

*Antisatire: "In Defense of Women, against Francesco Buoninsegni."*

Arcangela Tarabotti.

Ed. and trans. Elissa B. Weaver. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 70; Medieval and Renaissance Text and Studies 564*. Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2020. xvi + 114 pp. \$41.95.

*Convent Paradise*. Arcangela Tarabotti.

Ed. and trans. Meredith K. Ray and Lynn Lara Westwater. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 73; Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 568*. Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2020. xxx + 288 pp. \$53.95.

Forced by her family to enter a nunnery against her will, Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–52) used her time, intellect, and pen to crucify Venice's patriarchy. In her lifetime, her fulminations on men's maltreatment of women won her regard and disapproval in equal measure. The diatribes that so troubled certain male contemporaries are precisely what make her so popular today, with both students as well as scholars. In the last few decades, *tarabottisti* have made available several of her volumes, in both Italian and English. Now, newly available in English are her *Antisatire*, translated by Elissa B. Weaver, and *Convent Paradise*, translated by Meredith K. Ray and Lynn Lara Westwater. The two works are vital for apprehending Tarabotti's full range as a writer.

Though Tarabotti showed no proclivity for the spiritual life, she was placed in a Benedictine convent as an adolescent. Dowries for nuns were cheaper than those for wives, and Tarabotti's marriage prospects were deemed weak, having been born with a limp, and with five younger sisters behind her. From the early years of her "imprisonment," as she often referred to it, Tarabotti unleashed her rage in writing. Though her first two tirades (titled *Paternal Tyranny* and *Convent Inferno*) were too shocking to find a willing printer, her writing did win her favor, including with the libertine members of the local Accademia degli Incogniti. With that group's support, finally, she was able to get her writing published, in the form of the two texts under review here, *Convent Paradise* (1643) and *Antisatire* (1644).

If Tarabotti's earliest manuscript attacks highlighted the miseries of unwilling nuns, with *Convent Paradise* she invites readers to witness the joys that monastic life offers for women who possess a true spiritual calling. The work is further distinguished from Tarabotti's oeuvre in that it is deeply autobiographical: she describes her own conversion from resistance to acceptance, which the editors analyze at length as a response to Augustine's *Confessions*. *Convent Paradise* is a dense patchwork of textual references in both the vernacular and Latin, from sources religious and secular. It is further scaffolded by numerous tributary poems, Tarabotti's letter to the reader, and her lengthy *Soliloquy to God*, site of her most penetrating confessional material: "Let

this literary love give way to divine love,” she pleads with Augustinian fervor (106). Ray and Westwater (who translated Tarabotti’s *Letters* for the same series in 2012) render the material in clear and compelling English—a true feat, giving the syntactically complex and citationally dense nature of the Italian. Their introduction not only provides context and analysis for the text; it also places readers in Tarabotti’s world, with descriptions of the convent space (its seclusion, its darkness) and its practices (the Liturgy of the Hours, unwritten rules for nuns’ contact with the outside world). The edition is enhanced by numerous illustrations, from images of Sant’Anna to photographs of Tarabotti’s dowry contract and other archival materials (the editors’ onsite research was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities). Overall, the introduction is imminently useful for teaching as well as for research.

*Antisatire*, published close on the heels of *Convent Paradise*, is a response to the misogynist *Against the Vanities of Women, a Menippean Satire* (1638), the published version of a semiserious discourse delivered by the Sieneese intellectual Francesco Buoninsegni at an academy gathering. Weaver—a renowned scholar of convent studies and one of the earliest scholars to work on Tarabotti—has done scholars the service of translating Buoninsegni’s original satire together with Tarabotti’s *Antisatire*. The inflammatory nature of Tarabotti’s text is hinted at by the fact that it was published under her initials, “D. A. T.” (Donna Arcangela Tarabotti), ostensibly because the author did not want her name associated with its polemical contents. (As Weaver explains, this was mere dissembling.) *Antisatire*, though short, is packed with learned references and Baroque stylings, as the genre of the Menippean satire required. Tarabotti’s rhetorical deftness—including her ability to imitate and reframe her opponent’s tactics—belies the humility of this autodidact’s claim in the dedicatory letter to Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, of “an unlettered pen” (33). Weaver’s critical apparatus is especially useful for its reconstruction of Tarabotti’s network and the impact of the *Antisatire*’s publication. She describes the public reaction to Tarabotti’s text as primarily one of “astonishment,” given this nun’s “level of culture in no way inferior to her adversary . . . and that she was not fooled by the supposedly semiserious nature” (3).

It is serendipitous that the two translations have been published nearly consecutively in *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series, as the texts are so deeply intertwined. As Weaver explains, *Convent Paradise* first gave Tarabotti an audience, paving the way for the more scathing *Antisatire*, with which she became “a known personality, a public figure” (28). Tarabotti used the *Antisatire* to defend herself against those who claimed she could not have authored *Convent Paradise*, pronouncing that she takes “no greater pride in any merit of [her] book than that no men have had a hand in it” (69).

Moreover, both texts are key to appreciating the true breadth of Tarabotti’s output. Tarabotti has become best known for her fiery tone, on full display in *Convent Hell*, made available in Italian in 1990 by Francesca Medioli, and *Paternal Tyranny*,

translated for *The Other Voice* in 2004 by Letizia Panizza. These most recently translated works make apparent new aspects of Tarabotti's rhetorical abilities. In *Convent Paradise*, Tarabotti is unexpectedly spiritual; in *Antisatire*, she is surprisingly sly. Tarabotti's devotional writing has been particularly overlooked, though it is key to understanding the whole body of her work, as Ray and Westwater make clear: "*Convent Paradise* and *Convent Hell* can be understood as two radically different perspectives on the same convent experience: one belonging to nuns by vocation, the other to nuns by coercion" (6).

With these new editions, Tarabotti has become one of the most prominent authors of *The Other Voice* series, both in quantity and quality. The radical nature of her contributions to early modern women's writing is highlighted in both introductions: by Ray and Westwater, who call her "a foundational feminist writer and political theoretician" (2); and by Weaver, who asserts that "she should be considered an early feminist thinker and activist" (5). In each work, Tarabotti demonstrates her commitment to defending a community of women, in *Antisatire*, subtitled "In Defense of Women," and more subtly but no less substantively in *Convent Paradise*, written in celebration of her most inspiring sisters. It is welcome news that Ray and Westwater are translating another of Tarabotti's devotional works, her *Tears for Regina Donati*; reading these two translations together only makes the reader eager for more.

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*Klassik und Klassizismen in römischer Kaiserzeit und italienischer Renaissance.*

Marc Föcking and Claudia Schindler, eds.

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This volume collects fourteen papers delivered at a conference on the classics and classicism held at the University of Hamburg in December 2016. In their introduction, the editors Marc Föcking and Claudia Schindler examine the antithesis between the terms *classical* and *classicistic* as applied to literary texts, and summarize the essays that follow, whose lengthy German titles I here abridge in English.

In "Typologies of Foundational Figures," Anja Wolkenhauer explores the "invention of tradition" (a 1983 coinage of Eric J. Hobsbawm) and highlights the canonical texts: Pliny's *Natural History* 7.57 and Polydore Vergil's *De Inventoribus* (1499). Within this classical genre, Polydore Vergil strikes a modern, Albertian note when he extols printing among the *nova reperta* that surpass the ancients. In "Giraldi's Classicizing Canons of Poetry," Florian Mehlretter examines the innovative categories of poetic genres in Gregorio Lilio Giraldi's 1545 *Dialogi Decem*, whose discussion of ancient poetry