

Marie-Luce Demonet and Stéphan Geonget. *Un joyeux quart de sentences*. Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 509; Etudes rabelaisiennes 52. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012. 192 pp. \$84. ISBN: 978-2-600-01607-0.

In 2012, Rabelais's *Quart Livre* was placed on the list of works for the *Agrégation de lettres* in France, the national competition for recruiting teachers. Because of this, there have been a variety of cultural activities and publications since 2011, including conferences held in Rome and throughout France, a special issue of

Magazine Littéraire (September 2011), and collections of conference essays such as *En relisant le Quart Livre de Rabelais* (2012) and the current volume being reviewed. This volume is the result of two different conferences that were held in 2011, the first in Tours and the second in Toulouse. This represents the fastest turnaround in recent memory for conference proceedings by the highly regarded *Études rabelaisiennes* series published by Droz. (Their last conference proceedings were published in 2011, more than a decade after the conference was held.)

The volume includes ten contributions from nine different authors (Myriam Marrache-Gouraud contributed two articles.) In the introduction, the editors set out the primary approaches of the contributors: those who focus on the internal aspects of the works, and those whose emphasis is more centered on historical context. All of the contributions, broadly conceived, are intertextual in their approach. The editors express the wish that the volume will both contribute new, original research and that it will help make the *Quart Livre* more accessible to future teachers. The volume is more successful with the first of these two objectives, as the contributors' immense erudition and discussion of previous Rabelais scholarship makes the volume much more interesting for specialists than for future teachers. For pedagogical help with Rabelais, the recent volume *Approaches to Teaching the Works of François Rabelais* (2011) is much more useful.

All of the contributions to this volume are well researched and provide interesting insights. There is not enough space here to discuss all contributions, but among the most engaging is the first one by Daniel Ménager, who examines the epistle to the Cardinal de Chastillon found at the very beginning of the *Quart Livre*. He points out a publishing anomaly — the epistle precedes the royal *privilege*. In the epistle, Rabelais mentions how the former king, François I, had Rabelais's works read to him by an *anagnoste*, which Rabelais defines simply as a “reader” (“lecteur”). Interestingly, Ménager speculates that it was the *Tiers Livre* that was read to François I, which I do not think is what most of us would suppose, as *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* seem like more obvious choices. Regardless, Ménager's point is that here and elsewhere Rabelais is seeking to engage with his readers, to find the sort of ideal *anagnoste* who will read his work without being scandalized. In an effort to avoid a different sort of scandal, Nicolas Le Cadet offers a *médiocre* study of Rabelais that seeks to split the difference between the previous battle lines that were drawn between specialists who insisted on a transparent lecture of Rabelais (e.g., Duval, Defaux) and those who contended that the Rabelaisian text is fundamentally ambiguous (e.g., Rigolot, Jeanneret). Le Cadet focuses on the *andouilles* episode, and proposes six separate ways to read this episode. His point is that the six ways are all viable, and that one interpretation cannot be maintained to the detriment of the others but that each is internally coherent.

In another contribution that highlights yet another position of compromise, Stéphan Geonget demonstrates that in the *Papimanes* episodes, Rabelais tries to split

the difference between the extremes of Rome and Geneva, attempting to offer a Gallican, *médiocre* solution to this ideological impasse. Geonget is absolutely right at the end of his article when he insists that in our modern attempt to assert that allegory is dead in the Renaissance and that ambiguity and polyvalence dominate, an episode such as this one presents the opposite, as this “écriture de combat” (58) is unambiguous in the allegorical, ideological position it illustrates. Frédéric de Buzon’s rather straightforward study on music and Rabelais in the *Quart Livre* nevertheless provides insights that most specialists are unaware of, and he ends with an impressive table that attempts to identify the two lists of musicians in the prologue of the *Quart Livre*. John O’Brien offers an erudite exploration of the uses of tragicomedy in sixteenth-century France, drawing upon antiquity and contemporary usage to show how the term seeks to mediate the tension between history and literary creation. All in all, this is a fine volume that illustrates the myriad ways in which one can approach Rabelais’s work, with each way providing a new layer of richness and interpretive possibility to Rabelais’s multifarious work.

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