

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Sforza, Ippolita Maria. Duchess and Hostage in Renaissance Naples: Letters and Orations. Ed. and trans. Diana Robin and Lynn Lara Westwater

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lecture, qui donne littéralement accès à la signification perdue des références et enjeux, la plaquette aux sujets multiples — La Foi et les œuvres, la Scammonée, le Mal français en sont les têtes de chapitres —, aux accents polémiques et à la lourde érudition, s'inscrit dans le foisonnement des interrogations des années 1530 tout autant qu'elle éclaire les obscures contradictions de son époque.

Ajoutons qu'une note sur les poids et mesures, ainsi qu'un index des noms propres pallient les défauts de mémoire ou de langue des lecteurs. S'il l'on devait alors regretter une absence, dans ce volume si plein, ce serait celle d'une table des matières qui aurait détaillé les parties de l'introduction, signalée comme un bloc monolithique au sommaire.

Cette édition fait déjà référence, non pas tant pour l'édition critique d'une plaquette somme toute étrange et reniée sitôt publiée, que pour la magistrale peinture par l'éditeur et traducteur, des déchirements humanistes de la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.

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### **Sforza, Ippolita Maria.**

***Duchess and Hostage in Renaissance Naples: Letters and Orations.* Ed. and trans. Diana Robin and Lynn Lara Westwater.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 55 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 518. Toronto: Iter Press/Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. Pp. xvi, 229. ISBN 978-0-86698-574-1 (paperback) US\$39.95.

Ippolita Maria Sforza (1445–48) was a tremendously interesting Renaissance woman writer whose rich political life, as illustrated by her letters and Latin orations, deserves far more attention than it has received. The daughter of the beleaguered but astute Duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza (1401–66), and of Bianca Maria Visconti (1425–68), Ippolita was at front and centre of the complex politics of Renaissance Italy. Married at the age of twenty to Alfonso II, Duke of Calabria (1448–95), King of Naples (r. 1494–95), not only was she duchess and consort, she was also an astute diplomat and politician. Her importance, however, has been underplayed and English-language scholarship

on her has been scarce. Thanks to this recent translation by Diana Robin and Lynn Lara Westwater, her letters and orations will be accessible to an English-speaking audience for the first time, which may usher in further studies on this fascinating woman.

The volume's organization is very accessible to the non-specialist. Ordering material by chronology and theme, Robin and Westwater provide translations of one hundred of Ippolita's letters. The letters are followed by translations of her Latin orations in parallel text. The editors deftly handle these sometimes difficult-to-translate texts in a manner that provides a vivid picture of Ippolita's personality. One gets a distinct sense of her concerns and desires, her feelings and her familial relationships, and her political life. To underscore this rich picture, the letters are divided into three parts: Ippolita's girlhood, her time as a young wife, and finally her role as not only mother but diplomat and representative of her family and lineage. Starting with her first letters to her father, we see a picture of a precocious, learned young girl already becoming adept in the arts of diplomacy and politics. We see, after her marriage to Alfonso II, the trials and tribulations of the young wife trying to find her place at court while coming to terms with a new husband who was notoriously unfaithful. We also see her assuming an important role as intercessor and go-between for her natal family, her husband and in-laws, and various political players on the Renaissance stage. One of the best aspects of this volume is that we get to see Ippolita evolve as a woman and a person.

The editors provide a short but informative biographical introduction that places Ippolita in the tradition of learned women of Renaissance Italy—her scholarly peers being Isotta Nogarola, Laura Cereta, and Cassandra Fedele. We thus get an important picture of a female network of social and political peers, among whom were her sister-in-law Bona of Savoy, later regent of Milan, and Eleanora D'Aragona, Duchess of Ferrara. The introduction also provides a synopsis of the letters in chronological order, gives context for the circumstances in which they were written, and names the addressee. Coloured plates throughout the volume provide portraits of Ippolita's family and residences. Also included is a copy of her letter to Lorenzo di Medici. The volume ends with extremely helpful appendices: a glossary of names, a chronology, and a bibliography.

Because no edition is perfect, there are a few editorial decisions that I found confusing. The editors maintain that the one hundred letters translated

for this volume represent one-third of Sforza's surviving correspondence. It is not clear, however, what the criteria were for inclusion in the volume. A better sense of the rationale for selection would provide more context. Similarly, a more thorough discussion of the archives containing the letters would provide more background and aid future scholars.

I also wonder if the use of "hostage" in the title doesn't underplay some of Ippolita's political agency. While she was certainly in peril many times during her life at the Neapolitan court (there was the infamous incident in which her husband locked his new wife in her rooms), it is hard to see how categorizing her as a hostage advances a volume that presents such a rich picture of the vividness, astuteness, and force of her personality. While it is important to give a balanced picture, this juxtaposition still seems incongruent. I would also have liked to see more Italian transcriptions of the letters in order to get a full sense of their language.

These are admittedly minor flaws which in no way detract from the importance or deftness of this edition. As one whose scholarly trajectory has been shaped tremendously by *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* Series, I find it always a pleasure to see such a wonderful new addition to this important series.

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**Welch, Ellen R.**

***A Theater of Diplomacy: International Relations and the Performing Arts in Early Modern France.***

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 289 + 10 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-8122-4900-1 (hardcover) US\$75.

The subject of this study is of considerable interest: the participation of foreign representatives in the ritual life of the court of France over the period of a century and a half, from the 1560s until the end of the reign of Louis XIV. The book is organized in eight chapters proceeding chronologically, the second and the fifth taking us outside France to consider the other side of the coin, the experience of French ambassadors in England and Germany. Negotiation between states