

Marco Girolamo Vida. *De arte poetica / Art poetique*.

Ed. Jean Pappé. Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 111. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2013. 244 pp. \$60. ISBN: 978-2-600-01646-9.

In his own day Milton could count on his readers to recognize that when he wrote “Loud o’re the rest *Cremona’s Trump* doth sound” (“The Passion,” line 26) he was referring to Marco Girolamo Vida (1485–1566), author of both the *Christiad*, a Virgilian epic on the life of Christ, and *De arte poetica*, a didactic poem in three

books on how to write poetry. Pope and Boileau still knew him, but his reputation did not survive romanticism, which condemned his work for draining the life out of Western poetry. Vida, however, has been undergoing something of a renaissance of late. In addition to editions of several minor works, the edition of the *Christiad* edited by G. B. Drake and C. A. Forbes (1978) was followed by another bilingual version in 2009 (edited by James Gardner), while *De arte poetica* has been edited and translated into English (by Ralph G. Williams in 1976), Italian (by Raffaele Girardi in 1982), and Portuguese (by Arnaldo M. Spiroto Santo in 1990). It was perhaps inevitable that a French translation would follow, and so it has.

Pappe's edition, which is based on the same 1527 version as the three translations mentioned above, begins with a lengthy introduction that presents a brief biography of the author; a detailed overview of *De arte poetica* that covers the general plan of the work followed by its treatment of inspiration, imitation, classical models, Vida and Virgil, the question of classical versus Baroque stylistic tendencies in the poem, and Vida's aesthetic of variety; a discussion of Vida and epic that shows how the author uses contemporary history to turn the genre in a new direction; an analysis of Vida's Latin style, including his intertextual strategies; and a brief discussion of how the author's position as churchman and teacher affects his guidelines for writing poetry. The Latin text and French translation follow. Pappe has courageously chosen a verse translation, in Alexandrines, a dignified form whose roots in early modern French literature make it appropriate for a translation of a sixteenth-century Latin poem into that language. The text and translation are accompanied by enough notes, some of them taken (with acknowledgment) from Williams, to facilitate a first reading of the text. There is a useful bibliography, divided into editions and translations of Vida's works, then into works cited, with the second category divided again into those by ancient and humanistic authors and those by modern scholars. An index of names concludes the book.

There is a good deal in this edition to commend. The translation is fairly literal, which makes it especially useful to a reader who has some Latin, and the introduction goes beyond the expected treatment of topics like inspiration and imitation to a thoughtful discussion of some difficult issues, such as the importance of Quintilian's rhetorical view of culture in Vida's poetics, the extent to which Vida can be considered a classical or Baroque writer, and the crucial role of the *Georgics* as a model for a didactic poem on writing poetry. Unlike some works of French scholarship, the bibliography at the end of this book adds relevant work in English, German, and Italian to the seminal studies (in French) of Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Virginie Leroux, making it a useful and up-to-date resource for those who wish to continue their study of *De arte poetica*. In the end, however, I am a little disappointed. The author has done what he set out to do, giving us a usable Latin text and French translation of an important Renaissance work, but it feels as if an opportunity has to a certain extent been missed. Pappe does not present us with a critical edition, but with a transcription of the same Latin text that his three most

recent predecessors also used. He offers enough notes to allow the reader to work through the text, but not enough to make this edition definitive in that area, either. I suspect that *De arte poetica* will be taken up again by other scholars in the next few years, especially in Germany, and I hope one of them will give us the definitive text and commentary that this important treatise on poetics deserves.

CRAIG KALLENDORF
Texas A&M University