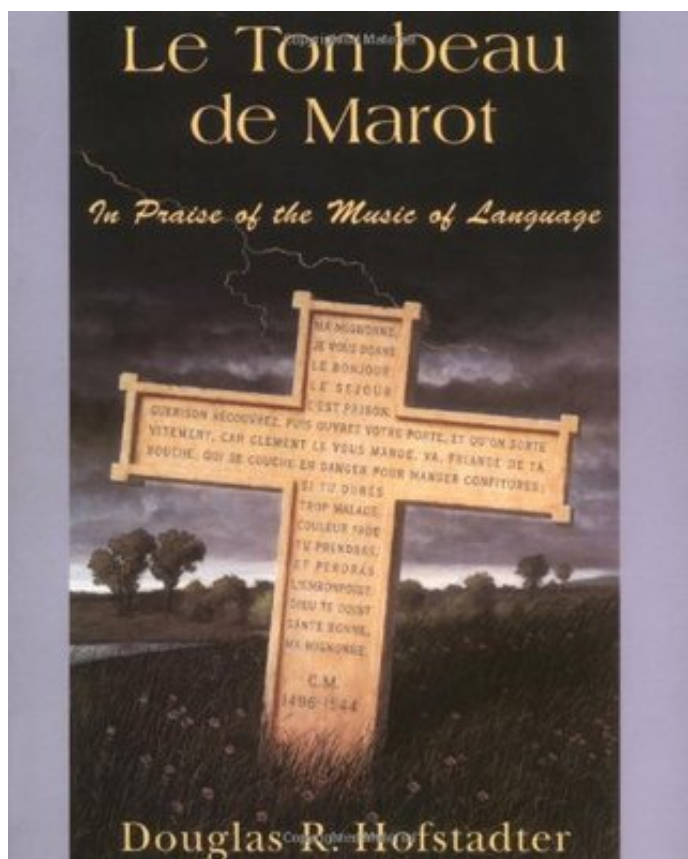


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**Douglas R. Hofstadter**

**Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language**



Title: Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language

Author: Douglas R. Hofstadter

Format: Paperback

Language: English

Pages: 632

Publisher: , 0

ISBN: 0465086454

Format: PDF / Kindle / ePub

Size: 5.7 MB

Download: allowed

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## Description

Lost in an art—the art of translation. Thus, in an elegant anagram (translation = lost in an art), Pulitzer Prize-winning author and pioneering cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter hints at what led him to pen a deep personal homage to the witty sixteenth-century French poet Clément Marot.”

*Le ton beau de Marot* literally means “The sweet tone of Marot”, but to a French ear it suggests “Le tombeau de Marot”—that is, “The tomb of Marot”. That double entendre foreshadows the linguistic exuberance of this book, which was sparked a decade ago when Hofstadter, under the spell of an exquisite French miniature by Marot, got hooked on the challenge of recreating both its sweet message and its tight rhymes in English—jumping through two tough hoops at once. In the next few years, he not only did many of his own translations of Marot's poem, but also enlisted friends, students, colleagues, family, noted poets, and translators—even three state-of-the-art translation programs!—to try their hand at this subtle challenge.

The rich harvest is represented here by 88 wildly diverse variations on Marot's little theme. Yet this barely scratches the surface of *Le Ton beau de Marot*, for small groups of these poems alternate with chapters that run all over the map of language and thought.

Not merely a set of translations of one poem, *Le Ton beau de Marot* is an autobiographical essay, a love letter to the French language, a series of musings on life, loss, and death, a sweet bouquet of stirring poetry—but most of all, it celebrates the limitless creativity fired by a passion for the music of words.

Dozens of literary themes and creations are woven into the picture, including Pushkin's [Eugene Onegin](#), Dante's [Inferno](#), Salinger's [Catcher in the Rye](#), [Villon's Ballades](#), [Nabokov's](#) essays, Georges Perec's [La Disparition](#), Vikram Seth's [The Golden Gate](#), [Horace's](#) odes, and more.

Rife with stunning form-content interplay, crammed with creative linguistic experiments yet always crystal-clear, this book is meant not only for lovers of literature, but also for people who wish to be brought into contact with current ideas about how creativity works, and who wish to see how today's computational models of language and thought stack up next to the human mind.

*Le Ton beau de Marot* is a sparkling, personal, and poetic exploration aimed at both the literary and the scientific world, and is sure to provoke great excitement and heated controversy among poets and translators, critics and writers, and those involved in the study of creativity and its elusive wellsprings.

## Insightful reviews

Maria Elmvang: As you'll know by now, I'm typically a very fast reader. This book, however, took

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me almost a year to get through. I started in September 2006 and only just finished this morning. It's not that it's a bad book - in fact, it's really interesting! - it's just incredibly heavy to get through so I could only cope with a little bit each day.

I'd highly recommend this book to anybody interested in translations and language in general as Hofstadter has a fascinating way of describing both. I don't quite agree with everything he says, and must admit to finding him somewhat arrogant at times (for instance an entire section was dedicated to explaining why I, as a woman, should be offended when people include me in "you guys". I don't think so. 'Guys', when used in that manner, has been understood to include both males and females for at LEAST 17 years. I'm not about to start being offended by it NOW. But I digress.), and I think he'd appreciate L.M. Montgomery's poem "Free Verse" (found at <http://www.gov.pe.ca/firsthand/index....>) if he ever were to stumble across it... Hmm... maybe I should send it to him! ;)

I ended up loving the poem that inspired this book, although I'd be hard pressed to say which translation I prefer! ;) All in all, I'm very pleased to have finally finished the book.

Scurra: As someone else said, if I could give this book six stars, I would.

More "complete" than GEB, perhaps because it is more personal, Hofstadter nevertheless maintains his trademark diversions and sidetrips, without ever losing sight of his goal, which is to try and convey the insanity and joy of translation and to attempt understand why polylinguism is both a curse and a blessing.

And providing the spine of the book are the numerous translations of Ma Mignonne, all of which are terrific and all of which are so gloriously different.

Anyone even remotely interested in understanding why we speak the way we do and why communication is often so difficult, even between those of us who ostensibly speak the "same" language, owes it to themselves to read this.

James Swenson: Some fascinating insights on the difficulty of translation, along with examples showing that apparently untranslatable texts often aren't. "Borges thinks you should try a little harder." (p. 539)

Hofstadter interleaves a variety of surprising sample texts with reflections on his life with his recently deceased wife and with extended attacks on the work of [John Searle](#) and [Vladimir Nabokov](#).

Hofstadter says interesting things, many of them several times each. When you have won the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction, it is probably harder to find an editor who can advise you to shorten your new book by 75-100 pages, but it would have been worth the trouble in this case. I was charmed by the poem "A une Damoysselle malade" by Clément Marot -- the translation of which inspires the present book -- when I first saw it, but now I don't want to see it again for at least five years.

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[Edit:] By the way, you can see the poem in French, and judge how hard it might be to translate, [here](#).

Kelly: OK, so now i actually accomplished it and whereas I did get pleasure from it, it wasn't approximately as attention-grabbing and price obsessing over like Godel, Escher, Bach. i might suggest this to an individual who loves languages (and it is best in the event you recognize French or Italian for the reason that there is a lot of these in there) and as a more in-depth examine translation it really is wonderful. I particularly cherished the eye paid to computer Translation in view that Hofstadter is within the particular place to discuss it from first hand event from his examine group.

Hillary: excellent for overall compulsives, between whom I quantify myself in terms of language. one in all my favourite information of this publication is while Hofstadter admits that he rewrote pages over and over in order that they may lead to a cheerful position physically--that is, not just no widows or orphans (a large no-no from my stance), yet many pages finish with the tip of a sentence. it is also witty, light, insightful approximately translation from many various perspectives of that task, a little sad, own yet no longer stupid, well-designed, and smart. Plus, should you shouldn't have the urge to do your personal translation (or a couple) after completing it, you have got a lifeless soul. The overdue Hugh Kenner contributes one among my favorites, consisting of an amazing visible pun on Rx.

Rob: (7/10) Translation is a thorny issue, particularly for readers and critics who depend on a standard thought of authorship. if you happen to learn a translated text, how a lot of what you learn was once within the original, how a lot is the translator's invention, and what sort of is a few muddy center floor among the two? Is the translator a type of author? Is a translation a totally new text? Douglas Hoffstadter delves into those concerns with *Le Ton Beau De Marot*, a paving stone-sized experimentally formatted tome that remembers his previous hit *Godel, Escher, Bach*. This booklet is a much less formidable and extra targeted than *GEB* -- it purely offers with the innumerate complexities of human languages. alongside the way in which Hofstadter drops in on theories of cognition, cultural history, and autobiographical bills of his try to increase the world's squarest kids. Hofstadter's major argument is that shape is vital to a piece, and that any translation must contain shape in its issues -- so, for instance, a translated sonnet should persist with a similar metre and rhyme scheme. this is often okay so far as it is going (I'm whatever of a formalist myself), even if i do not percentage Hofstadter's disdain for extra literal translations, and in reality imagine they are often rather valuable. as an instance of this principle, Hofstadter encompasses a multitude of translations of 1 Marot poem undertaken through he and his colleagues, utilizing various principles and conceits yet sticking with regards to the form. Unfortunately, those examples form of undercut his argument, as they are regularly doggerel, with sentences rearranged awkwardly and pat rhymes created in an effort to healthy the formal constraints. Hofstadter generally turns out to process poetry, and especially poetic translation, as much less of an inventive task and extra of a linguistic puzzle, the place one has to slot all of the syllables jointly within the correct order. This loss of aesthetic appreciation kinds a massive flaw in his argument. One does not really want numerous hundred pages to provide this argument, so there are numerous tangents and overexplanations. a few of these are fairly interesting, abnormal puzzles of translation and examples of interlinguistic strangeness. At different instances it really is only a devolution into repetitive and disingenuous arguments, or

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offended outdated guy rants. there is certainly invaluable fabric and concepts in here, however the e-book as a complete is a decidedly combined bag, and just a little a disappointment.

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