

Garzoni, Tomaso. *The Hospital of Incurable Madness: L'Hospedale de' pazzi incurabili (1586)*.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 352. Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 26. Ed. Monica Calabritto. Trans. Daniela Pastina and John W. Crayton. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2009. viii + 252 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$52. ISBN: 978-2-503-52895-3.

This volume presents an English translation of the Italian Renaissance bestselling *L'Hospedale de' pazzi incurabili*, published in 1586 by Tomaso Garzoni (1549–89). Garzoni, a member of the order of the regular Lateran canons, was a prolific author in the vernacular and to a lesser extent in Latin. The use of the vernacular fit the pastoral aims of his order and helped to disseminate the

cultural and religious views of post-Tridentine Catholic Reformation that imbued his work with a moral overtone. Most of his works bore in the title the name of a restricted social space (the theater, the market, the synagogue, the hospital), inviting the reader-observer to identify and judge what the author exposed in a detailed classification of human behaviors and actions.

L'Hospedale is a good example of this approach and reflects an underlying concern with the need to define normality through the stigmatization of deviance. The author presents the book as a visit to the cells of a new hospital “where the honoured spectators can take great solace and enjoyment from gazing on the foolish *prosopopeia* of these savage geese” (43). Sexual difference divides the hospital into two sections, one for men and one for women. Each cell contains a type of madness represented by various examples in the case of men and by a single exemplar in its feminine counterpart. The visit to the folly, in Garzoni’s reading, is not an invitation to reflect on the visitors’ own vices and folly. There is no possible dialogue between reason and madness, between virtue and sin. And the end of the book, with the closing of the gates of the hospital and a firm admonition to leave, makes plain that identification with or any sort of empathy between spectators and inmates was not the author’s intention. The text presents a mixture of styles and sources of information — literary, philosophical, and medical — and as a literary work it is entertaining and engaging.

This translation includes an introductory study, a bibliography and an index of names. The brief introduction by Monica Calabritto helps to place the *L'Hospedale* in the cultural context of its production and in Garzoni’s oeuvre. It analyzes its medical and encyclopedic sources and its content, paying special attention to the gendered bias of the work and to its misogynistic views. This introductory study would have gained from the addition of reflections on the impact and success of the work and on its intended and actual readerships in Counter-Reformation Europe.

It is a serious flaw of this volume that no details are given about the production of the work, about its Renaissance editions and earlier translations, especially the early English translation of 1600. From the section “About this Translation,” one can only grasp that the translation “is based on the first edition of 1586” (33), from the copy held in the University of Chicago. From the acknowledgment concerning the cover image, it can be assumed that this first edition is Somascho’s edition (Venice), but no explanation is given as to why this has been privileged over, for example, two other editions of 1586 (Ferrara and Piacenza) or over the more recent editions of 1993 and 2004.

The translation by Daniela Pastina and John W. Crayton reads as fluently as in the original Italian. The critical apparatus includes an identification of sources, clarification of obscure references, and explanation of the meaning of some technical words. The reason for choosing to translate *L'Hospedale de' pazzi incurabili* as *The Hospital of Incurable Madness* could have been an interesting point to develop in the introduction. The early English translation preferred “incurable fooles” instead of “incurable madness,” the French translation by François de Clarier (1620) also respects “fols incurables,” and a recent Spanish

translation (2000) equally reads “locos incurables.” In my view, displacing the fools by the more abstract concept of madness distorts the idea of the work, giving a theoretical gloss to what was intended as a moral collection of *exempla*.

Even if Garzoni’s *Hospedale* were purely allegorical, the public exhibition of fools in processions or visits to asylums as social entertainment was a reality in his days. Which kind of real and allegorical hospitals we enjoy visiting today is a matter for another book, but reading this translation may help us think about it.

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