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STEDMAN, ALLISON. *Rococo Fiction in France, 1600–1715: Seditious Frivolity*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2012. ISBN 978-1-61148-436-6. Pp. xiii + 227. \$80.

This is an ambitious and far-ranging attempt to recuperate a literary aesthetic long eclipsed by triumphant Classicism—the rococo of the work's title. Stedman is aware of the violence done to our habits by the historical extension of a term typically used to characterize the early Enlightenment. But this use is justified, she argues, for the rococo aesthetic, whose origin she traces all the way back to Montaigne, is a harbinger of the Enlightenment to come. In the fictions analyzed here we find a brand of innovation and creativity that, in its “protodemocratic” (40) rejection of Classicism's ideology and universalism, leads directly to the Enlightenment public sphere. What are these fictions? With the exception of Montaigne's *Essais*, probably not most people's usual suspects. After a first chapter on the oppressive consolidation of what Stedman calls the ‘classical-baroque,’ as seen in Malherbe's poetic reforms and the attacks on Corneille's *Le Cid*, she turns to a series of texts in which she locates a resistant spirit of innovation. Chapter two posits the *Essais* as the inaugural example of formal innovation that allowed for the treatment of new subject matter and for authorial freedom broadly conceived; Stedman then provides a tour of a number of what we might call compilation novels—relatively short and almost uniformly forgotten narratives, proliferating in the century's first decades and then again in the 1660s, that contain within them any number of letters, songs, poems, games, and conversations. Chapter three argues that Louis XIV's absolutist control of space was countered by a “textually mediated social field” (84) produced in and by texts ranging from Montpensier's *Divers Portraits* and the periodical *Le Mercure galant* to some works by Préchac in the 1670s and 80s. Similarly, Stedman argues in the last chapter that fin-de-siècle compilation novels by d'Aulnoy, Murat, and others effectively move literary creation out of the real space of the salon and into the virtual space that is rococo literature, thus creating a kind of “new social network or ‘diaspora’ of like-minded individuals” (163). For this reader, Stedman's best idea is that we can trace changes in real social practices through novels: the compilation novel, because it frequently represents characters exchanging different forms of oral and written discourse, enables people to imaginatively model the relation between sociability and space, and registers specifically the upheavals wrought by Louis XIV's court culture and the book market. This point, unfortunately, isn't explicitly developed, and the author could have provided better triangulation between her findings and existing scholarship on sociability, salons, and print culture. It can also be difficult to discern how the individual texts analyzed—many of them ‘one-offs’—deepen and nuance Stedman's larger narrative, or even whether they are all part of the same story. The reader also needs to sign on to the loosely defined and idiosyncratically deployed category of the rococo, which may not be easy. Such are a few drawbacks to an otherwise courageous attempt to exploit a series of odd, sometimes fascinating, and surely neglected texts.