

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Barral-Baron, Marie and Judit Kecskeméti. Médecins des textes, médecins des âmes : Adrien Turnèbe et Guillaume Morel. Les préfaces de deux imprimeurs érudits

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## Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

**Barral-Baron, Marie and Judit Kecskeméti.**

*Médecins des textes, médecins des âmes : Adrien Turnèbe et Guillaume Morel. Les préfaces de deux imprimeurs érudits.*

Nugae 20. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020. Pp. xviii, 527. ISBN 978-2-503-59291-6 (paperback) €80.

This volume, a product of painstaking work, presents a collection of prefaces from two rather neglected figures of French humanism, Guillaume Morel (1505–64) and Adrien de Turnèbe (1512–65). Of the two, Turnèbe has attracted the most attention, as he was the “royal lecturer of Greek” (1547–61), while also briefly the “royal printer of Greek” (1551–5). Although scholarship (but less so bibliography) has almost forgotten Morel, he was a very important humanist printer in sixteenth-century Paris and succeeded Turnèbe in holding the “royal printer of Greek” title. The two were close collaborators.

This much-awaited volume contains transcriptions of at least eighty-five of their surviving prefaces and dedicatory letters from their Latin, Greek, and French editions, as well as some that were published posthumously. While Morel and Turnèbe wrote many of the prefaces in the volume, there are also prefaces from editions by other famous humanists or theologians, such as Johann Carion, René Guillon, Jean du Tillet, Jacques Goupyl, Paolo Manuzio, Francisco Vergara, and Pietro Vettori. The prefaces are accompanied by either a summary in French or, less frequently, by a full translation. When the former, the summary precedes the full text; when the latter, the translation is printed on the opposite page. On this point, readers would have found it useful to have an explanation regarding the criteria behind the choice of prefaces to be translated.

The book fills a notable lacuna in the scholarship. From a bibliographical point of view, the active years of the two printers-editors are well covered by the bibliography *French Vernacular Books and French Books III & IV* by Andrew Pettegree et al. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007 and 2011). Similar volumes from Brepols—*Europa humanistica: La France des humanistes* by Jean-Francois Maillard, Monique Portalier, Judit Kecskeméti, and Catherine Magnien (1999), as well as the volume by Judit Kecskeméti, *Fédéric Morel II* (2014)—mostly cover the work of editors and scholarly printers from the beginning and the end of the sixteenth century. Overall, however, the middle of the century from the

point of view of prefatory material is almost entirely unexplored. Researchers will welcome this volume for its inclusion of all the titles printed under Morel's and Turnèbe's names, whether these included a preface or not, although it would have been preferable to have these numbered. Such a comprehensive approach contributes greatly to our understanding of the printing and scholarly work of the two humanists.

In this sense, the volume will be greatly appreciated by book history specialists, specialists in early modern culture and ideas of France, as well as scholars interested in classics and classical reception. In the words of Barral-Baron, the volume is intended as a "basis or outline of research" on the two humanists (xv). Indeed, what emerges from the range of these prefaces is the intense passion of these two scholars for (especially Greek) classical and post-classical (early Christian) culture. Through their work and words, they are shown as significant promoters of "paideia." With their editions, they made available to the learned reading public of the time anything from elementary texts required for the teaching and learning of Greek, such as grammars, to *editiones principes*, to luxurious folio editions dedicated to classical philosophers, such as Aristotle, in 1555; Philo, in 1552; Synesius, in 1553; and Cyprianus, in 1564.

In her introduction, Barral-Baron gives a thorough account of the background against which these books were issued. This is a well-written and penetrating piece, with excellent notes, many intertextual references, and considerable material relating to the personalities addressed in the prefaces. In her analysis, Barral-Baron emphasizes the religious landscape and uncertainty of the time, and stresses the extent to which these two scholars saw their editions as part of the public discourse grappling with the problems arising from the religious divisions in France and the upcoming upheaval. Turnèbe wrote a significant number of dedications to important figures of his age, such as Charles IX, Marguerite de France, Cardinal de Châtillon, Cardinal de Lorraine, and Michel de l'Hospital, as well as to a number of scholars. Morel, on the other hand, from the less celebrated position of a printer, wrote dedicatory letters only to three individuals (the prelate Jacques Spifane; the Archbishop of Tours, Simon Maillé; and the Cardinal de Lorraine), preferring instead to address himself to the readers. With their prefaces, the two scholars tried to pacify passions and point to a more moderate way through the study of the classics (and Greek, in particular), as according to Barral-Baron, both Morel and Turnèbe belonged to a group of people who promoted a third way, that of religious moderation. This

stance favoured an approach that would entail some reform of discipline and rites but would not break with the Catholic Church. Thus, intellectual historians and historians of the wars of religion in France will find much interesting material both in the introduction and in the relevant prefaces.

The reader, however, may be distracted by some editorial inconsistencies. Generally, the volume usually contains the full title of each edition and information about imprint and colophon, albeit with some irregularities in all three cases. The information about the language of the editions is also inconsistent (and sometimes incomplete). Finally, researchers would have benefited from a more thorough index, which could have included subjects, apart from names, and list of dedicatees in a separate section, while distinguishing references to notes or the main text.

It is understandable that in a work of such scope, some inconsistencies could appear; in this reviewer's opinion, an indication of which of these titles or copies were, in fact, inspected by the editors would have offered a solution. Researchers will find more challenging the fact that the volume, on the whole, contains no information regarding the location of where copies of these editions can be found, contrary to the practice of other *Nugae* editions. This exclusion, in conjunction with an overall lack of cross-references to other bibliographical catalogues, will make it difficult for researchers who may want to see the actual books for themselves. This is particularly important, since the main bibliographical reference used in the volume is Brigitte Moreau and Philippe Renouard's *Inventaire chronologique* (Paris: Imprimerie municipale, 1972–2004), which only covers the years 1501 to 1540, namely, before Morel's and Turnèbe's activity.

There is no doubt whatsoever that, despite these inconsistencies, this is a rich resource that makes such interesting material, which was previously difficult to reach, available to specialist audiences. The array of personalities that jump off the pages of this volume weave a vivid tapestry of the period, while the introduction presents an excellent overview of the intellectual, political, and religious climate of mid-sixteenth-century France, up until the first stages of the religious wars—when it was still possible for some to contemplate a different way out.

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