

PERNETTE DU GUILLET

# Complete Poems

## A Bilingual Edition



*Edited with introduction and notes by*

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*Poems translated by*

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*Pernette du Guillet (ca. 1520–1545)*

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KAREN SIMROTH JAMES

*The Other Voice*

Published soon after her death in 1545, the collected poems of Pernette du Guillet—*Rymes de gentile et vertueuse dame D. Pernette du Guillet, Lyonnoise*—evoke a young woman’s experiences with love and her birth as speaking and writing subject.<sup>1</sup> The seventy-three poems composed during her short life represent a variety of lyric genres prevalent in the early French Renaissance, including epigrams, songs, verse epistles, and elegies.<sup>2</sup> Du Guillet adopts elements of Italian Neoplatonism and Petrarchan poetics, and responds to the works of other French poets, including Clément Marot and Maurice Scève. Her poems recognize the attraction and force of physical desire, while resolutely upholding the goal of a spiritual and intellectual union with the beloved that will result in reciprocal affection and mutual contentment. The *Rymes* draw the reader into an intimate world of conversational exchanges that echo learned philosophical debates on the nature of love. Du Guillet’s poetry encompasses a variety of forms, influences, and rhetorical strategies, conveying a lyric voice quite different from those of her better-known contemporaries in Lyon, Maurice Scève and Louise Labé, who drew from the same pool of literary sources. Pernette du Guillet’s unique use of poetic conventions and philosophical models allows her to assert her rights in love and her active role as a writer in an era when a woman’s speech exposed her to censure, and silence protected her feminine virtue.

1. The first edition of the *Rymes*, published by Jean de Tournes in Lyon in 1545, includes seventy poems by Du Guillet, a preface by the editor, Antoine du Moulin, a liminary poem by the printer, and four lyric epitaphs in praise of the deceased poet by Maurice Scève and Jean de Vauzelles. In his subsequent 1552 edition, Jean de Tournes added three poems attributed to Du Guillet. For details about the publication history of the *Rymes*, see the section below on the reception of the *Rymes*.

2. Although not true equivalents of the French, we have chosen the closest possible English terms to refer in translation to these genres: *épigrammes*, *chansons*, *épîtres*, and *élégies*. V.-L. Saulnier categorized and numbered the poems by genre in the first important modern study of Du Guillet’s work, “Etude sur Pernette du Guillet et ses *Rymes*,” in *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 4 (1944), 7–119. See the section below on the French text for more about the naming and numbering of the poems.

## 2 Editor's Introduction

According to Antoine du Moulin's preface to the first edition of the *Rymes*, the young woman's grieving husband brought her poems to light after her death, providing a socially acceptable context for publishing love poetry by a woman, an otherwise risky venture at that time. Literary tradition has long linked Pernette du Guillet's name with that of Maurice Scève, identifying Du Guillet as the inspiration for Scève's *Délie* (Lyon, 1544). She herself inscribed Scève's name in her verse through anagrams and wordplay, prompting literary historians until the late twentieth century to read her poetry largely in the shadow of Scève's *canzoniere*, focusing undue attention on suppositions pertaining to a Platonic love between the two poets, although we have no external evidence regarding the nature of their relationship.<sup>3</sup>

More recent critical approaches to the *Rymes*, however, have set aside this autobiographical focus to explore the collection in ways that shed light on Du Guillet's poetic techniques in relation to the works of her contemporaries and predecessors.<sup>4</sup> The poems of the *Rymes* engage in intertextual dialogue with the *Délie*, as well as with other important works of poetry and theories of love in circulation in mid-sixteenth-century Lyon, displaying innovative responses to those texts.<sup>5</sup> Pernette du Guillet's literary dialogues with the works of Scève and others—the *Rhétoriqueurs*, Marot, the Petrarchan poets, and the Neoplatonists—reveal a young writer fully aware of her difference from her male counterparts, both contemporary and historical. Within traditions focusing on the experience and voice of

3. Joseph Buche first published this identification of Scève's *Délie* with Pernette du Guillet, based on his reading of the two works. See "Pernette du Guillet et la <<Délie>> de Maurice Scève," in *Mélanges de Philologie offerts à Ferdinand Brunot* (1904; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), 33–39. As Floyd Gray notes, however, the appearance of Scève's name in the *Rymes* as anagrams and puns is "flimsy evidence on which to base a claim for anything other than the poetic relationship that is assumed here." *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 184.

4. The list of noteworthy studies of the *Rymes* is now (happily) too numerous to fit in one opening footnote. I have indicated particularly relevant publications in the notes to the poems themselves and in corresponding passages of the Introduction. See also the list of resources in the bibliography of this volume.

5. Françoise Charpentier observes that "l'œuvre baigne dans une intertextualité dont Scève est loin d'être la seule composante, tant au niveau du contenu que de la forme" (the work is bathed in an intertextuality of which Scève is far from being the only element, on the level of content as well as of form). "Projet poétique, travail poétique dans les *Rymes* de Pernette du Guillet: Autour de trois quatrains," in *Poétique et Narration: Mélanges offerts à Guy Demerson*, ed. François Marotin and Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard (Paris: Champion, 1993), 146. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of secondary sources are my own.

the male poet and lover, the female lyric subject of the *Rymes* gently, humorously, yet firmly, asserts her right to speak and be heard.

The variety and complexity of the voices in the collection constitute a particularly compelling feature of the *Rymes*. They extol the beloved's virtues, yet also offer spirited criticism of his behavior. They speak at times in the abstract vocabulary of Neoplatonism, but at other times in a straightforward and often light-hearted tone of common sense that suggests a passing conversation rather than a philosophical discourse on love. The collection as a whole presents the authorial voice of a young female poet who expresses admiration of her beloved's impressive learning and eloquence, but who, beyond that praise, conveys a full range of emotions pertaining to love and to the process of writing. How the poet creates this unique lyric subject within literary traditions, and in a time of social constraints that gave women no voice, remains a central and intriguing aspect of the *Rymes*.

### Ce Climat Lyonnais<sup>6</sup>

Pernette du Guillet wrote her poetry in the stimulating intellectual and artistic climate of mid-sixteenth-century Lyon. The city's geographical location at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône rivers and the crossroads of important trade routes between France and Italy favored commerce and promoted the transport and exchange of new ideas. Goods and money flowed particularly freely during the fairs held four times each year in Lyon. The vigorous economy attracted new industry in the first decades of the sixteenth century, including silk and printing. Foreign bankers—many from Florence, Genoa, Lucca, and Milan—contributed to making Lyon one of Europe's most important financial centers. Wealthy merchants joined lawyers and doctors among the city's well-to-do, and its artisan class prospered in the environment of economic growth.<sup>7</sup> The royal court, beginning

6. Du Moulin uses this phrase in his preface, addressed to the "Ladies of Lyon," to emphasize the city's remarkable climate for encouraging learning and fostering literary accomplishments.

7. For a detailed account of the fairs, see Louis Bourgeois, *Quand la cour de France vivait à Lyon, 1494–1551* (Paris: Fayard, 1980), chap. 3 ("Lyon, trône des foires"), 23–44; Marc Brésard, *Les foires de Lyon aux XVe et XVIe siècles* (Paris, A. Picard, 1914). Natalie Zemon Davis outlines the city's tremendous growth between 1530 and 1550, when "its resident population increased by a third, from around 45,000 people to 65,000," and explains the role of the fairs in Lyon's status as a financial and commercial capital of Europe. "The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon," in *Past and Present* 90 (February 1981), 43. For

#### 4 *Editor's Introduction*

with the military campaigns in Milan and Naples, spent lengthy visits in Lyon, many of which were marked by pomp and pageantry,<sup>8</sup> but the elite and ruling classes of the city nevertheless knew a relative autonomy from the seat of royal and state power (the king and *parlement*) and the church authorities (the theologians of the Sorbonne) in Paris.

The cosmopolitan culture of Lyon, with its many wealthy foreign inhabitants, favored the importation and circulation of new literary and artistic models, particularly those of the Italian Neoplatonists and Petrarchan poets, as well as texts associated with the humanist movement in France, and later with the Reform movement.<sup>9</sup> The flow of new ideas and the relatively well-educated population meant a large market in Lyon itself for printed books, including the classics in Greek and Latin, the newer works of Italian poets and philosophers, translations of all those texts into the vernacular, and contemporary French works. The fairs guaranteed a national and international market for the books printed in Lyon. When the magistrates decided to found a new school in 1527—the *Collège de la Trinité*—humanist scholars from elsewhere in France flocked to Lyon to take advantage of the city's open intellectual atmosphere and booming economy.<sup>10</sup>

François Rigolot cites the climate of vigor and astonishing freedom that characterized the world of printing in Lyon as an important factor contributing to the “Louise Labé phenomenon”—referring to the other highly celebrated “Dame de Lyon,” whose collected works were published by Jean de Tournes in 1555 and 1556,

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more details on commerce and on the demographic impact of the city's population growth in the first half of the sixteenth century, see Richard Gascon, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVIe siècle, Lyon et ses marchands*, vol. 1 (Paris: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and Mouton, 1971).

8. The pageantry associated with royal visits to the city was often commemorated in printed volumes, such as *La Magnificence de la superbe et triumpante entrée de la noble & antique Cité de Lyon faicte au Treschrestien Roy de France Henry deuxiesme de ce Nom, Et à la Roynne Catherine son Espouse le XXIII. de Septembre M.D. XLVIII* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1549), written by Maurice Scève. See *The entry of Henri II into Lyon: september 1548*, ed. Richard Cooper (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance texts and studies, 1997).

9. See Lucien Romier, “Lyons and Cosmopolitanism at the Beginning of the French Renaissance,” in *French Humanism, 1470–1600*, ed. Werner L. Gundersheimer (London: Macmillan, 1969), 90–109. For more on the role of Italians in the commerce and culture of Renaissance Lyon, see Jacqueline Boucher, *Présence italienne à Lyon à la Renaissance, du milieu du XVe à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Lyon: Editions LUGD, 1994).

10. L. Gerig refers to Renaissance Lyon as an “earthly paradise” for unhappy scholars. “Le Collège de la Trinité à Lyon avant 1540,” in *Revue de la Renaissance IX* (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1968), 74.

ten years after his publication of the *Rymes*.<sup>11</sup> In this environment favorable to writers and to printers, Tournes published more than 500 editions before his death in 1564—elegantly printed volumes of the classics and of contemporary works of religion and literature, primarily in the vernacular. He was the first printer in Lyon to publish Dante and Petrarch in Italian; his editions in French include the literary works of Clément Marot, Bonaventure des Périers, Pernette du Guillet, Marguerite de Navarre, Maurice Scève, Jacques Peletier, Louise Labé, and Pontus de Tyard. Astute in business, Jean de Tournes—like many of his fellow printers in Lyon—was also a learned man, steeped in the humanist culture and ideals of the books he printed. He shared his interests and aspirations with a network of writers and scholars in his city, among them his longtime collaborator, Antoine du Moulin.<sup>12</sup> The presence of a liminary poem by the printer to the reader, along with a preface by Du Moulin, situates the *Rymes* in this intellectual network of the world of printing in Renaissance Lyon.<sup>13</sup>

In his prolific career, Jean de Tournes published several successful editions of works by women writers—notably Pernette du Guillet, Louise Labé, and Marguerite de Navarre—along with texts conveying a favorable account of women or discussing the roles of men and women in love. Antoine Héroët's *La parfaite amyé*, for example, published by Jean de Tournes in 1547, was one of the most well-known texts in the Renaissance *querelle des amyés*, part of an ongoing exchange of works defending or condemning female nature, begun in the Middle Ages and known as the *querelle des femmes*.<sup>14</sup> In 1551, Tournes published Pontus de Tyard's French translation of Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi d'amore*, the

11. As Rigolot suggests, Louise Labé may well have responded to Antoine du Moulin's exhortation to the ladies of Lyon in his preface to the *Rymes*, benefiting from the relatively favorable atmosphere for women writers in Lyon. See *Louise Labé Lyonnaise, ou La Renaissance au féminin* (Paris: Champion, 1997), 15–16.

12. Natalie Zemon Davis explains that Jean de Tournes discussed Italian poetry with Scève, morality with Des Périers, and topics such as physiognomy with Du Moulin. "Le monde de l'imprimerie humaniste: Lyon," in *Histoire de l'édition française*, vol. 1, *Le livre conquérant* (Paris: Promodis, 1983), 265.

13. For a discussion of the role of the printing trade in the literary life of Lyon in the first half of the sixteenth century, see "Le Clos d'un excellent Lyon" in the introduction by Elise Rajchenbach to *Rymes* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 10–19. See also Henri-Jean Martin, "Les imprimeurs et l'humanisme," in *Lyon, l'humaniste*, ed. Claude Royon (Paris: Editions Autrement, 2004), 67–74.

14. See the series editors' Introduction at [www.itergateway.org/iter20.htm](http://www.itergateway.org/iter20.htm), and the notes for poem 39, "Perfect Love" ("Parfaicte amytié").



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influential dialogues on love that Pernette du Guillet would have known, perhaps both in the original Italian and in French. The translation, or parts of it, may well have circulated in manuscript form in the literary circles of Lyon before its publication.

Printed music books represented another important component of the book trade in Lyon, encompassing the sacred and the secular, and supplying the local market—including aristocrats and the wealthy merchant class—as well as a national and international market engaged by the fairs. Music flourished in Renaissance Lyon, playing a significant role in the lives and theories of many literary figures in the city, such as Symphorien Champier and Jean Lemaire de Belges, who closely associated music with love and with poetry, as well as Rabelais, Dolet, Des Périers, and Aneau, whose works reflect their musical interests.<sup>15</sup> Two of the three songbooks in which Pernette du Guillet's poems were published during her lifetime were printed in Lyon.<sup>16</sup>

Musical skill was also a valued feminine accomplishment, as Antoine du Moulin tells us in his preface to the *Rymes*, where he praises the poet's mastery of so many musical instruments, including the lute and the spinet, and calls on the ladies of Lyon to follow her example in striving for similar perfection. (As noted above, four of Du Guillet's epigrams were set to music and published in local anthologies as early as 1540 and 1541.) With Du Moulin's praise of the poet's lute playing in mind, we are not surprised to find that instrument evoked within the collection, although the role it plays there is not precisely that which the preface suggests. In the imagined scenario of poem 43, the female speaker fantasizes about seducing and controlling her

15. See Frank Dobbins, "Lyons: Commercial and Cultural Metropolis," in *The Renaissance: From the 1470s to the end of the 16th century*, ed. Iain Fenlon, Man and Music (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 197–215. Dobbins explains the role of music in literature, at the court, and in the church in Lyon during the sixteenth century. See also Dobbins, *Music in Renaissance Lyon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), and "Recueils collectifs de musique et de poésie," in *Le poète et son œuvre: De la composition à la publication*, ed. Jean-Eudes Girot (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 147–71.

16. The *Second livre contenant xxvii chansons nouvelles a quatre parties en ung volume* (Paris: P. Attaignant and H. Jullet, 1540) includes poems 52 and 53. These two poems also appear in the same year in Jacques Moderne's *Le parangon des chansons. Sixiesme livre contenant XXV chansons nouvelles au singulier prouffit et delectation des musiciens*, published in Lyon. Poems 12 and 14 were published in *Le parangon des chansons. Neufviesme livre contenant XXXI chansons nouvelles* (Lyon: Jacques Moderne, 1541). Rajchenbach's edition of the *Rymes* (Droz, 2006) reproduces the pages of these and later sixteenth-century "partbooks" for singers in the appendices, along with information on the composers and modern scores for five epigrams based on the Renaissance songbooks.

beloved by jumping nude into the water of the clear fountain pool and playing her lute to lure him closer.<sup>17</sup> Although the sensual wish is not fulfilled, it is doubtful that this scene, however hypothetical, is exactly what Du Moulin had in mind when exhorting the ladies of the city to devote themselves to virtue, following the young poet's example.<sup>18</sup>

In Renaissance poetry, the lute often served as a metaphor for the art and song of the poet. Carla Zecher's study of *Sounding Objects* explores the roles that lutes and other instruments played as physical objects signifying poetic imagination and production in the literature and visual arts of the Renaissance. Musical skill could represent spiritual effort and virtuous accomplishment on the part of a woman, but Zecher shows how the lute itself, with its rounded shape, could also symbolize *voluptas*—both in the positive sense of “honnête volupté” and in the negative connotation of physical gratification and excess—concluding that, “when it came to women's lute playing, the slope leading from desirability to disrepute was a slippery one.”<sup>19</sup>

The manner in which the depiction of a lute in a woman's hands could suggest either praiseworthy artistic accomplishment or excessive sensuality serves to illustrate the precarious position of Renaissance women engaged in literary pursuits. On the one hand, Lyon in the middle of the sixteenth century was indeed a milieu relatively favorable to the education of women and their participation in the vibrant cultural and intellectual life of the city. The influence of Italian culture and Neoplatonic theory resulted in a privileged situation for at least a minority of women of means with access to education and

17. Poem 43 is also known as “elegy 2” (élégie II) in the naming and numbering system established by Saulnier in his 1944 study. For more about the two conventions, see the section on the French text in this Introduction. See also the concordance for the two systems at the end of this volume. On the definition of the *élégie* in the Renaissance and the classification of five of Du Guillet's poems as such, see Philip Ford, “A propos des ‘élégies’ de Pernette Du Guillet,” in *Le poète et son œuvre*, 165–67.

18. Cathy Yandell demonstrates the difference in the meanings of the word *vertu* as applied to women and to men in Du Moulin's preface, as well as Pernette du Guillet's particular use of the term in the *Rymes*; see *Carpe Corpus: Time and Gender in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), chap. 3. See also Jan Boney's discussion of virtue and virtuosity in the context of the *Rymes* in “Ardeur de veoir: Reading Knowledge in Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes*,” in *Esprit Créateur* 30 (Winter 1990), 49–60.

19. Carla Zecher, *Sounding Objects: Musical Instruments, Poetry, and Art in Renaissance France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 139. Zecher discusses the lute poems of Louise Labé and Pernette du Guillet on pages 149–52. See also Marcel Tetel, “Le luth et la lyre de l'école lyonnaise,” in *Il Rinascimento a Lione*, vol. 2 (Roma: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1988), 949–62.

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with leisure time for literary activity.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Pernette du Guillet, like any educated woman who wished to write, was necessarily bound by social conventions that placed the highest value on a woman's domestic roles, considering her place to be in the home and censuring her appearance and speech in public in order to protect her chastity, her greatest virtue.<sup>21</sup> Rigolot points out that despite the atmosphere of relative intellectual freedom and openness to new ideas that characterized Lyon at the time Jean de Tournes was publishing the works of Pernette du Guillet and Louise Labé, all was not for the best in this seemingly ideal climate: "a woman writer had to defend herself before the court of morality for taking up the pen."<sup>22</sup>

As the series editors' Introduction observes, Renaissance women who chose to pursue literary endeavors faced powerful obstacles from longstanding traditional views regarding the inferior and imperfect nature of the female. Renaissance society—following beliefs

20. Natalie Zemon Davis explains that, "in the first half of the sixteenth century, the wealthy and well-born woman was being encouraged to read and study by the availability to her of printed books; by the strengthening of the image of the learned lady, as the writings of Christine de Pisan and Marguerite de Navarre appeared in print; and by the attitude of some fathers, who took seriously the modest educational programs for women being urged by Christian humanists like Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives." "City Women and Religious Change," chap. 3 in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 73. See also Michèle Clément, "Comment un nouveau champ littéraire est créé à Lyon: 'en donnant lieu à la main féminine' (1530–1555)," in *L'Émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon à la Renaissance, 1520–1560*, ed. Michèle Clément and Janine Incardona (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2008), 15–28.

21. See Ann Rosalind Jones, "The Mirror, the Distaff, the Pen: The Ideological Climate of Women's Love Poetry," chap. 1 in *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). Popular emblem books expressed and promoted these values in visual and poetic form, highlighting the importance of chastity as the highest of female virtues, the association of a woman's silence with her virtue, and the insistence on her rightful place at home. Several editions of Alciato's widely read emblem books were published in Lyon, including one French translation, *Emblèmes d'Alciat* (Lyon: Guill. Rouille, 1549), in which the image of a statue of Venus with her foot resting on the back of a tortoise illustrates the moral proverb, "Publiée soit de la femme / Non la beauté, mais bonne fame" (May only the good reputation of a woman be made public, and not her beauty), 244. The admirable tortoise, a mute animal that never leaves its home, is a model for women to emulate. See the facsimile of this edition available in the digital resources of "The Renaissance in Print: Sixteenth-Century French Books in the Douglas Gordon Collection" at the University of Virginia: [http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/gordon/gordonimages/Gordon1548\\_A54\\_n1\\_2/](http://iris.lib.virginia.edu/rmds/gordon/gordonimages/Gordon1548_A54_n1_2/).

22. "...une femme écrivain devait se justifier de prendre la plume devant le tribunal de la morale" (*Louise Labé Lyonnaise*, 20).

transmitted from Antiquity and the Middle Ages—by and large viewed women as inherently irrational, flighty, and deceitful creatures, prone to melancholy, and incapable of controlling their passions. Women were therefore typically excluded from any civic activity and advised against going out in public. Societal constraints and lack of education made it difficult for women to write and even more so to publish their work.<sup>23</sup> These deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes about women were an integral part of the culture of Renaissance Lyon, where Pernette du Guillet acquired more learning than most of her peers and wrote poetry, publishing several poems during her lifetime, though most of what she wrote was published posthumously. Despite the city's relatively open literary environment, she—as well as her editor and printer—must have faced the inevitable risks that a woman's speech implied, not only for her moral reputation, but also for the commercial success of her published work.

#### *How to Read the Rymes: the Power of the Paratext*<sup>24</sup>

We know remarkably little about the young poet of the *Rymes*. The biographical sketches that have served to introduce this work in literary anthologies and critical studies relate information gleaned from the original editor's introduction to the volume or inferred from

23. In her study of Castiglione and Ariosto, Valeria Finucci points out that in the Renaissance “any individuality for women would have been the product not only of a social, public self subject to the authority of the ruler/prince but also of a private self subject to the authority of the father/husband in the privacy of the home.” *The Lady Vanishes: Subjectivity and Representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 12. For additional analyses of the social, legal, and literary status of women in the Renaissance, see Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, *Les femmes dans la société française de la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1990); Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Peter Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123–42; Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

24. The paratext is the term used to refer to the parts of a published work that accompany the text itself, including the title page, preface, liminary poems, epitaphs, and illustrations. Gérard Genette's canonical study examines this privileged “threshold” between the text and the reader and how it influences the reading and interpretation of the text. See Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987) and the English translation, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

the poetry, rather than derived from archival evidence. The editorial preface by Antoine du Moulin and the *épitaphes* by Maurice Scève and Jean de Vauzelles—included in the posthumous first edition of the collection and in all subsequent complete editions—indicate that the young married woman left these poems behind at her death on July 17, 1545. The plague ravaged the city of Lyon in this period, suggesting a possible cause of the poet's demise, but we have no documentary evidence to confirm this or any other hypotheses about her life or her death.<sup>25</sup>

All that we have, then, is the poetry itself and the lyric voice of the *Rymes*, which has long been defined and read as “other.” Interpretations of that voice have led to a wide spectrum of accounts of the work and its author. The first published “reading” of the collection is that of Antoine du Moulin, whose editorial remarks prefacing the volume have long shaped the way the poems have been interpreted. For a variety of likely reasons, including the need to promote a positive reception for a work of love poetry by a woman, Du Moulin's preface emphasizes the virtuous character, remarkable spiritual qualities, and intellectual talents of the young female writer, underlining the fact that she was married and that her poetry was a private endeavor until her grieving husband brought forward the “little bundle of rhymes” to be published after her death. Du Moulin presents the poet as an example of virtue—and of learning in service of virtue—for other ladies of Lyon to emulate. Because we have no information about the author outside of what is presented to us in the printed preface by Antoine du Moulin, and what we might infer from the poems themselves and the lyric epitaphs that follow them, over the years the rhetorical strategies of the editor have had a tremendous influence on our understanding and appreciation of this collection.

The absence of external documentation regarding the life and work of Pernelle du Guillet is one of several factors leading Mireille Huchon to question the authorship of the *Rymes* in her recent study of Louise Labé's *Euvres*.<sup>26</sup> Huchon's argument that Louise Labé is “une

25. As Saulnier notes, 1520 is the date traditionally given for her birth, although slightly earlier and later dates have been proposed, all based on conjecture. Saulnier suggests the plague as a likely cause of the poet's death; he points to an epidemic of the plague in Lyon in 1544, citing a study by Docteur Jules Guiart, “Pourquoi la peste nous a quittés, histoire de la peste en France du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle,” in *Revue de l'Université de Lyon*, vol. VI (1933). “Etude,” 8–9.

26. Mireille Huchon, *Louise Labé, une créature du papier* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 69.

créature de papier,” that the *Euvres* were the result of a collaborative effort—a literary hoax—has given rise to an intriguing debate about the identity of that celebrated *dame lyonnaise* and about what Huchon’s premise means for other women writers of the same period.<sup>27</sup> Whether or not the reader concurs with Huchon’s conclusions, the examination of the literary and historical factors affecting female authorship in Renaissance Lyon contributes valuable insights to our understanding of both the *Rymes* and the *Euvres*, asking us to reconsider how a work of poetry constructs the persona of its author, independent of what we may or may not know about the poet herself.

It is essential to recall, however, that scarcity of archival documentation of a woman’s life was the norm in the Renaissance. Young women were taught that silence was a virtue, that a woman’s place was in the home, and that her speech—or even her very presence in public—could expose her to censure. By and large, a woman did not have a civic or public role or individual legal status, living under the protection of her father and then of her husband. Lack of archival evidence of her existence, then, is not unexpected. In the case of Pernette du Guillet, her poems were published singly or collected in a variety of books between 1540 and 1561—in Lyon and in Paris—by at least eight different printers, making it all the more difficult, or so it would seem, to maintain the sort of literary hoax that Huchon proposes behind Labé’s *Euvres*.<sup>28</sup>

27. Huchon’s book has elicited strong responses for and against it, underscoring the degree to which our understanding of authorship and authorial voice affects our reading of lyric poetry. The Société Internationale pour l’Etude des Femmes de l’Ancien Régime has established a website, entitled “Louise Labé attaquée!” (<http://www.siefar.org/ActuSIEFAR-Labe.html>), with articles on the issue by French scholars and journalists. The debate has intrigued those outside the discipline of French Renaissance studies, making its way into Wikipedia articles, for example. In a blog entry on the topic, Ellen Moody, translator and English professor at George Mason University, writes, “One result of this erasure of Labé’s identity [...] is the attempt to deny the existence of Pernette du Guillet too. And where will this stop?” (“Erasing Louise Labé,” December 14, 2006; reposted in 2009 at <http://www.jimandellen.org/feministblog/562.html>). Christine Planté’s thoughtful assessment of Huchon’s argument reminds us that every writer—no matter what we may know of his/her “real life”—is a construct of paper and ink, existing in the reader’s understanding and in literary and cultural tradition. See “Tout.e écrivain.e est ‘de papier,’” in *L’Émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon*, 257–72.

28. For details on the sixteenth-century printed works containing poems by Du Guillet, see *Rymes*, ed. C. Barataud and D. Trudeau (Paris: Champion, 2006), 24–26, and 230–31. See also *Rymes*, ed. E. Rajchenbach (Geneva: Droz, 2006), 97–98.

## 12 Editor's Introduction

Along with this absence of external biographical documentation, it is important to take into account the role played by literary and rhetorical tradition in constructing the poetic subject in the Renaissance. As Gray explains, “if the private self intrudes into sixteenth-century texts, it is almost always conditioned by rhetorical training as well as contemporary cultural constraints.”<sup>29</sup> Despite our understanding of these factors, we nevertheless curiously continue to read the author's life in the *Rymes*. That tendency prompts us to explore the ways in which the work constructs a lyric subject and the nature of the authorial persona conveyed by the poems. An autobiographical reading of the collection reflects in part the extent to which our understanding of the discourse of poetry, after the influence of Romanticism, implies the reader's participation as a “bystander” who overhears the poet's “speech”—often the expression of his or her innermost thoughts. We are well aware that literary voices and the subjects they “represent” are fictional constructs, even when *intended* to be autobiographical, but we are inclined nevertheless to look for unity of voice and subject in the work.<sup>30</sup> This search for unity in the text is one factor that has hindered readers of the *Rymes* from appreciating the dialogic nature of the poetic model and the ideal love that the poems project, and from recognizing the impact of Du Moulin's rhetorical strategies.<sup>31</sup>

29. Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture*, 64–65.

30. On the link between poetic subjectivity and discourse, see Antony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (London: Methuen, 1983). Easthope concludes: “Subjectivity must be approached not as the point of origin, but as the effect of a poetic discourse” (31). Formulating the issue from the reader's perspective in an influential essay on the notion of authorship, Michel Foucault argues that the attempt to identify the author in the literary work reflects a principle of unity that stems from the reader's desire to reconcile contradictions in a series of texts. “What is an Author?” in *Partisan Review* 4 (1975), trans. James Venit, 603–14. Olivia Holmes traces the emergence of an implied author—“an aggregate of inferences based on the text, primarily on the use of the first person”—to the emergence of author-ordered lyric collections in the thirteenth century, when vernacular poetry shifted from an oral to a written medium; see *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 4. Joel Fineman looks at these issues in Shakespeare's sonnets; see *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

31. See Jones's remarks about Du Moulin's preface in *Currency of Eros*, 82–83. Leah Chang's study of the 1546 *Rithmes* (Paris: Jeanne de Marnef) shows to what degree that edition resists an author-centered reading, creating instead a gendered volume of poetry that revolves around the concerns of women in love. See “The Gender of the Book: Jeanne de

Antoine du Moulin's editorial interventions and Jean de Tournes's liminary *huitain* highlight the voice that, in certain poems, appears to sing only praise of the beloved, suggesting the female poet's complete deference to his extensive learning.<sup>32</sup> In his preface to the *Rymes*, Antoine du Moulin praises Du Guillet's poetic accomplishments and emphasizes the association of her learning with virtue. He declares that the *Rymes* should inspire the "Ladies of Lyon" to undertake literary projects and thereby share in the glory of the "Ladies of Italy." A moralizing tone underlies his encouragement. Du Moulin hopes that the women of Lyon will not only benefit from this intellectual and literary model, but that they will also follow the moral and spiritual example of her devotion to virtue. With her poetry, what Du Moulin calls her "little pastime," Pernette du Guillet has shown other women "the path to goodness." Du Moulin also explains that the poet's grieving husband convinced him to make this "little bundle of rhymes" known to the public. The presence of a grief-stricken, devoted husband would effectively forestall critics inclined to spread ugly rumors about a woman writing love poems—however Neoplatonic the context—to a man other than her husband. The editor insists on the confused state of the papers brought to him, surmising that the young woman had not yet felt her poems were ready for publication, and explains that he was persuaded to edit them in order to encourage other women to follow this example of moral virtue combined with learning.<sup>33</sup>

The feelings and qualities that Antoine du Moulin attributes to the poet in this preface have, through time, come to serve as biographical information, since so little is known about her life. More significantly, these attributes have influenced subsequent readings of Du Guillet's poetry. Certain poems of the collection do convey the image of a humble young poet, inspired by Platonic love and awed by the vast erudition and eloquence of her beloved. The poems in which this voice is most evident, however, represent only a part of

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Marnef Edits Pernette du Guillet," in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 97–120.

32. Genette's study of paratextual "seuils" describes this effect. Paratextual elements that accompany a text, such as the title, preface, or illustrations, "surround and extend it, in order to *present* it, in the usual meaning of that verb, but also in its stronger meaning: to *make it present*, to ensure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption" (*Seuils*, 7). (Translation mine.)

33. On the poetic tradition of the found manuscript, see Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn, "Recueillir des brouillars": Ethique de la silve et poétique du manuscrit trouvé," in *Le poète et son œuvre*, 9–34.



the collected works. A close study of the entire text reveals a complex series of voices that assert contradictory emotions and proclaim the merits of the speaking, writing woman.

Antoine du Moulin's preface has the effect, intended or not, of masking the complexity and subtleties of these voices in the *Rymes*, an editorial intervention that may have helped to ensure the volume's commercial success by averting the censure of contemporary readers. Du Moulin's emphasis on the moral purity underlying the young poet's intellectual endeavors reflects a concern for social codes in Renaissance France, which questioned the virtue of any woman who entered the public domain through speech or writing. This concern is made explicit toward the end of the preface, when Du Moulin contemplates the possibility of a reader—"some odd fellow"—who would take this work in the wrong light. According to the editor, such a reader of bad faith would be motivated by envy, which always trails virtue. Du Moulin cautions the ladies of Lyon not to heed any such jealous rumors, which might discourage them from seeking the good through literature and learning. He concludes by comparing readers of ill will to "les Asnes"—asses who feed on thistles and can therefore appreciate no finer fare—and affirms that he chose to publish the *Rymes* in order to please the ladies of Lyon, even at the risk of displeasing the malicious. As Anne Larsen points out, a preface serves to promote the book that follows, often declaring an authorial intention; in the *Rymes*, it is the editor, not the author, who declares the work's intention, fulfilling the primary aim of the preface—"to negotiate a place for the work, and its author, in the public realm."<sup>34</sup>

34. Anne R. Larsen, "'Un honneste passetems': Strategies of Legitimation in French Renaissance Women's Prefaces," in *L'Esprit Créateur* 30 (Winter 1990), 12. Informed by investigations into printing history, recent studies have yielded new perspectives on the role of this and other such prefaces in the publication and reception of works by women writers. Leah Chang's study of the complex relationship between printers and female authors in the Renaissance examines Du Moulin's rhetorical strategies and argues that he emphasizes the distinction between author and editor, using gender difference as a tool to define, differentiate, and assign value to those roles in his preface. *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009). Elise Rajchenbach considers the preface to the *Rymes* in light of two other works published by Jean de Tournes in 1545: *Panegyric des Damoyelles de Paris* (with the editorial collaboration of Antoine du Moulin) and *Il Petrarca* (the works of Petrarch, preceded by an epistle in Italian by Jean de Tournes to Maurice Scève, recounting the latter's reported discovery of the tomb of Petrarch's Laura in 1533). By comparing the paratextual elements of the three volumes, Rajchenbach finds evidence of a concerted editorial strategy designed to promote Lyon as an important center of poetic renewal and innovation, equal to or

Du Moulin's editorial approach was to have a far-reaching effect on the critical reception of the *Rymes*. Rigolot and Read examine this phenomenon in their study of Renaissance prefaces to the works of women writers, describing the "reductive nature" of any preface that assigns moral intent to a literary text whose very essence is to be open to multiple interpretations.<sup>35</sup> Du Moulin confers extreme humility upon the poet, but of course we can have no way of knowing how she felt about her work, except for opinions expressed in the poetry itself. It should suffice to recall that, despite the editor's implication that Du Guillet did not consider her work worthy of publication, four of her poems appeared in print in her lifetime in popular songbooks.<sup>36</sup> She may have kept the rest of her work unpublished for many reasons: it is certainly possible, for example, that the collection as she envisioned it was not yet complete, or she may simply have wished to protect herself from gossip. That issue appears explicitly in poem 42, where the speaker responds to several malicious accusations, presumably attacks on her virtue. The controversy surrounding the publication of women's writings at the time may indeed explain the editor's caution.<sup>37</sup> This explanation of the one-sided interpretation presented in the preface is further corroborated by Saulnier's observation that Du Moulin's remarks are rather commonplace, and that the same ideas can be found in the prefaces of all the collections published by women poets of the day.<sup>38</sup> Whatever the reason or combination of reasons for the content of the preface, it has undeniably influenced the reception of this poetry.

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surpassing Italy and—perhaps more importantly—Paris. See "‘Tu le pourras clément icy veoir’: les *Rymes* de Pernette Du Guillet, publication vertueuse ou stratégie éditoriale?" in *L'émergence littéraire des femmes à Lyon*, 123–64.

35. "De là le caractère généralement réducteur de toute préface lorsqu'elle assigne une intentionnalité morale à un texte littéraire dont l'essence est justement d'être ouvert à la pluralité des interprétations." François Rigolot and Kirk Read, "Discours liminaire et identité littéraire: Remarques sur la préface féminine au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Versants* 15 (1989), 75–76.

36. The poems were published anonymously in the partbooks, as was common for the genre.

37. Larsen reminds us that, however real and autobiographical the topos of authorial humility may seem to be in the works of women writers, we must "remain alert to the depiction of female vulnerability as *poetic strategy*" ("French Renaissance Women's Prefaces," 16). In the case of the *Rymes*, it is the editor who adopts the humility topos as a prefatory strategy to deflect potential critics and win over intended readers. The tone of Du Moulin's preface makes more sense, explains Jones, when we take into account the "social climate in which chastity and silence were enjoined upon women." See "Assimilation with a Difference: Renaissance Women Poets and Literary Influence," in *Yale French Studies* 62 (1981), 138.

38. "Etude," 13.

The liminary verse by Jean de Tournes, “To the Reader from the Printer,” echoes and reinforces Antoine du Moulin’s “reading” of the *Rymes*. The printer’s poem, like the prefatory letter, insists that virtuous, chaste love of the pure, Neoplatonic variety forms the basis of the poems to follow. In his critical edition of the *Rymes* (1968), Victor Graham agrees with this assessment, indicating that Jean de Tournes’s “admirable little poem” reveals “a sensitive familiarity with the essence of Pernette’s thought.”<sup>39</sup> While it is true, as Graham points out, that many of the expressions highlighted by the printer do recur frequently in the *Rymes*, the complex poetic voices of the collection lend nuance to—and sometimes contradict—this Neoplatonic “essence.”

In addition to the preface, with its assurance that exemplary virtue accompanied the poet’s intellectual achievements, we can reasonably attribute to Antoine du Moulin the organization of the poems into the collection we know today. Du Moulin insists that he has retained the “poor order” of her papers, presenting the poems to us “almost as a copy” (“quasi comme pour copie”).<sup>40</sup> To what extent the editor imposed an order on the collection is a matter of speculation, but groupings of poems based loosely on themes such as birth and jealousy do suggest some editorial intervention, whether by Du Guillet herself or by Du Moulin after her death. No matter how it may have been determined, the order has shaped our reading of the *Rymes* in the same manner as the liminary texts. The initial poems of the volume focus on the spiritual birth of the poet’s intellect, attributed to the rays of light, love, and learning emanating from her beloved—a noble, learned, and eloquent poet. There is a logic to placing the birth poems at the beginning, of course, but read in conjunction with the prefatory texts, the initial poems highlight a relatively humble voice that appears to echo contemporary patriarchal social ideals and literary discourses. Grouping these poems at the beginning has the

39. Pernette du Guillet, *Rymes*, ed. Victor Graham (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 7. Regarding Jeanne de Marnef’s re-use of this liminary poem, and the effects of Marnef’s editorial choices on the presentation of the 1546 *Rithmes*, see Chang, “Gender of the Book,” 116–17.

40. The layout of the poems on the pages of the first edition, running continuously through the volume with only a minimal visual break between each, and no association of page breaks with the ends or beginnings of poems, is consistent with and even reinforces the notion of an immediate transcription of scattered drafts, rather than a carefully thought-out editorial arrangement.

effect of emphasizing that voice and neglecting others, and of setting up the notion of a life, beginning with this birth.<sup>41</sup>

The full title of the collection, *Rhymes of the Noble and Virtuous Lady [D.] Pernette du Guillet of Lyon*, reinforces with its adjectives the image of the chaste female author.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the title—presumably chosen by Antoine du Moulin and Jean de Tournes—also evokes the prestige of Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, suggesting that what follows may be a *canzoniere* in the Petrarchan vein, conveying the extended love experience of an individual who suffers and sings of unrequited love. Rajchenbach notes that the French title, *Rymes*, had no precedent in Lyon, or even in France, and calls to mind the Italian model of collections of love poetry by women, such as the *Rime* of Vittoria Colonna (Parma, 1538).<sup>43</sup> The connotative value of a title like *Rymes (Rime)* may well lead readers to expect coherence and consistency within the collection and to look for similarities of poetic voice rather than to notice differences.

The printer's opening epigram, addressed to the reader, emphasizes the notion that the poems to follow will show how virtue triumphs over desire, even in death. Rounding out the presentation of this poetic "life" are the four epitaphs at the end, describing how the poet's virtue manifested itself even in her death at a young age. We have no way of knowing whether or not—or to what extent—the information and assessments offered in these paratextual additions and editorial interventions correspond closely to a real woman's life and character. We can, however, recognize the impact of these combined elements on our reception of the poems. In a sense, the collection

41. Charpentier points out that finding the poems in poor order ("en asséz povre ordre") does not rule out the scenario in which the husband found the texts, though not yet in a final state, at least in something of a tentative arrangement, demonstrating an early classification (*Projet Poétique*, 145). We have no way of knowing who may have imposed the sequence of the poems as they are presented to us. Regarding what we presume to be Du Moulin's ordering of the poems, Gray observes that "our understanding of the story they seem to relate is predicated on [Du Moulin's], and it is not inconceivable that a different arrangement would produce an entirely different story" (*Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture*, 83).

42. *Rymes de gentile, et vertueuse Dame D. Pernette du Guillet Lyonnoise*. The adjective *gentil* could mean both "noble/well-born" and "gentle/gracious" in sixteenth-century usage. See the notes to the preface for further discussion of the title.

43. For Rajchenbach, the title of Du Guillet's collection announces a *Lyonnois* model, capable of rivaling the Italian tradition, as Antoine du Moulin confirms in his preface ("Tu le pourras clerement icy veoir," 124). For more on Petrarch and the lyric subject of his *canzoniere*, see the studies by Balsamo, Bloom, Kennedy, and Mazzotta in the bibliography.

is “marketed” or “packaged” as biographical and autobiographical, as representing an exemplary life and voice from start to finish, with implications in the paratext that we will find in this book a unified and edifying poetic voice and subject, although such a reading glosses over the complexity of the poetic subject and its voices in the *Rymes*.

*The Trail of Immortal Concern:  
Birth, Love, and Learning in the Rymes*<sup>44</sup>

Steeped in the influences of the earlier *Rhétoriqueurs*<sup>45</sup> and the increasingly popular Petrarchan and Italian Neoplatonist poetry and theories of love, Pernette du Guillet was likely to have been welcomed in the thriving literary society of Lyon. The young writer nevertheless had no models of a female lyric subject to follow in the process of creating her own poetic voice. The conventions of Neoplatonism and Petrarchism—praising and objectifying the beloved and desired lady—relegated women to silence. In Neoplatonic philosophy, despite an ideal reciprocity of love, the woman and her physical beauty served as a rung in the ladder of man’s ascent to the realm of the Idea and the ultimate Good. Similarly, in the Petrarchan tradition the woman remained the silent object of the male gaze. The lover’s suffering from the lady’s lack of response was a precondition for the act of writing poetry. Even in the first epigrams of the *Rymes*, however (those that most closely match the interpretation offered by Du Moulin), the lyric speaker resists this silent role that literary convention would thrust upon her. She attributes the birth of her self-knowledge, and thus of her self-identity, to the beloved, and she honors his eloquence and learning. The voice that expresses that praise, however, does so in terms that also call attention to the speaking subject’s own work as poet.

Critics and literary historians have often pointed to the first epigram of the *Rymes* as an example of Du Guillet’s Neoplatonism, typical of her submissive and humble stance vis-à-vis the male

44. See poem 56, lines 51–54.

45. *Rhétoriqueurs* (or *Grand Rhétoriqueurs*) is the term used to refer to many of the French poets writing at the end of the fifteenth century and in the first third of the sixteenth century. Rhyme in verse was considered a type of rhetoric, hence the name given to these poets, who were known for their experimentation with complex rhyme schemes and verbal games. Among the best-known *Rhétoriqueurs* are Jean Molinet, Jean Marot, and Jean Lemaire de Belges.

poet, her beloved “Day.”<sup>46</sup> The opening and closing references to the “lofty power from the Stars” (“le hault pouvoir des Astres”) and contemplation of “an excellence so long revered” (“si haulte qualité”) support this reading. This epigram may have found its way to the head of the collection precisely because of its mention of the poet’s birth in the second line. Certainly the abstract nature of the references to the beloved and his virtues is typical of Neoplatonist writers.

The lover remains an abstraction in this epigram—the “one who was to me avowed” (“celuy, qui m’est promis”). At the same time, however, the use of first person forms—subject and object pronouns and the possessive adjective “my”—in six of the ten lines serves to foreground the speaking voice of the woman. The verb tense changes from the past (what happened when she was born) to the present, and in line 5 the speaker shifts the focus to her own sentiments and activity. She explains what happened following the moment of celestial promise at her birth:

Leaving me numb to life—except for when  
The suffering I feel time and again  
Drives me to engrave my deep impression  
Of cruel love, of passion’s sweet progression,

Restee suis sans sentyment de vie,  
Fors le sentir du mal, qui me convie  
A regraver ma dure impression  
D’amour cruelle, et douce passion, (1:4–7)

A sense of suffering led her then to “engrave” her “deep impression”; the combination of the verb “regraver” and its object, “impression,” evokes the material aspect of Pernette du Guillet’s work as a writer intending to publish her poetry. In Renaissance France, according to the historical dictionaries of Cotgrave and Huguët, *impression* generally referred to an edition and to the printing process itself.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the verb “regraver” evokes the epigram, a genre from

46. The speaker in many of Du Guillet’s poems refers to her learned and eloquent beloved as her “Jour” (Day).

47. Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611; reprint, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1950). A searchable version created by Greg Lindahl from scans in the Bibliothèque nationale is available online at <http://www.pbm.com/~Elindahl/cotgrave/>. See also Edmond Huguët, *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 7 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1925–1973); Algirdas Julien

Antiquity that was originally engraved or inscribed in stone. Du Guillet's use of the word here suggests the physical act of inscribing words or images on stone or on a page.<sup>48</sup> Although this poem was published posthumously, Du Guillet's apparent contact with contemporary literary figures in Lyon and the printing of four of her poems in songbooks in 1540 and 1541 lend credence to the interpretation of line 6 as a reference to her literary and publishing activity.<sup>49</sup> This first poem in the collection, while initially appearing to reflect the persona of the virtuous, admiring, humble woman poet—in keeping with the account of the author presented by the preface—also serves to introduce the active role of the woman as speaking and writing subject. She becomes much more than a mere echo of her mentor, and attains a position not generally granted to women in Neoplatonic theory, literary practice, and social conventions.

We observe a similar situation in poem 2, where the rays of dawn bring the Day's illumination to the female speaker's dark and troubling night. In this second birth scenario—at this important moment of her intellectual and spiritual awakening—the arrival of the light of day brings joy and unleashes her own voice:

But when I saw the dawn's defining glow,  
All serene, with its thousand-colored rays,  
Such joy full suddenly did me amaze  
(Seeing how light already round me swirled),  
That with exalted voice I began to praise  
Him who formed for me such a Morn in the World.

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Greimas and Teresa Mary Keane, *Dictionnaire du moyen français: la Renaissance* (Paris: Larousse, 1992).

48. The Neoplatonists, following Plato, theorized that the image of the beloved is engraved on the lover's heart. That image then becomes a mirror in which the beloved sees his own reflection, and which will cause him to love the lover as himself, explaining the reciprocal nature of love. For more on this tradition with regard to this and other poems in the *Rymes*, see the section below on Neoplatonism, as well as the notes to poem 1.

49. Lance Donaldson-Evans makes the important point that the adjective "dure" here recalls the "durs Epigrammes" of Scève's *huitain liminaire*. "The Taming of the Muse: The Female Poetic Voice in Pernette du Guillet's *Rymes*," in *Pre-Pléiade Poetry*, ed. Jerry C. Nash (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1985), 90. Christine Clark-Evans traces the link between *amour* and *art* in the *Rymes*, finding that, in this collection, pure love leads to the art of poetry. This association reflects the Neoplatonic theory that the purest type of love, detached from physical desire, is a form of divine knowledge, directing the soul toward the ideal beauty it seeks. "L'art et l'amour dans *Les Rymes* (1545) de Pernette du Guillet," in *Le moyen français* 35–36 (1996), 161–73.