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Colonna, Vittoria.

***Poems of Widowhood: A Bilingual Edition of the 1538 Rime.* Trans. and intro. Ramie Targoff. Ed. Ramie Targoff and Troy Tower.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 82. Toronto: Iter Press, 2021. Pp. xi, 204 + 4 col. plates. ISBN 978-1-64959-014-5 (paperback) US\$41.95.

Following Abigail Brundin's publication of Colonna's *Rime sacre* in 2005, also in The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe series, Ramie Targoff and Troy Tower now present the first bilingual edition of *Poems of Widowhood*.

Vittoria Colonna (1490?–1547), daughter of Fabrizio Colonna, Grand Constable of Naples, married Ferdinand “Ferrante” Francesco I d’Avalos, marquis of Pescara (1489–1525), in 1509. By the standards of the time, the couple lived on Ischia and the marriage was happy enough, although they had no children. In 1525, Vittoria was widowed and chose not to remarry; she thought rather of becoming a nun, but was thwarted by Pope Clement VII. Having gained economic and social independence, Colonna, while remaining very religious, had contacts with a wide network of *litterati*, including (among others) Pietro Aretino, Veronica Gambara, Benedetto Varchi, the Sienese Claudio Tolomei, Paolo Giovio, and Michelangelo Buonarroti (not Buonarrotti, 1, 12).

In 1538 Filippo Pirogallo of Parma published the *Rime*, which was “the first book of poems by an Italian woman ever to appear in print” (1). Although Colonna did not approve of the publication, it would set the tone for the publication of other women’s works. Pirogallo, in fact, published the volume without her consent. Colonna’s hostility to the press, Targoff points out, should be taken with a grain of salt: the publication allowed her to be a poet while maintaining her social position as a private noblewoman, and she had already allowed her works to circulate in manuscript collections. She produced two manuscripts of her sonnets as gifts to Margaret of Navarre and Michelangelo, so we can emphasize her strategy in “cultivating her literary persona” (5).

The *Rime* were composed in the aftermath of d’Avalos’s death: 143 sonnets and two *canzoni* in mourning for her husband; but, by the time of the 1538 edition, Colonna was no longer defined by widowly behaviour, and had already moved on to writing spiritual verse.

The edition prepared by Pirogalo was riddled with errors, being based not on an authoritative manuscript but on several circulating manuscript copies of the sonnets, thus realizing a cheap and no-frills edition. Nevertheless, it provided Colonna with an audience outside her network and paved the way for other women to have their works published and known. Among the sonnets, there is a series of spiritual sonnets, added by Pirogalo shortly before the *canzoni*; in fact, after a certain number of mourning years, Colonna devoted herself to religious writings, abandoning poetry for spiritual works in prose and spiritual letters.

Nevertheless, the success of Pirogalo's edition was such that thirteen editions appeared before Colonna's death in 1547, all of which were widely circulated and well received. Rinaldo Corso published a commentary on thirty-six of her sonnets, making Colonna the first living poet who had "a printed commentary on his work" (25). Following these new editions of her poems, however, Colonna's spiritual poetry and religious views came to be considered too "risky" in the wake of the Council of Trent, and reprints ended. Colonna, as a person and poet, was rediscovered in the nineteenth century and her works were reprinted again.

This bilingual edition of the 1538 *Rime* contains all the poems (even those not by Colonna) without corrections, because there is no authoritative manuscript. According to the editors' goal, it also aims to "reproduce the actual experience of a 16th-century reader" (28). Only slightly incomprehensible or illogical errors have been changed according to the editions by Rinaldo Corso (*Dichiaratione fatta sopra la seconda parte delle Rime* [Bologna: Giovanni Battista Faelli, 1543]), Alan Bullock (*Rime* [Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1982]), and Tobia Toscano (*Sonetti: In morte di Francesco Ferrante d'Avalos* [Milan: Mondadori, 1998]), while spelling and capitalization have been retained; punctuation has been modernized. The English translation is in unrhymed iambic verse because it proved difficult to maintain the meaning of the sonnets in a different language; however, the translation is not in archaic but modern English. The text and translation are followed by a critical apparatus, a concordance of numbering systems with Bullock's 1982 edition, and an index of first lines.

This welcome edition makes an intimate and human aspect of Colonna accessible to students and scholars, thus expanding—as the editors point out

by quoting Jacob Burckhardt—our knowledge of “the most famous woman in Italy” (1).

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