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Gabriele Simeoni (1509–1570?). Un Florentin en France entre princes et libraires.

Geneva: Droz, 2016. Pp. 639. ISBN 978-2-600-01833-3 (paperback) CFH 89.

Gabriele Simeoni was a Florentine exile in France, a man of letters, erudite poet, antiquarian scholar, polygraph translator, editor, geographer, astrologer—in short, a Renaissance man. New interest in this versatile figure of the sixteenth-century learned environment was generated in 2011 after the discovery of a manuscript transmitting an illustrated poetic text by Simeoni. The work was dated 1539 and dedicated to Duke Cosimo I de' Medici; its purpose was to obtain a pardon from the duke that would allow Simeoni to return to Florence after many years abroad. Even though Simeoni's praise of the duke remained unheard and his hope unrealized, this new discovery clearly shows the link between Simeoni's literary activity and his intellectual ambitions. Here, Simeoni presents himself as a new Petrarch, an achievement that, he claims, was prefigured in his horoscope.

The current volume, edited by Silvia D'Amico and Catherine Magnien-Simonin, considers the 2011 discovery to be a fundamental turning point in modern scholarship on Simeoni's eventful life and his heterogeneous production. Their book includes twenty-four contributions in French and Italian, plus an appendix containing editions of previously unpublished texts. The miscellany is structured along several thematic groupings.

The first brings to light further information on Simeoni's biography, especially on his first Florentine years before he went into exile, his relationship with the French cultural universe, some aspects of his education, and his first printed book of poetry (1546). In this section, the approach to his autobiography is revised in line with new perspectives that also consider his self-representations through emblems and *imprese*.

The second grouping revolves around Simeoni's activity as an erudite translator, with particular emphasis on his translations from classical languages into the modern vernaculars, and his translation from vernacular to vernacular (Italian and French). Among the former, two significant works are examined: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Simeoni's illustrated *Bible* (a fascinating example of Catholic translations of sacred texts in an environment exposed to Protestant influences). In the latter, instead, his bilingual *Presage du triumphe de Gaulois / Presagio del trionfo de franzesi* (1555) is examined to reveal how his translations

could vary according to cultural and political issues. From these examples, an outline of his methodology emerges—including theoretical statements and practical applications—that reflected his multifaceted investigations and “les résultats acquis dans les recherches les plus variées” (252).

The third grouping deals with Simeoni’s antiquarian interests. Here we see how Simeoni’s antiquarianism focused on archeology, epigraphy, and numismatics, as well as geography, cartography, and war studies. He applied a rather systematic comparative method, very common at that time, which provided some original readings of findings still accepted by modern scholarship. Worthy of mention are his collaborations with the publisher Jean Rouille and the humanist Guillaume Du Choul, which fostered the diffusion of knowledge regarding Roman antiquities, especially with the publication of the *Discours sur la religion des anciens romains* (1558). The study on the origins of Lyon, *Origine e antichità di Lione* (1560), is probably one of his masterpieces, even though the manuscript transmitting this text and its many drawings was never published. This work displays all of Simeoni’s skills in antiquarian investigation, how he cross-referenced scattered material and literary sources to find the original site of Lyon and arrive at a more reliable history of its foundation.

The last part of the collection contains three critical editions of texts by Simeoni that have not previously been published, that is, an encomiastic poem to the Medici that celebrates their genealogy (*De’ fatti del Signor Giovanni de’ Medici et della genealogia della sua casa*), which is clearly emulating what Ariosto did for the Este family, some “familiar letters” dated between 1547 and 1553, and his autobiography (*Vita di m. Gabriel Symeoni, di nazione fiorentino, et d’obbligo lucchese*).

The structure of the entire volume shows remarkable progress in the scholarship of Renaissance history and circulation of culture, renewing positions that had become obsolete. By contributing editions of unpublished material, this volume becomes an important primary source that could be used by academics to advance research on Simeoni as a sixteenth-century learned writer and to measure the transnational impact of his antiquarian studies—more specifically, to show how the methodology he developed in Italy was applied in different territories with significant and long-lasting results.

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