

Obituary: Marcel Tetel

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Marcel Tetel, founding editor of the *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (now *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*) from 1971 until 1995, and Professor of French and Italian Literature in the Department of Romance Studies at Duke, died in Durham, North Carolina, on May 27, 2004. He was born in 1932, in Paris, the only child of Jewish parents from Poland, who had immigrated to France in 1928. His father was deported to Germany late in 1939 at the outset of the Occupation, and his mother, who lived with her son in hiding in Paris for the next four years, was arrested and deported in 1943. Both parents perished at Auschwitz. The eleven-year-old Marcel was rescued by the Resistance and survived the war at La Rochelle passing for the son of a Christian family. In 1947, the orphaned teenager was brought to the United States by a Jewish relief organization and given a home in Tennessee.

After completing a B.A. at the University of Chattanooga in 1954, he took an M.A. at Emory University in 1956, and the following year lived in Italy on a Fulbright. He returned to the United States in 1958 and entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His study with the eminent *seizièmiste* Alfred Glauser played a crucial role in determining his choice of specialization. He completed his dissertation on Rabelais with Glauser in 1961. He was later to edit Glauser's festschrift, *Textes et intertextes: Etudes sur le XVIe siècle pour Alfred Glauser* (1979).

By 1961, Marcel had already been teaching a year at Duke as an instructor in the Romance Studies Department. He became assistant professor in 1962, associate professor in 1965, and full professor in 1968. Although he lectured and taught widely in the United States, Africa, and Europe over the years, Duke and Durham provided him with the stability that he required after a turbulent childhood and youth.

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Memories of that past prevented Marcel from returning to France for many years. Although the focus of his research from the beginning was on the great French writers of the sixteenth century, he did his early postdoctoral research in Italy. His scholarly work there provided him with unique insights into the influence of late Renaissance Italy not only on Rabelais, but also on Marguerite de Navarre, Montaigne, and Scève. The results of his discoveries were published over the years in eight monographs and more than seventy articles dedicated to the work of these writers.

As important to Marcel as his own scholarship, however, was his contribution to promoting the international exchange of ideas between scholars in the field of Renaissance studies. The ten collections of essays that he edited on topics ranging from Pirandello to Ronsard to death in fifteenth-century Florence are the results of conferences that he organized and directed. The subjects and the list of contributors, drawn from five continents, testifies to his concern for the vitality of intellectual communication in a broad range of disciplines. He also used these conferences as a means of putting talented younger scholars in contact with senior people in their field. The indexes of the *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* for twenty-four years also manifest his role in advancing the careers of talented younger scholars, who have now become the senior generation.

Although Marcel began with Rabelais, he felt closest to Montaigne not only as a writer but also as a human being. Aside from his publications, Marcel made Montaigne the focus of six of the eight National Endowment for the Humanities summer institutes and seminars he directed for high school teachers and college professors between 1983 and 1995. These seminars were held in St. Michel de Montaigne, where, after swearing never to drink any wine but Bergerac, Marcel became an honorary citizen. For him Montaigne represented the ideal balance between the reflective life of the scholar/writer/intellectual and the life of the public servant. Although he never held a political office, in his own way Marcel lived an active life beyond his study as a leader in his profession.

Marcel leaves behind his wife, Julie Tetel, and four children.