

Desarbres, Paul-Victor, Émilie Le Borgne, Frank Lestringant, and Tristan Vigliano, eds.

Guillaume Postel (1510–1581). Écrits et influences.

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To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of Guillaume Postel (1510–81), in September 1981, a colloquium on the sixteenth-century French scholar was organized at Avranches, France, chaired by Jean-Claude Margolin, who later edited a collected volume of essays, entitled *Guillaume Postel, 1581–1981* (Paris: G. Trédaniel, 1985), significantly comprising a variety of methods and topics. Almost thirty years after Avranches, a new symposium was held online in March 2021, and a new volume of proceedings, edited by Paul-Victor Desarbres, Émilie Le Borgne, Frank Lestringant, and Tristan Vigliano, has repeated the original experiment of the Avranches *colloque* providing multiple perspectives that convey the complexity of Postel's intellectual production.

“Que savons-nous de plus sur Postel aujourd’hui [...]?” (“What do we know more about Postel today [...]?”, 10; my translation), we might ask. A more thought-provoking question might be: Can we learn something new about Postel? In contrast to the paucity of literature on Guillaume Postel in English, the scholarship in French is quite vast, and of great note are, of course, the numerous studies of François Secret and his students. Nevertheless, there is still a vacuum in the literature when we come to some specific features of Guillaume Postel's thought and life. In particular, aspects not directly related to his study of the Hebrew language and the Jewish and Christian Kabbalah have often gone unremarked. Also, with few, though noteworthy, exceptions, most of Postel's manuscripts and published works lay unedited. The essays in the present volume, all in French, succeed in offering new perspectives on the Frenchman's thought and in giving new details on his manuscripts, works, and, in some cases, his networks.

After the introduction, the twelve essays are grouped by topic into six parts and are followed by the conclusions, authored by Frank Lestringant, summing up the contents of the essays. Part 1, “Raisons de la concorde,” opens with Olivier Millet's essay. Millet offers an illuminating discussion of the idea of *restitutio*, nuancing our understanding of this crucial concept in Postel's philosophy. By situating Postel's *restitutio* in broader historical contexts, Millet

distinguishes between it and similar contemporary ideas, such as *reformatio* and *instauratio*. Tristan Vigliano's essay about Postel's controversial *De orbis terrae concordia* examines the intricate structure of the four-chapter treatise, arguing that, although polemical against Islam, Postel's book cannot be easily compared to traditional Christian apologetics.

Part 2, "Postel et les langues," includes the contributions of Marie-Luce Demonet and Émilie Picherot. Demonet's essay, which returns to the well-known quarrel between Guillaume Postel and the Italian Orientalist Teseo Ambrogio, presents new material, a copy—now at the Besançon Municipal Library—of Ambrogio's *Introductio in Chaldaicam linguam, Syriacam, atque Armenicam, et decem alias linguas* extensively commented on by Postel. Picherot, in the following essay, proposes the first analysis of the content of three Arabic and Ottoman Turkish manuscripts—mainly grammars and lexicons—that Postel purchased in the Ottoman Empire, which are now at the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin). According to her attentive reading, Postel was, intriguingly, reproducing an ideal Muslim library.

Part 3, "Mesurer une influence," comes with a twist by dealing with Postel's career and his intellectual collaborations. Isabelle Pantin brilliantly problematizes the peculiar word *mathemata*, which Postel uses to describe his role as *lecteur royal* at the Collège royal, by exploring Postel's production in the field. Another stimulating discussion is Rosanna Gorris's writing about Postel's Italian networks between Venice and Padua. Gorris explores the relationships Postel established with several printers and booksellers, such as the Giunta brothers, Daniel Bomberg, the printing house Ad signum Spei, and Grazioso Percacino, reinstating their mutual interests at the centre of their collaborations.

The subsequent four essays, grouped into two parts, situate Postel within a larger horizon, giving an interesting overview of Postel's representation of the Ottomans, Japan, and the terrestrial paradise. In Part 4, "Postel et les Turcs," Émilie Le Borgne focuses on the Latin-French instruction on the Ottoman Turkish that Postel adds to his *Histoires orientales*, arguing that the trilingual lexicon serves as a tool for Postel to develop his nationalistic claim for the superiority of French and France. Part 4 ends with Frédéric Tinguely's thorough analysis of the specific example of Ottoman justice in Postel's 1560 edition of *De la République des Turcs*. As Tinguely shows, Postel poses a sort of apparent paradox by exalting the excellence of Ottoman Muslim justice over Christian justice and preventing, at the same time, his Christian readers from identifying

with the Ottomans. Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud's contribution in Part 5, "Autres lointains," explores Postel's *Des merveilles du monde* and his providential description of Japan, based on letters from some Jesuits. Here, she considers how the Jesuit Order affected Postel's narrative even after being dismissed from the Society of Jesus. Vincent Masse's significant contribution extensively surveys the manners by which Postel cartographically revises the position of the terrestrial paradise during his life. In particular, Masse sheds new light on the peculiar role Postel attributes to Canada, providentially located on the South-North axis, slowly replacing the East-West alignment in Postel's cosmography.

Beginning with Paul-Victor Desarbres's essay on Postel's *Commentarii in Apocalypsim*, Part 6, "Religion postellienne," returns to theological topics, somewhat anticipated in Part 1. Desarbres considers Postel's interpretation of the Apocalypse as prophetic rather than as historical or eschatological, locating modified passages from the Kabbalistic text of the Zohar in Postel's commentary. Katherine Stratton's essay ends the volume. Her contribution stands out for providing an original analysis of the use Postel made of the biblical Magi—emblematic figures in Renaissance culture—in three different works and for displaying the intertwining between Postel's cosmography and prophetic discourse.

Despite some disparity in the length of the essays, the extent of the topics, as well as the way new material is introduced and treated, makes this volume an important and solid contribution to the literature on Guillaume Postel. All the essays successfully look at the intricate life and thought of Postel from new and fascinating angles, convincingly leading the reader through the complexity and ambiguities of the sixteenth-century scholar's intellectual production.

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