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**Miani, Valeria. Amorous Hope, A Pastoral Play: A Bilingual Edition. Ed. and trans. Alexandra Collier**

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**Miani, Valeria.**

***Amorous Hope, A Pastoral Play: A Bilingual Edition.* Ed. and trans. Alexandra Collier.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Toronto Series 83. Toronto: Iter Press, 2020. Pp. 368. ISBN 978-1-64959-026-8 (paperback) \$59.95.

This bilingual edition of Valeria Miani's 1604 pastoral is a welcome addition to the previous bilingual publication of her tragedy *Celinda* (1611), also in the Other Voice series (2010). Alexandra Collier refers to her championing of Miani in her recent monograph, *Women, Rhetoric and Drama* (2017), and encourages readers to pay close attention to the merits of *Amorous Hope*, which she believes establishes Miani as exceptional among her peers both male and female.

Collier's bringing Miani into the spotlight as an important proto-feminist writer deepens our knowledge of her valuable contribution to the female-authored pastoral genre. Collier believes that *Amorous Hope* goes further than Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla* (1588) in speaking out against the prevailing misogyny. Collier's lively translation is a great gift for English-speaking theatre scholars and a vital contribution to our relatively recent discovery of a significant number of excellent female playwrights. In rediscovering and making their pastoral works available, we now have the means to compare them and engage in a discourse that addresses their interventionist strategies for promoting more equal treatment and recognition of the value of women.

Collier tells us that Miani (ca.1560–after 1620?) was a Paduan, from an intellectual family, who married Domenico Negri of the Venetian nobility when she was in her thirties and still managed to continue with her intellectual pursuits. The multiple cultural activities fostered by the University of Padua and the rich intellectual and theatrical landscape of nearby Venice became Miani's milieu and put her in contact with prominent male and a few female scholars, such as Giulia Bigolina, the author of the prose romance *Urania*. Collier discusses the important relationship of Miani with the illustrious Paduan Accademia dei Ricovrati whose members included the noblest families of both Venice and Padua, with such names as Ingegneri, Guarini, and Marino. She explains how the academy—which admitted Passi, the author of the infamous treatise *I donneschi diffetti*—became a site where the “woman question” was hotly contested by profeminist authors, starting with Marinella's decisive rebuttal defending the great women of the past, and following with such authors

as Miani in her plays, including two comedies now lost. Even if learned women were not generally admitted by the Ricovrati, their presence was strong enough to make them the object of debate concerning their rights to an education and participation in important cultural matters previously restricted to men. Miani and several other notable women authors devoted themselves to debunking male arguments aimed at devaluing the female.

Coller's mission to build Miani's reputation as a *litterata* leads her to include a careful reading of a few of her extant poems. Her first example, from a special collection *Polinnia* (1609), put together by Bolzetta, the official publisher of the Ricovrati and dedicated to the Venetian nobleman Tommaso Contarini, shows that Miani was highly valued in Padua. As the sole female poet represented, Miani's contributions of a canzone, two madrigals, and a sonnet are each read for their ingenious poetic devices and the ways they engage with other famous poets in the collection. Coller notes Miani's protofeminist stance in extending her praise beyond Contarini to include his consort, and suggests that choosing Miani's sonnet to close the volume indicates the great esteem she was held in as a "dotta musa," since it bookends Ingegneri's sonnet which opens the volume. Next, Coller analyzes Miani's very special contribution to another famous collection of madrigals, *Gareggiamento poetico* (1611), featuring the most prominent late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets. Although she is not the only female poet in this collection, as Andreini is well represented, her madrigal is placed on the same page as Tasso's and seems to be in competition with him. To round off Coller's examples of Miani's poetic talents, the final one is a very moving lyrical poem that recreates the dialogue between Jesus and Mary Magdalene after his resurrection.

In locating *Amorous Hope* in relation to the other female-authored pastorals, Coller points out that Miani's play is closest to Andreini's *Mirtilla* in its basically comic tone which separates it from Campiglia's more serious *Flori* (1588). So too, Torelli's *Partenia* (ca. 1587), which may have influenced Campiglia, takes a moralizing stance very different from the lightness of *Amorous Hope*. Miani, following Andreini's *Mirtilla*, seems to have come closest to writing a pastoral that could be performed rather than circulated in print. Coller notes such theatrical features as the prologue, which is crafted as a virtual dialogue between the ladies in the audience and the personified Lady Hope (la Speranza); the inclusion of a chorus in the scene staging the punishment of the satyr; and the ending where Iulo, the brother of the lead

nymph Venelia, appears and flirts with the women in the audience, advising them to return to their homes.

Coller's analysis of the strengths of *Amorous Hope* focuses on its plot, character, and themes as they capture its profeminist perspective. The lead nymph Venelia, who has been deflowered and abandoned, still refuses to consider herself disgraced and spends her time flirting with several suitors who chase after her while ignoring the nymphs to whom they are promised. Coller draws attention to the frequent misspelling of Venelia as "Venetia," speculating on whether she is intended to be a version of Miani herself, given her Venetian connections. Coller proposes that Miani's sustained portrayal of the charming Venelia brings the double standard of protecting men from the consequences of their treatment of women to our attention in a way that is unprecedented in the other female-authored pastorals. She goes further in presenting women as superior to men through Venelia and her sister nymph Tirenica, who take charge of the discourse when they debate with their male antagonists. In the longest episode in the play, Venelia sets the wayward shepherd Alliseo right about the cruelty of abandoning his betrothed, and then encourages his transformation into a reformed husband to be. The other lead nymph Tirenica's final encounter with the satyr Elliodoro (4.6), as the second longest scene, sets up a parallel with the Venelia-Alliseo dialogue. A show piece like Filli's tricking the Satyr in *Mirtilla*, it tells the story of Tirenica's clever revenge as she overturns all the violent tactics that the satyr had used in his repeated attacks on her. Accompanied by a supportive woodland chorus, Tirenica forces the tied-up satyr to submit to the shearing of his beard and the breaking off of one of his horns—acts that strip him of his masculinity.

Coller's translation captures Miani's comic wit and comes down on the side of the inevitable happy endings where even the satyr repents. Miani's strong pitch for consensual marital bliss echoes Andreini's and possibly made *Amorous Hope* palatable to the Counter-Reformation moral tastes. However, Miani still offers a transgressive view that reveals her commitment to using her pastoral to show that early seventeenth-century women were very much in the know about sex/gender inequalities that are still operative today.

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