

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Eisenbichler, Konrad. L'opera poetica di Virginia Martini Salvi (Siena, c. 1510 – Roma, post 1571)

Johnny L. Bertolio

Volume 36, numéro 1, hiver 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091185ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20030>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Bertolio, J. (2013). Compte rendu de [Eisenbichler, Konrad. L'opera poetica di Virginia Martini Salvi (Siena, c. 1510 – Roma, post 1571)]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(1), 173–175.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20030>

Eisenbichler, Konrad.

L'opera poetica di Virginia Martini Salvi (Siena, c. 1510 – Roma, post 1571).

Monografie di storia e letteratura senese 17. Siena: Accademia senese degli Intronati, 2012. Pp. 221. ISBN 978-88-89073-18-6 (paperback) 16 €.

This first monograph on the Sienese poet Virginia Martini Salvi fills a gap that had existed for a long time. It not only brings to light a very prolific woman writer of sixteenth-century Italy, but also provides a modern, critical edition of all her extant poetry which, till now, had been available only in old variorum collections or in manuscript.

In his rich introduction to Salvi and her times, Eisenbichler provides a detailed biographical profile of the poet. He first clarifies the question of which Virginia Salvi, of those alive at that time, was the poet, resolving a problem that has confused scholars since the Renaissance. He then outlines how Salvi's life was firmly tied to Siena—partly because of her love for the city, but especially because of the political events touching her marital family. Her husband, Matteo Salvi, was part of a boisterous group of brothers (among them Giulio, Achille, and Ottaviano) who, during the government of the Nine Priors (1531–45), chose to support the wrong party. In a period dominated in Europe by Emperor Charles V and in Tuscany by Duke Cosimo de' Medici, the Salvi brothers supported the French and sided against their most powerful neighbour and his Spanish protector. They then switched sides and supported the firmly pro-Spanish Capitano del Popolo, Alfonso Piccolomini, but continued to involve themselves in secret plots. When Siena evicted its Spanish protectors and placed itself under French control (1553), the Salvi brothers reached the apogee of their power, but their desire for even more power led them to become involved in yet another plot against the government. When the plot was discovered, Giulio Salvi, who at that time was Capitano del Popolo, and his younger brother Ottaviano were found guilty of high treason and executed.

Virginia Salvi also took part in the political events of her time, but did so indirectly by writing about them. She composed poems, many now lost, critical of the current political situation, and this soon led her into legal difficulties. She was at first imprisoned for her poetry and then confined outside the city for a year. Several of her poems were addressed to King Henri II of France, whom she celebrated as the liberator who would free Italy from Spanish domination. In them she encouraged the French king to take possession not only of

Siena, but of all of Italy. With the fall of Siena to Spanish and Florentine forces, Virginia was forced to go into exile in Rome, where she remained for the rest of her life, dying there sometime after 1571.

Although a very large number of Salvi's surviving poems deals with political matters, not all do. Many touch on themes of love, Petrarchan affection, and friendship. Many of her poems were addressed to important contemporary figures, be they political, ecclesiastical, or literary, and some of these even responded, from Alessandro Piccolomini (1508–78) to Celio Magno (1536–1602), from the members of the Accademia fiorentina to Pietro Bembo (1470–1547). The latter, in fact, was probably the first to note and praise Salvi's poetic talent. Even musical composers showed great interest in Salvi's works: in particular, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–94), who set to music her poem "Da fiamma sì gentil nasce il mi' ardore" ("From so gentle flame my love is born"), which is a *glosa* of Petrarch's sonnet 134, "Pace non trovo, et non ò da far guerra"; in fact, it includes in its strophes a recapitulation of all of Petrarch's sonnet. In his composition Palestrina did the same and, in his own musical rendering of Salvi's poem, cited verbatim the music of his predecessor, the French composer Ivo Barry, who had himself set Petrarch's sonnet to music.

In examining the possible literary sources and models used by Virginia Salvi, Eisenbichler picks out in particular the presence of Michelangelo's lyrics in her poetry, in terms not so much of precise verbal echoes as of the common tone and themes of some love poems: for example, the sorrow for an ungrateful lover (no. 36), or the necessity of purging an immoderate passion (no. 53), which Salvi is prepared to do with the waters that quenched the immoderate thirst of the Samaritan woman at the well from the Gospel of St John (and here we can add Dante, *Purgatory*, 21.1–6). As in Michelangelo, there is no permanent or explicit addressee in Salvi's love poems: they are generally inspired by contemporary Petrarchism—the last stanza of poem no. 67 is clearly tied to Petrarch's sonnet "Zephhiro torna, e 'l bel tempo rimena" (*RVF* 310)—and often the poet hides her name and that of her beloved behind pseudonyms derived from the pastoral tradition. Therefore, we cannot strictly speak of her collection as a "Canzoniere."

The book reveals Eisenbichler's philological side. Each of the poems is accompanied by explanatory notes that include precise references to the rhyme scheme used, the date of composition or first publication of each poem, the name of its addressee, a brief summary of the contents, its surviving manuscripts

and previous editions, its variants, and finally other useful details that explain the genesis and the meaning of the text.

Eisenbichler's monograph on Virginia Martini Salvi and his edition of her poetry bring back into scholarly circulation and discussion the life and work of a very prolific and politically engaged woman writer from sixteenth-century Italy. As such, it also serves as an inspiration and model for future research on other Renaissance women poets still waiting to be rediscovered and studied.

JOHNNY L. BERTOLIO, *University of Toronto*

Erasmus, Desiderius and Martin Luther.

The Battle Over Free Will.

Ed. Clarence H. Miller, trans. Clarence H. Miller and Peter Macardle, intro. James D. Tracy. Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012. Pp. xxviii, 355. ISBN 978-1-60384-547-2 (paperback) \$16.95.

The confrontation in print from 1524 to 1527 between Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther over fundamental issues of Christian theology and Church authority, centred on free will, has of course appeared in English translation from Latin before, in its entirety and in selections such as this one apparently designed for student use. Here Clarence H. Miller translates selections from the standard critical edition of Luther's *De servo arbitrio* (WA) and reprints excerpts from two volumes of *Collected Works of Erasmus* (CWE vols. 76 and 77), edited by Charles Trinkaus, to which Miller himself made substantial contributions: in CWE Peter Macardle translates Erasmus's opening challenge to Luther, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* (*A Discussion of Free Will*) and Miller translates Erasmus's two-book reply to Luther's response, *Hyperaspistes* (*A Warrior Shielding a Discussion of Free Will Against The Enslaved Will*). The original CWE annotations are a collaboration of the translators and editor, but Miller has carefully revised them for his new readership, supplying, for instance, new page numbers cross-referencing citations by Erasmus and Luther of their opponent's arguments. The notes are not overwhelming in number but aid the neophyte on points of theology, and they delight in pointing out sarcastic glances at the opponent's publications.