period are, she necessarily butts heads with psychoanalytic theorists who find Freud problematic. Greenfield is, however, fully aware of critics (such as Jane Gallop) who insist on separating maternal theory from the assumptions of psychoanalysis. Greenfield also defends herself from anticipated criticism for using psychoanalysis to interpret pre-Freudian fiction.

If some of Greenfield's readings are provocative, they are always responsible and grounded. For example, her analysis of mother-daughter eroticism in *The Italian* is surprisingly convincing. Here she argues that Radcliffe depicts homoerotic incest not only as normal and as less catastrophic than heterosexual incest but also as a source of security within the family. Greenfield's emphasis on the ideological and psychological complexity of the novels she discusses makes this book a remarkable and groundbreaking contribution to cultural studies of motherhood and to literary history. Her dazzling analysis of maternal discourse contributes to our understanding not only of the rise of the novel but also of psychoanalytic theory.

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Sophie Cottin. *Claire d'Albe (The Original French Text)*, ed. Margaret Cohen. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002. xxviii+158pp. US$9.95. ISBN 0-87352-925-1.

Sophie Cottin. *Claire d'Albe (An English Translation),* trans. Margaret Cohen. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002. xxxiii+155pp. US$9.95. ISBN 0-87352-926-X.

Michael J. Call. *Infertility and the Novels of Sophie Cottin*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002; London: Associated University Presses, 2002. 167pp. US$35. ISBN 0874138078.

Many of the texts republished by the MLA since 1993 are by the forgotten women writers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France. They were "buried" more whole-heartedly than in the United States and Britain. For, patriarchal though these societies were, they were less oppressive than the France that enshrined misogyny in its Napoleonic Civil Code and that, despite its influential 1970s women's movement, still lags in its promotion of women's rights. And yet, as is clear in the case of the author Sophie Cottin (1770–1807), France has never been a monolithic culture: it was precisely in the establishment's partial acknowledgment of women's intelligence and sexual self-determination that the conflict lay for many female authors.

The MLA texts are central ones, either because readers now concur that they are masterpieces, such as those by Isabelle de Charrière, Françoise de Graffigny, and Claire de Duras, or because they were best-sellers of the period, showing how cunningly certain women tapped into the *Zeitgeist* (and consequently achieved real earning power). Cottin belongs to the latter category. Over a seven-year period (1799–1806), she published five popular novels, and though their sententiousness and plot contrivances are not always to modern tastes, at the time each was still more successful than the last. Cottin's heroines are courageous and defy convention. Thus her fourth, Mathilde, travels to Jerusalem with the Crusaders; her fifth, Elisabeth, makes a perilous ten-month journey from Siberia to Moscow to plead with the Tsar for her exiled father's pardon—it is granted, and Elisabeth marries her suitor. This last tale was a wildfire hit not only in France but also abroad, particularly in the United States. No doubt its picture of a brave family living in isolated and harsh conditions struck a chord, but also, and perhaps especially, it appealed through its foregrounding of enterprising and adventurous womanhood.

Claire d'Albe is Cottin's first novel; the heroine, if not yet a traveller, undergoes an adventure of the heart. Married to a much older man, she falls in love with another of her own age and finally, after an inner turmoil that almost drives her mad, she has sex with him—just once; soon after, she and the young man die. But Cottin has found one of her key motifs. What is significant is that, despite the obligatory punishment, the intense enjoyment of the act is emphasized both before and during consummation: "I felt his hand on my heart, all my blood rushed towards it; and he felt it beat with violence. ... I inhaled his breath, it set me on fire ... . At this moment Frédéric's lips touched mine; I was lost, if virtue by a last effort had not rent the veil of pleasure wrapped around me" (80–81, 89). Claire's friend narrates the consummation itself: "She tastes in all its fullness that flash of delight that love alone can feel; she knows the delightful and unique rapture ['jouissance' in the original], rare and divine like the feeling that created it; her soul, merged with her lover's, swims in the senses' flood of pleasure" (145). Contemporaries could scarcely doubt what was being promoted, and Cottin was roundly condemned by such moralizers as Mme de Genlis (herself, however, by no means beyond reproach in private life). Pornographic fiction had been in circulation for some time, and 1799, the year *Claire d'Albe* appeared, is also, interestingly, the estimated date when the first Frenchwoman dared to publish pornography under her own name (Giraux de Montmorency). But commentators saw that something new was happening in "respectable" fiction. This strong strain of eroticism runs through all Cottin's works, and it is arguably one of her main services to future female authors, who became increasingly bold as the nineteenth century went on: first in their declarations that female sexuality exists, then in depictions of it (cases in point were George Sand; Flaubert's lover Louise Colet, herself an author; and the Decadent writer Rachilde). It has also been claimed that such women writers helped to set the agenda for their male colleagues'

representation of female eroticism. Would Flaubert have depicted the aftermath of Emma Bovary's first orgasm so sensitively if not for his female predecessors and contemporaries?

The MLA text is generally accurate, with an introduction by the expert Margaret Cohen that sets out the context helpfully; she is also the translator of the companion volume. She shows a specialist's awareness of contemporary usage, and she translates fluently while preserving the dignified diction of the original—a diction that characterized most eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century French works, still in the grip of seventeenth-century models; it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that a direct earthiness would reappear, which makes Cottin's descriptions of sexual pleasure all the more remarkable.

Critics' interest in Cottin has been increasing since the mid-1980s. However, Michael Call's book is the first full-length analysis of her life and works since 1949. As his title indicates, Call argues that the frustrations engendered by Cottin's infertility both activated her vocation to write and were reflected in her subject matter. (She was amenorrheic, hence well aware of her problem.) Call writes sensitively about the grief this condition caused her: after her husband's premature death she felt unable to remarry because of it, and she spent much of her life with a beloved female cousin acting as a second mother to that woman's three children. Call also brings out well the nature and impact of Cottin's novels, striking a good balance between plot summary and thematic discussion, and interweaving the turbulent history of the period with her own life-story. The correspondence is used aptly: quotations from this prove, incidentally, that, like many other women writers, Cottin could allow herself to be much sharper in private than her unironic works would suggest. In short, this study is a real contribution to the field.

Inevitably, perhaps, the premise leads to some foreshortening. Call plays down the eroticism that may have galvanized Cottin's imagination even more powerfully than her infertility. Her heroines Claire and Amélie (in a later novel) effectively abandon their children for the sake of physical passion. Call also overstresses Rousseau's influence on Cottin (he himself cites her unconventional views of marriage as well as her more dutiful ones); and he might have considered that feminist ideas were a subject of debate at the time: we cannot simply assume, as he does (55), that Cottin viewed herself as an "Old Testament" barren woman. Call does not mention still earlier predecessors, attributing to Cottin herself scenarios and comments which clearly emanate from predecessors such as Racine and Mme de Lafayette. (Cohen provides valid pointers here.) And he might have made something of the fact that Cottin and her family were Protestant. A disproportionate number of France's best women writers of the period belonged to this minority religion (Staël was another); a somewhat oppositional stance to the prevailing culture may have been a spur to authorship also. So a little more contextualizing could have been worthwhile, and there are perhaps telling gaps in Call's bibliography. (Omissions include Joan Hinde Stewart's *Gynographs*, 1993,

which has a chapter on Cottin and locates her among eighteenth-century writers, and Olwen Hufton's magisterial *The Prospect Before Her,* 1995: the chapter on European women writers up to 1800 would have been relevant.) At the least, some sense of the overlap between Cottin's subjects and those tackled by her contemporaries would surely be needed to "prove" that she was writing out of frustration rather than because, say, she had the imaginative and intellectual curiosity to engage with the literary issues of her time. Or ... because she could write well and knew it? Some letters quoted by Call himself, particularly late ones, strongly suggest this. One might therefore advance the picture of a rather different Cottin: one who, initially self-deprecating and almost fearful of her authorship, became ever more confident, enjoying the income from her publications and able finally to recognize that she was writing from sheer pleasure in creativity. A dynamic Cottin, in short. "I cannot express how delightful writing is for me ... I cannot describe the pleasure I find in composing a work" (cited on 135). Call's comment here is that the writer's craft has "clearly become for her a therapeutic activity": would he have offered this reductive "explanation" of a male writer revelling in his own inventiveness?

- Readers of this review may like to know that Cottin's *Amélie Mansfield* (1809 edition) has been retyped and placed on the Internet by Ellen Moody. This important and gripping novel is not likely to be reprinted in the near future. Text: www.jimandellen.org/cottin/amelie.show.html; introduction (critical and textual notes): www.jimandellen.org/cottin/AMtextnote.html; bibliography: www.jimandellen.org/cottin/SCBiblio.html

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Annibel Jenkins. *I'll Tell You What: The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003. viii+596pp. US$39.95. ISBN 0-8131-2236-8.

Jenkins's critical biography of Elizabeth Inchbald (1753–1821) retraces her remarkable fifty-year career from her early days as a player on the circuit through her acting days on the London stage to her later years as a popular and respected playwright, novelist, and essayist. Meticulously written and edited, its thorough, highly readable synopses of every literary work written or translated by Inchbald will make it valuable to students without other access to these documents, but its special strength is its judicious use of contemporary documents as sources. Inchbald destroyed her memoirs at the end