Document generated on 04/24/2024 10:22 a.m.

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Tarabotti, Arcangela. Antisatire: In Defense of Women, against Francesco Buoninsegni. Ed. and trans. Elissa B. Weaver

Laura Benedetti

Volume 44, Number 4, Fall 2021

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1089387ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38680

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)
2293-7374 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this review

Benedetti, L. (2021). Review of [Tarabotti, Arcangela. Antisatire: In Defense of Women, against Francesco Buoninsegni. Ed. and trans. Elissa B. Weaver]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, *44*(4), 313–315. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38680

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2022

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

https://www.erudit.org/en/

The Conclusion is devoted to a brief explanation of the connection between early modern theories of creative imagination and its conceptualization in the Romantic period. The author demonstrates an organic link between these two periods within this long history, making this a good way to end the book. One question lingers: To what extent did *inventio* also become one of the resources of the neoclassical style of writing, or *elocutio* (style), especially among playwrights in the age of Shakespeare?

GORAN STANIVUKOVIC
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38679

Tarabotti, Arcangela.
***Antisatire: In Defense of Women, against Francesco Buoninsegni*. Ed. and trans. Elissa B. Weaver.**
The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 70 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 564. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: ACMRS Press, 2020. Pp. xiv, 114. ISBN 978-0-86698-622-9 (paperback) US$41.95.

Throughout the years, Elissa Weaver has devoted great intellectual energy and numerous publications to the rediscovery of Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–52), the Venetian nun who powerfully critiqued the patriarchal ideology of her times, particularly the practice of forced monachization. In 1997, Weaver gathered a formidable group of scholars at the University of Chicago for the conference "Arcangela Tarabotti: A Literary Nun in Baroque Venice," which provided the basis for the volume by the same title that she edited in 2006 (Ravenna: Longo Editore). Even more relevant to this review is her publication of the first modern edition of Francesco Buoninsegni and Arcangela Tarabotti's *Satira e antisatira* in 1998 (Rome: Salerno). Twenty-two years later, Weaver now provides the English edition and translation of these same texts, furthering Tarabotti's relevance in the Anglophone world. A comparison of the Italian and the English editions highlights the progress that the study of Tarabotti has made, thanks of course to Weaver herself, to some of her former students—such as Lynn Westwater and Meredith Ray—and to other scholars who have tackled various facets of Tarabotti's literary persona and made her texts widely available.

Starting with Francesca Medioli's edition of *Inferno monacale* in 1990, all of Tarabotti's extant works have been reissued, either in Italian—Simona Bortot's masterful edition of *La semplicità ingannata* in 2007 deserves a special mention in this context—or in English. Therefore, Weaver, who in 1998 was still somewhat of a pioneer venturing into a largely unexplored territory, can now establish a dialogue with scholars who have followed and/or accompanied her on this journey of rediscovery and assessment. The introduction to the 2020 volume is consequently longer, bolder, and more richly annotated compared to the previous volume. Weaver, in other words, has taken advantage of this opportunity to revisit Tarabotti's *Antisatire* in light of the wealth of scholarship that has appeared in the last twenty years. Another remarkable feature of Weaver's latest work is the inclusion of several illustrations of seventeenth-century hairstyles and articles of clothing—a precious visual aid to the authors' references to contemporary fashion.

A comparison between the two volumes also reveals a curious discrepancy. While they both include Buoninsegni's *Satire* as well as Tarabotti's *Antisatire*, the information on the title page of this most recent book (Arcangela Tarabotti, *Antisatire: In Defense of Women, against Francesco Buoninsegni*) is markedly different from the Italian edition (Francesco Buoninsegni, Suor Arcangela Tarabotti, *Satira e Antisatira*). This decision not only deprives Buoninsegni of authorship but also leads to a misrepresentation of the volume's content. It would have been appropriate, as well as accurate, to openly acknowledge the Buoninsegni-Tarabotti co-authorship as a case in which "the other voice" engaged in a very close dialogue with its interlocutor—so close, in fact, that the two texts have shared a common editorial history.

The introduction begins with an overview of the circumstances surrounding Buoninsegni's *Satire* and Tarabotti's *Antisatire*. Buoninsegni first delivered a discourse against women's luxury at a gathering of the Academy of the Intronati in Siena in 1632. The published version of the speech, *Il lusso donnesco, Satira menippea*, attracted the attention of Arcangela Tarabotti, who wrote a spirited response, the *Antisatira*. The two texts first appeared next to one another in a volume published by Valvasense in 1644 which served as the basis for Weaver's 1998 Italian edition and now for this English translation. Faithful to the genre of the "satira menippea" (Menippean Satire), Buoninsegni interspersed his prose with poetry and attempted to humour his audience through daring puns and witticisms. Silk, for instance, is "nothing more than the vomit

and the sepulcher of a worm" in his description (40). His reasoning, however, is also clearly influenced by (and, in turn, contributes to) the wave of misogyny sweeping through Italy at the time, as the conclusion of his discussion on silk clearly reveals. Buoninsegni in fact ends up stating, somewhat incongruously, that a woman—and not her dress—is "nothing more than a worm that devours the heart of lovers, a delicate vomit of nature, and a gilded tomb of human hearts" (40).

Tarabotti was not amused. Her *Antisatire* combines vehement criticism of Buoninsegni's arguments with a discussion of her own predicament as one of the many women who "are held as prisoners, because every day the perfidy of men grows greater" (63). In other words, she interprets the condemnation of women's luxury as another facet of the same patriarchal oppression that had incarcerated her in a convent in spite of her lack of religious vocation.

Weaver devotes the last portion of her introduction to the intriguing history of the reception of this work. Buoninsegni expressed nothing but praise for Tarabotti, both in his private letters and in a public speech, professing himself honoured that the "reverend mother" had provided a "most erudite response" to his "bagatelles" (23–24). Tarabotti's friend and correspondent Angelico Aprosio, on the contrary, first advised against the publication of *Antisatire* and then attacked its author both in a work that only circulated as a manuscript (*La maschera scoperta*) and, to a lesser extent, in another he eventually did manage to publish (*Lo scudo di Rinaldo, overo Lo specchio del disinganno* [1646]).

The translation strives to convey the characteristics of the authors' styles while making their texts accessible to a modern Anglophone audience. When this is impossible, as in the case of puns, readers can rely on clear and exhaustive footnotes. This volume confirms Weaver's crucial role in furthering our knowledge of Arcangela Tarabotti's life and works, and consolidates the importance of this Venetian nun in the cohort of early modern women writers.

LAURA BENEDETTI
Georgetown University
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i4.38680