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Madeleine de l'Aubespine, *Selected Poems and Translations: A Bilingual Edition*. Edited and translated by Anna Klosowska. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2007. xxx + 136 pp. Notes, appendix, bibliography, and index. \$50.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN: 0-226-14193-4; \$.20.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN: 0-226-14194-2.

Review by Isabelle Fernbach, Montana State University.

Anna Klosowska's bilingual edition of Madeleine de l'Aubespine's poetic works is part of "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe" series and constitutes a welcome addition to Renaissance studies for at least two major reasons. First, it is the first English translation from this French Renaissance female writer, whose poetry was praised by her most illustrious male counterparts, especially Ronsard. Second, this is the first complete edition of l'Aubespine's poems in any language: seventeen sonnets including an exchange with Ronsard, never published before the present edition; three songs or *vilanelles* in which l'Aubespine engages in a galant debate with Philippe Desportes and Agrippa d'Aubigné; a dialogue; and three epigrams. The appendix also features Madeleine de l'Aubespine's two translation projects: the first two cantos from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, previously attributed to male writers, and four Ovidian Epistles, of which only one had been discovered before the present edition.

Klosowska's original findings make this new edition of l'Aubespine's poetry more accurate than previous ones, such as Roger Sorg's *Les Chansons de Callianthe, fille de Ronsard* (Paris: Léon Pichon, 1926) and Frédéric Lachèvre's *Poesies attribuées a tort a Madeleine de Laubespine sous le titre Chansons de Callianthe* (Paris: A. Margraff, 1932), which is less faithful to the original manuscript. Indeed Klosowska's edition, established according to BnF MS fr.1718 and the description of a lost posthumous volume of l'Aubespine's complete works, corrected the reordering of the love poems in the previous edition by Sorg, which aimed at creating a romantic narrative absent from the original manuscript. Klosowska's discovery of a fragment of an unknown sonnet from Ronsard enabled her instead to present l'Aubespine's poetry in a new literary context.[1] Through an exchange of three sonnets between the two authors, Madeleine de l'Aubespine is portrayed as a "true poet," worthy of competing with her male contemporaries.

However, Lachèvre's previously cited work raises the problem of the debated authorship of the poems, which the author attributes to Héliette de Vivonne, a question not properly dealt with by Klosowska.[2] The same ambiguous authorship is seen with l'Aubespine's prose work *Cabinet des saines affections* (ed. Colette Winn, Paris: Champion, 2001), as the book editor is careful to explain. Klosowska on the other hand only mentions the mistaken attribution over l'Aubespine's translation of Ariosto. It is important to insist, though, that with Klosowska's three main discoveries—the Ariosto and Ovid translations by l'Aubespine, and Ronsard's lost sonnet to the poetess—this new edition is the only one gathering the poetess' complete poetic works. It is also the first English translation, which will surely contribute to have l'Aubespine's work find its way into the classroom. As for Klosowska's translation of l'Aubespine's poetry, facing the French original, is very readable and will help this largely unknown female author reclaim her place next to the most famous poets of Renaissance France.

Klosowska's cross-references with other Renaissance female authors also highlight the mainstream position of Madeleine de l'Aubespine's poetry, preoccupied by the Pléiade's literary project as well as more feminist stances such as those seen in Louise Labé's poetry, among others. L'Aubespine's "Song translated from *Biscayen* into French" (pp. 70-71) for instance links her poetry to the idea of a national

poetic model. The reader can nonetheless grasp the significance of l'Aubespine's feminine voice in the Renaissance thanks to Klosowska's comments on her erotic writing, "unprecedented in French poetry" (p. 17) for its boldness and originality. Insights into the contexts of courtly life inform the non-specialist reader of l'Aubespine's peculiar stylistic features. Moreover, biographical commentaries about the poetess' prosperous marriage and tumultuous amorous life are reminiscent of the oscillations in her work between virtuous love and the pleasures of seduction. Given the constraints on space, notes are scarce and limited to bibliographical information or translation issues, but Klosowska provides the reader with relevant comments on the individual poems in the introduction.

The text presentation follows an introduction by the series editors that contextualizes women/female writing through medieval and early modern societies. Klosowska's commentary starts with some historical background about sixteenth-century France, continues with biographical information about l'Aubespine, and proceeds with the text analysis. Following the order in which the poems appear in the volume, she first comments on the sonnets, where she isolates various themes: the "myth of the author" (p. 12), mainly expressed through l'Aubespine's exchange with Ronsard and Desportes, the lyric subject, and eroticism. She then proceeds to the three *chansons* where l'Aubespine is in dialogue this time with Desportes and d'Aubigné. They in turn are followed by l'Aubespine's poetic dialogues, mainly satirical of courtly life, three epigrams on the theme of love, her translation of Ariosto and Ovid, and an anonymous dedicatory epistle to l'Aubespine's lost volume of poetic works. The text commentary as a whole would have gained in clarity with a better referencing to the poems, the adoption of some kind of numbering system, or a more accurate table of contents. In the current form, it is not always clear which poem Klosowska is referring to in her introduction, especially as the collection includes works by several authors. Klosowska's argument also appears difficult to follow at times, as she tends to jump from a description of early modern cultural practices to in-depth comments on her editorial method; at the end of her section on the sonnets for instance, she goes from general observations on female erotic poetry to the ordering of the poems in the reference manuscripts.

My last critique addresses the choice of an English translation in prose, likely to appear as if the author had sacrificed meter and rhyme to readability. This choice may have been influenced by the series' emphasis on the feminine voice, whereby the provocative erotic content of the poems takes over the literary quality of the translation – the editor, for example, heavily advertises the pieces celebrating lesbian love and onanism. Without considering the re-creation of an English rhyme pattern, the translator should commit to the preservation of a metric system and strive to preserve the lyricism of the text. To quote Du Bellay: "Celuy donques qui voudra faire oeuvre digne de prix en son vulgaire, laisse ce labour de raduyre, principalement les Poëtes, à ceux, qui de chose laborieuse, (...) emportent à bon droict plus de molestie, que de gloyre" (*Deffence*, l.vi. 35). [3]<sup>1</sup>

## NOTES

[1] Klosowska presents her finding in Anna Klosowska, *Madeleine de l' Aubespine: Life, Works, and Auto-Mythography: An Exchange with Ronsard, ca. 1570–80, in French Forum* (Lincoln and New York: University of Nebraska Press), 32, Numbers 1-2, Winter 2007: 19-38.

[2] On the same topic, see also Frédéric Lachèvre, *Madame de Villeroy ou Héliette de Vivonne? : Les chansons de Callianthe, éditées par M. Sorg ne sont pas de Madeleine de Laubespine : réponse à M. Jacques*

<sup>1</sup> "Let him then who wishes to produce a work worthy to be valued in his vulgar tongue leave the work of translating, especially of poets, to those who from a laborious task of little profit (...) rightly earn more vexation than glory," in Joachim du Bellay, *The Regrets, with the Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies, and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language*, ed. and transl. Richard Helgerson, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, bk.1, ch.6, p.336.

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*Lavaud (sa thèse sur Desportes) ; Un critique littéraire à trois têtes : Pierre de Ninon, Jean Tournemille, Georges Mongrédien, ennemis d'Héliette de Vivonne* (Paris, 1937).

[3] “Let him then who wishes to produce a work worthy to be valued in his vulgar tongue leave the work of translating, especially of poets, to those who from a laborious task of little profit (...) rightly earn more vexation than glory,” in Joachim du Bellay, *The Regrets, with the Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies, and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language*, Richard Helgerson, ed. and trans., (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), bk.1, ch.6, p. 336.

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