Virginia Cox, ed. *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. xvi + 456 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-4214-0888-0.

This book completes the trilogy of works by Virginia Cox on the significant contribution made by women writers to culture of the Italian Renaissance and Counter-Reformation. While in her previous volumes she traced in detail women's participation in literary culture from the fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries, as well as analyzing the particular impact of the post-Tridentine period on women's literary voices and attitudes, in this final volume she takes one key genre, lyric poetry, and assembles a comprehensive anthology of female-authored examples, encompassing amorous, religious, polemical, correspondence, and comic verses, among others. The volume, which provides poems in the original language - obtained through a careful comparison of extant manuscript and printed sources - together with an accompanying prose translation, presents to the reader a large majority of works not previously available in English, many of them never before published in a modern edition of any kind. Poems are arranged thematically rather than by author, partly, as Cox explains, as a useful means of illustrating the kinds of poetic topoi at work in the period, and partly as a way of dispelling still-lingering tendencies to read women's poetry in a biographical vein.

The choice of lyric poetry as the genre most suitable for an anthology of this kind, among the many that Cox analyzed in her previous studies, is apposite, recognizing as it does the key role played by Petrarchism in heralding women's entry onto the literary scene in the early sixteenth century (with the work of Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara) as well as in the genre's great popularity in the period among the reading public. Cox traces the subsequent editorial history of the writers she features, underlining the ahistorical and essentially unsympathetic treatment of *letteratura femminile* in the wake of Benedetto Croce, a complex figure who simultaneously did much to uncover a body of work by Renaissance women writers and to denigrate the literary merits of the same. In her anthology Cox instead looks back to a much earlier model, the innovative anthology of women's poetry compiled by the Venetian Luisa Bergalli in 1726, which notably refused the modern bisection of the sixteenth century by the Council of Trent, and included a large number of poets from the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is impossible to summarize such a broad range of works by so many different writers, many of them woefully understudied and waiting for the eager throng of doctoral researchers who will, one hopes, heed Cox's call to arms and further populate this rich field. The author's many years of intensive archival work in Italy have uncovered a host of names previously little known to scholarship. She cites literary quality as her touchstone for inclusion in the book, but admits that this can mean both the kind of emotional truth that modern readers look for, and the formal and technical mastery that was highly prized by Renaissance readers. Two examples, positioned at either end of this scale of merit, will serve to illustrate the potential of the volume. Francesca Turina's extraordinary "domestic Petrarchism," first published in 1628, is a long, autobiographical sequence charting life events from infancy, through marriage and childrearing, to widowhood and old age, including the loss of her teeth and the graying of her hair. Her use of the Petrarchan mode to treat a topic such as breastfeeding (poem 180) is unprecedented within the genre. Meanwhile, a collection of elegant Latin hymns by Lorenza Strozzi, published in 1588 and written for performance in her Florentine Dominican convent to familiar tunes (poems 102–04), displays a notably classicizing register that was highly unusual for a woman and a nun.

A welcome feature of this volume is that it does not need to be read in conjunction with its sister volumes in order to be properly understood. Rather, the substantial and informative introduction provides a stand-alone guide to the genre and the range of examples that follow; the book will therefore perform an important function as a course text for teaching, while also contributing much to the broader field in view of the large amount of original research that it contains. A useful section sets out the names of the various metrical forms in use in the period, and a glossary of technical terms provides further support for researchers. Contributions by single authors can be reconstructed through an appendix listing poems by author.

There is no doubt that Virginia Cox's work in the field has had a transformative impact on the study of Renaissance women writers in Italy in recent years. This fascinating anthology positively vibrates with the quality and interest of its contents, and serves as a timely reminder of how much rewarding work remains to be done now that so many texts and authors have been lovingly brought back into the light.

ABIGAIL BRUNDIN University of Cambridge