

Pierre Sala. *Tristan*.

Ed. Chantal Verchere. Textes de la Renaissance, Serie "Roman de chevalerie de la Renaissance" 135. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2008. 368 pp. index. append. illus. gloss. €57. ISBN: 978-2-7453-1668-4.

The critical edition by Chantal Verchere of Pierre Sala's *Tristan* is a labor of love that renders justice to a Lyon author whose works have largely remained in

manuscript form. Born before 1457, Sala came from an upwardly mobile family of artisans, bourgeois, and notable community members, and, before his death in 1529, had not only been in the service of several kings but, through a second marriage, became a member of Lyon's patrician families with a property that made him the "seigneur de l'Antiquaille." Verchere traces Sala's education during the first Lyon Renaissance and his place in the city indirectly through documents and witnesses. The author's works, whose chronology is difficult to establish, show a broad range of interests: he wrote, among other texts, the two compilations *Antiquitez de Lyon* and *Epistre sur l'amitié*, a historical account of kings from David to François I entitled *Des Hardiesses de plusieurs roys et empereurs*, verse epistles, an adaptation of the *Chevalier au lion*, and *Tristan*, which probably was composed around 1526–29. Unlike Lynette Muir, who in her 1958 edition of *Tristan* offers a sixteen-page introduction in which she also gives a short plot summary, Verchere embarks on an exhaustive analysis of the work.

We see Sala as a reader who, in the dedicatory poem to *Tristan*, places his book under the double authority of a source text that supposedly is a gift of King François I. Verchere traces references to *Lancelot-Graal*, *Tristan en prose*, *L'Histoire de Giglan*, *La Tavola ritonda*, as well as echoes of *La Mort le roi Artu* and the *Roman de la Dame à la licorne*. She concludes that an imitation of these literary sources is often difficult to prove, and instead explains the three major strategies that Sala employs: though the beginning of *Tristan* imitates chapter 49 of *La Tavola ritonda*, the author elaborates certain characters and situations through stratification; emblematic characters, such as Merlin and Morholt, are integrated into the work through displacement from their traditional contexts; and the meeting of Tristan and Lancelot in disguise works by way of reconfiguration. Thus Verchere illustrates that Sala is a rewriter, reinventor, and renovator firmly anchored in the medieval tradition, but conscious of adapting his motifs for a new context. Verchere proves the latter point through a literary analysis: three different desires initially fuel the plot, but the first part is based on a series of motifs from the romance tradition that culminate in the remotivation of Tristan's desire for Ysolde. The narration is fragmented, yet centers around the importance of friendship that the author developed earlier in his *Epistre sur l'amitié*. In fact, this is the theoretical material that influences Sala's *Tristan*, because Lancelot not only has a competitor and loses his position as the world's best knight, but love is relegated to second rank throughout this quest.

Whether Sala's *Tristan* is a mere compilation by an imitator caught in the literary tradition or the successful adaptation by an innovator who experiments with genres is the question with which Verchere ends her analysis. She reminds us that the text was intended for a small number of readers, was never printed, and does not include any reference to the author's poetics. Thus, *Tristan* may be emblematic of the crisis of French prose at the beginning of the sixteenth century and of the early modern novel. Verchere presents an analysis of extant manuscripts, the principles of her own edition, accounts of the text's early readers, and a website

with the work's miniatures and watercolors followed by their thorough description. She also adds a linguistic study, a bibliography, and several useful annexes.

Sala's *Tristan* should be read in view of the practices of sixteenth-century novel production in France that we find, on the one hand, in the rewriting of chivalric romances by Jean Des Gouttes or Jean Maugin, and, on the other hand, in the adaptations of classical or contemporary Spanish and Italian sources, as developed by Jeanne Flore and Hélienne de Crenne. For this reason, this new edition is welcome.

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