

Gaspara Stampa. *The Complete Poems: The 1554 Edition of the "Rime," a Bilingual Edition.*

Ed. Troy Tower and Jane Tylus. Trans. with a commentary by Jane Tylus. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. xxix + 444 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$35. ISBN: 978-0-226-77072-7.

Gaspara Stampa's reception history is unusual. A single edition of her poetry, edited by her sister Cassandra, appeared in 1554, shortly after her death. She was then promptly forgotten until the early eighteenth century, when Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto published an edition of her poetry, believing that by doing so he was honoring his ancestor, Count Collaltino di Collalto, to whom Stampa addressed many of her poems. Her poetry gradually became popular with romantic and neo-romantic poets; she appears prominently in the first of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, for example. Nevertheless, critical attention has often been condescending; Benedetto Croce found her poetry to be a passionate love diary, implying that female poets write spontaneously, unable to exercise rational control over their verse. Furthermore, all modern editions of her poetry have been based on the edition prepared by Abdelkar Salza (Gaspara Stampa — Veronica Franco, *Rime* [1913]), who changed the ordering of the poems in Cassandra's edition so that they would accord with his own view of Stampa's life — that she was a repentant upper-class courtesan. Serious critical studies of Stampa's poetry have multiplied in recent decades, but we have lacked a solid critical edition of her poetry, one based on Cassandra's 1554 publication rather than on Salza's edition. Happily, Jane Tylus and Troy Tower answer this need in the book under review.

Following the standard introduction to Chicago's *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* series, the edition begins with Jane Tylus's excellent introduction to Stampa's life and poetry. For the most part, she leaves the question of whether Stampa was a courtesan to one side, and instead treats the basic facts of her life only as they are relevant to an understanding of her poetry, focusing on Stampa's experience as a musician and performer and situating her work within the cultural milieu of sixteenth-century Venice. As is appropriate for a critical edition, the introduction is intended for a scholarly audience; she assumes a basic knowledge of sixteenth-century poetry and history and does not take time to explain, for example, the identity of Pietro Bembo. She also provides a thorough bibliography of recent scholarly work. Individual scholars will disagree or quibble with certain of Tylus's interpretations, but those looking for an informed, lucid, and scholarly introduction to Stampa and to recent scholarship on her poetry will find no better place to start than Tylus's essay.

The editors, in an effort to provide, "as much as is practicable, the experience of reading the original 1554 printing" (42), restore the ordering and preserve the

inconsistencies of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation of that original edition. Tylus also provides a running commentary on the poems through numerous endnotes that offer both factual information (on textual history and other matters) and interpretive guidance. Simply put, this book is by far the best edition of Stampa's poetry now available in the English-speaking world and in Italy, and it should now become the standard scholarly edition.

As a bilingual edition, it also offers those without Italian an opportunity to discover Stampa's poetry. Tylus's translation is to be commended; it is lucid while remaining true to the original. Prior to this publication, readers needed to look to the translation by Stortoni and Lillie (Stampa, *Selected Poems* [1994]). While valuable for introducing Stampa to a wider audience, it includes fewer than half of Stampa's poems, follows Salza's edition, and presents occasional translation difficulties. In poem 208 (216 in editions following Salza's ordering), for example, Stampa refers to the day when her desire took wing ("che 'l desir prese l'ali") and then describes that since that day, "mi son fatti i martir propri e fatali," a phrase that Stortoni and Lillie render as "I made these fateful tortures for myself," which makes the speaker more active and willing in her suffering than the Italian allows. Tylus more accurately translates the line as "desire . . . made these torments fatal and my own" (243).

Beautifully produced by The University of Chicago Press, this publication is an overdue and, in fact, essential addition to the growing scholarship on one of Italy's most fascinating poets.

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