

François Rouget. *Pierre de Ronsard*.

Bibliographie des Ecrivains Français. Paris: Memini, 2005. 528 pp. index. bibl. €85. ISBN: 88-86609-48-5.

Renaissance poetry has been well served by the ambitious new bibliographical series, *Bibliographie des Ecrivains Français*. Volumes on Tyard, Du Bartas, La Ceppède, Baïf, and d'Aubigné have already appeared since the project was initiated in 1997. Others on Scève, Théophile de Viau, and Du Bellay have been announced for the near future, with many more to come. The most recent volume on Ronsard, prepared with immense care and erudition by François Rouget, is the longest and most complex to date. Like all volumes in the series it is beautifully produced, printed, and laid out on the page, making it a real pleasure to consult. Separate sections are devoted to editions of Ronsard's works — including all extant autograph and allograph manuscripts, partial and complete original editions, musical editions and settings, publications in collective volumes, critical editions, and translations into fifteen different languages — bibliographical studies, biographical studies, general studies, focused studies, and a catalogue of reviews of the most important books on Ronsard. Rouget has sensibly chosen to organize the enormous section on focused studies by dividing these into four large subsections: (1) Ronsard's poetry, further subdivided into the twelve more-or-less generic categories corresponding to the eleven sections of the 1584 *Œuvres* and the "derniers vers"; (2) Ronsard's prose and Latin works; (3) poetry and music, including not only scholarship but also a discography of musical settings by composers from Clément Jannequin to Francis Poulenc; (4) reception. No system for organizing such a vast and variegated field is perfect, of course, and many items could reasonably have been classified otherwise or included in more than one of Rouget's far-from-watertight categories. But the system adopted by Rouget is as adequate as any that can be imagined and an index of key words helps readers locate books and articles on virtually any subject they might want to look for. Subject searches will presumably be even easier with the CD-ROM version that is promised for all volumes in the BEF series, but because no such version has yet appeared (at least none was included with my review copy) I was unable to put this to the test.

There are bound to be some omissions in such a vast record, but the impression of exhaustiveness is overwhelming and the references contained in all entries are complete and detailed and appear to be highly accurate. What makes this new bibliography especially useful, however, is the astonishing fact that every one of its 2,901 entries is accompanied by a brief summary or commentary. Some of these, understandably, are rather general, but a surprising number are remarkably full,

detailed, and extremely helpful. This is precisely the kind of guidance that makes critical bibliographies so much more useful than annual updates like the Klapp and MLA bibliographies, as indispensable as these may be. One of my own favorites is still the generously annotated, though admittedly highly selective, sixteenth-century volume of the Cabeen *Critical Bibliography of French Literature* as revised in 1985 by Raymond C. La Charité and his team (which includes a section on Ronsard edited by Bodo Richter and Isidore Silver that is still useful today). The problem with such enterprises is that, like new cars, they begin to lose their value almost immediately. The BEF has addressed this problem with the promise of an online version and regular five-year updates for all its volumes. It remains to be seen when this process will begin and how it will work, but if the promise can be kept and an online version can be developed that is sufficiently user-friendly, then students of Ronsard will have at their disposal a precious critical bibliography that will remain current well beyond the publication date of this volume. In the meantime, François Rouget has provided us with a virtually complete record and expert bibliographical guide to Ronsard and Ronsard scholarship in all major languages, from 1549 to 2005. This is an indispensable research tool and a real treasure of a book.

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