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**Radziwiłłowa, Franciszka Urszula. Selected Drama and Verse.**  
**Ed. Patrick John Corness and Barbara Judkowiak. Trans.**  
**Patrick John Corness. Trans. ed. Aldona Zwierzyńska-Coldicott.**  
**Intro. Barbara Judkowiak**

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of knowledge—a risky enterprise at a time when the value of scholarship, the rationale supporting publicly funded research, and the utility of institutions like the Bodleian Library itself, are coming under increasing attack. Crucial to the study of Shakespeare's dead, then, is acknowledgement of the many whose life work has helped ensure the perpetuity of his posthumous legacy.

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**Radziwiłłowa, Franciszka Urszula.**

***Selected Drama and Verse.* Ed. Patrick John Corness and Barbara Judkowiak. Trans. Patrick John Corness. Trans. ed. Aldona Zwierzyńska-Coldicott. Intro. Barbara Judkowiak.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 37 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 478. Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. xv, 395 + 7 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-532-1 (paperback) US\$45.95.

This collection features a selection of Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa's poetry and plays in first-time English translations chosen to capture her previously overlooked personal lyrical voice. Princess Radziwiłłowa (1705–53) is generally remembered as Poland's first woman dramatist, who founded the court theatre at Nieswiez, but Barbara Judkowiak's excellent introduction claims that the somewhat dismissive treatment of her as a bluestocking of minor talent needs to be revised to recognize her literary and dramatic output as powerful examples of women's writing. Judkowiak foregrounds Radziwiłłowa's feminine tone of voice, noting how it reflects the influence of French culture on eighteenth-century Polish women and their ability to speak about feelings regarding romantic love in marriage and selfless devotion to husband and children. Judkowiak reads the princess's lyrical confessions as portraying "a woman enslaved by cultural conventions, yearning for reciprocity and fidelity [...] whose life is slowly slipping away in heartfelt torment" (23). By providing crucial autobiographical details of Radziwiłłowa's love match with Prince Michal—and her endless struggles in fulfilling her duties running their estate and bearing a constant stream of children, most of whom died in infancy or early youth—Judkowiak

opens up new ways to appreciate Radziwiłłowa's literary and dramatic output as not simply an essentialized autobiographical commentary but a form also of autotherapy, where she shares her deepest insights and sorrows.

Judkowiak's introduction with detailed footnotes provides a wealth of fascinating insights into the events shaping Radziwiłłowa's literary output. Since the poems are chosen to capture her personal voice, they need to be cross-referenced to the biographical commentary in order to be fully appreciated. The reader is advised to follow the footnoted references in the introduction to some of the twenty-five poems found in the last section of the book. For example, the first two poems, "Letters to her husband. First letter" and "Woe," capture the first blush of married life and are explicit in expressing her passion and sense of deprivation at Michal's absence. The fourth poem, a poignant epitaph expressing her grief for her son Mikola, who died at three in 1729, captures her torment at the loss of a beloved heir. Several poems are noted by Judkowiak as showing how the princess finds herself coping with her own betrayal and loss of belief in her marriage: for example, Poem 15, "if you know how to read people's character"; Poem 18, "Response to her husband"; Poem 23, "Such strong emotions in my heart"; Poem 24, "Emotions insincere, just seeking pleasure." Over time, she seems to retreat more and more into a stoical forbearance, looking more and more to God and fate as her consolation when life gets harder, as the title of Poem 25 reveals: "Ah! When will my torments cease?"

The second half of the introduction deals with her theatrical output, throwing light on the seven plays included in highly readable contemporary English, which, as translator Patrick Corness notes, use blank verse to capture the complex rhyming verse of the originals. Judkowiak defends the princess's dramatic works to show how they broke with the "rigid system of cultural values typical of classist drama and theater culture," which still defined the Polish official theatre and instead revived "old clownish traditions" (45) with one-act farces, mixed romantic and tragicomic genres, and adaptations from fairy tales, novels, and mystery plays. She sees "this spirit of defiance" (46) manifesting in imaginative dramaturgy and innovative staging.

The following brief comments on the plays give some sense of her eclectic range. First, *Witty Love* (1746), a birthday gift to Prince Michal, is a court entertainment with musical and choreographed interludes combining elements of the *Commedia dell'Arte* with the pastoral idyll. Ostensibly about

teaching the female children of the court how to behave to win the consent of their dictatorial father, it also advocates strongly for more freedom for girls in general. The thirteen daughters openly ridicule the prince who finds himself compelled to give in to their demands to marry their lovers.

*Dishonesty Entrapped*, a one-act farce, effectively utilizes the well-worn staging tricks of trapping the three upper-class thieves inside large trunks to humiliate them. It ends in another triumph for a female character who saves her husband from ruin.

*An Act of Divine Providence, or a Fairy-Tale Initiation into Maturity* (1746), a combined recreational-educational creation and vehicle for her children to act in, is an original combination of folklore and court culture which offers a suspenseful staging of *Sleeping Beauty* where the princess magically overcomes a series of traps laid out for her by her evil mother.

*The Judge Who Lost His Reason*, modelled on *Dulcitius* by Hroswitha, is an excursion into the genre of martyrological tragedy in its presentation of the unflinching acceptance of suffering that the three young female martyrs show in the face of their persecution and impending deaths. As Judkowiak notes, Radziwiłłowa endows these members of the traditionally “weaker” (62) sex with exemplary heroic courage.

Two companion plays, *Love is Born in the Eyes* and *Consolation after Troubles*, were influenced by the romantic novels of Mille de Scudéry and feature strong-willed, complex female characters. The first play, which explores two contrasting love themes, with one couple separated by unequal status, is eventually solved after many theatrical twists when the inferior bride is revealed to have aristocratic origins. The second, closer to tragicomedy, shows a young woman determined to test the strength of her lover’s vows to the utmost after being betrayed.

Finally, *Gold in the Fire* retells the Patient Griselda story with an impossibly self-effacing heroine who serves as an allegory of Christian virtue while possibly also referencing the loss of freedom marriage brings for women.

A valuable record of Radziwiłłowa’s accomplishments in eighteenth-century Poland, this memorable volume celebrates her special contribution to theatre history and modern women’s writing.