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Jeanne Flore, *Tales and Trials of Love: A Bilingual Edition and Study*. Ed. and trans. Kelly Digby Peebles. Poems translated by Marta Rijn Finch. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series, 33. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014. xiv + 342 pp. Notes, appendices, bibliography, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-7727-2166-2.

Review by Kathleen A. Loysen, Montclair State University.

The *Comptes amoureux* of Jeanne Flore have experienced a renewal of scholarly attention since the appearance of the first critical edition produced by Gabriel-André Pérouse in 1980.^[1] Since that time, in addition to another critical edition by Régine Reynolds-Cornell in 2005,^[2] there have been at least three monographs,^[3] several articles,^[4] as well as analyses of the work in several volumes not solely focused on Jeanne Flore.^[5] Never before, however, has the work been translated into English. This is why the most recent critical edition, with introduction and prose translations by Kelly Digby Peebles and poetic translations by Marta Rijn Finch, is so vitally important. Included in the Toronto Series on the Other Voice in Early Modern Europe, this volume opens up the literary world of Renaissance Lyon and Jeanne Flore to myriad new potential audiences, facilitating study by a wider array of scholars and enabling the inclusion of the text in undergraduate and graduate courses outside of the French programs where it has resided until now.

The identity of “Jeanne Flore” is unknown; this name is not referenced in any other literary context, nor does there seem to be any record of such a woman’s existence in the documentary history of Lyon, where the *Comptes* were first published (in an initial iteration in 1540 by the printer François Juste as *La Pugnition de l’amour contempné, extrait de l’amour fatal de madame Jane Flore*, and then in an augmented version by Denys de Harsy, most plausibly in 1542, with three new tales, an added closing poem, and a revised title, *Comptes amoureux par madame Jeanne Flore touchant la punition que faict Venus de ceulx qui contempnent & mesprisent le vray Amour*). The title page of each of these editions includes the name “Jeanne Flore” as part of the title itself, perhaps signaling the pseudonymous nature of the name and postulating that “Jeanne Flore” may herself be part of the fiction created by the work, in a curiously playful *mise en abyme* and fictionalization of the process of authorship, transmission, and publication that the collection itself recounts and reproduces. Digby Peebles does not shy away from this tension, indeed diving right into the question of “Jeanne Flore’s” identity from the start of the introduction. While she does not draw any conclusions or propose any new theories on the identity of “Jeanne Flore,” that is not her primary purpose here. Rather, the goals of the edition are to give a solid introduction to the current state of Jeanne Flore studies, to situate the *Comptes amoureux* within the literary and cultural landscape of early modern Europe, and to provide both a French transcription and an English translation of the work itself. All of these goals are accomplished masterfully.

The introduction is divided into seven parts, leading the reader successively through a discussion of the debates around the identity of Jeanne Flore and the publication history of the *Comptes*; an examination of the “intellectual and literary world” of Renaissance Lyon; an analysis of the work’s paratextual items (title page, opening poem, introductory epistle, closing poem), frame context, and seven tales; a brief

history of Renaissance ideas on marriage, one of the work's major themes; a positioning of the work within the literary history of the *roman sentimental*; a brief history of the *querelle des Amyes*, a longstanding debate related to the *querelle des femmes* but specifically focused on how a woman should properly comport herself in matters of the heart; and finally, a discussion of how all of this fits into the contemporary movements for religious reform. The introduction is completed with three sets of notes regarding the transcription of the French text, the English translations of the prose sections, and the English translations of the poetic sections (this last section of the introduction is authored by the poetry translator, Marta Rijn Finch). After the detailed and thoroughly annotated introduction, we move directly into the presentation of the text itself, which is followed by additional explanatory notes on the content of the work, three appendices of images, a rich bibliography of primary (both sixteenth-century and modern editions) and secondary sources, and a clear and valuable index of names, works, and ideas.

The first part of the introduction, subtitled "The Other Voice," begins by placing Jeanne Flore right into the context of Lyon, acknowledging the debate around her existence: "What we know about Jeanne Flore, if indeed there *was* a Jeanne Flore, we glean solely from her printed works" (p. 1). Digby Peebles then goes on to relate the controversy around Jeanne Flore's identity to similar ones pertaining to Pernette du Guillet (c. 1520-1545) and Louise Labé (c. 1522-1566), who also lived in Lyon. By doing so, she raises "important questions about women's status and roles in the culture of Renaissance France" (p. 1) and then broadens these questions into an appraisal of the status of women's authorship, by tracing the history of the very notions of *authorship* and *authority* and of the interactions of oral, manuscript, and print culture. This is a particularly compelling section of the introduction that engages with the most current scholarship in the fields of book history broadly writ, and of the particular circumstances of book production and literary culture in early sixteenth-century Lyon. Relying heavily on the convincing arguments of critics such as Leah Chang,^[6] Digby Peebles describes how and why the *Comptes* were shaped to appear under a woman's name with a "deliberate strategy for its sale" in mind (p. 5): "Authors, editors, printers, and booksellers collaborated and conspired competitively, in effect creating books collectively, thereby cultivating literary communities that both shaped and were shaped by the multiple manners of producing and of consuming books: the printing industry, the scribal tradition, and intellectual coteries" (p. 6).

This leads directly into the next section of the introduction, "Imprimé nouvellement à Lyon," which deals with the culture of sixteenth-century Lyon. Digby Peebles describes the "unique and unusual circumstances" (p. 9) of Lyon as a point of convergence between northern and southern Europe. With its two international book fairs per year, Lyon became one of the most important printing centers of early modern Europe, especially as it was relatively freer from the constraints of Paris as the center of political, religious, and intellectual authority. Discussing the particulars of the Lyon book trade, Digby Peebles relates this to how the city of Lyon also fostered women's participation in the new literary culture. Following this contextualization of the authorship of the tales and their production history, Digby Peebles enters into an analysis of the collection itself in part three: "*Comptes amoureux*: Content and Analysis." Considering the narratological structure of the work, with its frame context, circle of oral storytellers, seven inserted tales, as well as the paratextual material, she draws an excellent picture of the paradoxes involved in a literary representation of oral storytelling, a phenomenon we see throughout early modern French fiction, and the confrontation of multiple points of view that is facilitated by this structure. By assembling such a scaffolding, the author Jeanne Flore has, according to Digby Peebles, created a "*mise en abyme* of women's literacy" (p. 18), by relating fictional scenes of women telling tales to other women, discussing them, transcribing them, and finally printing them, and in turn offering up the printed collection itself to real-life audiences as exemplary models for new communities of readers.

This is where Digby Peebles draws a connection with the contemporary debates around women's access to education, and their freedom to don positions of authority and authorship. By placing the collection under the name of Madame Minerve, both the "author" of the introductory poem and one of the main

storytellers of the circle, Jeanne Flore links it to Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom and invention, as well as Lyon's patron goddess of printing. In the newly authoritative positions into which they have been placed (whether seriously or satirically is yet another unanswered question surrounding the *Comptes*), the women storytellers debate and exchange stories related to love, marriage, desire, women's virtue, and women's freedom to choose compatible amorous partners. This is the intersection of the *querelle des femmes* and the *querelle des Amyes* so central to the thematics of the *Comptes*, and what Digby Peebles discusses in the next section of the introduction, "Mismatched Marriage in Renaissance Literature." The topos of the *mal-mariée* is a common one in medieval and Renaissance literature, since marriage was based not on love but was rather arranged according to social or financial considerations. Digby Peebles does an admirable job illuminating how and why this was a crucial issue for the Christian humanists[7] of sixteenth-century Europe in general and of France in particular—Christian humanists such as Erasmus, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Clément Marot, Bertrand de la Borderie, and, in the *Comptes amoureux*, the author known as Jeanne Flore; Digby Peebles contends Jeanne Flore sought to synthesize Christian reformist ideas on marriage (such as Erasmus's contention that marriage is not only an economic contract but a marriage of souls[8]) with neo-Platonist ideas on Eros and Anteros (with Eros representing *fol' amor*, profane or physical love, and Anteros, the *Amour* endorsed in the *Comptes*, standing for spiritual, sacred love, a love based on compatibility and mutual respect). In my mind, however, Digby Peebles does not address here one of the work's central paradoxes: the women storytellers are calling on the other women of their circle, both within and outside of the fictional frame of the text, to "liberate" themselves by "subjecting" themselves to the reign of *Amour*. [9] While she sees Jeanne Flore as exhorting women to "shap[e] their own lives, and...dispute or subvert authority" (p. 7), the fact that this vision of freedom and autonomy should come via a new sort of submission to their lovers and to *Amour*, in order to avoid punishment for their hard-heartedness and frigidity, is a perplexing contradiction that deserves fuller treatment.

Digby Peebles continues each of these discussions in the following sections of the introduction. In part five, dedicated to the history of the sentimental novel, the *Comptes* are placed into the wider literary history of early sixteenth-century Europe, with the decline of the chivalric romance and the rise of the sentimental novel. It was during this time that many Italian and Spanish *romans sentimentaux* were translated into French, by such authors as Diego de San Pedro (c. 1437-c. 1498), Giacomo Caviceo (1443-1511), and, interestingly, Juan de Flores (1455-1525)—the author of *Grimalte y Gradissa*, a continuation of Boccaccio's (1313-1375) tale *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, which the Lyonnais poet Maurice Scève (c. 1501-c. 1564) translated into French in 1535 as *La Déplorable fin de Flamète*. The multiple suggestive connections among Juan de Flores, "Jeanne Flore," and the Lyonnais literary milieu, with Scève at its head (Scève is among the most frequently suggested as possible authors standing behind the Jeanne Flore pseudonym), are reviewed at length. Section six expands Digby Peebles's earlier discussion of the *querelle des Amyes*, by once again comparing contemporary developments in French letters to those in broader European movements. The *mal mariée* victim of traditional literature here "seek[s] to affirm [her] personal independence in matters of love and marriage" (p. 43) by the "very deliberate exercise of free will" (p. 45). This question of free will is then related to more expansive matters of religious reform in the final section of the introduction, "Love and Marriage as Religious Dissidence in *Comptes amoureux*," where Digby Peebles posits that Jeanne Flore's "syncretic approach reveals [her] to be an active reader of contemporary literature and an active participant in an intellectual and cultural world that discussed social change and church reform" (p. 48).

In her notes on the French textual transcription, Digby Peebles gives the reader an overview of each sixteenth-century and modern edition of the *Comptes*, specifying issues related to dating, variants, and accuracy, and the locations of each extant copy of the early modern editions. In order to give twenty-first-century readers a feel for the original work, her transcription rightfully does not modernize spelling and punctuation; except for the replacement of "j" for "i" and "v" for "u"; she also replaces various printers' abbreviations (such as "&") and adds the missing consonants where a tilde would have indicated a nasal sound (so "õ" becomes "on"). She does not reproduce the 1542 woodcuts, due to space

limitations, but she does indicate where they are and points out that interested readers can go to Gallica to see them. She also describes how printers such as Denys de Harsy re-used and re-purposed woodcuts that were used in other publications; this sort of information can often help with the dating of various editions where other pertinent confirmation is missing. In her note on the prose translation, she specifies that there are places where she introduced parentheses, quotation marks, and paragraph spacing, and also sometimes broke up long sentences, for the sake of clarity, while taking proper account of evolutions in French spelling, syntax, punctuation, and lexical meaning since the sixteenth century. She also explains that since the text itself makes frequent reference to “classical, medieval, and contemporary literature and history” (p. 53), contemporary readers will find explanatory commentary in the endnotes. The endnotes do indeed provide much worthwhile information for today’s student and scholar.

The translator’s note on the poetry translations, written by Marta Rijn Finch, explains that the poems included in the *Comptes* represent the diversity of forms being used in Lyon at the time, “tapping into the classical mythology and the Neoplatonic and Petrarchan influences of literary traditions that preceded them” (p. 54). She explains her decision to “follow Jeanne Flore’s original meter and rhyme scheme, to provide the truest echo of the original” (p. 56) and the challenges presented by various puns and homonyms such as “esté” (was) and “Esté” (summer), “vieillart” (old man, or aged husband as translated by Rijn Finch), and “vieil art” (ancient art), as well as how she dealt with key words whose meanings have significantly changed over time, such as *aventure* and *desplaisance*.

The text itself is clearly laid out, with the French transcription and the English translation on conveniently facing and correlated pages (signposted with indications of the location of page breaks and woodcut illustrations in the Harsy edition[10]) with substantial, thorough endnotes interpreting the tales themselves and explicating classical and mythological references.

In sum, Digby Peebles and Rijn Finch have produced an outstanding edition and translation of Jeanne Flore’s *Comptes amoureux*, and the critical apparatus provided by Digby Peebles casts a keen analytical eye on the text itself, while integrating book history, printing history, and cultural history into the framework she provides. She delivers a solid foundation to newcomers and specialists alike, and opens up the work to a new generation of scholarship.

NOTES

[1] *Contes amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore*. Gabriel-André Pérouse, ed., Lyon: CNRS Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1980.

[2] *Les Contes amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore*. Régine Reynolds-Cornell, ed., Saint-Étienne: publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2005.

[3] See, for example, Diane Desrosiers-Bonin and Eliane Viennot, eds., *Actualité de Jeanne Flore* (Paris: Champion, 2004); Magda Campanini Catani, *L’immagine riflessa: La riscrittura delle fonti nei Contes amoureux di Jeanne Flore* (Venezia Lido: Supernova, 2000); and Laura Doyle Gates, *Soubz umbrage de passetemps: Women’s Storytelling in the Evangiles des quenouilles, the Comptes amoureux of Jeanne Flore and the Heptaméron* (Montreal: CERES, 1997).

[4] The full list is too lengthy to enumerate here. See, for instance, Denis Baril, “Des ‘Quenouilles’ aux ‘Caquets’, 150 ans de comméragés,” *Recherches et travaux* 22 (1982): 53-64; Cathleen M. Bauschatz, “Cebille/Sebile: Jeanne Flore, Reader of Christine De Pizan,” *Women in French* 8 (2000): 86-96; and “Parodic Didacticism in the *Contes Amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore*,” *French Forum* 20.1 (1995): 5-21; Carolyn M. Fay “Who Was Jeanne Flore? Subversion and Silence in *Les Contes Amoureux Par Madame Jeanne Flore*,” *Women in French Studies* 3 (1995): 7-20; Claude Longeon, “Du

nouveau sur *Les Comptes amoureux de Madame Jeanne Flore*,” *Bibliothèque d’humanisme et Renaissance* 44.3 (1982): 605-613; Régine Reynolds-Cornell, “Je’ est une autre ou la délivrance fictive du réel dans les *Contes amoureux* de Jeanne Flore,” in Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore, ed., *Les Représentations de l’Autre du Moyen Age au XVIIe siècle* (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 1995), pp. 239-246; and “Madame Jeanne Flore and the *Contes Amoureux*: A Pseudonym and a Paradox,” *Bibliothèque d’humanisme et Renaissance* 51.1 (1989): 123-133.

[5] Among many others: Josephine Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel, 1405-1726* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf, eds., *Women’s Writing in the French Renaissance: Proceedings of the Fifth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 7-9 July 1997* (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1999); Floyd Gray, *Gender, Rhetoric, and Print Culture in French Renaissance Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Madeleine Jeay, *Donner la parole: L’histoire-cadre dans les recueils de nouvelles des XVe-XVIIe siècles* (Le Moyen français 3; Montreal: CERES, 1992); Anne R. Larsen and Colette H. Winn, eds., *Renaissance Women Writers: French Texts/American Contexts* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Deborah Losse, *Sampling the Book: Renaissance Prologues and the French Conteurs* (Lewisburg, Penn. and London: Bucknell University Press and Associated University Presses, 1994); Lionello Sozzi, ed., *La Nouvelle française à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1981); and Sonya Stephens, ed., *A History of Women’s Writing in France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[6] Leah L. Chang, *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009).

[7] Digby Peebles borrows the term “Christian humanist” from Charles Nauert, “Marguerite, Lefèvre d’Étaples and the Growth of Christian Humanism in France,” in Colette H. Winn, ed., *Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptaméron* (New York: Modern Languages Association, 2007), pp. 38-43.

[8] Erasmus, *The Institution of Christian Matrimony*, in Michael J. Heath trans. and ed., *Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, vol. 69 of *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, John W. O’Malley ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 212.

[9] Jeanne Flore makes repeated reference to the “puniton” (punishment) (p. 58) of those who “mesprisent” (scorn) (p. 58) the power of Amour instead of entering into faithful and “tressainct service” (holy service) (p. 64) as “humbles et loyaulx subjects” (humble and loyal subjects) (p. 64); she condemns the “Orgueil et rigueur” (pride and ruthlessness) (p. 114) with which women refuse to give in to their suitors; they should stop trying to “souffrir la batterie” (endure [the] assault) of their lovers (p. 108) and simply yield, following the example of Madame Minerve in relation to Amour: “Au vouloir et obeissance duquel je me submets du tout” (I completely surrender myself to his will and obedience) (p. 170). The translations belong to Digby Peebles.

[10] The Denis de Harsy (1542) edition can be examined online at the Gallica site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k791612/f1.image.r=jeanne+flore.langEN>.

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