival depends on what Mireille Labouret sees as ‘du bon usage des sensations dans l’équilibre des personnages’, by recourse to different or complementary senses (such as sight, hearing, and touch), and by fusing material and spiritual worlds: ‘la spiritualisation des sens va de pair avec une matérialisation de l’esprit’ (Patrick Labarthe, p. 81). Fortunately, the seeming opposites of matter and spirit are further fused in Balzac’s use of the word ‘substance’ (Max Andréoli) and in the correspondences in *L’Enfant maudit* (Patrick Labarthe). Fortunately, too, both the decay (Aude Déruelle) and the fragmentation (André Vanoncini) of the objective world can impact positively on the resourceful or insightful character, prompting ‘la recherche du plein perdu’ (Déruelle, p. 31). Even more proactively, some Balzacian painters can exploit matter positively in the form of ‘pâtés de couleur’ (Adrien Goetz, p. 68). As is shown, moreover, by Scott Sprenger’s illuminating analysis of Pons’s ‘taste’, motivated by frustrated sexual energies and by repressed *ancien régime* Catholicism, different characters’ exploitation of their sensations depends on their physiology, their social position, and their history (Blanche Schmitt-Lochmann). After Stéphane Vachon’s agenda-setting *mise au point* on the state and promising future of Balzac genetic criticism, a second, *Varia* section continues with Florence Filippi on the actor Talma, whom she sees as ‘une sorte de protagoniste invisible’ instantiating characters’ initiation into Parisian society, Balzac’s fusion and confusion of the ‘real’ and the ‘theatrical’, and ‘la rivalité générique entre tragédie et roman’ (pp. 224, 226). While a similar rivalry may characterize Balzac’s relation to music, a shared structural unity and similarly violent affects/effects can, as Katherine Kolb demonstrates, be seen to characterize both Balzac and Beethoven in the former’s evocation of the Fifth Symphony in *César Birotteau*. Relationships of a different kind feature in the closing articles of the volume with Julia Chamard-Bergeron’s extended presentation of friendships in *Illusions perdues* and Igor Sokologorsky’s broad-brush account of ‘l’envers’ in Balzac. Although the first cluster might have benefited from a Balzac-style explanatory overview, and although some pieces in the second grouping could have been more tightly argued, the volume as a whole, particularly with its usual complement of reviews and bibliographical information, is testimony to the variety and vigour of Balzac research.

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*Alexis de Tocqueville*. By ALAN S. KAHAN. (Major Conservative and Libertarian Thinkers, 7). London: Continuum, 2010. x + 152 pp. Hb £65.00; \$130.00.

This book is part of a series devoted to ‘major conservative and libertarian thinkers’. As is the case in any series of this nature, some of the authors chosen would seem to fit more appropriately into other categories (such as classical liberal thought). Meanwhile, many readers might cringe at seeing the likes of Locke, Hume, or Tocqueville in the same category as Ayn Rand. These caveats aside, the purpose of these short introductory books is to provide an accessible overview of the works and influence of a major author. A Tocqueville specialist (among other things, he has translated *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1998–2001)), Alan Kahan has produced one of the best, combining concision and clarity without sacrificing intellectual depth. As is called for in this type of publication, Kahan has a pithy way of summarizing complex issues: ‘What is essential in Tocqueville are two moral commitments, a commitment to freedom and a commitment to France’ (p. 23); ‘*Democracy in America* is a book about democracy. America is the setting, not the subject’ (p. 36); ‘For Tocqueville, there is always a choice for human beings to make,

and it is always the same choice — whether or not they wish to be free' (p. 57); 'His neo-liberalism was not a good fit for his time. It may prove to be a better fit with ours' (p. 110). Kahan has packed a lot into a small book, providing a biographical outline, a comprehensive introduction to Tocqueville's works (including the less famous writings, such as on pauperism or Algeria), analyses of how his major works were received and of how his influence has waxed and waned (during his lifetime and since his death in 1859), and an annotated and categorized bibliography. The one element that seems to have received relatively short shrift, through lack of space, is the historical context, particularly in terms of French intellectual and political history. While Chateaubriand and Benjamin Constant are briefly mentioned, for instance, Mme de Staël is not. As Kahan is quick to point out, the author of *De la démocratie en Amérique* more accurately belongs to the tradition of liberal political thought (Chapter 7 is entitled 'Tocqueville, the Neo-Liberal'), even though he has more recently been appropriated by conservatives, particularly in the United States. The contemporary relevance of Tocqueville's works, no doubt enhanced by the collapse of Communism, is highlighted: 'At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Tocqueville's reputation and influence are probably greater than ever' (p. 125). While he was never eclipsed in the United States, his fairly recent return to prominence in France is notable — and indicative of a broader shift in French intellectual history. Kahan's book is thus doubly meritorious, as it makes available to students and beginning readers of Tocqueville a succinct and well-written presentation of one of the most important political thinkers since the Enlightenment period. It is a pity that such a useful book, which should have a wide readership, is so expensive.

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*Prophètes, sorciers, rumeur: la violence dans trois romans de Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–1889).*

By HÉLÈNE CELDRAN JOHANNESSEN. (Faux titre, 307). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 306 pp. Pb €60.00; \$90.00.

Hélène Celdran Johannessen's perspicacious study of the marginal figures in three of Barbey's novels builds on previous exploration of representations of violence and the sacred in *Une vieille maîtresse*, *L'Ensorcelée*, and *Un prêtre marié*. Shepherds, seers, mendicants, hags, and other characters from popular Norman folklore appear frequently in these works. Since their roles as storytellers, prophets, malefactors, or slanderers are, more often than not, associated with incidents of conflict or violence, René Girard's ideas on mimetic crisis, violence, and the sacred constitute a coherent theoretical framework for analysing Barbey's narratives. The frequent presence of the angry mob or *la foule* in these texts corresponds to the theatrical and ritual representation of public execution and suggests the collective need to preserve social order through sacrifice. Johannessen indicates the critical precursors on the topic: Joyce Lowrie's *The Violent Mystique* (1974) and Pierre Tranouez's *Fascination et narration dans l'œuvre romanesque de Barbey d'Aurevilly: la scène capitale* (1987). The latter shows how the triangular structure of relationships in Barbey's stories consistently brings about the death of one of the characters, namely the scapegoat; however, Girard's formulation is not mentioned *per se* in Tranouez's work. A sustained analysis of Barbey's depiction of the pariah/scapegoat in a Girardian context is entirely appropriate, if not overdue, and the author's considerable research on the subject is admirable. The first four chapters clearly and cogently reveal the representation of the victimary mechanism in the three novels. The author exposes in the first chapter the prophecies that presage the death of specific characters — she refers to these narrative features as 'récituels'. Chapters 2 and 3 elaborate on the concept of the *récituel* in relation to time and space. La lande de Lessay