

*Barbara Gonzaga: Die Briefe / Le Lettere (1455–1508)*. Christina Antenhofer, Axel Behne, Daniela Ferrari, Jürgen Herold, and Peter Rückert, eds. Valentina Nucera, trans. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013. 492 pp. €49.

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The first thing one will notice in looking at this new edition of the letters pertaining to Barbara Gonzaga, Duchess of Württemberg, is that it is completely bilingual. All essays, descriptive summaries, and even footnotes are presented in both German and Italian, side by side. In part, this speaks to the international collaboration on which this volume depended: the work of Austrian, German, and Italian scholars and based on archival collections in Mantua (principally), Stuttgart, and Innsbruck; it also builds upon a traveling 2011 exhibition that visited those first two cities, along with other Württemberg towns. But it also vividly captures the problem that Renaissance Italy and pre-Reformation Germany are two fields that simply do not talk to each other enough. For that reason, a volume that speaks so eloquently and coherently to both is to be welcomed.

The eighth child of Marquess Ludovico III Gonzaga of Mantua and Barbara of Brandenburg, the younger Barbara (1455–1503) is immortalized in Andrea Mantegna's

famous depiction of the marquess's family and court on the wall of the Camera degli Sposi, which is reproduced on this volume's cover. Educated at the school founded by celebrated humanist teacher Vittorino da Feltre, she was raised as an Italian princess; but, pursuing a pro-Imperial policy from a city situated on the chief transalpine route, the Gonzaga sought to further their agenda through dynastic marriages with the great princely houses of the empire. Barbara's 1474 marriage to Eberhard, Count and then Duke (from 1495) of Württemberg, was one of many such unions, including those of her brother Federico I and Margaret of Bavaria, her sister Paola and Count Leonhard of Gorizia, and of course her parents. Gonzagas abroad were expected to be informants — Barbara reports to her parents on the siege of Neuss (1474–75) by Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy, for example — and advocates, and all these figures feature prominently in the published correspondence. The letters are in Italian, Latin, and German, with the former used most frequently. A helpful introductory essay discusses the language politics often present in these decisions and situates the correspondence in light of the recent sustained attention given to late medieval and Renaissance diplomacy, nicely condensing the results of these fertile inquiries into chancery and other epistolary practices and cultures.

While Barbara Gonzaga is the central figure, this attractive volume will be of great and perhaps-unexpected use to a wide range of researchers. Complementing the publication of the *Carteggio degli oratori mantovani alla corte sforzesca* series, it is certainly an important resource for political and diplomatic historians, just as it is for scholars of court culture in Italy and the German lands. The parallel with Isabella d'Este, wife of Barbara's nephew Francesco II and, in fact, one of her correspondents (represented by doc. 302), will please all these as well as those studying Renaissance women — their political agency, cultural interests, and epistolary networks. Art historians will appreciate the description of Mantegna's *Camera Picta* in the dispatch (doc. 18) of two Milanese ambassadors at the Mantuan court: they also comment favorably on Barbara's manner and appearance, though unfortunately they offer no such judgments on the painting. Many letters treat the exchange of gifts, and there is also material of interest for scholars of humanism and of reading and book-collecting practices on both sides of the Alps. Barbara's older brother and frequent correspondent Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga not only promoted his brother-in-law Eberhard's cause at Rome, but also helped him establish links with leading humanist circles and provided books of the new learning. Yet at the same time as Latin letters from Württemberg begin to display notable humanist features (e.g., doc. 237), Federico Gonzaga entreats his sister Barbara with frequent missives to secure a copy from Germany of a life of Saint Frederick, the ninth-century bishop of Utrecht, which Eberhard had promised him during a recent visit to Mantua. Meanwhile, the Gonzaga agent Konrad von Hertenstein, who picked up the language of his adoptive land as an adult, emerges as an unlikely star: his letters in both Italian and his native German, written on various long-distance diplomatic missions for his prince, speak to the international and multilingual ambit of this archetypal Renaissance court; his humble request that Barbara of Brandenburg help him fix a sticky domestic situation

by finding a job for his secret son as a page to Paola (doc. 95) is just one of the many amusing, personal, even playful details that enrich this volume.

OREN J. MARGOLIS, *Somerville College, Oxford* and *Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies*