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Salons, History, And the Creation of SeventeenthÂ–Century France: Mastering Memory (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

Faith Evelyn Beasley

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The first half of the book is a detailed study of how the salons influenced the development of literature. Beasley argues that many women were not only writers, they also served as critics for the literary sphere as a whole. In the second half of the book Beasley examines how historians and literary critics subsequently portrayed the seventeenth century literary realm, which became identified with the great reign of Louis XIV and designated the official canon of French literature. Beasley argues that in a rewriting of this past, the salons were reconfigured in order to advance an alternative view of this premier moment of French culture and of the literary masterpieces that developed out of it. Through her analysis of how the seventeenth century salon has been defined and transmitted to posterity, Beasley illuminates facets of France's collective memory, and the powers that constituted it in the past and that are still working to define it today.

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