

REVIEWS

Deux leçons sur l'art. Benedetto Varchi.

Ed. and trans. Frédérique Dubard de Gaillarbois. Works from the Centre for Further Study of the Renaissance 2. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020. 552 pp. €58.

Benedetto Varchi read his *Two Lessons on Art* at the Accademia Fiorentina on successive Sundays in 1546, during the heroic age of Cosimo I's grand duchy. According to Frédérique Dubard, the editor of this finely presented and thoroughly annotated text, he cut a rather ambiguous figure in the emerging politics of culture. Back in Florence after years of exile following involvement in a failed attempt to halt the advance of Medici hegemony, he was too important to ignore. He even enjoyed favor at court and regime-friendly associations, but his *History of Florence* was kept under wraps by the Medici patrons due to its evident republican bias.

His *Two Lessons* were published in 1550, four years after completion, but were not reissued in their entirety until now. They impressed Michelangelo, the editor insists, in contrast to a strain of scholarship saying the opposite (Matteo Residori, Maddalena Spagnolo, Leatrice Mendelsohn). And they were ransacked and dismembered in subsequent years for numerous other purposes and publications because, the editor argues, the role of Michelangelo and of art in general began to shift away from the wide-ranging and politically loaded theses of the older generation, for whom visual art and social thought joined with philosophy and literature in a broadly based world view. Such a view, says the editor, had no place in the developing institutionalized environment, with the Accademia Fiorentina, recently forged by Cosimo from the compliant remnants of the now defunct Accademia degli Umidi, assuming a guiding role over culture minus the arts, and the newly minted Accademia del Disegno under Giorgio Vasari taking the helm in matters visual.

In the new environment, inconvenient aspects of Michelangelo's role were to be jettisoned: there was to be no more talk of the writer, the philosopher, or, especially, the politically committed friend of republican Florence. From now on, only the artworks mattered, mostly seeming to celebrate the glories of the dynasty (with convenient silences in regard to the statues of David and Brutus). However one may wish to judge the context of writing, and even the arguments in the *Lessons* themselves, the 1550 first edition involved a veritable publishing coup: the first printed versions of a number of Michelangelo's poems (later somewhat manipulated by Buonarroti the Younger in the controversial 1623 printing), as well as letters by him and by some of the other key artists of the moment, all accompanied by Varchi's careful analysis.

In the 170-page introduction, Dubard lays out the context and meaning of a work supposedly compiled just as the exigencies of political consolidation demanded a program for giving preference to particular interpretations about culture. For example, in

Varchi's version, Michelangelo straddles not only the aesthetic trilogy of painting, sculpture, and architecture, but also the fields of poetry and philosophy, a view enshrined in the Varchi-influenced San Lorenzo exequies for Michelangelo, where exquisite, though temporary, exhibits and staging celebrated a many-sided intellectual. All of this was to be safely dismantled after the event, leaving only the simple Santa Croce monument celebrating an artist tout court.

The facing texts, Italian original and French translation, feature "Lesson One," with Varchi delivering an account of Michelangelo's sonnet 151 (numeration from Corsaro and Masi) in the light of Aristotelian notions about beauty and Platonic themes concerning art, love, and creativity. More recent figures such as Dante, Petrarch, Marc'Antonio Zimara, and Pietro Bembo come into play, as well as references to numerous other poems by Michelangelo, with complete versions of poems 89, 98, 116, and 147, to confirm a portrait of the consummate artist-writer. "Lesson Two" considers the aesthetic *paragone*—in other words, the question of superiority between painting and sculpture, with epistolary interventions by Vasari, Niccolò Tribolo, Benvenuto Cellini, Agnolo Bronzino, Jacopo Carucci, Giovanbattista del Tasso, Francesco da Sangallo, and Michelangelo. Varchi's conclusion, not exactly in harmony with all of his interlocutors—especially Vasari and Cellini—proposes a compromise, prizing both pursuits in a common endeavor of harmonizing life by the imitation of nature.

Over the years, critical appreciation of the lessons has been mixed. Carlo Dionisotti dismissed them as superficial; Julius Schlosser Magnino regarded them as excessively abstract; Paola Barocchi seemed to follow the official contemporary line articulated by Vincenzo Borghini, in playing down the significance. This first integral edition in over four centuries promises to move the critical appreciation in some of the new directions already suggested by Annalisa Andreoni and Salvatore Lo Re. Dubard invites a rereading in the light of a reevaluation of the whole period that is now under way; and the quality of this contribution bodes well for these aspirations.

Brendan Dooley, *University College Cork*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2022.111

Dictionary of Italian-Turkish Language (1641) by Giovanni Molino: Transcribed, Reversed, and Annotated. Elżbieta Świąćicka, ed.

Studen zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der Turkvölker 23. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020. 514 pp. \$114.99.

This book presents the reversed version of a dictionary originally penned by the seventeenth-century dragoman Giovanni Molino, and published in 1641. Elżbieta Świąćicka presents not only a reverse dictionary, but also the story behind this "user-friendly"