

Le Printemps d'Yver. Jacques Yver.

Ed. Marie-Ange Maignan and Marie-Madeleine Fontaine. Textes Littéraires Français 632. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2015. clii + 756 pp. \$85.62.

Despite having scores of editions in the early seventeenth century, *Le Printemps d'Yver* by Jacques Yver (1572) has had only one full edition since 1618. The resultant 1841 edition by Paul Lacroix was reprinted in 1970. Pierre Jourda chose to include some excerpts of *Le Printemps* in his 1956 Pléiade edition, *Conteurs français du XVI^e siècle*, and so it is these two sources that have kept Jacques Yver's only extant work, an intriguing amalgam of narrative prose and poetry, from becoming forgotten. Published posthumously by Yver's sister and brother, *Le Printemps* and its author have remained as footnotes in French literary history, vaguely known but little read or referenced.

Marie-Ange Maignan and Marie-Madeleine Fontaine have provided French Renaissance scholars with an invaluable and long-overdue resource with their meticulously prepared critical edition of *Le Printemps*. Given the disappearance of Yver's original manuscript, they have based the edition principally on the first edition by Ruelle, while also including variations from three other 1572 editions, all by Ruelle. As none of the editions were well proofed, Maignan and Fontaine make the point that by maintaining the original varied spellings that appear even on the same page, they give to modern readers a sense of the act of reading in 1572. A quite thick and small paperback, this critical edition also replicates the small (in-16°) format of the original edition.

In their substantial introduction Maignan and Fontaine provide an overview of Yver's life and the intellectual milieu in which he was raised. Born in the predominantly Protestant town of Niort in the Poitou-Charentes region of western France, Yver came from a prosperous and well-educated family. The editors offer multiple examples where Yver reveals in *Le Printemps* detailed knowledge of varied classical writers, with Ovid, Plutarch, and Pliny being the most prominent. They also assess the distinctiveness of Yver's literary style, terming it a *prose poétique* (lxxx), which presents an oftentimes lively and jocular narrative touching on the eternal questions of love, friendship, death, and war.

Maignan and Fontaine do not hesitate to comment on or correct the few truisms assumed about Yver and his work since the seventeenth century. *Le Printemps* through the centuries has become known principally either as derivative of Boccaccio or as a source for later — and better — works. Namely, Yver's fifth tale is often cited as a source for Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Maignan and Fontaine, however,

argue convincingly that the resemblance is slight. They instead wish to establish *Le Printemps* as an important text in and of itself. Describing it as “un roman qui pense,” they believe *Le Printemps* follows Rabelais and announces Montaigne “avec cohérence et continuité” (xlix). Their close lexical analyses have led to the conclusion that the final part of the last tale was not written by Yver but instead completed by either a sibling or Jean Thirmoys, a friend who composed the concluding elegiac quatrain, “Du trepas de l’auteur.”

The editors have produced what will be the standard edition of *Le Printemps d’Yver*. Putting aside some very few typographical errors in English in footnote quotations, the volume is also a model for all scholars to follow in bibliographic excellence. Maignan and Fontaine have described Yver as a writer who loves all and wants to write all. They seem to have followed this same ethos about Yver when compiling the ancillary materials. They are multiple, ranging from a listing in order of frequency of the works of Plutarch and Achille Tatius referenced by Yver to a compilation of the proverbial expressions found in *Le Printemps*. Nonetheless, given the relative paucity of textual analysis of *Le Printemps*, these references are most welcome and offer intriguing topics for further inquiry on virtually every page. Footnotes are replete with comparisons to multiple other Renaissance writers, including Belleau, Arioste, Rabelais, and Ronsard. The glossary is particularly valuable, often going beyond a word’s meaning to an explication of Yver’s usage of the term.

Scholars and students of the French Renaissance will benefit greatly from this accessible and expert critical edition of *Le Printemps*, a work still deserving of the remarkable popularity it enjoyed in France and England for fifty years after its original publication.

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