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**Benoît Garnot, *Justice et Société en France aux XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup>, XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles* / Jacques Berthold, *Les prisons du roman (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup>). Lectures plurielles et intertextuelles de Guzman d'Alfarache à Jacques le fataliste***

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**Stuart Carroll**



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- 1 Benoît Garnot's synthesis offers much more than a history of crime in early modern France. It skillfully condenses a great deal of scholarship and thinking over many years and will be invaluable to the specialist. Its clarity of expression will ensure its popularity with students and surely make it the standard work of synthesis for years to come. His range is impressive: there are sections on the hierarchy of crimes, criminals and their motives, judicial personnel, procedure, punishment and jurisprudence. Garnot is particularly helpful in unraveling the inquisitorial procedure, while at the same time demonstrating the survival of the accusatorial procedure. The continuing

role of infra justice and parajustice in regulating crime and in preventing vengeance is clearly established with the most recent scholarship. He makes excellent use of primary documents, gathered from an array of printed and manuscript sources, to illustrate his argument. Like all the best works of synthesis he maps the areas of future research. He is right to be skeptical about the decline of interpersonal violence and his hunch that the economy of vengeance remained an important factor in French society down to the nineteenth century is surely correct. This notion sits rather uneasily with the idea that 'la justice criminelle véhicule les valeurs de l'absolutisme' (219). Greenshields' study of the *maréchaussée* in the Auvergne during the seventeenth century, of which Garnot seems unaware, highlights the limits of royal attempts at repression. Garnot might have made more of regional differences, since much of the evidence he cites is from frontier provinces only nominally French and incorporated under Louis XIV. Garnot adopts the traditional teleology of evolving state power, whose origins he charts to the 1520s. But as medievalists have shown sovereignty was not simply the product of increased access to royal justice. The metaphysical power of monarchy and its continuing importance in public life cannot be underestimated. Charismatic power was derived from the king's ability to bestow grace. As their princely rivals fell by the wayside, so the Valois and later the Bourbon established a monopoly on the bestowal of letters of remission. The monarchy was thus increasingly able to intervene in the localities to uphold peace and order through reconciliation. Repression may have been more effective in the eighteenth century, but even then justice and reconciliation were not inimical. The survey finishes off with a chronology, a very useful glossary and bibliography that could have been longer. While early modernists and historians of crime and justice alike will applaud Garnot's condensing all of the recent scholarship into 220 clearly written pages, Berchtold's study of representations of prison in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature is likely to be of more esoteric interest. It is an exhaustive and exhausting read: 150 pages alone are devoted to classical models and antecedents, and the remaining 550 pages discuss seventeen French and Spanish novels published between 1599 and 1775, all of which amounts to an impressive work of scholarly erudition. Berchtold is not reductionist and insists on multivalent interpretations of his sources. He displays a grasp of the current scholarship and draws on methodological innovations from work in all the major European languages, though the often dense prose style, reminiscent of a doctoral thesis, will deter many who would otherwise have profited from his insights. Historians will find it of less use than literature specialists, however, as it operates purely at the level of representation and has little to say about how the novels related to the historical reality of incarceration. Without any new historicist insights to guide us, the two disciplines are likely to remain cut off from each other, blinded by their distinct epistemological traditions. As this book appears in a series dedicated to the history of ideas I think we are entitled to a little more interdisciplinarity and thought about the historiography of the subject. Historians are conscious of how much research into the issue of incarceration has changed since the 1970s. Any examination of the early modern 'discours carcéral', and especially one of such length, should pay at least some attention to the contemporary reality of public policy and inmates' lives. It is to be hoped that Berchtold returns to the interface between representation and reality. Only by opening a dialogue between historians and literary specialists are we likely to deepen our understanding of early modern confinement and imprisonment.

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