

Tales and Trials of Love, Concerning Venus's Punishment of Those Who Scorn True Love and Denounce Cupid's Sovereignty: A Bilingual Edition and Study.

Jeanne Flore.

Ed. Kelly Digby Peebles. Trans. Kelly Digby Peebles and Marta Rijn Finch. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 33*. Toronto: Iter Inc. / Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014. xiv + 342 pp. \$39.95.

This bilingual edition of Jeanne Flore's *Comptes amoureux* is the latest French offering in the excellent series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, a series devoted to making texts by early modern women across Eastern and Western Europe available to a broader reading public. Until now, there have been only two modern editions of the *Comptes amoureux*: one directed by Gabriel-André Pérouse (1980) and another edited by Régine Reynolds-Cornell (2005). In both cases, the text is in the original Renaissance French and thus particularly suited to French Renaissance scholars. Both include glossaries for obsolete words, information relating to the various Renaissance versions of the text, and discussions of probable sources for the tales. Kelly Peebles's volume requires no preexisting knowledge on the part of the reader. It includes a general introduction in

English, the bilingual text on facing pages, copious translation notes that explain Flore's extensive allusions to classical and contemporary literature, several illustrative plates, and a comprehensive bibliography. The care Peebles takes with the physical presentation of the text is quite gratifying. She describes the method in which the 1542 edition (the basis for her translation) was printed and folded, notes the start of the quires, and marks the side and page numbers of the original. Peebles also indicates the placement of the original woodcuts, five of which are included here, leaving the reader wishing for the others.

There is no doubt that translation is heavy work, so it is unfortunate that the reader's confidence is shaken as early as page 4 of the first tale. The first bridge is into the Jealous castle "n'estoit point plus large de quatre pieds et vingt de longueur," and the second bridge is the same "longueur et largeur" as the first. Given this clear indication of two dimensions, the first bridge should be four feet by twenty rather than Peebles's translation of "just barely four feet twenty inches in length." Since, due to strong winds, the hero must crawl across this bridge, a length of less than five feet makes little sense. In the last story, when Raymon de Castel and his five companions catch sight of Guillien de Campestain, the perfect lover of Raymon's wife and the embodiment of Castiglione's courtier, Peebles would have us believe that Guillien is "alone except for a page, leading two hares on a leash and carrying a bird on the wrist." The actual word in the French text is *levrier* (greyhound) not *lièvre* (hare).

Most disappointing, however, is the impression that Peebles has forced the tales to fit her chosen interpretation. She sees the gratification of the women's physical desires with suitable lovers as a step toward female empowerment and a positive note in the discourse of the *querelle des femmes*. While this view is arguable up to a point, it completely sidesteps what is possibly the most intriguing aspect of the *Comptes amoureux*: the subversive side of the stories. Even in the first tale, where the young and handsome Andro liberates the beautiful Rosemonde from the Jealous Castle and her disgusting and old husband, the lovers' nuptial bed is hung with splendidly embroidered scenes of "poor Pasiphæë," "unhappy Ariadne," "dolorous Phaedre," and the death of Adonis. Strange choices to celebrate a happy love affair. The gorgeous and arrogant Meridienne of tale 2 is torn to bits by dogs because she spurns her suitor and laughs at his suffering, but before she even meets poor Pyrance, Venus has turned her heart "hard as stone." Most of the stories contain an element of coercion and fear. In order not to anger Venus or Cupid, women are urged to give in to their lovers and make them happy, or suffer the very unpleasant consequences. This element of the *Tales and Trials of Love* is part of the work's enticing complexity — it is at once straightforward and ironic, menacing and engaging. Yes, there is a certain affirmation of female independence, but the dark side of the tales needs to be explored as well.

Marta Rijn Finch, who provided the translations for the Other Voice's edition of Pernette du Guillet's poetry, has once again proven that she is a master of her art. The poems of Jeanne Flore's text demonstrate Finch's great skill at rendering the verse into English while remaining faithful to meaning, rhythm, and rhyme scheme. Few texts in early Renaissance France are as intriguing as this odd collection of stories by Jeanne Flore,

whose very existence is a mystery. Peebles and Finch have done a great service by translating the text into English so that it can be appreciated by a larger audience.

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