Breton Literature between the 16th and 17th Centuries: The Work of Artisans

Ronan Calvez

> One day, Claude Simon said to me: 'We are artisans'. And I replied: 'Not at all: artisans, truly skilled artisans, know what they are going to do and how they will go about it. They know what the purpose of their work is and the best methods to use. We, on the other hand, don't know what we are going to achieve or what our work may become, independently of us.'
>
> Pierre Soulages, *Le Monde* on Friday, 16 October 2009

Introduction

The term Middle Breton refers to a stage in the evolution of the Breton language spanning the 11th century to the middle of the 17th century. Sources remaining from the early days of that period are extremely rare. The disparate fragments and half complete short texts that are available date from the middle of the 14th century (Le Menn 1982, Courouau 2008, Schrijver 2011). In 1449, the first Breton – French – Latin dictionary, *Le Catholicon,* was printed in Tréguier.[1] Some years later, the Parisian printers Yves Quillévéré published a *Passion* and *Resurrection* in verse, and three poems. Today, these are the most complete of the oldest surviving works. Continuous output followed.

Texts from the 16th and 17th centuries were rediscovered and republished in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century and these have been the main focus of philological analyses.[2] The few scholars and academics who studied these works highlighted their complex verse form (Ernault 1912). There was hardly any interest in the content of other texts, mainly because "it would be pointless to look for any finesse of style or thought" (Guyonvarc'h 1987: 216).[3]

In recent years, however, approaches to comprehending these texts have changed completely and the knowledge we have about them has been renewed considerably. To appreciate this literature, we first need to understand its nature and consider

1 It was reprinted in Tréguier in the early 16th century, then in Paris in 1521 (Guyonvarc'h 1975: the introduction mentions various Middle Breton written works for standards of comparison).

2 See Ernault's *Dictionnaire étymologique du breton moyen* (1887) and *Glossaire moyen-breton* (1895, 1896). His articles on Breton linguistics have been republished by Gwennole Le Menn (2001).

3 The author speaks more specifically about the mysteries and adds: "It is a vulgar form of theatre indeed." (*Ibid.*)

the form it takes. We then need to examine the context in which it was produced. In other words, we must try to understand why these works were written as they were.

1. What was written

Some of the texts we know about have been printed, others are in manuscript form, and others we can only have an idea of, as they no longer exist. They can be broadly divided into four genres (Le Berre 2012: 114–6):[4] plays in verse form, prayers, poems and sermons in verse form, narrative and didactic prose, and secular writing. Here, I cite the most representative and emblematic texts.

The most voluminous works are the mystery plays which alternate monologues and dialogues between characters:

> The *Passion* and the *Resurrection*, comprising 4,837 verses, printed in Paris in 1530;[5]
>
> *Buhez Sante Barba* (*The Life of Saint Barbara*), printed in Paris in 1557;[6]
>
> *Buhez Santez Nonn* (*The Life of Saint Nonn and her son David*), a manuscript,[7] the date of which is subject to debate;[8]
>
> *An Buhez Sant Gwenôlé* (*The Life of Saint Winwaloe*), which we know from a transcription by Dom Louis Le Pelletier (1716: 1353) of a copy thought to date from 1580.[9]

Some prayers, poems and sermons have also survived:

> The three poems which follow the *Passion* and the *Resurrection*: *Tremenuan an Ytron Guerches Maria* (*The Passion of the Virgin Mary*); *Pemzec Leuenez Maria* (*The Fifteen Joys of Mary*); *Buhez Mad Den* (*The Life of Man*) (1270 verses in total) (Le Berre 2011);[10]

4 This work includes a list and extracts of surviving texts.

5 The one remaining copy is held at the BNF (Bibliothèque Nationale de France). This work was republished in Saint-Malo in 1609 and in Morlaix in 1622 (cf. Le Berre 2011 and see review of this edition by Le Bihan 2018b).

6 The one remaining copy is held at the British Library in London. This work was republished in 1608 and 1647 (see Le Berre 2018, Widmer 2013).

7 Held at the BNF, in the Celtic and Basque collection, and available online at *Gallica*.

8 See the most recent republication, which dates the manuscript at the end of the 16th century (Le Berre, Tanguy & Castel 1999). Le Bihan (2021: 12) dates it at around 1480. See also Botrel (1998).

9 See Dom Le Pelletier's copy and translation (1716: 1356–1425). The manuscript is available online at *Les Tablettes Rennaises*, the website of the Bibliothèque des Champs Libres. See also Ernault (1932: 2–3).

10 See also Le Bihan & Fleuriot (2012: 37–48), Le Bihan (2018a). On the *Fifteen Joys,* see also Le Bihan (2019: 56–62).

Le Mirouer de la Mort (*The Mirror of Death*), a long poem with 3602 verses, printed in 1575 by the Cuburien Franciscan Monastery near Morlaix,[11] and composed in 1519 by "Maestre Iehan an Archer Coz",[12] of the parish of Plougonven;

An Nouelou, *Ancien ha Devot* (*The Christmas Carols*, *Ancient and Devout Songs*), Christmas canticles composed by Tanguy Gueguen and printed in Quimper in 1650, 18 years after his death.[13]

Tragedien sacr (*Sacred Tragedy*), set in verse by Dom Jean Cadec, *Les Dévotes méditations sur tous les mystères du sacrifice de la sainte Messe* (*The Devout Meditations on All the Mysteries of the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass*) by François de Sales. There are several editions, but the date of composition is uncertain:[14] 1651, which appears in the editions that have come down to us, refers to the French text that inspired the Breton author.

It is difficult to distinguish narrative prose from didactic prose as both provide moral instruction to readers or listeners:

Buhez an Itron Sanctes Cathell (*The Life of Saint Catherine*), printed in 1576 in Cuburien;[15]

The *Confessional*, adapted in Breton by Euzen Gueguen (Le Bihan 2013) printed in Nantes in 1612 (Le Bihan 2010) and in Quimper in 1646;[16]

An mirouer a confession (*The Mirror of Confession*),[17] a Breton translation by Tanguy Gueguen of the French version of the work by Emerio de Bonis (1618), printed in Morlaix in 1621;

Doctrin an christenien (*The Christian's Doctrine*),[18] a Breton translation by Tanguy Gueguen of the 1608 French version of the work by the Spanish Jesuit Diego de Ledesma,

11 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*. It was republished and translated by Emile Ernault (1914).

12 *Le Mirouer…*, f° 71 r°.

13 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*. The *Nouelou* have been republished and translated by Goulven Pennaod (Preder, 1984).

14 There is one undated edition published in Brest and another published in Quimper in 1688. The Brest edition held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*. The two impressions of this *Tragedien* were reprinted by Le Menn (1998).

15 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*.

16 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*.

17 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*. See the reprint of Gwennole Le Menn (2006).

18 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*. See Hemon (1977).

Sommaire de la Doctrine chrestienne, en forme de Dialogue entre le Maistre et le Disciple (*Christian doctrine in manner of a dialogue between the master and the disciple*). Printed in Morlaix in 1622, the Breton edition also includes a translation, in verse, of the *Stabat Mater*;[19]

Buhez sant Euzen (*The Life of Saint Yves*), translated from the French by Tanguy Gueguen and printed in 1623;[20]

Ar veac'h devot hac agreabl eus a perc'herinet Santes Anna e Guenet (*The Devout and Agreeable Journey [to God] of the Pilgrims of Saint Anne*), written by the Carmelite Bernard du Saint-Esprit and printed in Morlaix in 1656.[21] In addition to the prose text which tells the story of the pilgrimage of Saint Anne of Auray, there is a dialogue in verse form "between death and all kinds of people" (Le Menn 1978) and a canticle to Saint Anne for pilgrims.[22]

The last category of surviving texts concerns secular works:

An Dialog etre Arzur Roe d'an Bretounet ha Guynglaff (*The Dialogue between Arthur King of the Bretons and Guynglaff*), known due to a transcription by Dom Le Pelletier of a text dating from 1450;[23]

A sonnet written by one François Moeam and published in 1554 in a work honouring the birth of the Dauphin.[24]

These are not the only works, however. The same Dom Le Pelletier (1716: 1460) cited some extracts from a secular play *Amouroustet eun den coz* (*The Loves of an Old Man*),[25]

19 This work has been published and analysed in detail by Le Berre (2009).

20 This biography has been reissued by Gwennole Le Menn (Saint-Brieuc, Skol, 2002). At the end of the prose narrative, there are two acrostics by Tanguy Gueguen, prayers addressed to Saint Yves.

21 The copy held by the BNF is available online at *Gallica*.

22 This canticle features in another work by Bernard du Saint-Esprit, *Doctrinal ar christenien* (*The Christian Doctrine*), printed in Quimper in 1680, reprinted in Brest in 1688 (the BNF's copy is available at *Gallica*) and in Quimper in 1689. The canticles were republished by Emile Ernault (1900). He mistakenly asserted that the text was Morlaixian and dated to 1628. For a critical appraisal see G. Le Menn (1979: 122-123; 1982).

23 The transcription and translation of the *Dialogue* are on pages 1426–1441 of Dom Le Pelletier's manuscript. See Le Bihan (2013a).

24 *Poesie En diuerses langues. Svr la naissance de Henry de Bovrbon Prince tres hevrevs, ne av chasteav de Pav av mois de decembre. 1553* (Tolose: Imprimerie de Iacques Colomiés). See Le Menn (1981: 249–71) and Bihan (2021: 18–9).

25 These extracts from Le Pelletier (1716: 1460–6). See Hemon (1969) and Piriou (1986: 88–97).

which he said were printed in Morlaix in 1647. Is this an isolated work or is it the surviving remnant of a secular output in verse form? Based on current research, it is hard to answer this question. Moreover, although the mystery plays in Breton from the 15th and 16th centuries are models of the genre, they also include scenes which break with the style and are secular and burlesque in nature. For instance, the *Life of Saint Barbara* features a song performed by stonemasons;[26] and similarly, in the *Resurrection*, printed in 1530, there is an argument between a maid servant, a servant and an innkeeper.[27]

In their way, these scenes are indirect evidence of a tradition of secular writing for informed readers and listeners (Le Roux 1954: 3–21), just as some canticles from the earliest surviving collection were sung over clearly secular tunes[28] and therefore circulated orally at least. The anonymous composer *Père Jésuite* fully embraced this approach ("the other tunes are borrowed from songs which were sung communally in the Cornoüaille district, named in the title of each canticle").[29] And he explained this in his "epistre av lectevr":

> *Partant nous exhortons de la part de Dieu, tous les chrestiens à faire diuorce dés a-present auec toutes les chansons mondaines, contraires à leur fin derniere; & à commencer à faire des ce monde, & mesme parmy les occupations necessaires de leurs vacations, l'office des Anges & des citoiens du ciel, loüans & benissans Dieu par ces cantiques spirituels composés à ce dessein, attendant que Dieu leur fasse la grace de l'aller loüer eternellement au ciel, parmy les chœurs des Anges, & des trouppes bienheureuses de leurs freres.*[30]
>
> Hence, on God's behalf we exhort all Christians, from now on, to give up those worldly songs which run contrary to their final destiny; and start to use this world, and even those tasks necessary to their work, to serve the Angels and the citizens of heaven, let us praise and bless God through these spiritual canticles composed for this purpose, hoping that God will grant them the honour of eternal praise in heaven, among the choirs of Angels and the blessed troupes of their brothers.

26 See the edition by Le Berre (2018: 124–25, v. 475–480). For information about this song, see Bihan (2021: 52–3).

27 See the edition by Le Berre (2011: 394–99, v. 4088–4116).

28 See the directions for the tune in the Christmas canticles collection printed in Quimper in 1642: "Me meus seiz maner ha seiz coat" (p. 32), "Er bloas quentaff maz demezis" (p. 66), "E Plouare en pleg ar mor" (pp. 41, 81), "An Itroun à Kgabin à lauare bepret" (p. 119) (*Cantiqvov spiritvel da beza canet er catechismou, ha lechiov all gant an christenien* […], Qvemper Cavrentin, Machvel, 1642). This work, available online at *Gallica*, has been reprinted by Gwennole Le Menn (1997).

29 "Advertissement av lectevr tovchant les airs de ce livret" (*idem*, 7).

30 "Epistre av lectevr" (*idem*, 6).

Although, at present, it is difficult to evaluate these surviving texts, nevertheless, they are evidence of a very distinctive form.

2. How it was written

Some artists sculpt wood and others work with stone. Consonants and vowels, rhymes and rhythms are also construction materials.

As we know, some texts are written in prose and others in verse. In both cases, these works in Breton have a refined register that suits the message they convey to readers or listeners. Even if the didactic aim is the same, there is a visible contrast (Le Berre 2012: 208) which can also be understood as a form of complementarity between the long phrases with embedded subordinate clauses in the prose and the complexity of the verse form. Middle Breton verse is composed of a complex form which combines end rhymes and internal rhymes. This extract from *The Life of Man*, is an example of an exceptionally polished octosyllabic hexastich:

*Tro dr**em** / a br**em**an // map an bet*	5 // 3	2 / 3 // 3
*Hac eng**alu** / s**alu**der // daz speret*	5 // 3	3 / 2 // 3
*Hep go**ap** / **ap**ret // parfet detal*	4 // 4	2 / 2 // 4
*Ha m**yr** / ouz h**iru**out // dyouty*	5 // 3	2 / 3 // 3
*H**an** **roll** / **foll**ez // deux **an**ezy*	4 // 4	2 / 2 // 4
*Pan out t**enn**[31] / **en**hy // cordyal.*	5 // 3	3 / 2 // 3

Henceforth turn your face from the world, man,
And call for the salvation of your soul,
Seriously, very scrupulously;
And beware the torments it causes
And all the forms of madness it inspires,
As you devote yourself to him unreservedly.[32]

The end rhymes follow an *aabccb* model. The end rhyme in the first two lines (-et) becomes the internal rhyme in the third line and the end rhyme in the fourth and the fifth line (-y) becomes the internal rhyme in the last line. This is sometimes known as lateral rhyming. Each line contains a classic internal rhyme (underlined) on the last but one syllable and on the syllable before the main caesura (//). The prepositions *dyouty*, *deux anezy* which relate back to *bet* 'world',[33] meaning the danger that the sinner must avoid in order to save his soul (*daz speret*).

31 The *tell* on the print should be corrected to *tenn*.

32 See Le Berre (2012: 650–51, v. 5806–5811).

33 Strangely, the noun *bet* here is feminine.

In the first hemistich of each line, there is a secondary internal rhyme (in bold) which highlights a secondary caesura (/). This secondary internal rhyme comes on the last but one syllable of the hemistich and on the syllable before this secondary caesura — as if the first hemistich was a poem within a poem – a form of mirroring. The fifth line even contains an additional secondary internal rhyme (in bold and underlined). In this line, which speaks of the multiple forms of madness on earth, seven out of the eight syllables rhyme. Additionally, in the third line, there is a noticeable build-up of occlusives (/g/p/d/t/), even though it is more difficult to interpret the purpose here than it is in the reply of the shepherd in the *Life of Saint Barbara,* who, wielding his crook, invites his companion to admire his strength and dexterity, and in which, through imitative harmony, the sound of the crook slicing through the air can be heard vividly:

Heman so taul sech a brech mat
A ya tizmat hac a pat pell.
Horell.[34]

See how a blow of my crook, with a strong arm,
flies quickly and goes far.
Hurray!

I have attempted to represent the verse structure used for stanzas in *The Life of Man* to show how this is, to some extent, mathematically constructed. Consonants and vowels, caesura and rhymes are the materials (Le Berre 2009), just like wood and granite, colours and forms (Losowska 1982: 241–372; Recht 1982: 375–490). This brings to mind a painting by the Italian artist Piero della Francesca, *The Flagellation of Christ* (*c.* 1460). This work was created from lines and diagonals which divide the space into geometric shapes and convey the painter's philosophical and religious message.[35] Evidently, he was addressing an educated audience who would appreciate the structure of his work. But his painting also evokes the façades of religious buildings constructed according to highly specific plans and rules of proportion,[36] with the intention of revering the divine order and its perfection.[37]

Similarly, in a stanza describing The Kingdom of Heaven, the author of *The Mirror of Death* uses internal and lateral rhymes and systematically repeats a vowel sound (emphasised in bold) in the first hemistich of every line, to symbolise

34 See Le Berre (2018: 264–265, v. 2261–2263).

35 See Jaubert (1993).

36 See Mussat (1995).

37 For Lower Brittany examples, see Fons de Kort (1980: 329–340; 1990: 49–51).

the precious stones used to create paradise and which, in an explicit reference to The Book of Revelation (21, 19–21) featured abundantly in religious art at that time:[38]

*Guenu**id**ic splan vezo an den,*
*D**e** gu**el**et hy hep sy dien:*
*Ayel**o** la**o**uen hep enoe.*
*A m**e**yn pr**e**cius nedeux sy,*
***E**z **e**o **e**difiet detry:*
*Ha p**enn enn**hy ez edi Doe.*

Blessed is the man,
Glorious and serene
Who has the good fortune to go there.
It is fully constructed
To perfection, in precious stones
And God is its head.[39]

The last example is an extract from the *Nouelou* by Tanguy Gueguen, a work which some consider to be much simpler. This octosyllabic quatrain contains end rhymes (*aaab*) and the first three (-en) become an internal rhyme in the fourth line. In each line, there is also a main internal rhyme (underlined) and, in the third line, a secondary internal rhyme. I have also represented the caesura (/).

Euel an sclerder / dr'en guezren,	5/3
Hep bizcoaz / courrompaff goazen,	3/5
*Ez g**an**at Doue / guir Roue **an** glen,*	4/4
En craou vn asen, / voar fouen pur.	5/3

Like a ray of light through stained-glass,
Without ever changing,
God, the true King of the earth is born,
With just hay and a manger for a crib.[40]

38 See, for example, *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432) by the Van Eyck brothers, and Fabrice Hadjadj's commentary (2008), *L'Agneau mystique. Le retable des frères Van Eyck*, L'œuvre éditions.

39 *Le Mirouer de la mort*, f° 55 r° (v. 2805–2810 from the edition of *Mirouer de la Mort* (Ernault 1914)). Translated from Breton into French by Yves Le Berre (2012: 164).

40 p. 65–6 of the 1650 version.

With texts intended to be declaimed or sung, the alternance between stressed and unstressed syllables, specific to the Breton language, creates a rhythm which accentuates the desired expressiveness. The stanza below is an extract from *The Fifteen Joys of Mary*:

Pet euidoff / gant couff ha striz	4/4
Roen drindet[41] */ a macsoth gluiz.*	4/4
Glan roanes / pan petes piz.	4/4
Absoluenn / a caffenn quen tiz.[42]	3/5

Pray for me with constancy and fervour
the King of the Trinity who you nourish tenderly.
Chaste queen, if you prayed for it piously,
I too would obtain absolution.

The caesura separates the first three lines into two hemistichs of four syllables; the fourth line has a caesura which emphasises *absoluenn* 'absolution'. In this same line, the rhythm is completely different to the regular rhythm in the preceding lines. The rhythmic pattern can be represented as follows (<+> denotes a stressed syllable and <-> an unstressed syllable) (see Table 1 below):

Table 1. Rhythmic pattern in an extract from *The Fifteen Joys of Mary*

+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+
+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+
+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+
-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+

As can be heard and seen, the most important word in this stanza is most definitely 'absolution', which is what the narrator hopes to obtain through the Virgin Mary's intercession. Likewise, we can represent the rhythmic pattern of the *Nouelou* mentioned above in the same way (see Table 2 below):

Table 2. Rhythmic pattern in an extract from *Nouelou*

-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-
-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-

41 For the rime, one should read *drindot*.

42 This last line could also be represented in the following form: *Absoluenn / a caffenn / quen tiz*. Namely 3/3/2.

The first two lines in this stanza include a highly sophisticated image, which attempts to explain the Virgin Mary's virginity: the ray of light passes through the glass but does not break it. Then comes the central reminder about God's power. This third line includes the most rhymes to highlight the perfection of the divine creation, and it has a perfectly regular rhythm, which contrasts with the rhythm in the other three lines. Thus, the form used is in itself a metaphor and it creates a sense of distance which would only be accessible to an educated audience. The stanza concludes with an image pointing out that God became a man. This image is much more basic than the first one and was more likely to speak to a peasant audience. Content and form are therefore inseparable as the latter serves the first.

3. Why it was written

As with many other artistic works from the 16th and 17th centuries,[43] we could focus on the remarkable and striking details within Breton literature. But to finish, we can also take a step back.

With the exception of the surviving secular texts, and although we only have an indirect suggestion, the guiding theme in this literature is death (Le Berre 2012: 112–113, 239).[44] In the background of all these works, the doctrine of *contemptus mundi*, linked to an indictment of human life, comes through. This theme of contempt for the world, and therefore the vanity of worldly goods, combines with the theme of *Ubi Sunt* and the Danse Macabre; the impossibility of answering the *Ubi Sunt*?[45] question standing as proof of the vanity of our life on earth. If there is a stark inequality when it comes to dying—in 1530, your life expectancy was undoubtedly higher if you had enough to eat—in death there is equality, as we will all die and it is a matter of urgency to prepare for death. The theme of the *ars moriendi* (van Hemelryck 1995: 12–8) is therefore also significant.

There is more to this, however. The style of this literature should be considered alongside Gothic artistic works from that time (Mussat 1995; Duhem 2009) as in a way it prefigures the baroque art of Breton altarpieces.[46] This literature was written for an audience that is still difficult to determine precisely, but no doubt comprised nobles, bourgeois and rich farmers with newly acquired wealth (Croix 1993)[47] who,

43 For a Breton illustration of the works of Daniel Arasse (1992), see Thierry Le Prince and Arnauld Le Brusq (2012).

44 See also Croix (1981), especially the third part: 'Essai sur la culture macabre' (*ibid.*, II, 863–1246).

45 See Baruch 3, 16–19, and also Isaiah 33, 18.

46 See, for example, the Sainte-Anne de Commana altarpiece, built in 1682. On this altarpiece, see 'Commana: un chemin initiatique traverse la nef nord', in Chamard-Bois, P., Le Gentil, M., & Gac, H., eds., *Enclos paroissiaux. Livres de bois, livres de pierre*, Rennes: Ouest-France (1990), 7–11; Chapalain (1993: 51–9).

47 For a perspective overview of this notion of the golden age, see Jarnoux (2022: 329–51).

for this reason, were likely to hoard, and as a consequence to sink into the sin of Pride. Nonetheless, these people would want to gain a piece of paradise by commissioning sacred texts from monks or clerics who could write them[48] because, like all other artisans, the latter mastered their craft. Moreover, to create work dedicated to the glory of God is to praise the divine order and its perfection. For both writers and recipients, the physical objects surrounding them bore witness to the existence of a metaphysical order. These works were written to edify and move an audience by displaying a level of craftsmanship, the motivation for which we cannot perhaps fully comprehend.

I will use an example to illustrate what represents a form of circularity. Above and on both sides of the door to the ossuary in the Parish Close at La Martyre, there are two sculpted angels each holding a scroll inscribed with the following words:[49] *an maro han barn han ifern ien pa ho soing den e tle crena fol eo na preder e*[50] *e speret gvelet ez eo ret decedi an 1619.*

It is evident that the inscribed phrase is inspired by the quatrain found on the last page (fol. 72 v°) of the *Mirror of Death:*

> *An Maru, han Barnn, han Yffernn yen,*
> *Pan ho soing den ez dle crenaff :*
> *Foll eu na preder è Speret,*
> *Guelet ez eu ret decedaff*[51].
>
> Death, Judgement, and cruel Hell,
> When contemplating them, Man should tremble.
> Foolish is he whose soul does not reflect,
> As we all must die.

There is still much to research and find out about the authors and recipients of these works, how they were used and why they were written. To complete this task successfully, it is essential to consider these texts as *sources* which must be placed in a religious, literary and artistic context. However, they should also be considered from a social, economic, and possibly a political perspective as well. This would increase our understanding of these contexts at the same time.

48 On the composition style, see Le Berre (2009); on audiences and writers, see Le Berre (2001: 29–51).

49 On this inscription, see Bihan (2020: 11–4).

50 A letter '*n*' most definitely needs to be restored and this read as 'e*n*', which adds a syllable.

51 This quatrain is a distich.

Conclusion

Contemporaneous with some of the texts I have discussed here, the statue of the Virgin Mary at the Basilica of Our Lady in Le Folgoët[52] has taken pride of place there for centuries. This statue depicts Mary holding her child who blesses the faithful. In her right hand, she holds the foot of Jesus who in his left hand, holds the thumb of his mother's left hand. This sculpture is a representation of the love between a mother and son *as well.*

University of Western Brittany

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52 This statue was placed by Emmanuelle Le Seac'h (2014: 193) at the workshop of the Maître de Plougastel (1570–1621).

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