

Carmina: Livre I. Michel de L'Hospital.

Ed. and trans. Perrine Galand and Loris Petris. With David Amherdt. *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 531. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2014. 398 pp. \$84.

Michel de L'Hospital was a great sixteenth-century statesman — “Nicodemite, father of the Politiques, precursor of the Enlightenment, apostle of the liberty of conscience,” and a poet celebrated by Ronsard, Montaigne, and other famous contemporaries. Though he

avoided long poems, he was a poet at heart, choosing the Horatian genre of the poem-epistle; but for his career he chose a juridical profession and the public, political, and spiritual good. Influenced by contemporary jurists, humanists, and "Erasmian poetics," L'Hospital's poems were composed as letters to a variety of distinguished contemporaries, starting with Cardinal Tournon and including three other cardinals and Marguerite de France. Philosophically, the letters, representing in effect "poetry of circumstance," were characterized by a combination of evangelism and Christian Neo-Stoicism. In this edition, each letter includes a history of the printed and manuscript texts, a facing translation, a scholarly "presentation," an outline of the contents, an analysis, and an even more detailed commentary. In the annexes a couple of responses by the recipients of these letters are published, along with further analysis and commentary.

This book contains editions, or reeditions, and translations of L'Hospital's epistle-poems, written in the 1540s and 1550s to (along with Marguerite and Cardinal Tournon) Cardinals Armagnac, Chatillon, and Du Bellay, in addition to Pierre du Chatel, Francois Olivier, Claude d'Espence, Adrien Du Drac, Achille Bocchi, Potrone, Lancelot des Carles, and "To the Muses." In great detail the editors trace the history of the manuscripts, editions, and reeditions, and after each text they offer a "presentation" describing the intended recipient, outlining the content of the epistle, and then giving an analysis of it. L'Hospital's concerns were with the hazards of history, everyday disagreements, and bodily ailments, as well as with his king and country, family values, and hopes for peace, virtue, and the support of literature for the humanizing of the individual.

The editing of each epistle poem follows an elaborate plan. First, the Latin text and facing French translation are accompanied by numbered paragraphs. Next comes a "presentation," reviewing in detail the life, activities, publications, and associates of the recipient. Third, a "datation" displays the exact chronology and further information on the historical context. Fourth is a paragraph-by-paragraph summary of the contents of the text, while fifth is an analysis of the significance of the text, including its "philosophical and political orientation," its "rhetorical modes," and then a commentary on the "response of the recipient." Sixth, a "commentary," again paragraph-by-paragraph and in great detail, is on the text, explaining the references, historical context, and literary forms.

The commentaries on the letters exhaustively explain the terms, names, references, allusions, parallels, and topoi such as the *translatio imperii*, as well as the experiences and events of L'Hospital's own life, also providing a pertinent bibliography. With many classical allusions, L'Hospital refers to his time spent at the Council of Trent, the political conflicts of the 1550s, Gallican and reformist attitudes, and questions of election to the papacy, though L'Hospital's concerns were more literary, religious, and ethical. The annexes contain one response from Jean du Bellay and another comment on a letter of L'Hospital. This is a marvelous work of detailed erudition but not designed for the general reader.

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