L'ultimo capitolo è dedicato ad Eleonora ('Dianora') di Toledo de' Medici, la figlia di don Garzia di Toledo (fratello di Eleonora) e Vittoria di Ascanio Colonna. Nata a Firenze, alla morte della madre venne allevata come una figlia dagli zii Eleonora e Cosimo e, nell'ottica di un rafforzamento dei legami familiari tra Medici e Toledo, sposò il cugino Pietro, con il quale era cresciuta. Purtroppo Pietro aveva seri problemi psichici e maltrattava, anche fisicamente, Dianora la quale, forse, ebbe una storia d'amore con un Antinori. Assicurata la successione con la nascita di Cosimino, Pietro uccise Dianora nel luglio 1576, pochi giorni dopo la morte di Isabella Orsini.

La figura di Dianora è studiata dalla Langdon attraverso una miniatura, oggi nella collezione Thyssen-Bornemisza. La particolarità della miniatura sta nel suo ruolo di ritratto 'privato', destinato cioè ad essere visto solo dagli intimi ed è un particolare tipo di ritratto che fu molto utilizzato dai Medici.

Il volume è corredato da tavole ed illustrazioni bellissime e molto nitide, oltre ad appendici tra le quali vanno segnalati alcuni sonetti del Bronzino in stile petrarchesco. L'accuratezza della descrizione pittorica delle opere, la cura per i dettagli ed i particolari, le resa in un linguaggio semplice ed insieme tecnico, la mole di informazioni archivistiche e letterarie fornite dall'autrice, rendono la lettura di questo libro appassionante.

ELENA BRIZIO

The Medici Archive Project - Firenze


To the ever increasing number of useful tools for the study of women writers a new volume has been added that provides new perspectives on Italian women poets from 1530 to 1570. This clearly written and useful work fulfils its promise of putting women’s literary production on the agenda. Diana Robin’s assessment of the development of the lyric genre is particularly impressive as she analyzes it within its historical framework before she focuses on women writers as a community of letters. Her project is appealing: to explore the interactions amongst groups of writers linked by a network of personal and professional relationships in close correlation with new reforms imposed by the church.

The author challenges the widely accepted notion that women stood at the margins of early modern culture and were, at best, consumers of culture. Her study presents them as full participants and even as producers of culture. She examines their literary contribution to the debate on women raging in the sixteenth century as well as their involvement with the wider cultural world of contemporary women and men. The field is by no means not ploughed, yet her approach is different. Robin surpasses the common practice of presenting women poets individually and portrays them as true communities of readers and writers.
located across various cities in Italy, such as Ischia, Naples, Rome, Florence, Siena, and Venice. Thus, the scholar maps out a completely different direction for early modern studies by moving away from a primary concentration on a single author or the thematics of gender to propose a new approach that encompasses cultural, historical, and social paradigms.

Robin offers the reader a guided tour of early modern poetry that will startle even those scholars well grounded in this literary period with its dazzling expertise and complexity. The book is divided into six chapters, each section complementing the others and reinforcing them. They are intelligently arranged, ensuring that each generates insights that are developed subsequently. The discussion is based on a solid body of research, which is more impressive because factual information relating to primary sources about women is not always easy to come by. Lastly, the appendices include helpful statistics on the Giolito poetry anthologies (1545-1560) that include the names of poets, editors, printers, dedicatees, a chronology of events, and a biographical-bibliographical index of authors, patrons, and popes.

The first chapter, “Ischia and the Birth of a Salon”, traces the origins and the role of the first Italian literary salon established by Costanza d’Avalos on the island of Ischia. Robin argues that this literary assembly is particularly important because it constitutes the matrix from which sixteenth-century salons derived. Women such as Vittoria Colonna, Giulia Gonzaga, and Maria d’Aragona are known as the founders and promoters of these literary coteries. They travelled extensively, from Ischia to Naples, Rome, Ferrara, Orvieto, Lucca or Milan, to disseminate both literary and religious ideas and to promote the vernacular literature.

The following chapter, “From Naples to Venice: The Publication of Two Salons”, foregrounds the public emergence of two more cultural salons and the bonding of women writers with male authors, correctors, editors, and publishers. In this section Robin has expanded scholarly appreciation for the controversial poligrafo Lodovico Domenichis who played a vital role in promoting and championing women poets. Robin dedicates an entire section to Domenichis’s ground-breaking anthology “Rimes diverse d’alcune nobilissime et virtuossime donne”, published in Lucca in 1559. Robin’s skilful analysis details the circumstances leading to the publication of the first collection of women’s poetry in Italian literature. She also examines closely the two innovative framing devices introduced by Domenichis: the cluster of poems composed by a group of poets and the miniature canzoniere, a collection of poems representative for each author who is showcased in his volume.

The final chapter, “Florence: Intimate Dialogues and the End of the Reform Movement”, focuses on three dialogic works authored by Bernardino Ochino, Marcantonio Flaminio, and Tullia d’Aragona. Robin argues that in spite of the different philosophies adopted by the aforementioned authors (the Neoplatonic orientation of the first two authors and the Aristotelian’s model in d’Aragona’s case), they all convey the idea that women can be legitimate and reliable interlocutors when it comes to literary communication. The scholar offers a valuable exploration of the ways in which d’Aragona has found innovative forms of self-expression and a rich source of self-representation in her literary work. Undoubtedly, this
a clear indication that intellectual debates were no longer exclusively suited to men and that women were not only consumers of culture, but expressed a visceral desire to engage with the literary world of their time.

Robin has nicely inventoried the material, offered a useful interpretative context, and advanced new interpretations. Perhaps inevitably in a study of such wide scope, the interpretation of historical events is at times a little meagre. Nevertheless, the volume is well thought out and provides valuable springboards for further research within the fields of poetry and of women studies for sixteenth-century Italy.

Laura Prelipcean
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Research on Renaissance gardens is rarely life-threatening. It can be in novels, though—especially in the wake of Umberto Eco and Dan Brown. When Adam Strickland, a Cambridge undergraduate, is sent off by his professor to investigate a sixteenth-century garden in Tuscany, he little suspects the cascade of complications that will ensue. Adam discovers that at least two murders (four hundred years apart) have taken place here, and that both can be reconstructed from the clues in the landscape. As he unravels the double mystery, danger closes in. Will the amateur sleuth discover that he himself has been framed?

The Savage Garden is an historical novel of sorts, set in the summer of 1958. The timeless Tuscan setting of olive groves and vineyards is enlivened by references to Domenico Modugno, Krushchev, and the Suez crisis. Italy has just joined the Common Market and the Communists have won a disappointing 22 per cent in the recent national elections. In lieu of an internship at the Baltic Exchange (one more step toward a dreaded career in marine insurance), Adam sets out on his detective mission with the barest textbook knowledge of Italy. Arriving at his pensione in San Casciano with a battered copy of Edith Wharton's Italian Villas and Gardens and translations of Ovid's Metamorphoses and Fasti, he sets out to decipher the program of this mannerist garden. Perhaps recalling a recent seminar, he is particularly eager to apply Edgar Wind's theory of the allegory of love in Botticelli's Primavera and Birth of Venus to the mystery of the garden: "It's a new theory, very new," he confides to his guide, the dark-eyed granddaughter who escorts him through the estate. Their progress through the garden culminates, as may be expected, with occasional reminders of Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. Memorably, at one point he tells her, "Whenever I smell sulphur I'll always think of you" (265).

Mills is familiar enough with Renaissance gardens to have invented a plausible setting for his novel. The Villa Docci, he tells us, was built by Fulvio Montalto, a fictitious apprentice of the real Niccolò Tribolo (architect of the Boboli gardens). The patron, Francesco Docci, is an imaginary Florentine banker and contempo-