

Pierre Matthieu. *Théâtre complet*.

Ed. Louis Lobbes. Textes de la Renaissance 121. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2007. 990 pp. index. illus. tpls. gloss. chron. bibl. €171. ISBN: 978-2-7453-1512-0.

This critical edition of the plays of the sixteenth-century “French Euripides” (according to his contemporaries) fills an important gap for scholars of Pierre

Matthieu (1563–1621). Because the author is most famous for his position as royal historian under Henri IV and Louis XIII, his name is almost exclusively associated with his later works; indeed, Molière in *Sganarelle* (1660) refers to his non-dramatic writings as appropriate reading for proper young ladies. The five Senecan-inspired tragedies presented here (*Esther*, *Vasthi*, *Aman*, *Clytemnestre*, and the *Guisiade*) therefore restore the early, theatrical writings to their place in the Matthieu canon and provide much-needed examples of French Renaissance theater. His dramatic texts are the product of youth (all written prior to the age of 25), but reflect the sophisticated training he would have received as part of his advanced law degree — underscoring an acknowledged but largely understudied link between law and theater.

Although the author's plays were issued in multiple editions during his lifetime, only two works — *Clytemnestre* (edited by Gilles Ernst) and the *Guisiade* (edited by Lobbes) — have been published individually in recent French-language critical editions. These are part of Droz's student-friendly *Textes littéraires français* series, characterized by their small paperback format. Honoré Champion's complete, hardback reference edition allows for more extensive introductions and detailed notes, and gives the reader a chance to contrast the plays and their various editions. In this compilation, Lobbes, an accomplished Matthieu scholar, provides a detailed chronology of the author's life and works. He follows this with six chapters of literary analysis, replete with tables cross-referencing Matthieu's dramatic structure with source material and contemporary works (including Ronsard's), as well as scene-by-scene comparisons of the plays and quantitative charts of textual differences in the early modern editions. Lobbes presents the bulk of the text — editions of the tragedies and their textual variants — by reproducing the title page of each early modern edition consulted and by collating all the original sixteenth-century materials that were printed with the plays: dedications, introductions, poems, prologues, epilogues, printing privileges, etc.

The lion's share of relevant scholarship listed in the bibliography was bound to be in French due to the highly specialized nature of the edition, but no works in English are included — not even by Richard Hillman, who so admirably translated the *Guisiade* based on Lobbes's own 1990 edition. Also absent is any mention of the Italian/French series “Théâtre français de la Renaissance” (or the scholarship of its general editors), which includes *Esther* (ed. Mariangela Miotti [2005]). Additionally, readers might find it useful to know that many copies of the early modern texts by Matthieu residing in the Bibliothèque nationale have been digitized and are available online through the library's Gallica catalogue; Lobbes relies more heavily on copies housed in Avignon, Nancy, and Dijon.

One of the advantages of Champion's “Textes de la Renaissance” series, founded in 1995 under the general editorship of Claude Blum, is that it does not privilege one genre of writing over another, thus giving a more accurate impression of the variety of works produced in France during that time. One of the disadvantages is that the disciplinary borders are largely maintained within each volume. This collection, officially the “complete” works of Matthieu's theater, does not include

editions of the royal entries into Lyon of Henri IV in 1594 and of Marie de Medici in 1600; fortunately, early printed texts of both sets of theatrical festivities are available through Gallica, as are books commemorating several other civic events scripted by the playwright-historian. This omission seems a shame, because those works represent the perfect Renaissance amalgamation of politics and performance that had been an obsession of the writer at least since the 1589 publication of the *Guisiade*. What better way to link theater and power than to orchestrate a royal entry? In the case of the individual writer-jurist, these events would cement his position at court. In the case of theater history, the link between politics and performance would become one of the most studied aspects of seventeenth-century French drama. Let us hope that Lobbes will favor us with a future critical edition of Matthieu's texts surrounding these later performances.

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