

Ingrid A. R. De Smet. *Thuanus: The Making of Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553–1617)*.

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Ingrid A. R. De Smet's study most skillfully recounts and analyzes the remarkable life of Jacques-Auguste de Thou, one of France's most scholarly, albeit controversial, luminaries of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Historian, poet, memoir writer, parlementaire, and contributor to the Edict of Nantes, de Thou possessed a steadfast, neo-Stoic *politique* presence in the midst of an age of some of the most savage religious warfare and intolerance, while witnessing the highs and lows of the healing presence of Henri IV's stabilizing regime. Unfortunately for de Thou, however, during the latter part of his life he endured the scorn of papacy and crown alike because of the unflinching courage and moderation that he showed in his opus magnus, *Historiarum sui temporis*. Never mind. Even if Henri IV's *politique* overtures to the papacy necessitated such unfair treatment of de Thou, future literati would come to regard him as not only the best historian of his age, but "first and foremost a man of real influence" (17). De Smet's direct, clear, engaging style facilitates our understanding of the man and his age. She has constructed an intellectual biography, thematically arranged rather than chronological, which defines de Thou in the context of his life as a highly influential statesman and writer.

The long introduction to this book provides a thorough and necessary foundation to the author's purpose as well as to de Thou's family origins and background. Then the first two chapters examine de Thou's writing of poetry "in order to project a calculated public and literary persona" (24). Also, in the beginning chapters, de Thou's relationships with friends such as Isaac Casaubon and Joseph Scaliger, two of the most intellectual figures of the day, reveal his place as a prominent statesman and man of letters. Next, chapter 3 centers on the women in his writing and in his life and the pivotal role they played in shaping his identity. Finally, chapters 4 and 5 focus on de Thou's phenomenal library and scholarship involving his *Historiae*, *Memoires*, and role as a political voice at this moment in French history. Thus, it is not the author's purpose to examine the content, accuracy, or method of de Thou's *Historiae*, but rather to reveal how and why de Thou thought and acted as he did. In the well-formed conclusion, De Smet not only recaps de Thou's fall from favor, including the slings and arrows from court and church alike, but she also reveals little-known information that sheds light on

why the king became more than a little annoyed with de Thou. His poetry provides some pieces to this puzzle in his life. Combing the Dupuy manuscripts, especially ms. 460, the author has discovered that several poems, some written in de Thou's own hand, not only criticized Henri IV's beloved mistress, Gabrielle d'Estrées, but also that other poetic fragments praised the king's rather free-spirited first wife, Marguerite de Valois. Neither was de Thou silent in his poetry concerning the Jesuits, whom he distrusted all the while that Henri had allowed them to reenter the realm after they had been expelled some years before. It seems de Thou had a knack for being supportive of the wrong causes and people just when the court took an opposite view. What is worse is that de Thou's religious moderation in matters of the state did not help. De Smet surmises the situation best when she concludes, "what was an advantage in the 1580's and 1590's turned into a drawback in the more rigorously Catholic, almost ultramontane climate that permeated France with the arrival of Marie de Medicis" (282).

Included in this exceptional work on de Thou's life and identity are genealogies of his family, a useful index, thorough bibliography, list of illustrations, and more recent listings of works in the *Trauvaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* series. It was the author's hope that "this book has done de Thou the justice he requested" (285). Indeed, it has done that and much more as a fine contribution toward our understanding of a much maligned yet ultimately superlative figure in French history and scholarship.

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