In Memoriam

JEAN DUFOURNET
1933-2012

Jean Dufournet was undoubtedly one of the most important medievalists of the second half of the twentieth century. A member of both the Société Internationale Rencesvals and the International Arthurian Society, he was an active and natural networker. In addition, the range of his own output, of the colloquia he organised, the series of publications he edited, and the theses he supervised put him virtually in a class of his own.

Jean Dufournet was born into a large family at Thônes (Haute Savoie, France) on the March 13, 1933. During the Second World War his parents were active résistants, and the upbringing he gained in that troubled period remained solid: he never lost touch with his roots, saying on more than one occasion that his real ambition was to be a mountain guide. In fact, after his elementary education in the village, he prepared for the École Normale Supérieure at the Lycée du Parc in Lyon, entered the ENS in 1954 and gained the agrégation in 1957. After a period of school teaching, he held posts successively at the universities of Rabat (Morocco), Clermont-Ferrand, and Montpellier before being appointed professor at the Sorbonne in 1970. When, following the upheavals of 1968, the new system of Parisian universities was established in 1971, Jean Dufournet chose to leave the conservative Sorbonne and move to the more liberal environment of the Sorbonne Nouvelle (Université de Paris III), which he helped to establish and where he worked until his retirement in 1994.

Despite a very serious illness suffered in 1993, which gave deep concerns to his friends and colleagues and which continued to have repercussions for the rest of his life, Dufournet’s energy remained un-
abated, and his retirement was as full as his previous working life. From his original thèse d'état, *La destruction des mythes dans les ‘Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes’*, published in 1966, to his latest edition of *Galeran de Bretagne*, published in 2009, the flow of research across the full range of medieval French literature was unbroken and the standard of work uniformly and impressively high. To mention just a small sample, his personal work included *Adam de la Halle à la recherche de lui-même, ou, Le jeu dramatique de la feuillée*; *Les Écrivains de la IVe croisade: Villehardouin et Clari*; *Philippe de Commynes: un historien à l’aube des temps modernes*; and a series of five studies of François Villon, undertaken alone or in collaboration with Michael Freeman and Jean Dérens. Then there were also his more than twenty editions and translations ranging from lyric poetry through theatre, fabliaux and romance to epic and historiography, and over 600 articles showing the same range. He was also an indefatigable organiser of colloquia and collaborative volumes in all areas. His contributions to epic studies include his masterly and enlightening *Cours sur la ‘Chanson de Roland’* (1972), an edition of *La Chanson de Roland* (1993, revised 2004) and two collaborative volumes edited by him: *‘Ami et Amile’: une chanson de geste de l’amitié* (1987) and *Mourir aux Aliscans: ‘Aliscans’ et la légende de Guillaume d’Orange* (1993, in collaboration with Nelly Andrieux-Reix).

Nor did his contribution to our discipline stop with his personal research. He was editor-in-chief of five series published by Champion-Slatkine, some of which he launched or relaunched himself: *La Nouvelle Bibliothèque du Moyen Âge*; *La Bibliothèque du XVe Siècle*; *Essais sur le Moyen Âge* (dedicated to new approaches or to studies of less well-known works and authors); *Traductions des Classiques du Moyen Âge*; *Colloques, Congrès et Conférences—le Moyen Âge*. He was also joint editor of the periodicals *Le Moyen Âge* and *La Revue des Langues Romanes*. All of this would have occupied more than one lifetime for most men, but Dufournet also supervised over 100 doctoral theses, not only on medieval topics but also on contemporary French literature, including less fashionable authors such as Patrick Modiano.

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Jean Dufournet was indeed a giant among scholars, but he was never overbearing. He was a charming and witty companion, generous of spirit and never gratuitously acerbic. His support and encouragement of scholars, especially of young scholars, was unstinting. His international standing was recognised by his election to the Académie Royale de Belgique and to the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters. He died in Férolles-Attilly (Seine-et-Marne, France) on Saturday, May 5, 2012, aged 79.

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