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**Targoff, Ramie. Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England**

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**Targoff, Ramie.**

*Posthumous Love: Eros and the Afterlife in Renaissance England.*

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014. Pp. xiii, 243. ISBN 978-0-226-78959-0 (hardcover) \$40.

It's no secret that Thomas Wyatt's translations of Petrarch made a foundational contribution to the development of the English sonnet, but as Ramie Targoff suggests in her latest book, it may be that Wyatt's renderings should be recognized as instigating a more particularly English and Protestant approach to the lyric tradition. If Petrarch grasps at the hope that Laura will meet him in the afterlife, and indeed, that she will actively help him ascend to her level, as suggested by their poetic post-mortem discussions, transcendent love finds no place in Wyatt's versions. Instead we see the beginnings of a distinctive "mortal poetics" that will find its logical extension in the *carpe diem* poems of Robert Herrick and Andrew Marvell (185). Although Targoff ends her narrative in the mid-seventeenth century, she suggests that the train of influence begun by Wyatt does not end there. The materialist and secularizing impulses of this mortal poetics implicitly look forward to Enlightenment materialist debates about the relationship between body and soul.

Wyatt's rejection of Petrarch's—and Dante's—dream of love's ability to continue beyond the grave, and his insistence on locating the dynamics of love in worldly contexts, can be seen as liberating, giving future poets an opportunity to develop further his materialist focus. But Wyatt can't take all the credit. Targoff's first two chapters, which examine both gravestone epitaphs and Protestant perspectives on the posthumous future of love and marriage, indicate that the early moderns held a wide range of beliefs about the persistence of love after death. Epitaphs for deceased spouses might exhibit on the one hand a desire for the couple to be reunited in the afterlife, but on the other hand might equally focus on the earthly comfort of a joint burial, with no attempt to contemplate heavenly companionship. Protestant ministers likewise often followed Calvin in asserting that Christ was the sole heavenly spouse, yet other writers drew on Protestant traditions of companionate marriage to maintain that the pleasures of heaven must logically include the solace of a spiritual spousal companionship. Wyatt's innovations, Targoff proposes, found a receptive audience because of such polarized beliefs. In the absence of certainty, English

poets were able to invent their own solutions and attitudes to the problem of posthumous love.

The Elizabethan love poets were the prime inheritors of Wyatt's innovations, which included the lyric focus on love's mortality. Targoff's readings cover a representative selection of minor and major poets, from Thomas Lodge and Barnabe Barnes to Shakespeare, Spenser, and Donne. Poets such as Lodge and Barnes, she suggests, influentially contribute to the development of a mortal poetics, as they frequently welcome death as a solution to the pain of unrequited love. Their longing for an end does not include an imagined afterlife; their focus is on escape, not redemption. Sequences by Shakespeare and Spenser convey a different perspective on the relationship between love and death: these poets don't dismiss immortality, but locate it instead within the material object of poetry. Donne's secular love poems, such as "The Canonization," typically take these negotiations one step further. Despite his allusions to heavenly bonds, Targoff argues, Donne ultimately celebrates love's immediate earthly ties, which similarly gain immortal fame through his exemplary poetics.

Donne's interest in the immediacy of the present is prescient of the mid-seventeenth century *carpe diem*, but this later lyric mode also finds its roots in the pessimistic ending of *Romeo and Juliet*. In a pivotal chapter, Targoff shows Shakespeare diverging substantially from his Italian, and even English, source-material in leaving the audience with an absence of spiritual consolation. The young couple die together, but their bodies, like the rest of the material world, will rot and be digested by worms. In their turn, the *carpe diem* poets take this denial of transcendence to a logical extreme, with Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" taking the triumphant moment of imagined consummation as the only possible response to the future absence and decay that he so graphically depicts.

Targoff's lucid and elegant argument is enhanced by her detailed comparisons between Catholic Continental and English Protestant poetry that identify the English poets' remarkable turn away from depictions of spiritual and posthumous union. In part, she suggests, this reveals an evolving distinction between love and religious poetry, with contemplations of life after death saved for meditations on the divine. Skilful close readings and carefully selected texts guide the reader firmly through Targoff's narrative, yet this reader is left with a few nagging questions. English Neoplatonism gets little examination, and one wonders whether time spent with Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*—which is oddly

brushed aside—might have fleshed out the relationship between this popular philosophy and the concept of mortally-defined love. A related examination of the Neoplatonic sonnet sequence of Sidney’s niece, Lady Mary Wroth, might not only strengthen Targoff’s distinctions but also enlarge her poetic sampling to include a female sonneteer. Yet my desire to know “what would Ramie Targoff think?” also indicates the power and pleasure of this tightly argued and focused monograph. I’m attracted and intrigued by Targoff’s argument. She has given us an important and rich account that charts a previously unexamined history of materialist philosophies and lyric traditions while also leaving ample room for further critical discussion.

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**Vives, Juan Luis.**

*De Disciplinis, Savoir et enseigner. I. De causis corruptarum artium / Les causes de la corruption des arts. II. De tradendis disciplinis / La transmission des savoirs.*

Édition, traduction, introduction et notes par Tristan Vigliano. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 2013. 749 p. ISBN 978-2-251-34606-9 (broché) 99 €.

C’est un ouvrage de 900 pages, au poids conséquent, qu’offre Tristan Vigliano à ses lecteurs en proposant l’édition et la traduction du *De Disciplinis* de Juan Luis Vives (1492/1493-1540), grand humaniste européen de la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Mais ce livre lourd, démesuré même, tient toutes ses promesses et mérite qu’on le soulève, qu’on le feuillette pour finalement se laisser happer par son propos et par la découverte, page après page, d’une pensée vivifiante, extraordinairement féconde et stimulante au sujet de la question de l’éducation.

L’ouvrage débute par une longue introduction (p. xi–cxlii) qui présente en un premier temps la structure même de l’œuvre de Vives (deux parties qui se décomposent en de multiples livres), puis sa genèse, ses sources, l’originalité de sa pensée, mais aussi ses différentes éditions, sa diffusion, sa réception, son influence et sa postérité. Véritable tour de force, cette introduction permet au lecteur de pénétrer dans les arcanes de l’œuvre et d’en comprendre son essence, ses projets et ses limites. Tristan Vigliano décortique en effet les choix