

Madeleine de l'Aubespine. *Selected Poems and Translations: A Bilingual Edition*.

Ed. and trans. Anna Klosowska. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. xxx + 136 pp. index. append. bibl. \$20. ISBN: 978-0-226-14194-7.

Anna Klosowska has given us a new volume in the *Other Voice* series, on Madeleine de l'Aubespine (1546–96). De l'Aubespine is not well known today, largely because most of her poetic work has been lost, and of that which does survive, much was considered “anonymous” until recently. Klosowska’s major contribution is to have done a lot of detective work in France with the help of librarians at the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris, and at other libraries in Turin, Lyon, Tours, Chantilly, and Paris. Without this research, we might never have known of the poetic work and translations by and to her.

Madeleine de l'Aubespine was the wife of Nicolas de Neufville, Sieur de Villeroy (1542–1617), a minister of Henri III and later of Henri IV. As is true for many women writers, her life is better known than her works. She was active in the courtly world of the late Valois dynasty, and knew court poets like Ronsard, Desportes, D'Aubigné, and others. She wrote Petrarchan sonnets, epigrams, and pastoral poetry such as the *chanson* and *vilanelle*. Klosowska has also authenticated translations of portions of Ovid’s *Heroides* and Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, which translations had remained anonymous until now.

The book is divided into three major sections: Klosowska’s introduction, translation of de l'Aubespine’s poetic work in a dual language format (French and English on facing pages), and two appendices with some of the authenticated translations (Latin-French and Italian-French, respectively). The introduction emphasizes the fact that much so-called information about de l'Aubespine has

been unreliable, and Klosowska endeavors to set the record straight. In particular, she shows the way in which Ronsard and Desportes validated de l'Aubespine as a writer in their own works, and points out that de l'Aubespine wrote not only Petrarchan poetry but also some satiric verse that could be viewed as erotic. For example, sonnet 9 appears to describe a Sapphic triangle; sonnet 11 plays with her lute as with a male lover; and two epigrams satirize a lover who wants to "rest," and a husband with a wandering eye whose appetite is bigger than his capacity. There is also the unusual "Dialogue of a Doublet with a Vest," in which Klosowska finds transvestitism suggested.

The second section of the book is made up of the surviving poems and their translations into English by Klosowska. These are excellent, and generally keep the poetic form of the original. One minor criticism is that the order of the poems themselves is not the same as the order in which they are treated in the introduction, nor are they cross-referenced by page, so that there is inevitably a lot of flipping back and forth, to match analysis with text. Although the introduction stresses the erotic and homoerotic aspects of de l'Aubespine's work, when we come to read the poems themselves, we find that most are fairly conventional Petrarchan sonnets.

Poems by other poets about and to de l'Aubespine are also included, and these help to validate Klosowska's claim that her poet was much better known in the sixteenth century than she is today. The "Epistle Dedicatory" by an anonymous poet praises de l'Aubespine's writing; a sonnet of Ronsard asks her to give up the hawthorn for the laurel; Desportes writes of her beautiful verse; and D'Aubigné even writes a *vilanelle* to referee a dispute between Desportes and de l'Aubespine, who may have been lovers.

The two appendices contain the originals and de l'Aubespine's translations of one letter from the *Heroides*, and a portion of one canto of the *Orlando furioso*. But the translations by de l'Aubespine are not themselves translated into English, nor is there any glossary for difficult sixteenth-century French vocabulary. Therefore, these texts will be of interest to the specialist, but not to the student or general reader of English to whom the rest of the book appears to be addressed. The existence of the translations and Klosowska's work in authenticating them are very interesting, and might have merited more attention in the volume, since the translations actually represent the major body of de l'Aubespine's surviving work.

These minor criticisms aside, Anna Klosowska has performed a valuable service in presenting Madeleine de l'Aubespine to students, specialists and general readers interested in early modern European women writers. We will look forward to the critical edition of de l'Aubespine's complete works that Klosowska has proposed.

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