

Girolamo Fracastoro. *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus*.

Textes de la Renaissance 152. Ed. Christine Dussin. Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2009. 210 pp. index. illus. bibl. €32. ISBN: 978-2-8124-0060-5.

Readers of classic works always look forward to new editions and new translations as these versions bring new opportunities to revisit earlier scholarship and apply new critical lenses to old favorites. This French edition is a result of the 2003 symposium in Verona that honored the 450th anniversary of the author's death and prompted the editor, Christine Dussin, and the publisher to again deliver Fracastoro's seminal work (pun intended, of course) to French audiences and invite them to enjoy his disparagement of their ancestors and their early modern counterparts who spread and suffered from the painful and disfiguring disease of syphilis in the sixteenth century.

Unfortunately the pleasures of this new annotated edition are tempered by some editorial decisions that make this version mildly more difficult to use than it might have been. For example, the French and Latin text are kept distinct. This might be understood as a wise choice, as a reader might prefer the pure and smooth flow of either the French or Latin text as a better approximation of the experience of reading Fracastoro's poem when it first circulated in the Renaissance. If the series editor made this decision to aid his reader, then the failure to approximate the numbering of the Latin verses in the French translation that follows in this volume with any notations at all leaves the reader with a difficult task ahead in any effort to consider the translation *vis-à-vis* the original language. In an effort to help break down the text and identify subjects addressed in the solid introduction to the author, his life, his works, and his fascinating literary turn and successful assignation of a name to this novel pestilence, the edition features a simple plan of the text itself and a subtitled table of contents. These do aid the scholarly reader interested in enjoying the poem and the scientific and cultural context of the era, but the simple effort to number the French text to correspond with the Latin text would have proved useful.

Despite my misgivings about these editorial decisions, Christine Dussin has made a very valuable contribution to Fracastoro scholarship. Students of early modern culture and the history of science will enjoy her very thorough introduction

as a concise essay on the cultural context of the *Syphilis*. The rich notes and bibliography offer readers a solid foundation for research into the subject of the dread disease now known as syphilis after Fracastoro's work. The secondary sources cited in the notes and listed in the volume confirm Dussin's care in her construction of an introduction to the work that can be both a resource and a springboard for different readers. For readers of this work new to Renaissance science, the scholarly apparatus bears great fruit, but several errors suggest that the editor and other reviewers had their eyes focused on the classical antecedents, the nature of natural philosophy and medicine in the age of exploration, and other matters, and failed to make sure that references to the arts and other key elements of early modern culture so important to Fracastoro's cadre of intellectuals were correct — and this is another potential trouble spot for the audience of the new edition.

In conclusion, Dussin and Garnier have brought Fracastoro's *Syphilis* forward to a new set of readers and for that I recommend this work. Much useful material is incorporated into the introductory essay and the copious notes attached to the text and the commentary all but override the problem in the presentation of the Latin and French texts and some oversights in the notes. However, these concerns indicate that the user of this work and perhaps others from the same publisher must be circumspect on the one hand and bring some advance knowledge of the texts and authors to the table on the other to fully benefit from this new edition.

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