

7-2012

# The Mystery of Saint Clement of Metz – Book Review

Vicki L. Hamblin

Western Washington University, [vicki.hamblin@wwu.edu](mailto:vicki.hamblin@wwu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl\\_facpubs](https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs)



Part of the [French and Francophone Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Hamblin, Vicki L., "The Mystery of Saint Clement of Metz – Book Review" (2012). *Modern & Classical Languages*. 50.  
[https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl\\_facpubs/50](https://cedar.wwu.edu/mcl_facpubs/50)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Modern & Classical Languages by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wwu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wwu.edu).

copied in 1391 for Pierre le Roy, abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel. But fol. 313 (fig. 32, p. 152) belongs to a thirteenth-century component, a fragment of Justinian's *Digestum*, book 49, perhaps from Toulouse and closely related to two more southern Justinian manuscripts: Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale 619 and Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellonksa 374, so the illustration is not appropriate to Deuffic's article on Jean Cachelart who wrote the first part of MS 33. The illustrations in Reims, Bibl. Carnegie 807, of which folio 35 is reproduced on page 162, can be attributed to the Montbaston circle of painters in Paris, second quarter of the fourteenth century. Despite these and other errors, overall this volume is a mine of information and interest particularly for the late Middle Ages and a region that has largely escaped comprehensive study heretofore.

ALISON STONES, University of Pittsburgh

FRÉDÉRIC DUVAL, ed., *Le mystère de Saint Clément de Metz*. Geneva: Droz, 2011. Pp. 813; b&cw figs. \$84. ISBN: 9782600014540. doi:10.1017/S0038713412002230

When the existing edition of a late medieval mystery play is clearly insufficient, but the lone manuscript on which that edition was based no longer exists, what recourse is there for future study of that play? Frédéric Duval proposes an answer to this question in a new edition of a mystery play that narrates visually the twenty-five-year career of the saintly personage popularly cited as Metz's first bishop. First edited by Charles Abel in 1861, the *Mystère de Saint Clément* was based on a fifteenth-century manuscript copy that was destroyed in 1944. Despite the loss of the late-medieval version of that text, Duval's new edition brings together the only surviving textual tools, and considerable editing skill, in order to represent what the lost copy may have looked like. He does so thanks in part to corrections made to Abel's edition by Fritz Tinius, whose 1909 dissertation compared over 1,000 lines of Abel's reading to the manuscript copy itself. Duval's task, in de-modernizing and correcting Abel's edition without benefitting from access to a medieval copy of this mystery play, may be perceived by some scholars as controversial. For that reason, Duval concedes that in approaching this edition it would have been a waste of time to produce a philological monster that reinvented a fifteenth-century Lorraine dialect (153) and that any such proto-dialect or linguistic archetype would not have recreated the original manuscript copy (148). Instead, Duval's edition is based on Abel's reading, which he amends in numerous critical notes, and in which he extends Tinius's corrections throughout the text while cautiously reconfirming the syllabic count of hypermetric and hypometric verses.

Duval's experience in editing other medieval texts is evident both in the conventions that he adopts with respect to this edition's introductory materials and in the innovations that this hybrid edition proposes. The edition's 160 pages of standard introductory materials are detailed, precise, and carefully documented. Duval's analysis of the differences between dramatization and the hagiographic *Vies* of saints, for example, illustrates how the latter simply lists the sermon's topic, while "le *fatiste* doit composer un sermon *in extenso* à verbaliser au moment de la représentation" (the compiler must write out the entire sermon to be spoken during the spectacle, p. 52). The implications for timing a staged performance and for interpreting the play's *silettes*, its staging structure, and its production potential are thoughtfully acknowledged by Duval, who cites regional records from the fifteenth century as well as modern historians of the medieval theater in his analysis. Given the conjectural nature of the language proposed by this edition, Duval's documentation of the play's linguistic features is limited to those aspects of fifteenth-century Messine script that modern readers might not recognize, but its many examples are carefully annotated. With regard to the creation of this edition, Duval's extensive documentation of the nature and number of Abel's errors (for instance, mistaking the long *s* [-*f*-] for an *f* or

an *l* or not recognizing the nasal bar abbreviations written over words) justifies the corrections that supplement the rectifications that Tinius had proposed for Abel's edition. This level of detail is necessary, according to Duval, so that the text stratum created by Abel remains a visible layer in the new edition (147).

Thus, the Saint Clément play is presented in this 800-page volume as a true editorial hybrid that seeks a dialog with the reader by presenting multiple layers of a reconstituted text. Where lines or partial lines were missing from the manuscript copy, Duval retains Abel's additions, but places them in italics. Tinius's corrections appear in the body of the text, while Abel's erroneous readings are found in the footnotes. Symbols point to 100 pages of critical notes that explain literary, theatrical, linguistic, and historical information but that also comment on possible readings in the missing text. Duval's own interventions appear in square brackets in and beside the text. A *dramatis personae*, a useful index nominum, and a generous glossary round out the volume.

Once the reader masters the fairly complex presentation of this text, the play itself reads coherently and clearly, even as it exposes an archaeological layering of previous readings and possible meanings. The introductory materials, which are rich in content and detail, are unfortunately presented in a series of titled sections and subsections that are easily confused, despite their overall adherence to generic convention. Two separate subsections titled "Versification" (105) and "La versification" (115), for instance, refer back to sections on dating the manuscript and on the text's poetic language. The number of such sections, some of which appear in outline format while others do not, and the inconsistent use of definite articles in subsection heads—"II. Les rimes" (110) and "III. Formes avec refrains" (111)—further complicate the reader's relationship with this material. A similar inconsistency appears in the *dramatis personae* list, where Duval found it necessary, for example, to translate the term "l'avugle" but not "le quocquin," which immediately follows it alphabetically (723), as well as in the index nominum, where an introductory note states that an asterisk points to critical notes (727), but where, instead, the star used in the edition itself appears (160). Aside from these internal inconveniences, this edition poses interesting questions about the nature of modern critical editions.

VICKI HAMBLIN, Western Washington University

ALEXANDER E. ELINSON, *Looking Back at al-Andalus: The Poetics of Loss and Nostalgia in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Literature*. (Brill Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 34.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009. Pp. 198; color figs. \$129. ISBN: 9789004166806. doi:10.1017/S0038713412002242

Alexander Elinson examines the depiction of an idealized Arab al-Andalus in literature written by Andalusians from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. In taking on this topic, Elinson enters an area explored by such scholars as María Rosa Menocal, William Granara, and Teresa Garulo, among many others. Elinson builds on their work by acknowledging the ethnic implications of the idealized depiction of al-Andalus, which celebrates its "pure" Arab identity in contrast with the Berber Maghrib and Romance northern Spain. Elinson emphasizes the Arab nature of Andalusian literature by contextualizing the genres he examines in Arabic literary history. His close readings of selected Arabic and Hebrew texts examine the authors' use of poetic convention to express individual experience.

In the introduction, Elinson argues that nostalgia is inscribed in Arabic literary language. The pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* motif of the abandoned campsite as the site of a past erotic encounter encodes nostalgia. The evocative force of nostalgic literature, Elinson suggests, resides in the blurring of past and present, individual and collective, that enables a writer's personal expression to resonate with an audience educated in the poetic conventions