

*Le secrétaire* (1588). Gabriel Chappuys.

Ed. Viviane Mellinghoff-Bourgerie. Textes Littéraires Français 628. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2014. c + 788 pp. \$135.84.

In 1588 the translator and royal historiographer Gabriel Chappuys published a guidebook for official secretaries. He took most of his material from an earlier Italian work from 1564, *Del Secretario* by Francesco Sansovino. His edition owed much to an even earlier Latin work by Franciscus Niger, *Opus Scribendi Epistolas*, published in Venice in 1488. Mellinghoff-Bourgerie traces the permutations of this elaborate tale of plagiarism in the introduction to this critical edition. In doing so, she transports the reader to the world of sixteenth-century humanist scholarship, political culture, and the transmission of ideas from Italy to France.

Chappuys opens book 1 with a statement equating secretaries, who serve as communicators and managers of the affairs of state for their prince, with angels. Despite a short treatise exalting the office of the secretary, this work mainly serves as a practical manual for letter-writing. In addition to punctuation and folding, it also includes a discussion of the hierarchy of titles. Such detail encourages the reader to see this as a sort of handbook of the social order of the sixteenth-century court. Moving further from practical concerns, the book also includes dozens of fictive examples of letters expressing every aspect of human affairs, whether trivial or important, mundane or sublime. What is the proper way to express condolence, to lament the fall of one's city to a tyrant, or to make a young girl fall in love? Rest assured, there is a letter for that. The long train of models (bizarrely repeated in book 3) provides a reader with a window into a world of social networks. These letters, transmitted from Niger to Sansovino to Chappuys, have a variety of origins. Whether ancient, Christian, republican, or monarchical, the reader recognizes the same human emotions that underlay differences in culture and context. The book presents a fine example of the humanist enterprise, manifesting a distinct optimism in the possibilities of human communication.

The last two books of *Le secrétaire* contain actual correspondence with letters written by kings, queens, popes, diplomats, and humanists. Book 4 concerns the Italian wars earlier in the sixteenth century. Most letters detail the tense situation from 1525 to 1528, when Charles V fought to establish hegemony over the Italian states. The correspondence of Roberto Boschetto, Count of Modena, makes up a large portion of these. Most notably, there are some poignant letters from Ludovico Canossa of Verona. In service to Francis I, he wrote letters to urge the Venetians and Pope Clement VII to join a league with France to defend Italy against the emperor. In the months before the Sack of Rome in 1527, he sent exasperated letters to the king and queen regent of France asking why they had not sent any military aid, eventually asking to be relieved of service. The letters have no chronological order, which causes the reader to strive to put the story together. However, Chappuys and Sansovino clearly did not intend to tell a story, but rather to provide examples of epistolary elegance.

The fifth book contains letters not found in Sansovino's edition. For these, Chappuys translated from Tomaso Porcacchi's *Lettere di XIII. Huomini illustri* of 1571. These letters move beyond politics toward philosophical and literary concerns. The love letter from Hannibal Caro is notable, but the real highlight is the lengthy epistle from Alberto Lollio to Hercules Perinato in which he praises life at his villa in the country. This important letter, published in Venice in 1544, vaunts the benefits of the simple, agricultural life and Stoic detachment from political affairs. Interestingly, the passage from book 4, with its emphasis on affairs of state and civic values, to the retreat into the realm of the private sphere evidenced in book 5, mirrors the larger cultural transition toward courtly society by the end of the sixteenth century.

With the informative introduction, meticulous annotations, and copious supplementary material, Mellinghoff-Bourgerie's critical edition of *Le secretaire* provides the scholar of early modern Europe with a rich and fascinating source for exploring the interplay between human emotion and political culture in the Renaissance.

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