donna abbandonata e dell'incursione notturna, secondo i nuovi canoni culturali dell'epoca moderna.

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Natalia Costa-Zalessow, editor. *Voice of a Virtuosa and Courtesan: Selected Poems of Margherita Costa*. Translated by Joan Borrelli. New York: Bordighera Press, 2015. Pp. 269. ISBN: 9781599540931.

Margherita Costa (1610?–1656/7?), one of the most prolific women writers of the *Seicento*, was a poet, virtuoso singer, playwright and courtesan, and is considered by editor Natalia Costa-Zalessow “the most Baroque of the seventeenth-century Italian women writers.” (19) Margherita came from humble origins, was trained as singer and coveted by musical circles in Rome, where she rose to fame. As a female performer she was subject to scrutiny and considered immoral, due to a presumed loose lifestyle. When in Florence in 1628 to perform at the wedding of Margherita de’ Medici and Odoardo Farnese, Margherita sought protection at the Medici court, where her sister Anna Francesca, also an actress, was favoured by the duke’s brother. In Florence Margherita likely married Bernardino Ricci, a *buffone* at Ferdinand II’s court and here she also wrote most of her poems and established literary friendships with local poets like Alessandro Adimari, Benedetto Guerrini and Andrea Barbazza. After the publication of the comedy *Li buffoni* (1641), the only comedy written by a woman in this period, likely an unpleasant piece to the Florentine court, Margherita returned to Rome, seeking the protection of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, for whom she wrote the sacred poem *Cecilia martire*. Later Costa worked in Turin (1645), in Paris, where she sung as Juno in Luigi Rossi’s *Orfeo* (1647), in Venice and in Germany. She may have died of the plague.

This finely annotated bilingual edition, which opens with an Introduction, a bibliography and translator’s Foreword, contains poems from works Costa published between 1638 and 1647, of which no other modern edition exists. *La chitarra* (1638) is represented here with 25 poems, including octaves, sonnets (some encomiastic), idylls and *canzonette*. Many of these poems are variations on theme of the “Bella donna”’s love tribulations. The ten poems from *Il violino*

(1638) are idylls and *canzonette*; the most remarkable is the “Violamento di Lilla”, a poem about rape narrated in first person by a male poetic voice, modelled on Marino’s *Trastulli estivi*. *Lo stipo* (1639) with six poems, in typical Baroque fashion, is structured as a cabinet full of verses contained in drawers (*cassettini*), each consisting of poems in *ottava rima*. From *La selva di cipressi* (1640) we have excerpts from three pieces in octaves, lamenting the devastation brought to Italy by wars between France and Spain. *Cecilia martire* (1644) includes excerpts from four Cantos of a sacred allegorical poem about Saint Cecilia. *La selva di Diana* (1647) is sampled in 15 poems, mainly dedicated to contemporary women, including the queen of France. *La tromba di Parnaso* (1647), with ten poems, was published, like *La selva*, with the help of Cardinal Mazarin and includes laudatory poems in praise of the Queen of France, the royal family, the French court and Mazarin himself.

Main-stream critics considered Costa’s work poor but Costa-Zalessow (does the common last name indicate a possible descendant?) notes that Margherita wrote a lot and in a hurry, had no time to polish and correct some of her work; furthermore, Costa’s self-proclaimed “rozzo stile” was taken by critics at face value, ignoring the rhetoric of self-effacement used by many women writers of her time. Her collections *La chitarra* and *Il violino* reveal mastery of various poetics forms like sonnet, *capitolo*, idyll and *canzonetta*. In *Lo stipo*, poems are dedicated to the duchess of Tuscany, or respond to men of letters like Paganino Gaudenzio and Benedetto Guerrini. Costa’s *oeuvre* is remarkable for the breath and variety of genres, ranging from theatrical pieces, to prose, poetry and pastoral. Margherita was fully at ease with encomiastic verses, as well as Baroque witticism and irony.

Costa-Zalessow defines Margherita Costa a feminist (19) but this claim is problematic, since some of the poems presented in this edition reveal that Margherita’s imitative poetry was not immune from contemporary misogynist clichés, such as criticism of women’s vanity and use of make-up in “Donna dolendosi della perduta bellezza accusa le leggerezze delle donne” from *Lo stipo*, or in “Alle donne” from *La chitarra*, where the female poetic voice invites women to abandon love traps and turn to spinning. In another poem from *Il violino* “Madre al bambino nato femmina e poi dalla donna convertito in maschio” a mother considers it a victory when her baby turns from female to male.

Only one autobiographical poem from *Lo stipo* “Bella donna si duole della Fortuna” makes reference to a possibly flawed lifestyle, devoted to serving Venus, but gives no firm evidence of Margherita’s profession as high class prostitute, like,

say, Veronica Franco. It could be fruitful to compare Margherita Costa to Isabella Andreini, the other famous performer and writer of the early *Seicento*: the two followed parallel paths, were equally versatile writers and performers, and both took up a male poetic voice in some of their verses.

Besides the imitative and encomiastic verses Margherita Costa shows “her originality as a Baroque poet” (44) and is well served in Joan Borrelli’s skillful translations, that strive to replicate the rhymes, metric and musical quality of Margherita’s verses as in this excerpt from “Il bagno” in *Cecilia Martire*:

Grave è la nebbia e tra le nubi sono
spersi del dio del lume i rai lucenti.
È coperto d’orror, è tetro il cielo,
ha fuoco algente ed infocato gelo. (209)

Thick is the fog and there amid the cloud
bright rays are scattered from the God of Light
The sky’s in gloom, shrouded over in horror,
glittered with gelid flame and ice afire. (208)

The selections presented in this bilingual edition do no justice to the rich and diverse literary *corpus* that still remains unavailable to modern readers. Natalia Costa-Zalessow just scratched the surface and alas, had to curtail several of the longer poems. We can only hope that in the future she can bring us some of Margherita Costa’s intriguing works in complete form.

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Davide Colombo. *Foscolo e i commentatori danteschi*. Milano: Ledizioni, 2015. Pp. 220. ISBN 9788867052684.

Il volume di Colombo analizza il ruolo di Foscolo nella “tradizione esegetica ed editoriale della *Commedia* di Dante” (VII) concentrando l’attenzione sulle sue fonti sette-ottocentesche. I sei capitoli di cui è costituito lo studio propongono un