INTRODUCTION

In this anthology an effort has been made to include representative selections from the most significant sixteenth-century French poets. With the exception of a few longer works (mainly those of Ronsard, Du Bartas, and D'Aubigné), poems are given complete. In addition, the original spelling and punctuation have been retained as far as possible, except for the usual editorial modifications (differentiation of u and v, i and j, the addition of accents to à, ô, replacement of & by et, and so on). After all, part of the fun of reading sixteenth-century poetry is getting acquainted with differences in spelling and syntax, and learning to savour the authentic language of the period. The difficulties are not really very great and no glossary has been provided, on the theory that as often as not readers fail to find the word they are looking for among those which the editor thinks he needs to explain. Very often words can be guessed at by being read aloud but obsolete expressions and any others likely to prove troublesome are dealt with in footnotes. If students get stuck nonetheless, they should turn first to Harrap's Standard French-English Dictionary and then to their instructor.

Among general trends or movements during the century, it seemed essential to consider the Grands Rhétoriqueurs, the Lyon poets, and the Pléiade. Of the latter group, frequently only the names of Ronsard and Du Bellay are mentioned and it is for this reason that some space is given to each member of the school. The successors to the Pléiade are represented by Desportes and the anthology concludes with a group of Protestant poets who do not form a school even though they reflect a significant aspect of poetry near the end of the century.

No attempt has been made to include dramatic poetry or poetic theory, even though both are extremely important. From the bibliographical information given, interested students will be able to pursue these topics independently.

The sixteenth century is a period of tremendous poetic activity. It is a period closer in spirit to us in many ways than the intervening centuries, particularly the seventeenth and the eighteenth. Its poetry is still being rediscovered and re-assessed in a way that is just as exciting as the period of foment during which it was written.
REFERENCES


There is a special dictionary of sixteenth-century French language, which up to 1963 includes the letters A to Re:

Edmond Huguet, Dictionnaire de la langue française au XVIe siècle (Paris, Champion-Didier [1925— ]).