

Jacques-Auguste de Thou. *La Fauconnerie à la Renaissance: Le Hieracosophon (1582–1584) de Jacques Auguste de Thou.*

Ed. Ingrid A. R. De Smet. Travaux d'Humanism et Renaissance 520; Bibliotheca Cynegetica 7. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2013. x + 692 pp. \$102. ISBN: 978-2-600-01703-9.

Renaissance scholars owe an enormous debt to Ingrid A. R. De Smet for making a major work on falconry available to the public. This is the first French translation and critical edition of a work consulted by nobles with a strong interest

in falconry. Yet the fact that it was written in Latin meant that it was more often read by the growing *noblesse de robe*, trained in Greek and Latin, than by the *noblesse d'épée*, more interested in military strategy and feats of strength. De Smet makes it clear that de Thou targeted as his readers the growing learned professional magistrates like himself, whose classical education would permit them to grasp the nuances of the text.

Of real interest to scholars of Montaigne and the period of the French Wars of Religion is that the first edition of the *Hieracosophion* was published in Bordeaux by Simon Millanges in two books, a mere two years after Montaigne had published the first edition of the *Essais* with the same printer. The second edition, published in Paris in 1584 by Mamert Patisson, includes a third book. The first two books deal with the different types of birds of prey used in falconry and how to choose them (book 1), and then the feeding of the birds and how to care for them throughout their life (book 2). In the third book the author informs the reader of how to treat the various sicknesses that beset the birds.

The scientific apparatus of this study is meticulously put together: Jacques Auguste de Thou's biography set in the context of his illustrious family of magistrates and humanists; the depiction of the popularity of falconry with the kings of France, from François I to the start of the reign of Louis XIII, as well as with the clergy and prominent military and political figures in France; and the characteristics of the *Hieracosophion* within the tradition of hunting poems, especially the *Cynegetica* by the Greek author Oppien, published in Latin for the first time in Venice in 1517. De Smet presents a detailed study of the various editions of the *Hieracosophion* during de Thou's lifetime, including the last published before his death by Nicolas Rigault, with its dedication to the young Louis XIII and reminder that the young king's father, Henri le Grand, was an ardent hunter. Commentaries at the end of the volume guide the reader through the arcane terminology of falconry, bird husbandry, and mythology related to hunting.

A great virtue of the editor's painstaking editing is the care she takes to show the links between falconry and the Wars of Religion. She takes her cue from de Thou, who departs from the topic of falconry to deplore the excesses of the wars, the lack of respect for the rule of law, the monarchy, and the needs of the suffering population. Professor De Smet reminds us of Montaigne's remarks in "De la cruauté" (2:11) about the sadness of the hunt when hares and deer are pursued to the point of exhaustion by excited dogs. De Smet's insistence that falconry be set within the social and political context of the Wars of Religion, when all France was affected by hunger, violent conflict, and disease, brings the subject of falconry out of the alcoves of history to the forefront of life in Renaissance France. If for a period of time, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Catholics and Protestants alike attacked the excesses of the clergy's and aristocracy's passion for hunting and falconry, it was that the suffering of the general population demanded that one turn attention away from the costly pastimes of a few to reunite the fractured parties to work together for the good of the country.

Ingrid De Smet provides a well-documented, detailed study of falconry and a well-crafted, highly readable translation of de Thou's text that will delight the specialist and generalist as well. She provides the twenty-first-century reader with the information, vocabulary, and context required to understand why falconry played such a vital economic, political, and social role in sixteenth-century France.

DEBORAH N. LOSSE

Arizona State University, emerita