

Pernette du Guillet (ca. 1520–1545)

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.¹ 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.² 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.

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.³

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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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 Lyonnais⁶

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.⁷ 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

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*⁴⁴

Steeped in the influences of the earlier *Rhétoriqueurs*⁴⁵ 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.”⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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.

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.

Mais quand je vis que l'aulbe apparoissoit
 En couleurs mille et diverse, et seraine,
 Je me trouvoy de liesse si pleine
 (Voyant desjà la clarté à la ronde)
 Que commençay louer à voix haultaine
 Celuy, qui fait pour moy ce Jour au Monde. (2:5–10)

Before this moment, the subject—shrouded in darkness—could not see a thing and presumably remained silent, having nothing to express. The arrival of her Day brings an awareness of self *and* a voice to express that identity along with the praise of her beloved. Colette Winn points to this birth of the lyric speaker's identity—which coincides with the birth of her writing—as the essence and originality of the *Rymes*.⁵⁰

The question of the poet's identity recurs in poem 5, frequently cited as an example of the voice of the admiring female pupil, steeped in Neoplatonism. Here she has inscribed her beloved's name twice in the text in anagrammatic form. By a constant oscillation, however, between first and second person, and by a similar use of possessive adjectives, the focus of the poem shifts from the praise of the other (male poet) to the female subject's own poetic work.⁵¹ She attributes her transformation—from vice and ignorance to goodness and wisdom—to her beloved's desire to transform her. Scève did in fact metamorphose the female object of his love and admiration, the pure and unattainable Délie, in his *canzoniere*. Now Du Guillet will strive to accomplish the same service for her beloved, calling attention to her equality with him as a poet. She will flee ignorance by writing poetry to transform him into an ideal figure, and her powers to do so are inspired by his will and eloquence. The poem may well remind the reader of a constant play of mirrors; the individual poet's identity proves difficult to seize as it is reflected from one surface to another, reinforcing an ideal of reciprocity and exchange, yet undermining the

50. "Le chant de la nouvelle née: Les *Rymes* de Pernette du Guillet," in *Poétique* 78 (April 1989), 212. See also Lawrence Kritzman, *The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chap. 1. Kritzman notes: "If the female figure becomes the spectator of her own pleasure it is because du Guillet's delivery into speech, through the rhythmic movement of a poetic chant, enables her to realize a relation to language that is a projection of creative lucidity" (17).

51. Regarding the rich ambiguity in the first line of this epigram, see Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, "La Parole chétive: Les *Rymes* de Pernette du Guillet," in *Littérature* 73 (February 1989), 50–51. See the notes for poem 5 for further discussion of the opening lines of this epigram and its anagrams.

stability implied by the Neoplatonic goal of a perfect union in love, or by any one-dimensional account of the poet's persona.

Poem 6 also revolves around the poet's identity and voice. As Saulnier points out, most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthologies include this epigram in their limited selection of Du Guillet's poetry as an example of the modest voice of the young poet, student of Scève, largely because of the tone of its opening lines:⁵²

With this dizain I show myself clearly
Not knowing how to honor all your virtues
Beyond the will—a weak excuse, merely:

Par ce dizain clerement je m'accuse
De ne sçavoir tes vertus honorer,
Fors du vouloir, qui est bien maigre excuse: (6:1–3)

Even in this humbling comparison, however, the poet distinguishes herself from the lover, insisting on the differences that separate her from his eloquence. Her use of the humility topos allows her simultaneously to proclaim her inadequacies and to suggest quite the opposite. The voice of the young woman explains that she could give him the praise that is his due if she had his power, which comes through learning:

Lend me, then, your eloquent learning to
Praise you, in just the same way you praise me.

Preste moy donc ton eloquent sçavoir
Pour te louer ainsi, que tu me loues. (6:9–10)

Although he infuses her with his knowledge, no poet can sing the admiration of another without an identity and a voice strong enough to offer that praise. Furthermore, these verses call attention to the female poet's need of her beloved's learning in order to speak within a male mode of lyric discourse.⁵³ He represents the essence of the patriarchal conventions that dominated literary production in France and Italy during the Renaissance. A woman wishing to enter into this

52. "Etude," 111.

53. For further discussion of poem 6, see the section on dialogue and imitation below.

discourse must at least appear to do so within the boundaries of its conventions, or *sçavoir*.⁵⁴

In these first poems of the collection, the lyric speaker displays her share of this learning, effectively asserting her own voice and identity, while at the same time extolling her beloved's intellectual qualities in tones that evoke the chaste and virtuous woman described in the preface. This makes a closer examination of the poetic voices in the remainder of the volume all the more important. What do we make of the conclusion of poem 43, for example, where the female speaker decides not to use her poetic and sensual powers against the lover, because the sacred water of the muses' fountain belongs to all poets? Her decision does not negate the force of her vision of her own powers, so vividly depicted in the elegy; it reminds us, rather, that in the economy of the *Rymes*, dialogue replaces monologue. The speech of one of the lovers does not imply the silence of the other, a fundamental principle of this poetry.⁵⁵

Even when addressing the beloved, the nature of the speaker's voice can differ radically from one poem to the next; she sometimes praises him, but at other times reproaches him for not recognizing and returning her love, or for preferring the company of other women to hers. Although her "Day" has taught her a great deal, her adoration of him does not extend to a master/pupil relationship of a servile nature. Poem 32 indicates that she belongs to him only in the sense that he possesses the other half of this perfect Platonic friendship:

I've so enjoyed the good and hence
 Feel through his guiding influence
 The strong affection of our hearts
 Held by us both in equal parts:

Du bien j'ay eu la jouyssance,
 Dont il m'a donné congnoissance
 Pour m'asseurer de l'amytié,
 De laquelle il tient la moytié: (32:7–10)

54. Jones examines the various positions of "negotiation" adopted by women poets of the Renaissance (including Pernette du Guillet) to respond to dominant gender ideologies and literary discourses. See in particular the introduction to *Currency of Eros*, 1–10, and "Assimilation with a Difference," 135–53.

55. See the notes for poem 43 for further discussion of this conclusion; see also the section below on dialogue and imitation.

The speaker in poem 30 gently reminds her beloved that if he treats her “rudely,” as “master,” he will never gain what he seeks. In poem 16, the poet reminds her beloved that if God has given him fine assets, she herself has been given reason’s power to judge him, and asks that he behave reasonably.⁵⁶ Throughout the collection, the female poet rarely speaks in a voice characterized by servility or absolute humility. Filled with jealousy at the sight of her lover conversing with other women, she does not stand by in any docile manner, but reminds the beloved, through her verse, that she alone is worthy of his eloquent attentions. In poem 41, the speaker claims that she in no way wishes to restrain her beloved’s liberty, but then explains that he should prefer her company because the “others”—her rivals—are not as worthy of his “fine conversation” (“saint entretien”) as is her own heart, which belongs to him.

Jealousy does not prevent her from seeing the humor in her own reactions. In a playful tone, poem 49 relates a scene that the speaker observes between her beloved and another woman, and pokes fun at her own ensuing feelings of envy. In this tableau, Cupid (*Amour*) happens upon the seated couple engaged in common flirtation, shoots a few “words”—rather than flaming arrows—in their direction, and departs with a blithe *callimera* (Greek for “have a nice day!”). Jealousy causes the speaker watching the scene to wonder if she has overheard correctly, worrying that perhaps Cupid really proclaimed what she fears most:

When lo! Cupid burst forth with impish glee,
 Raised his bow, and aimed a fiery dart:
 He let fly four words as he drew apart
 And left the scene: *Catch you later, ciao!*
 But, oh! suspicion shot into *my* heart
 A fear that he’d said: *Captivate her, now!*

Voicy Amour sur eulx gay, et dispos,
 Portant un arc, et traictz à la Gregeoise,
 Lequel lascha deux motz à la Bourgeoise,
 Et au partir luy dit, callimera:
 Lors souspeçon en mon cueur myt grand noise,
 Doubtant qu’il dist d’elle: qu’il l’aymera. (49:5–10)

56. See the section below on Neoplatonism for more about the power of judgment associated with the moon and the poet of the *Rymes*.

The epigram begins with a reference to “my Day,” recalling the speaker’s praise of her beloved and his virtue in many of the poems, such as poem 8, where “my Day” illuminates the darkness of night. The opening reference to “mon Jour” in poem 49, however, immediately gives way to the suspicions and jealousy of the observer. Watching her Day seated next to another woman, the speaker’s tone reflects a good-natured recognition of her own possessiveness.

Here and elsewhere we see that, although the female subject admires her beloved’s intellect and eloquence, she does not do so blindly. She questions the strength of his love for her, sometimes suspecting the worst of him. She acknowledges in poem 45 that she is jealous, but insists that no one could persuade her that what she has seen with her own eyes was only a figment of her imagination:

But who could find the strength of words to flow,
 Convincing me—through argument so keen—
 That what I just, with my own eyes, have seen
 Be but a figment of imagination—
 And thus defective judgment contravene?

Mais qui pourroit estre en propos si fort,
 Et d’argumentz si vivement pourveu,
 Que ce, que j’ay de mes propres yeulx veu
 Soit une folle imagination,
 Il feit accroire à mon sens despourveu? (45:5–9)

In the first line of poem 35, the speaker announces this same mistrust: “I can’t believe your words are true—” (“Je ne croy point ce, que vous deites”).

In poem 35, as in 49, the speaker acknowledges that her jealousy springs from her feelings of possessiveness toward the beloved. According to Ficino and the other Renaissance Neoplatonists, the lover, in loving, gives himself to the beloved, who will then cherish him as a possession. Human nature dictates that we love and cherish what we possess, and this “truth” is one of the Neoplatonic proofs of the natural reciprocity of love.⁵⁷ Du Guillet’s humorous recognition

57. The Italian Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), completed his *In Convivium Platonis sive de Amore* (*Commentary on the Symposium of Plato about Love*) around 1469. Ficino’s commentary circulated widely in Europe throughout the sixteenth century in several Latin, Italian, and French editions and had a tremendous influence on the French

of the jealousy associated with her possessiveness serves as a playful reminder of the important ideal of exchange and mutual attraction in love. In poem 23, a similar voice reminds the beloved of her own rights in this reciprocal arrangement. She addresses him directly in this epigram, beginning with a confession of her ignorance, "I did, perhaps—through ignorance—fail" ("Je puis avoir failly par ignorance"), but in ten lines she uses the first person pronouns *je*, *me*, and *moy* a total of twelve times, effectively undermining the Renaissance ideal of woman as silent, passive admirer, and the tone of humility suggested in the opening lines of this poem.⁵⁸ The poet emphasizes her role as speaking subject in the process of declaring her rights:

Certainly, I aspire to have my due,
 Despite what others, in dismay, opine;
 Because—if the power of giving you
 Belongs to Love and Faith, you are all mine.

Bien est il vray, que je tasche à avoir
 Ce, qui m'est deu, quoy qui en ait esmoy:
 Car si Amour, et foy ont ce pouvoir
 De vous donner, vous estes tout à moy. (23:7–10)

The mutuality of this Platonic love becomes a quasi-legal matter in poem 27, where the poet presents her case:

As much as I am yours (and wish to be),
 Let us present the case that you are mine.

Renaissance poets. I have cited examples from the English translation by Sears Jayne, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love* (Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications, 1985). For purposes of comparison with the French verse, readers may also wish to consult the French translation, *Marsile Ficin, Commentaire sur le Banquet de Platon*, ed. and trans. Raymond Marcel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956). Regarding the link between reciprocity and possession, Ficino explains, "Therefore the same likeness which compels me to love you also forces you to love me. Moreover, the lover removes himself from himself and gives himself to the beloved. Therefore the beloved takes care of him as his own possession. For one's own things are always the dearest to one" (*Commentary*, 57); see also *Commentaire*, 158. The lover's possession and corresponding care of the beloved provide a source of comfort in the conclusion of poem 70, "Solace."

58. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani's comparison of the poet to the *infans* in the mirror stage seems particularly appropriate here. Caught in the specular game of identity with the other, Pernette as Délie "n'accèdera au statut de sujet que dans la maîtrise du langage" (will attain the status of subject only through the mastery of language). "La Parole Chétive," 49.

Prenez le cas, que, comme je suis vostre
 (Et estre veulx) vous soyez tout à moy: (27:1–2)

In this courtroom ambiance, Cupid's wandering arrows acquire the force of a law that neither party is free to break. This vision of equality in love has little to do with the Petrarchan Cupid and his blind *erreurs* or with the Neoplatonic account of the reciprocity of love that nevertheless imposed silence on the woman. The epigram presents a hypothetical question, suggesting a departure from convention. The speaker, although implying a judgment or "correct" resolution to the debate, never exits from the hypothesis at the end of the poem, leaving the reader (and the lover) to decide the case.

The application of legal discourse to matters of the heart recalls the popular medieval tradition of the courts of love, with their debates on the nature and laws of love and subsequent judgments handed down by the ladies who ruled them.⁵⁹ The particulars of the case presented in Du Guillet's poem, with its reference to "this our common good" ("ce commun bien nostre"), may not reflect precisely the same experience of suffering lovers depicted in many of the medieval debates, but the author of the *Rymes* clearly knows and manipulates the tradition, described aptly by Goodrich as a "casuistic analysis that is intensely personal in its subject matter, yet strikingly legalistic in its procedure and method."⁶⁰ Goodrich also notes that the judgment in the court of love is "conceived neither as a war, nor as a power play,—it is a question not of possession, but rather of reciprocal recognition and mutual right."⁶¹ It is not surprising, then, that Pernette du Guillet would choose this literary and legalistic framework in which to present her case for reciprocity in love.

In a similar debate of a hypothetical nature, poem 55 considers the question of which comes first, theory or practice. With humor, the speaker boldly presents her opinion that theory precedes practice in both art and love:

59. The judgments of the courts of love were recorded in Latin in the twelfth century by Andreas Capellanus in his *Tractatus de amore*, and in the fifteenth century by Martial d'Auvergne in his *Arrêts d'Amour*. For an overview of this tradition and examination of the judgments of love in relation to the history of jurisprudence, particularly with regard to legal history and women, see Peter Goodrich, "Law in the Courts of Love: Andreas Capellanus and the Judgments of Love," *Stanford Law Review* 48:3 (February 1996), 633–75.

60. "Law in the Courts of Love," 634.

61. *Ibid.*, 674.

That art is formed from what is known:
 This point a Sophist easily
 Concedes under a deep sleep's cover.
 For me, I say I quite agree—
 Love came first, before the Lover.

Car, qui fait l'art, jà la sçavoit,
 Qui est un point qu'un Sophistique
 Concederoit tout en dormant:
 Quand à moy, je dy pour replique,
 Qu'Amour fut premier, que l'Amant. (55:4–8)

The conclusion reminds the reader that Du Guillet, like her male counterparts, knew art and love, and the theories in both domains.⁶² Each poet makes of these what s/he can. The theoretical, yet light-hearted argument reinforces the link between the experience of love and the practice of writing poetry and reminds us that two lovers/poets may have different, even opposing, points of view.

Another such philosophical debate occurs in poem 24, which weighs the relative importance of love and the lady for the lover. The epigram evokes the medieval tradition of the courts of love, still popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as Ebreo's influential dialogues, in which Philo assures Sophia that, "just as the lover is prior to love, so is the beloved; for if there were not a first lovable person or object, it would be impossible to love, and there

62. Leone Ebreo (Léon Hébreu) presents those theories of art and love in his *Dialoghi d'Amore*. First published in Italian in 1535, the *Dialoghi* was an immensely popular work that circulated widely in numerous editions and several translations over the next twenty years. Pontus de Tyard's French translation of the *Dialogues* was published by Jean de Tournes in Lyon in 1551, and may well have circulated in manuscript form in literary circles prior to its printing. The two characters of Ebreo's dialogues are Filone (Philo, Greek for love) and Sofia (Sophia, Greek for wisdom or science)—who together represent the love of wisdom (i.e., philosophy). On the matter of theory and practice in love, Sophia tells Philo, "you cannot deny that knowledge of the theory should always precede application in practice, as it is reason which rule's Man's actions." *The Philosophy of Love (Dialoghi d'Amore) by Leone Ebreo*, trans. F. Friedeberg-Seeley and Jean H. Barnes (London: The Soncino Press, 1937), 233. I have cited the English translation in the remainder of this volume. For readers interested in the parallels between the French translation by Pontus de Tyard and Pernette du Guillet's verse, I have also indicated the relevant page numbers in the modern critical edition of Tyard's translation: *Dialogues d'amour*, trans. Pontus de Tyard, ed. T. Anthony Perry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974). For the French version of the passage noted here, see *Dialogues d'amour*, 178.

would be no love.”⁶³ Infused with Neoplatonic theory, poem 24 resolves the debate in a manner that conveys both personal conviction and universal observation. The first lines present the issue:

Who deserves more a Lover's obligation—
Does Love or, in truth, Lady earn this role?

A qui est plus un Amant obligé
Ou à Amour, ou vrayement à sa Dame? (24:1–2)

The initial question is followed by an allusion to the *service d'amour* central to the medieval tradition of courtly love and a reference to the “honor” and the “good” at the heart of Neoplatonic theories of love. The conclusion projects anything but an uneasy or timid voice:

Yet here's the point that must not be dismissed,
Which soothes my mind and calms my thoughts to rest:
Without the Lady, Love would not exist.

Et toutesfois voicy un tresgrand point,
Lequel me rend ma pensee assouvie,
C'est que sans Dame Amour ne seroit point. (24:8–10)

The speaker, whose gender is not evident, professes a general truth that applies not only to the female poet, but to all men and women who love. It is important to note also that several poems in the collection convey the voice of a *male* speaker, including “Despair” (poem 69), “Cock-and-Bull Story” (poem 67), and “Mummery: Five Posts of Love” (poem 71), uttered by five of Cupid's messengers. “Solace” (poem 70) projects a voice whose gender is not revealed and who addresses the suffering male lover of the previous elegy (“Despair”), offering a third-party defense of the lady's actions.

Without fully contradicting the interpretation of Du Guillet's poetry offered by Du Moulin's preface and the rest of the paratextual apparatus discussed, the examples cited above reveal a much more complex poetic subject than initially implied. In the case of the *Rymes*, the paratext filters out an array of poetic voices in

63. *Philosophy of Love*, 268; *Dialogues d'amour*, 197. This passage appears at first glance to contradict Sophia's earlier assertion that theory precedes practice in love. Whether Love or the Lover comes first is less important to the author of the *Rymes*, however, than the ultimate conclusion that the Lady comes before both.

the collection that convey alternately—or even simultaneously—sensuality and chastity, independence of spirit and adoration of the beloved's intellectual powers, praise and criticism tempered with humor, desire for spiritual union and a need for distance or difference from the other.

Dialogue, Imitation, and the Lyric Voice

The poet's transformation of a variety of literary conventions contributes to the complexity of voice in the *Rymes*, enriching rather than contradicting the all-encompassing, spiritual union in love that this poetry projects as an ideal. Saulnier's "Etude" examines the many traditions upon which Du Guillet builds her "art of variations": medieval courtly love poetry, verse in the style of Marot and in the Petrarchan mold, and poems inspired by Neoplatonism. To express an ideal of unity, the poet avails herself of multiple lyric traditions, creating a personal style that reinforces her independent identity and voice. Despite her humble claims to the contrary, Du Guillet evidently possessed her share of the extensive knowledge that she attributed to Scève. The multiple and at times contradictory voices in the *Rymes* represent a radical departure from the *Délie*. For Scève, as for Petrarch, the *canzoniere* depends upon the silence of the idealized woman. The lady's unbroken silence and the torment of the lover are the necessary conditions for poetic creation.⁶⁴ At the heart of many of Du Guillet's poems, however, is an exchange—of light, of knowledge, or of speech—with the beloved, with other contemporaries, with *Amour* (Cupid), with the reader, or with a combination of interlocutors. Furthermore, many of these texts conclude with the speaker's refusal to reduce her beloved poet to silence. Dialogue represents a central motif of the collection, with numerous poems evoking a conversational exchange between lovers, or at least allowing the reader to "overhear" the speaker's words to another.⁶⁵

64. In both the Petrarchan and the Neoplatonic theories of love, the woman remains the silent object of the male gaze and desire; her silence fuels the speech of the lover, whose poetry expresses the stages and states of his suffering. In the Neoplatonic mode, this situation may permit the lover's ascent to a higher spiritual realm, but in practice this applies only to men.

65. For an examination of the types of linguistic exchanges depicted in the *Rymes* and the lexical markers of dialogue, see Karen Simroth James, "On veult responce avoir: Pernelle du Guillet's Dialogic Poetics," in *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Theory and Bakhtin*, ed. Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 171–97,

ANTOINE DU MOULIN

AUX DAMES LYONNOISES

Comme ainsi soit que l'inclination, laquelle naturellement nous avons à noz semblables, nous face esmouvoir selon le bon, ou mauvais accident advenu à ceulx de nostre complexion, je ne doubteray point que la plus part de vous, Dames vertueuses, ne soit assés marrie de soy mesmes du trespas de celle vertueuse, gentile, et toute spirituelle Dame D. Pernette du Guillet, sans d'avantage par ce petit recueil sien vous renouveler la douleur, qui encor vous saingne au cueur (mesmement à vous, qui de plus privee frequentation l'avez congneue) pour l'oultrage faict n'a guieres par la Mort à elle et à vous, comme envyeuse de nostre bien. Mais les instantes, et affectionnées remonstrances de son dolent mary m'ont persuadé, comme luy, à vous vouloir plus tost desplaire pour un peu, vous renouvelant vostre particulier regret, que de voulour generalmente priver toutes celles, qui ne la congneurent onc de face, de ce petit amas de rymes, lesquelles elle nous laissa pour tesmoingnage de la dexterité de son divin esprit, et lequel, en le lisant, sera suffisant (j'en suis tout asseuré) de la faire regretter non seulement à ses accointées, mais aussi à toutes personnes de vertu avec une perpetuelle hayne contre la Mort, qui nous a privez de la consummation, que par cest heureux commencement la felicité de son celeste engin nous promettoit.

Car, veu le peu de temps, que les Cieulx l'ont laissée entre nous, il est quasi incroyable comme elle a peu avoir le loysir, je ne dy seulement de se rendre si parfaitement asseurée en tous instrumentz musiquaulx, soit au Luth, Espinette, et autres, lesquelz de soy requierent une bien longue vie à se y rendre parfaitz, comme elle estoit, et tellement, que la promptitude, qu'elle y avoit, donnoit cause d'esbahissement aux plus experimentez : mais encores à si bien dispenser le reste de ses bonnes heures, quelle l'aye employé à toutes bonnes lettres, par lesquelles elle avoit eu premierement entiere et familiere congnoissance des plus louables vulgaires (oultre le sien) comme du Thuscan, et Castillan, tant, que sa plume en pouvoit faire foy: et apres avoit jà bien avant passé les rudimentz de la langue Latine aspirant à La Grecque (si la Lampe de sa vie eust peu veiller jusques au soir de son eage) quand les Cieulx nous enviantz tel heur la nous ravirent, ô Dames Lyonnoises, pour vous laisser achever ce, qu'elle avoit si heureusement commencé: c'est à sçavoir de vous

ANTOINE DU MOULIN

TO THE LADIES OF LYON¹

As we all have a natural inclination toward others like ourselves, and are moved by what good or evil befalls those of a similar disposition,² I have no doubt whatsoever that most of you, virtuous Ladies, are already sufficiently afflicted by the passing of that virtuous, noble, and most spiritual Lady, [D.] Pernette du Guillet,³ without the addition of this little collection of hers to renew the pain that still bleeds in your hearts (especially those of you who knew her well personally) from the outrage committed recently against both her and you by Death, as if envious of our good fortune. Nevertheless, the insistent and affectionate pleas of her grieving husband moved me to believe, as he did, that it would be preferable to displease you a little, renewing your private sorrow, than to universally deprive all ladies who never met her of this little bundle of rhymes,⁴ which she left us as evidence of the dexterity of her divine mind. Once read, they will surely cause her loss to be lamented, not only by those of her acquaintance,⁵ but by all persons of virtue who hold Death in perpetual contempt for preventing us from enjoying what the felicity of her celestial intellect promised with this fortunate beginning.⁶

Seeing the short time that the Heavens allowed her to remain among us, it is almost impossible to believe that she was able to find the time,⁷ not only to become such an accomplished player of all musical instruments, including the Lute,⁸ Spinnet, and others, which by themselves require a long life at which to become as perfectly proficient as she was (so much so that her quick aptitude for them astonished the most experienced of musicians), but also to spend the rest of her precious hours so well, using them for literature and all good learning.⁹ In that way she gained, first and foremost, complete familiarity with and knowledge of the most noteworthy vernacular languages besides her own, including Italian and Spanish, to which her pen attested.¹⁰ She had already gone well beyond the rudiments of the Latin tongue, aspiring to learn Greek¹¹ (if only the Lamp of her life had been able to shine until the evening of her age), when the Heavens, envying our good fortune, snatched her away from us. O Ladies of Lyon, you are left now to finish what she so felicitously began—that is, to devote yourselves as she did to virtue, and in such a way that, if she has shown you the path to goodness with this little

exerciter, comme elle, à la vertu, et tellement, que, si par ce sien petit passetemps elle vous a montré le chemin à bien, vous la puissiez si glorieusement ensuyvre, que la memoire de vous puisse testifier à la posterité de la docilité et vivacité des bons espritz, qu'en tous artz ce Climat Lyonnois a tousjours produit en tous sexes, voire assés plus copieusement, que guere autre, que l'on sache.

Qui est la cause, qui m'a meu, entre les autres persuasions, à vous communiquer ce peu de commencement, que son affectionné mary a trouvé parmi ses brouillars en assés povre ordre, comme celle, qui n'estimoit sa facture estre encor digne de lumiere jusques a ce, que le temps la luy eust par frequent estude et estendue, et lymée. Et pource en la mesme sorte que luy, et moy avons trouvé Epygrammes, Chansons, et autres diverses matieres de divers lieux, et plusieurs papiers confusément extraictz, les vous avons icy, quasi comme pour copie, mis en evidence, tant pour satisfaire à ceulx, à qui privément en maintes bonnes compaignies elle les recitoit à propos, comme la plus part faitz à leur occasion, que aussi pour ne vouloir perdre soubz silence d'éternel oubly chose, qui vous peust non seulement recreer, mais faire honneur à vous, Dames Lyonnoises, et vous faire priser en maintes contrees toutes les fois, que ces petites, et louables jeunesses siennes seront en grande admiration leues de tous.

Et quand ce ne seroit, quelles pourront inciter quelcune de vous, ou d'ailleurs, et l'animer aux lettres, pour participer de ce grand et immortel los, que les Dames d'Italie se sont aujourdhuy acquis, et tellement, que par leurs divins escriptz elles ternissent le lustre de maintz hommes doctz, et comme en France semblablement tant de honnestes et vertueuses Dames, et Damoiselles s'y adonnent avec une grande expectation de leur perpetuelle renommée au grand honneur, et louange de tout ce Royaulme: et quand ce ne seroit (rediray je) que pour toutes ces justes, et louables occasions, ne devois je estre jugé ingrat, et oultrageux à vous toutes, si, ayant cecy entre mains, je vous eusse celé ce petit esguillon de vous poulsier à plus hault bien en perpetuelle recommandation de vostre renommee? Certainement il n'est celuy (pour depravé jugement, qu'il aye) qui ne m'en deust à bonne occasion blasmer, comme larron de l'honneur, et publicque louange de vostre sexe.

Et si d'avanture se trouve quelque bigerre cerveau (comme communement la vertu ne va jamais seule sans envie) qui vueille prendre cecy en mauvaïse part, pour n'en sçavoir autant faire, ny en approcher cent lieues pres, je vous supply croire, que toute personne

pastime of hers, you may be able to follow in her steps so gloriously that the remembrance of you may bear witness to posterity of the vivacity and aptitude for learning of the fine minds that, in all the arts, the Climate here in Lyon has always produced in both sexes—surely much more abundantly than in any other city known.

That reason (among others) moved me to share with you this meager beginning that her devoted husband found in rather poor order among her scattered papers, as of one who did not yet consider her work to be worthy of publication,¹² until time and frequent study would have expanded and polished it. And because he and I, in the same manner, found Epigrams, Songs, and other sundry writings in various places,¹³ and numerous pages pulled together haphazardly,¹⁴ we have put them forth for you here, almost as a copy. We have done so as much to satisfy those to whom she recited them whenever the occasion arose in many a private gathering of good company (for which purpose most were composed),¹⁵ as from a desire not to lose in the eternal silence of oblivion something that could not only delight you,¹⁶ but also honor you, Ladies of Lyon, and bring you esteem in many lands every time these little, yet praiseworthy, youthful works of hers are read and greatly admired by all.

Even were that not to be the case, they may inspire one among you here—or elsewhere—and encourage her to take up literary pursuits in order to share in the great and immortal fame that the Ladies of Italy have acquired in our time.¹⁷ By their divine writings, they tarnish the luster of many a learned man; in like manner, here in France so many honorable and virtuous Ladies and Gentlewomen devote themselves to such pursuits with a great expectation of their eternal renown, to the great honor and glory of this entire kingdom. And even were it not, I repeat, for all these right and commendable reasons, should I not be judged ungrateful and injurious to you all, if, having it in my hands, I hid from you this modest incentive to push you toward a higher good in perpetual consideration of your reputation? Certainly there is no one (no matter how depraved his judgment may be) who would not then have good reason to condemn me as a thief of the honor and public acclaim of your sex.

And if, by chance, there be some odd fellow¹⁸ (as envy commonly accompanies virtue)¹⁹ who would wish to take this²⁰ the wrong way, for not knowing how to do as much, nor even how to come close to it by 100 leagues,²¹ I beseech you to trust in what everyone of good, sound judgment knows quite well—that just as each person naturally judges

de bon, et sain entendement sçait tres bien, que, tout ainsi que naturellement chascun de soy juge les autres, les bons, comme vous, Dames bonnes, et vertueuses, feront tousjours bien leur prouffit en tout, et par tout: car il n'est si petite, ne si meschante chose, dont on ne puisse tirer quelque peu de bien, et utilité, qui l'y voudra chercher, et le prendre en bonne intention. Et pource, quand vous orrez detracter l'envie pour vous descourager, et destourner de bien faire, souviene vous, qu'il fault necessairement: que les Asnes voient tousjours à leurs chardons, et à Dieu mes Dames, en grace de qui j'ay mieulx aymé desplaire aux malingz, que, en leur complaisant, vous faire tort.

De Lyon ce XIII. d'Aoust, 1545.

others by his own nature, good souls (like you, honest and virtuous Ladies) will always find benefit everywhere and in everything; for there is nothing so petty or mean from which there can't be drawn a little something good and useful, by one who will look for it and take it with good intentions. Therefore, when you hear envy's disparaging insinuations, attempting to discourage and distract you from doing what is right, remember this—that Asses always feed upon their thistles.²² So Adieu, my Ladies, for whose good graces I preferred to displease the malicious than, by pleasing them, to cause you any harm.

From Lyon, this 14th day of August, 1545.

L'imprimeur au lecteur

Quelle puissance Amytié puisse avoir,
Quand la vertu y est au vif empraincte,
Tu le pourras clerement icy veoir,
Appercevant une affection sainte
De chaste amour si haultement attaincte
En foy loyalle, et si bien poursuyvie,
Qu'elle peult cy, sans aucune contraincte,
(Maulgré la Mort) faire taire l'Envie.



*To the Reader from the Printer*²³

What power fond affection finds to wield,
With virtue set and vividly engrained,
You can observe now clearly here revealed,
And glimpse a noble friendship long sustained
By a chaste love, so loftily attained—
Through faith pursued, and known to never tire—
That it can in this case, all unconstrained,
And despite even Death, silence Desire.



I

[Epigramme I]

Le hault pouvoir des Astres a permis
(Quand je nasquis) d'estre heureuse et servie:
Dont congnoissant celuy, qui m'est promis,
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,
Où s'apparut celle divinité,
Qui me cause l'imagination
A contempler si haulte qualité.



II

[Epigramme II]

La nuict estoit pour moy si tresobscure,
Que Terre, et Ciel elle m'obscurissoit,
Tant, qu'à Midy de discerner figure
N'avois pouvoir, qui fort me marrissoit:
 Mais quand je vis que l'aulbe apparissoit
En couleurs mille et diverse, et seraine,
Je me trovay de liesse si pleine
(Voyant desjà la clarté à la ronde)
Que commençay louer à voix haultaine
Celuy, qui fait pour moy ce Jour au Monde.



1

[Epigram 1]²⁴

As lofty power from the Stars allowed,
I was happy at birth, well served; but then²⁵
I met the one who was to me avowed,²⁶
Leaving me numb to life—except for when
The suffering I feel time and again
Drives me to engrave my deep impression²⁷
Of cruel love, of passion's sweet progression,²⁸
Where that divinity at first appeared,²⁹
Leading my mind to muse, in quiet session,
Upon an excellence so long revered.³⁰



2

[Epigram 2]

How terrible—the darkness of my night
Which so obscured Heaven, and Earth below,
That at Midday there was too little light
For discerning shapes. It troubled me so;³¹
 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 praise³²
Him who formed for me such a Morn in the World.³³



15. Du Moulin stresses here that this poetry was composed and recited for friends in private company.

16. *recréer*: to delight or please, and also to give comfort or solace. Both shades of meaning apply in this context, given the earlier mention of the grief suffered by the deceased poet's friends and by those who would know her only through her poetry.

17. When referring to the celebrated "Ladies of Italy," Du Moulin may have been thinking of Vittoria Colonna (ca. 1490–1547) and Veronica Gambara (1485–1550), both well-born women whose works include poetry in the Petrarchan tradition.

18. *quelque bigerre cerveau*: Cotgrave defines "bigearre, or bigerre" as "odde, humorous, fantastical"; the *Larousse Dictionnaire du moyen français* defines this adjective as "qui s'écarte des usages reçus; singulier, extravagant" (that which deviates from normal usage; singular/odd, extravagant). "Cerveau" literally means "brain," but Cotgrave's dictionary gives several uses of the word used in pejorative expressions to refer to individuals (lawyers, monks, etc.), which led to the choice of "some odd fellow" for this translation.

19. Here and in the concluding passage, Du Moulin recognizes the danger and harmful impact of readers of bad faith—those who may be motivated by envy to take this poetry the wrong way. These are perhaps the same readers to whose slander or false accusations the poet responds in poem 42.

20. *cecy*: The pronoun refers to "this work/collection/book" (i.e., this "little bundle of rhymes") and therefore, by extension, "these poems."

21. According to the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694), the expression, "En estre à cent lieuës-, n'en approcher pas de cent lieuës," was used to indicate that what a person thinks or proposes is far removed from reality or the facts.

22. *Les Asnes voient tousjours à leurs chardons*: Cotgrave's dictionary cites the proverb, "Laissons aux asnes les chardons," meaning, "Let Asses feed on thistles; leave unto poorer spirits dull conceits." The idea is similar here, that asses will always be drawn to or seek out their thistles; they cannot appreciate any finer fare.

"TO THE READER FROM THE PRINTER"

23. This liminary poem by the printer, Jean de Tournes, echoes the points made by Antoine du Moulin in his preface, emphasizing that virtuous, chaste love forms the basis of the poems to follow. See the Introduction for more comments on these paratextual elements.

POEM 1

24. This epigram clearly associates the speaker's happy destiny with the higher powers of the heavenly planets. The age-old belief that events in the heavens affect those on earth came

to the Renaissance from Aristotle and other classical philosophers. European writers of this era saw no inherent contradiction between Christian revelation and the prediction of events through astrology. The fifteenth-century Italian Neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, for example, published a commentary on Plato's dialogue on love, the *Symposium*, and a treatise entitled, *On Christian Religion*. Another of Ficino's works, *Platonic Theology*, demonstrates the unity between classical ideas and Christian beliefs concerning the immortality of the soul. (See the Introduction for a discussion of the influence of Ficino and the Italian Neoplatonists on Pernette du Guillet's vision of love in the cosmos.) Note that in poem 33, however, the speaking subject appears to reject astrological divination in favor of truths revealed through her beloved's enlightening presence.

25. The expression "well served" ("servie") reflects the concept of *service d'amour*, the devotion demonstrated by the beloved for his lady in the medieval tradition of courtly love.

26. *dont*: Cotgrave's dictionary indicates that in sixteenth-century usage, the word "dont" could mean "whence," "whereby," or "whereupon." The word is frequently used in this sense in the *Rymes*.

27. This line highlights the physical act of inscribing or printing words and images on a page. The verb "regraver" expresses the technical process of engraving, as well as the suggested repetition of that activity. As noted in the Introduction, the term "impression" refers to an edition and to the printing process itself. The adjective "dure," meaning both physically hard and intellectually difficult, recalls the "durs Epygrammes" of Maurice Scève's opening *huitain* to his *Délie*. Reflecting the origin of the epigram in Antiquity, the phrase "deep impression" in English evokes the words and images engraved deeply and with difficulty into metal or stone, suggesting the intensity of the poet's work, and the effort required by the reader seeking to discern the truth therein. For further commentary on this poem and the verb "regraver," see Jones, *Currency*, 88.

28. The juxtaposition of "passion's sweet progression" and "cruel love" echoes the traditional antithesis of Petrarchan love poetry. Here, however, we learn that the speaker will rise above the Petrarchan suffering by contemplating the noble qualities of the beloved who has inspired her.

29. In line 8, the somewhat ambiguous "where" ("où") denotes the speaker's lifeless state before her beloved's arrival, but it also refers to the "dure impression" of line 6, where "that divinity" makes frequent appearances, that is to say in her (printed) poems.

30. The use of the adjective "hault" in both the first and last lines of the epigram points to the importance of the noble and lofty qualities attributed to the beloved male poet. The term "qualité" in the sixteenth century encompassed the notions of goodness and nobility that many of the poems in the *Rymes* associate with the beloved. Cotgrave's dictionary also indicates "calling" as a contemporary meaning of "qualité," which would suggest that Du Guillet describes not only her beloved's noble virtues, but also his poetic vocation, which she now contemplates as her own. The combination of "divinité" (line 8) and the verb

“contempler” (line 10) underscores the speaker’s attitude of reverence toward her beloved and his virtues.

POEM 2

31. Darkness (of night or at midday) is a recurring metaphor in the *Rymes* for the state of the poet’s mind and spirit before the illumination brought to her by the eloquence and learning of her beloved. See the Introduction for a discussion of this motif in the Petrarchan tradition.

32. The dawn’s illumination—rays of light from her beloved—disperse the troubling darkness of ignorance, allowing the speaker not only to *see* the colors around her, but also to begin to *speak*. Her first words, proclaimed aloud, are of praise for her beloved. The phrase “à voix haultaine” can mean simply, “in a loud voice; loudly,” but the adjective “haultaine” also suggests the lofty and exalted nature of the subject’s new-found voice.

33. In numerous poems in the collection, the speaker identifies her beloved as her Day (“Jour”), bringing enlightenment to her through love and—more importantly—through his writing and his learned eloquence. This epigram focuses on the moment of dawn, when light and love appear on the horizon—what poetic tradition calls the *innamoramento*. The pronoun “Him” (“Celuy”) is somewhat ambiguous in the context of the last line, leaving room for two different (and complementary) interpretations. The pronoun may refer to the beloved male poet himself, with the “Morn” (“ce Jour”) indicating the daylight and enlightenment the beloved brings to the speaker at the moment her love and voice are awakened. Alternately, “Him” (“Celuy”) may refer to a Divine Maker—the God who created this Day for the speaker, making her moment of awakening possible. This Creator God is associated with the celestial promise evoked in the first epigram. See the Translator’s Note for Finch’s reflections on this line in the French and in the English.

POEM 3

34. Here, as elsewhere, the speaker praises her beloved’s *sçavoir* (his learning, knowledge, and erudition), which she associates with light and with virtue.

35. The reference to the Heavens (“les Cieux”), here and in line 7, echoes the belief that events in the cosmos affect events on earth, an element of classical philosophy that the Renaissance Neoplatonists reconciled with Christian teachings. See above, n24.

36. In Greek mythology, the three Graces—Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia—were daughters of Zeus, and the sea-nymph Eurynome. These three goddesses of joy, charm, and beauty, attendants of Aphrodite, joined with the Muses to sing for the gods and dance to music played by Apollo on his lyre. It was believed that the Graces, along with the Muses, bestowed the ability to create beauty in art and poetry. It is not surprising to find them associated in this epigram with the beloved, whom the poet elsewhere compares to Apollo (notably in poems 4, 43, and 61). Here, the three Graces are held in happy servitude to the male poet