

Virtù più che virili: Le lettere familiari di Beatrice Caetani Cesi (1557–1608). Caterina Fiorani, ed.

With Rita Cosma and Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro. *La memoria restituita: Fonti per la storia delle donne* 13. Rome: Viella, 2017. 120 pp. + 8 b/w pls. €25.

This volume, the thirteenth in the series *La memoria restituita: Fonti per la storia delle donne*, directed by Marina Caffiero and Manola Ida Venzo and published by Viella, provides a transcription of fifty-nine letters by Beatrice Caetani Cesi (1544–1608) from the Caetani Archive in Rome. The title derives from a description of Beatrice Caetani Cesi likely by Federico Cesi, founder of the Accademia dei Lincei and grandson of Beatrice, in an inscription at the Cesi castle in Sant’Angelo Romano (now known as the Orsini-Cesi castle). The letters are addressed to a variety of family members and acquaintances—Beatrice’s father, Bonifacio Caetani, her uncle Cardinal Niccolò Caetani, his secretary and occasional poet Giovan Francesco Peranda, her siblings Camillo and Isabella, her acquired niece Camilla Gaetani d’Aragona, among a few others. Many of the letters are autograph, although a fair number simply carry her signature, and they range from 1556, when, as a twelve-year-old, she wrote to her father soon after her mother’s death, to 1608, the year of her own death. The bulk of the letters were written either from Sermoneta, one of the strongholds of the Caetani family, or from Rome; a few are from Acquasparta or San Polo dei Cavalieri, seats of Cesi family holdings.

In addition to Beatrice’s letters, this volume offers an introduction to her and her historical and familial context by the editor, a paleographical note by Rita Cosma, and, curiously enough, an essay on the management of lands and waters within the Caetani of Sermoneta family holdings. Although the latter essay, by Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro (“Terre e acque nella signoria dei Caetani di Sermoneta [1540–86]”), is interesting in and of itself and offers insight into how the family lands were run by some of the recipients of the letters, it seems strangely placed at the beginning of the volume; if it were to be included at all, it would have been better positioned at the end of the book. A transcription of Beatrice Caetani Cesi’s last will and testament, from the State Archives in Rome, closes the edition.

Caterina Fiorani’s essay (“Non sento altro refrigerio che le lettere di mei amorevoli”) provides new information on Beatrice, such as her date of birth derived from archival sources, and provides a broader context for understanding her role within the family and her family’s role within sixteenth-century Italian politics. Fiorani makes use of various letters in the Caetani archive and elsewhere to reconstruct the adolescence and education (literary and musical) of Beatrice and her siblings. She also details the activities of her uncle, Cardinal Niccolò, in arranging the marriages of all the daughters, and particularly Beatrice’s marriage to Angelo Cesi, nephew of Cardinal Federico Cesi. Details of the unhappy marriage between the two are discussed in Beatrice’s letters, and Fiorani

outlines Angelo's military activities for the papal army, for which he died, probably in Hungary. After his death, Beatrice moved, in 1574, from Acquasparta to Monticelli (Montecelio, just north of Guidonia), where she was involved in administering the city. In 1580 she returned to Sermoneta and helped institute a confraternity, Santissimo Nome di Gesù, highlighting her own, her family's, and the Cesi's long-standing support of the Jesuits. Beatrice is likely best known to art historians as one of the three main benefactors of the Chapel of Santa Maria della Strada in the Church of the Gesù along with Porzia Orsini dell'Anguillara and Giovanna Caetani Orsini. During the same years, however, Beatrice Caetani Cesi was also a devotee of Filippo Neri and even gave testimony for his beatification in 1597, stating that she had followed him for more than twenty years.

My only qualm with this publication concerns the paleographical criteria: not expanding abbreviations sometimes caused difficulties in seeing the footnotes, as many of those abbreviated forms were also written in superscript. Moreover, the decision not to add punctuation of any sort made for challenging reading at times. Otherwise, this edition is a precise and detailed contribution to women's history and to the history of Roman nobility in the early modern period.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.343

Moral Combat: Women, Gender, and War in Italian Renaissance Literature.
Gerry Milligan.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. xii + 332 pp. \$75.

The controversy on the “universal gendering of war” (6)—war gendered as masculine—and the role of women in war are ancient questions famously debated by the Greeks and the Romans, and occasionally resurfacing throughout the Middle Ages. However, Italian sixteenth-century literature offers the first sustained discourse on women's militarism and militancy. These themes were central in philosophical works, fictional epics, and biographies of the Italian Renaissance. Scholars of this age debated the role of women in war, raising questions about decorum in killing, weakness, and vulnerability to sexual assaults, and portraying them as heroines—leading armies and fighting in combat. A major factor leading to the proliferation of textual representations of warrior women may be found in the escalation of violence and bloodshed brought by the Italian Wars (1499–1559).

Moral Combat is the first study in English to investigate this complex of issues through a dense, source-rich analysis of how Italian Renaissance texts functioned as agents in the cultural discourse of war and gender. This fascinating book explains how war was gendered in a crucial moment of the Italian Renaissance, a moment in