

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Fonseca Pimentel, Eleonora. From Arcadia to Revolution: The Neapolitan Monitor and Other Writings. Ed. and trans. Verina R. Jones.

Archie R. MacGregor

Volume 42, Number 4, Fall 2019

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068598ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068598ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

MacGregor, A. (2019). Review of [Fonseca Pimentel, Eleonora. From Arcadia to Revolution: The Neapolitan Monitor and Other Writings. Ed. and trans. Verina R. Jones.] *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(4), 218–220. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068598ar>

Ouvrant la dernière partie consacrée aux « Écritures », Michel Jeanneret explore le paradoxe joyeux du voyageur renvoyé à sa vanité chez Folengo et Montaigne. Jean-Charles Monferran démontre l'importance de la parenthèse parodique du chapitre III de *Pantagruel*, lequel fait écho aux débats contemporains sur l'attitude du chrétien face au deuil. George Hugo Tucker examine la fusion des discours de l'amour et de l'amitié chez Muret exilé. Mireille Huchon montre que la représentation de l'Hercule gaulois suscite une bataille d'images politiques dans la première moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Julien Gœury retrace le parcours poétique et moral de Beaulieu dans le genre du blason. Rosanna Gorris Camos, observant des textes peu étudiés de Grévin, éclaire son programme d'écriture qui unit science et poésie. Cornelia Klettke analyse le spectacle critique et philosophique qu'offre *La Conversation de Lucien*, Érasme et Rabelais de Voltaire. André Guyaux éclaire l'originalité d'*Octave*, œuvre de jeunesse de Musset réputée défectueuse. Antoine Compagnon examine les variations métaphoriques de la plume de fer, innovation controversée du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Thomas Hunkeler étudie l'intertexte ronsardien chez Beckett. Enfin, Ann Blair s'intéresse aux emplois d'expressions latines dans *Astérix*.

CELINE FOURNIAL

Sorbonne Université — CELLF

**Fonseca Pimentel, Eleonora.**

***From Arcadia to Revolution: The Neapolitan Monitor and Other Writings.***

**Ed. and trans. Verina R. Jones.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 67 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 558. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2019. Pp. xix, 246. ISBN 978-0-86698-616-8 (paperback) US\$47.95.

Reading this book, I was reminded of a comment made by the advisor for my master's thesis: "Your stylistic eccentricities remain in force. You favour amiable grandeur in expression over cool analysis, with conversational transitions between sections." A similar observation might be made about *From Arcadia to Revolution*. This is not a criticism. The author's passion for her subject matter is palpable and infectious.

That subject matter is Eleanora Fonseca Pimentel, a prominent figure in the Neapolitan Enlightenment and later an important chronicler of the tumultuous vicissitudes of the city's brief Jacobin Republic. Upon the restoration of the monarchy, her activism was deemed a sufficient danger to the state that she was executed. This volume presents and contextualizes a number of different writings by Fonseca Pimentel, from personal correspondence between the young woman and her fiancé, to political tracts and journalism written in the midst of revolution.

Based upon the Italian critical edition, this new translation corrects several errors in previous English editions. It also strives to remain faithful to Fonseca Pimentel's own idiosyncratic style. For the poetry, Jones provides the Italian or Neapolitan original alongside the English text. It would have been of interest to see the originals for the letters and newspaper articles too, but this would have greatly lengthened the book, and Jones's decision to omit them is understandable. In order to show the development of both her thought and her writing style, Fonseca Pimentel's works are presented in chronological rather than thematic order.

The book opens with a brief biography of Fonseca Pimentel, highlighting her precocious childhood, her unhappy marriage, her grief over the loss of her child, and, after her estrangement from her husband, her increasing activism first against papal power then against monarchical government. Jones provides ample summaries in her footnotes of the current state of (largely Italian) scholarship on Fonseca Pimentel. There is debate on whether she should be considered a proto-feminist. Although an important figure in society and politics, Fonseca Pimentel seems to have had little interest in the general condition of her sex. Jones treats this question in numerous places, and does so thoughtfully.

One neglected aspect of Fonseca Pimentel is her religion. She wrote some poems with religious themes, and expressed joy at the miracle of San Gennaro's Blood occurring during the Revolution. Jones assumes Fonseca Pimentel's atheism, without discussing the possibility of her being Jansenist. Indeed, in a surprising omission, there is not a single mention of that movement in her summary of the history of the Kingdom of Naples.

Each piece of writing presented in the volume has its own introduction to its context and significance. The first items offered are some early letters and poems. These will be of particular interest to scholars of literature, as they are

replete with classical allusions and subtle stratagems—skilfully catalogued and explained by Jones.

The first overtly political work is a play dedicated to the Portuguese reformer, Pombal. In her dedicatory letter, Fonseca Pimentel extols his economic prudence and his loyal service to his king, through which he restored the greatness of the kingdom. Jones demonstrates how Fonseca Pimentel was still at this time in favour of enlightened despotism, and how she used this document to discuss contemporary Neapolitan politics.

There follows a poem written in 1788 praising the king for ending the ceremony of tribute (*chineia*) to the pope. It is written in Neapolitan and shows a more radical strain than previous writings, which had adhered more closely to elite culture.

The majority of the book is given to Fonseca Pimentel's editorials for the republican newsletter, *The Neapolitan Monitor*. In order that the reader might more clearly perceive the author's own voice in the text, Jones has excised those portions which only repeat the text of government decrees. This succeeds in distilling the style of the original author, but occasionally at the expense of clarity. The *Neapolitan Monitor* is a treasure trove of information on the Republic. It highlights the ambiguous attitude of the revolutionaries towards the common people, the difficulties faced in communicating with the masses, the double-edged sword that was the presence of French troops, and the petty squabbles that hampered the new regime. Here, as in other sections, Jones provides a lucid and accessible commentary, teasing out the salient intellectual and historical issues.

In bringing Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel to a wider audience, Jones has made a useful contribution to women's history, literary scholarship, and the history of the Enlightenment. Her book is a fine introduction to Italian intellectual history in this period, embroiled as it was in economic questions and church–state relations. In its selection of texts, its surveys of previous scholarship, and its commentaries, the book offers much.

ARCHIE R. MACGREGOR

Marquette University