

The Rules of Riding: An Edited Translation of the First Renaissance Treatise on Classical Horsemanship. Federico Grisone.

Ed. Elizabeth MacKenzie Tobey. Trans. Elizabeth MacKenzie Tobey and Federica Brunori Deigan. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 454. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014. xxii + 628 pp. \$75.

The art of horsemanship has garnered significant attention in recent years among critics interested in early modern human-animal relationships: the horse-human bond is a historically, socially, and economically central one and is better documented than most in part because of the spate of European horsemanship treatises appearing in the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the initial inspiration for, and primary perceived competitor to, many of these manuals was unavailable until now to scholars who work in English, since the complete text of Federigo Grisone's 1550 *Gli ordini di cavalcare* had never been translated. Tobey and Deigan's edition remedies that situation, offering readers a meticulous and comprehensive translation, along with a detailed and very useful critical introduction that contextualizes Grisone's work. For these reasons alone this would be a most welcome volume. But Tobey has also included the complete set of fifty illustrations of bits that accompanied the first edition, a series of nine of her own illustrations of various principles and practices expressed in the text, a full glossary of terms, a bibliography, and a very thorough index, along with both the original Italian and the English translation on facing pages, making the volume an especially valuable resource.

Grisone's treatise was the first early modern major attempt since Xenophon's *On Horsemanship* to catalog riding and training techniques. As Tobey points out in her introduction, his work should be situated with other how-to manuals of the Renaissance, alongside those on music, dance, painting, architecture, and other arts; like them, his book engaged with a set of social, political, and artistic agendas beyond the field it covered. Grisone does not merely analyze the specific methods for producing the elegant performance of the horse: he emphasizes the intellectual and moral authority of the rider, his mastery of self, his commitment to moderation and the refinement of bodily skills, all of which were integral to any claim to authority. Although the manège riding (now called dressage) Grisone describes had its origins in war, his elaboration of it belongs more to the process of training noblemen, and contributed to Italian prestige abroad. Indeed, the way most non-Italian-speaking scholars have come to know Grisone is through his adumbrated appearance in similar English, French, and German horsemanship treatises: Thomas Blundeville translated a much-adapted version of Grisone's book in the sixteenth century, but while many English authors read and approved of that work, the Italian's (and Blundeville's) reputation and methods were later attacked for being cruel and irrational by William Cavendish in his own horsemanship manual.

Tobey argues in her introduction that Grisone's methods have often been thus misrepresented by later authors, and notes that Grisone himself invariably deploras the abusive corrections he feels compelled to include only in the interests of completeness. She carefully illustrates Grisone's preference for gentle methods, including the use of voice commands, reassuring praise, and especially his own rules, to create a more cooperative relationship. Tobey devotes a section to analyzing Grisone's concept of "contact," the connection between rider's hand and horse's mouth, as an example of the training principles and techniques he shares with dressage riders today, noting that he devotes much more time to the process of developing a light feel with a willing mount than any subsequent writer on the subject, even those deemed more humane by current critics (56).

What this volume offers that may be of most value, however, is Tobey's extensive and detailed notes and her glossary of terms. Translating Grisone is, in effect, a double

process, since not only must the translator handle issues arising from Renaissance Italian, but she must also decide how to address the specialized language of manège riding — despite the quality of the English in this text, even an experienced modern dressage rider would have a good deal of trouble figuring out what some of Grisone's terms and descriptions meant in practice. Tobey's painstaking approach, combined with her knowledge of dressage, result in informative decodings of nearly all Grisone's complex and unfamiliar expressions. This excellent and timely translation should open up Grisone's heretofore overlooked or inaccessible riding treatise to many kinds of scholars, ranging from those interested in animal studies, to those working on the wider genre to which the work belongs.

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