

explicitly state. Butler herself uses the term “abuse” more frequently than “violence,” and it is clear that in the Middle Ages, as today, “abuse” might encompass more than physical force, including verbal attacks and economic deprivation. Medieval records could be frustratingly vague in describing abuse; while witnesses seeking to prove abuse were often graphic in description—in one instance, stating that a husband beat his wife until “blood poured out both by her nostrils and ears” (151)—the courts themselves often seem to have used terms like “maltreat” or “diverse squabbles and discord” (100). Further discussion of the vocabulary used to describe marital abuse would be welcome to clarify this elision of “abuse” and “violence.”

This criticism, however, in no way diminishes the value of having these cases of marital disharmony, whether violent or not, discussed in such systematic fashion. While structurally Butler’s study bears the marks of its origins as a dissertation, it also stands as a valuable contribution to the history of gender in late medieval England.

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**Madeleine de l’Aubespine.**  
*Selected Poems and  
Translations: A Bilingual  
Edition*, ed. and trans. Anna  
Klosowska. (The Other  
Voice in Early Modern  
Europe.) University of  
Chicago Press, 2007. Pp.  
xxx + 132.

Anna Klosowska’s bilingual edition of the poems and translations of Madeleine de l’Aubespine (1546–96) is an exciting addition to early modern, queer, and feminist literary studies. L’Aubespine is virtually unknown, as a search of the Modern Language Association Bibliography demonstrates, and yet her importance in European literary history should not be ignored, as it undeniably has been. She is one of the few female authors afforded praise by Pierre de Ronsard, her contemporary and the French equivalent of Shakespeare in terms of importance to the literary and linguistic heritage of a country.

Klosowska’s edition is part of the University of Chicago Press series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. This series makes early modern women writers’ works available to a broad audience and seems especially well-suited for the classroom. Other books

in the series include editions of the writings of Louise Labé, Katharina Schütz Zell, Vittoria Colonna, Moderata Fonte, and many others.<sup>1</sup>

In the Series Introduction, the general editors, Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil, Jr., trace the various influences on misogyny in the Western tradition, from Hebrew to Greek to Roman to Christian. The editors posit the origin of today's advances in gender equality in the dissenting voices of women who wrote six hundred years ago. The Introduction touches on many important issues surrounding "the other voice," including problems of chastity, power, speech, and knowledge.

Medieval feminists may be troubled by the Series Introduction's placement of Christine de Pizan. She is acknowledged as an important, early, professional, female writer. However, a reader may come away with the idea that Christine is an early modern voice in Europe rather than late medieval. Positing the voices of early modern women as the first "other voices" ignores the voices of women in the Middle Ages. This oversight may be off-putting to those who study women in the Middle Ages and may provide other readers with a misapprehension about the role

of Christine de Pizan and other medieval authors in the history of women's writing. However, this criticism of the Series Introduction in no way diminishes the importance of Klosowska's edition, and her presentation of l'Aubespine demonstrates how vital it was to include her in this series.

Klosowska's Volume Editor's Introduction provides a nice overview of l'Aubespine's life, work, and significance to French literary studies. L'Aubespine's importance as an early modern voice, Klosowska argues, is three-fold. First, her work had been lost until Klosowska's and others' recent efforts. Second, her erotic poetry offers a counternarrative for the traditional view of early modern, female authors as fearful to maintain their chastity, modesty, and femininity. L'Aubespine's poems "describe homoeroticism, masturbation, multiple orgasms, and sexual agency" (17). In fact, she authors the first known lesbian poem in French, Sonnet 9. Third, l'Aubespine's relationship with Ronsard and their mutual construction of authorial voices makes her part of the foundation of the national literature of France. Their poetic dialogues construct "a myth of the woman author that establishes her as a heroic, national, masculine figure,

better than any other man, and not a representative of the female sex” (16).

Klosowska only briefly touches on her detective work in Italy and France during which she attributed a number of poems to l’Aubespine that had formerly been considered anonymous. She also uncovered a fragment of a previously unknown poem by Ronsard. More discussion of her detective work and the work of other l’Aubespine scholars would have been welcome. However, given the broad audience of this series, perhaps her brevity can be excused. Scholars who want to know more should look to the article she published in *French Forum* (32:1-2) in 2007 entitled “Madeleine de l’Aubespine: Life, Works, and Auto-mythography: An exchange with Ronsard, ca. 1570-80.” This article mentions the critical edition of l’Aubespine’s work she is preparing for Honoré Champion (under review) and the forthcoming biography of l’Aubespine by Isabelle de Conihout and Pascal Ract-Madoux. It is obvious that Klosowska is part of “the current confluence of scholars, access, and accidents of preservation” working “to bring out l’Aubespine’s legacy” (*French Forum*, 19). As Klosowska notes, l’Aubespine’s life is actually quite well-documented, if little studied. It is her literary works

that have been lost, ignored, or misattributed.

Klosowska’s presentation of l’Aubespine’s work opens with the extant fragment of the dedicatory poem from the posthumous edition of her work (unfortunately, lost in a 1904 fire in the Turin library).<sup>2</sup> This anonymous poem was supposedly written by one of her lovers. It is followed by seventeen sonnets by l’Aubespine interspersed with epigrams and songs by l’Aubespine and poems addressed to her by Ronsard (including the newly-discovered, three-line fragment), Philippe Desportes, and Agrippa d’Aubigné.

The poems are fascinating, and Klosowska’s translations are eminently readable. L’Aubespine’s poems stand on their own as literary creations, but do call to mind the themes and work of more well-known poets in their sensuality (Labé) and mythic references and erudition (Ronsard). At times, a bit of the erotic ambiguity and word play of l’Aubespine’s work is lost in the English translation. For example, the highly erotic Sonnet 11 plays with the masculine gender of the word “lute” in French to sexualize the musical experience. Differences in linguistic constructions oblige Klosowska to use “he” and “him”

to translate the French “il” and “le” which could arguably also be “it” in English.

The Appendices feature parts of l’Aubespine’s translations of Ovid’s *Heroides* and Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*. Klosowska includes the first forty verses of l’Aubespine’s translation of the first canto of *Orlando*. This translation was long thought to be by an anonymous, male translator who was praised for “his” clarity and mastery.<sup>3</sup> The epistles l’Aubespine translated from the *Heroides* (2, 5, 16, and 17), Klosowska argues, point to her interest in rewriting gender stereotypes as these epistles deal with characters such as Phyllis, Oenone, and Helen. Epistle 2, Phyllis to Demophoon, is in the Appendices. The presentation of the translations is less accessible than that of l’Aubespine’s poems. Included is the original Latin and Italian followed by l’Aubespine’s sixteenth-century French translation with no English or modernized French translation. However, l’Aubespine’s early modern French is not a huge barrier to any reader of modern French. We will have to wait for Klosowska’s critical edition for the complete texts of l’Aubespine’s translations.

Klosowska’s work is a most welcome addition to the canon

of early modern authors, female and male. This bilingual edition would be a great complement to any Anglophone or Francophone classroom focusing on early modern authors, women writers, queer studies, sexuality, or a range of related topics.

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#### END NOTES

1. For recent controversies surrounding Labé, see Mireille Huchon’s *Louise Labé: une créature de papier* (Geneva: Droz, 2006), which argues that Labé’s work is an invention of a group of male poets. Scholars continue to dispute Huchon’s argument.
2. The only other major source for l’Aubespine’s work is BnF MS fr. 1718. The Turin manuscript can be partially reconstructed from a detailed description.
3. See Alexandre Cioranescu, *L’Arioste en France, des origines à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*, 2 volumes (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1938), volume 1, 102, in Klosowska, 28.

