

L'Intention du poète: Clément Marot "auteur." Guillaume Berthon.
Bibliothèque de la Renaissance 13. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2014. 654 pp. €49.

Marotistes have long argued that the “prince des poètes” is a pivotal figure in the rise of authorial consciousness that characterizes the French Renaissance, and Guillaume Berthon situates *L'Intention du poète* squarely within this context. Yet, where previous scholarship has focused on Marot’s shift from *acteur* to *auteur* in the semantic sense, Berthon focuses instead on authorial intention, or how Marot understands and presents his status and his craft. While Berthon’s approach is not revolutionary in and of itself, the book does make an original and essential contribution to our understanding of Marot and his place in literary history, and in a fluid and often-entertaining style. In particular, Berthon’s command of Marot’s vast corpus and steadfast refusal to impose systematic interpretation on an unsystematic poet allows him to challenge many of the conclusions arrived at by previous scholars.

Part 1, “Réalités,” focuses on Marot’s life, career, and relationship with patrons, especially Francis I. Marotistes have often assumed that Marot’s poetry reflects his lived experience, even while acknowledging that the “je” of Marot’s poetry is a persona. Berthon makes a convincing argument for the latter option, showing how Marot, though some have seen him as explicitly or implicitly critical of Francis I’s foreign and religious policy, never presumes to blame the king, but only to correct him in the fashion of an evangelical humanist preceptor. In short, Berthon’s Marot is less subversive than the militant evangelical that Gérard Defaux and others have envisioned.

Part 2, “Représentations,” focuses on how Marot positions himself as a poet. Berthon shows that Marot was not as given to anticurial satire as some have suggested, and that if Marot does express misgivings about the court, he does so by transposing it to the realm of the Virgilian bucolic. Berthon also teases out the precise significance of Marot’s signature (“Clément Marot de Cahors en Quercy”), arguing that Marot insists upon his place of birth less for reasons of local color or nostalgia than to convey his own originality

and to present Cahors as a new Parnassus, and himself as a new Orpheus. Finally, Berthon's treatment of how Marot refers to rhyme and the poetic craft is of particular interest, as he shows how Marot defines himself as both a divinely inspired poet and an industrious artisan, complementary conceptions that the Pléiade poets would also adopt.

Part 3, "Les livres," focuses on Marot's editions of Villon and his father Jean, as well as on the authorized editions of Marot's works published between 1532 and 1538: the *Adolescence clémentine* and its *Suite*, the Chantilly manuscript presented to Anne de Montmorency, and the 1538 *Œuvres*. Reading Marot's editorial principles as reflections on the poet's development, Berthon contends that the *Adolescence* and *Suite* resist systematic explanations of their order by chronology or genre division, and are rather composed of a series of "micro-structures" or thematic series (439). Berthon also demonstrates convincingly how the *Œuvres* adopt a clearer narrative of poetic maturation, distinguishing Marot's carefree youth from a maturity marked by death and imprisonment. In all, Berthon rightly insists that any sense of order in the editions coexists alongside the essential *varietas* of Marot's poetry.

Useful though the aforementioned observations may be, this volume leaves something to be desired. What sets Berthon apart is his grasp of Marot's thorny publication history, and this knowledge is not as present as it should be. To wit, if Marot's authorized editions are essentially reactions to unauthorized editions, it would be helpful to have a clearer idea of how the two categories differ from one another. Moreover, in its present state, *L'Intention du poète* comes off as a very author-centered study, and would have benefited from a more sustained account of how printer-booksellers like Roffet, Tory, and Dolet play a decisive role in defining Marot. Berthon undoubtedly addresses these issues in his forthcoming annotated bibliography of Marot, but it still feels like something is missing from this volume. So while this book is a must read for Marotistes and scholars of French Renaissance poetry, it will need to be read alongside the bibliography to achieve its full potential.

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