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## More than a Reasonable Facsimile: Yvette Quenot's Edition of Jean de La Ceppède's *Théorèmes*

Russell J. Ganim

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, rganim1@unl.edu

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# More than a Reasonable Facsimile

Russell J. Ganim  
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA (LINCOLN)

La Ceppède, Jean de. *Les Théorèmes sur le sacré mystère de nostre redemption*. Edited by YVETTE QUENOT. Two volumes. Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1988.

Since the rehabilitation of Jean de La Ceppède's *Théorèmes*, study of the work has been hindered by the lack of an easily readable, critically annotated edition. Though extracts of his meditations appeared in a few poetry anthologies during the twentieth century, it was not until 1966, with the appearance of Jean Rousset's Droz facsimile that full access to the sonnets and the poet's annotations could be gained without consulting the original Toulouse editions of 1613 and 1622. The Droz text, though in many ways quite useful, is not sufficient for serious scholarship. Its archaic typefaces, moreover, make reading difficult for non-specialists, who also require lexical and encyclopedic notes. Seeing the need to reproduce the sonnets in a more authoritative, workable format, Yvette Quenot has ambitiously undertaken the first critical edition of the *Théorèmes*, the first part of which has recently appeared.

Despite some considerable weaknesses, Quenot's effort can be considered a substantial achievement, for it specifically addresses the problems of readability, accuracy, and notes. While Quenot's most significant contribution is undoubtedly her extensive documentation of La Ceppède's sources and inspirations, it may be best to begin with her treatment of a relatively simple, but important concern, that of readability. Quite wisely, Quenot tries to respect the in-

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tegrity of the text's original appearance by adopting a cautious attitude towards spelling and general presentation. As a rule, her changes are slight and her approach mixed. Following a precedent established in many reprintings of sixteenth and early seventeenth century works, Quenot avoids the difficulties in reading posed by diplomatic transcription, opting for modernization, differentiating between the *i* and the *j*, the *u* and the *v*, as well as standardizing the *s*. Along with modernization, she attempts to ease the reader's task by normalizing spelling and punctuation as well as correcting typographical errors that recur in the Droz facsimile, which she states is her "texte de base" (37). Most of these "erreurs manifestes" which number well over three hundred in both the poems and their annotations, are bracketed for reference to a list of "graphies originales" in which Quenot presents the "corrected" forms, based on her consultations of an original copy at the BN. This minutely detailed entry, designed for "le lecteur qui voudra retrouver le texte exact de la première édition" not only clarifies the reading but reinforces her attempt to produce an authoritative, accurate text resembling the original as much as possible (37). Maintaining her objectivity, Quenot is silent as to what effect these variations could have on the meaning of the work, leaving such questions for critics to debate. Corrections of this type are impressive as they show a sensitivity to textual modification and history necessary in the compilation of any definitive edition.

In her introduction, Quenot underscores her attention to the textual history of La Ceppède's meditations, emphasizing the difficulty of re-editing a work whose extant printings are not only quite rare, but scattered in libraries across France. Quenot employs a comparative approach to textual reconstruction, having examined numerous authentic printings in order to respect and reproduce the author's original intentions. Though clearly declaring her choice of Rousset's photo facsimile as her point of departure, Quenot does not explain her selection of this text over a prototype at the BN for example. One possible answer is that the Marseille text from which the Droz reproduction is taken was the last one La Ceppède himself revised, as a consequence of which, most modern scholarship has stemmed from it.

Further demonstrating her concern with the textual history of La Ceppède's poetry, Quenot includes variants of certain sonnets as they originally appeared in an "échantillon" of *Douze Meditations sur le Sacré Mystère de Nostre Redemption* which La Ceppède published in Lyon as part of his lesser known *Imitation des Psaumes de David*. While one must turn to other sources, including

Quenot's *Lectures de La Ceppède* (Droz 1986) for a detailed description of the "échantillon," her incorporation of these preliminary meditations is quite important as it shows the need to present both stylistic and substantive modifications which could eventually become a point of departure for scholarly contention and research. This edition includes six such variants, occurring mostly in Book 3. As with the list of corrections, Quenot reserves comment on the causes and significance of the poet's revisions. Careful to note only those preliminary sonnets which La Ceppède later revised for the *Théorèmes*, Quenot matches earlier and final versions of the sonnets, which attests to her extensive knowledge and active reading of La Ceppède's poetry. Both are more clearly evidenced in her copious documentation of La Ceppède's sources which constitutes the central focus of this edition. Quenot's notes, in large measure an extension and elaboration of the research done for her *Lectures*, at times provide a reasonably well detailed amplification of the evangelical, patristic, philosophical, historical and literary works to which La Ceppède alludes in his own notes. Quenot finds that instead of directly consulting the Gospel, Old Testament and other sources, La Ceppède often filters his references through theological interpretations of Christ's Passion. Thus she sees as her principal task to reveal these "intermediate" consultations or, as she puts it, "dévoiler le plus exactement possible, le ou les ouvrages que La Ceppède avait sous les yeux ou sous la main quand il écrivait" (37). The same method is applied to the sonnets themselves, as the editor attempts to trace the origins of the poet's images and comparisons through the "source médiante" of sermon or treatise (37). Quenot's documentation, initially based on the "Table des Auteurs" which La Ceppède includes at the end of the Première Partie, centers primarily on the interpretations of eighteen theologians, a list of whose works appear in the editor's introduction. Almost always citing the specific line and/or verse numbers in the sonnet or poet's annotation to which the reference can be matched, Quenot often directly quotes these works, as well as a host of others, choosing and condensing the passages which she believes have the greatest bearing on La Ceppède's themes, language and images. The extent of Quenot's research is evident in the depth of her documentation, often attributing the inspiration of the poem to several verifiable sources.

On the whole, Quenot's findings are informative and her method rather original, as the bibliographical perspective tends to de-emphasize lexical, idiomatic and syntactical approaches to annotation often used in critical editions. In considering the overall merit of this textual reconstruction, however, there are questions which must be

addressed: Do Quenot's notes constitute insightful, well-balanced amplifications of La Ceppède's sonnets and annotations; or conversely, do they somehow comprise an elaborative but rather uninspiring, peripheral reading of the *Théorèmes*, offering an approach concerned more with a presumed background of the text than with the text itself?

While the answers remain somewhat inconclusive, it can be said in Quenot's favor that she is aware of the singularity of her "modus operandi," trying to incorporate a number of interpretive concerns under the heading of "bibliography." Nonetheless, one comes away with the impression she falls short of this objective, content merely to trace and quote essentially one part of La Ceppède's influences and antecedents without really adding to her repertoire of editorial perspectives. The detail of Quenot's source work is revealing as far as it goes, but all too often, her documentation extends patterns previously set out in her *Lectures*. Though it is understandable and no doubt desirable that the editor integrate and expand her research into a critical edition, her rigid concentration on patristic sermon and treatise can be faulted for repetitions, narrowness of focus, and at times reductiveness. More extensive explorations of the poet's direct biblical, literary and mythological allusions, for example, might have yielded a work more sophisticated in its annotative orientation. Quenot's method, despite its originality, reads *around* La Ceppède's poetry not *into* it, valuing the extrinsic over the intrinsic without providing sufficient justification.

Despite these difficulties, it is undeniable that Quenot's work has scholarly value. Though space does not permit an extensive discussion of the lexicon and bibliography, they deserve brief mention because they greatly enhance the edition's usefulness. The lexicon, though incomplete, could serve as a basis for semantic research on La Ceppède. The bibliography, though omitting important works such as those of Christine McCall Probes and Francis Laurence, is probably the most complete to date, providing source material for a number of topics. What Quenot has effectively done is to transform what was previously an obscure, un-annotated, difficult-to-read collection of sonnets and author's commentary into an accessible, useful modern text which will undoubtedly encourage and support advanced research. While Quenot does not mention whether or not an edition of the *Théorèmes'* second part is forthcoming, the publication of this work will perhaps induce others to follow her example.