

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Ficino, Marsilio. The Letters of Marsilio Ficino: Volume 10 Being a Translation of Liber XI. Trans. members of the Language Department of the London School of Economics

Marco Piana

Volume 40, numéro 4, automne 2017

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086083ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29285>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Piana, M. (2017). Compte rendu de [Ficino, Marsilio. The Letters of Marsilio Ficino: Volume 10 Being a Translation of Liber XI. Trans. members of the Language Department of the London School of Economics]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 40(4), 204–206.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29285>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2017

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Feitler demonstrates a complete command of the material under consideration. Firmly rooted in the works themselves, his book is the fruit of meticulous research in several libraries the world over, notably a private collection that contains many of the works and items considered, sometimes their only exemplars: the Roberto Bachmann collection in Lisbon. Feitler's book presents images of the works discussed, which is both useful and evocative, giving readers a feel for the works themselves. Two additional sections present images of Inquisitorial Medals and Diplomas and the edition and translation of an *auto-da-fé* sermon from 1624, something especially useful for both specialists and general readers. This book is surely to constitute the definitive study on this topic and will be of interest to researchers in religious studies, Iberian history, Jewish studies, and research on propaganda in the early modern period. Feitler has done English-speaking readers a great service, namely, to shed light and present them with a largely unknown and neglected corpus of works that, in spite of their decidedly negative nature, nonetheless are poignant historical documents well worth our study and consideration.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA

University of Ottawa

Ficino, Marsilio.

***The Letters of Marsilio Ficino: Volume 10 Being a Translation of Liber XI.* Trans. members of the Language Department of the London School of Economics.**

London: Shephard-Walwyn, 2015. Pp. xviii, 152. ISBN 978-0-8568-3500-1 (hardcover) £25.

This tenth volume of Marsilio Ficino's *Letters* is the latest effort of the London School of Economics to translate and publish all the twelve books of letters of this fundamental Renaissance philosopher into English. The volume deals with book 11 of Ficino's correspondence, written between 13 April 1491 and 13 September 1492. The volume begins with a brief general introduction by Arthur Farndell, underlining some of the most important themes and useful topics found in the collection, and a short "Translators' Note" indicating the period in which such letters were written and the textual sources used. There

follows a group of thirty-four letters, an appendix of four more letters found only in manuscript form, the relative notes, and a high-quality print version of the 1495 Venice edition used for the translation with a set of precious notes on the Latin text. Lastly, we find a section of biographical notes of names mentioned in the letters, a bibliography, and the index.

The period of time encompassing these letters marks one of the most crucial events in the history of Renaissance Florence as well as in Ficino's life: that is, the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent (8 April 1492). Lorenzo's untimely departure seems to haunt most of Ficino's 1492 letters. The death of the Magnificent is foreshadowed *a posteriori* (letters 20 and A), analyzed philosophically (letter 20), and celebrated in Platonic and Pythagorean terms as a reincarnation of the spirit in the son Piero (letters B and C). While the missives sent to Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici (letter 18) and Duke Eberard of Wüttemberg (letter 23) show the philosopher's immediate efforts in finding a new patron, more intimate letters like the one dedicated to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (Letter 21) reveal a Ficino in a state of seemingly deep, sincere grief that goes beyond his usual rhetoric.

Another important aspect that transpires from these letter is the length of Ficino's international network of colleagues and benefactors, which spans from Spain to Rome, Germany, and Hungary. In this context, it is especially important to underline Ficino's ties with the intellectual elite of German universities and courts. Two letters, both addressed to the German astronomer Martin "Uranus" Prenninger—recipient of five missives in total—deserve special attention. Letter 28 is particularly important, as it provides a concise catalogue of those whom Ficino considered as friends and pupils. Letter 29, the lengthiest missive of the lot, is by far the most important one from a philosophical point of view. Here, in fact, Ficino presents a selection of excerpts from Proclus's commentary to Plato's *Republic*, received not long before. Among other issues, Ficino discusses Proclus's manifold concept of good and evil, the three states of the souls once separated from the body, and the attributes of divinity, images, and shadows.

Letters 2 and 10 are particularly important to further understand Ficino's reception of Dionysius the Areopagite. If letter 10 informs us of Ficino's current work on Dionysius's *Divine Names*, letter 3 reveals the philosopher's admiration for the late ancient Neoplatonist: "[...] certainly to me no form of knowledge is more beloved than the Platonic, and nowhere is this form to be more revered

than in Dionysius. Indeed, I love Plato in Iamblichus, I am full of admiration for him in Plotinus, I stand in awe of him in Dionysius [...]" (5). This letter, moreover, allows us to confirm that Ficino, like most of his contemporaries, believed that Dionysius had lived and taught prior to Iamblichus and Plotinus, exerting an influence on both.

Other curious and interesting elements can be found in the remaining missives. Letter 25, entirely dedicated to the concept that harmful ideas, like those presented in Orpheus's *Hymns*, must not be spread, contains—ironically enough—Ficino's translations of two such poems, accompanied by a reflection on Porphyry's *On images*, fragment 3. Ficino's choice of the first hymn, sometimes known as Palinode, is particularly meaningful, as it revolves entirely around the idea of merging all Olympian gods in one, thus suggesting—according to the translators' notes—that the gods of the pagan tradition could co-exist and be incorporated within principles of monotheism, even in ancient Greek culture. Letter 30 and D deal with the nature of demons, and prefigure the publication of Ficino's *On the Soul and Daemons*, published in 1497 with Iamblichus's *De mysteriis* (Venice, Aldus Manutius). Extremely interesting is also letter 15, where Ficino addresses Giovanni Pico della Mirandola as a "true fisher of men" (17), guiding humanity to Christendom through Plato.

In conclusion, this new edition of Ficino's letters continues the positive trend of the past volumes, and posits itself as a precious instrument of research and an inspiring reference for Ficino scholars and Renaissance experts alike.

MARCO PIANA

McGill University

Garnier, Édith.

Guillaume du Bellay, l'ange gardien de François I^{er}.

Paris : Éditions du félin, 2016. 428 p. ISBN 978-2-86645-835-5 (broché) 29 €.

Spécialiste de l'histoire maritime et déjà auteur d'un ouvrage remarqué sur l'alliance impie conclue entre François I^{er} et Soliman le Magnifique contre Charles Quint (2008, édition du félin, prix Diane Potier-Boès de l'Académie Française), Édith Garnier offre aujourd'hui à ses lecteur un excellent livre sur Guillaume du Bellay. Au fil de vingt-cinq chapitres bien équilibrés, l'auteur