

by Giorgio Petrocchi for his authoritative edition of the poem (1966–67). The third section consists of the catalogue of the manuscripts proper. The description of the manuscripts is brief but very thorough (shelf mark, place of origin, date, content, material, number and size of folios, size of written space, fasciculation, pricking and ruling, script, decoration, binding, cover, conservation status, history of the manuscript, bibliography). The third section also includes seventy-two tables with photographic reproductions of relevant folios from the manuscripts, which illustrate all the hands documented in the volume. The volume is accompanied by several overview graphs, which help the consultation of the various sections.

The merits of Bertelli's book are many. First, it reaches a higher degree of precision in ascertaining the date and provenance of the manuscripts. Bertelli manages to assign the codices to their specific century quarter. Of the sixty-five manuscripts sampled in the volume, twenty-six receive a more pertinent date and fifteen a more precise determination of their geographic origin, with significant repercussions on what we know about the early circulation of Dante's work. Second, the volume moves toward a crucial reconsideration of the whole manuscript tradition of the *Comedy*. Bertelli shows the necessity of a systematic *recensio* of the whole corpus of manuscripts that accounts for its specific scribal practices. Third, the tables at the end of the volume (and the images dispersed within) allow for a clear visualization of the more technically descriptive segments of the volume. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of such a visual apparatus not only for Dante scholars, but also for the students of manuscript culture and history of the book.

The intended audience of the volume consists primarily of Dante scholars with an expertise in manuscript studies and textual studies. For those able to read its data, the volume sheds light on the circulation and reception of the poem, on the various features of the long-lasting scribal activity around it, and on their possible implications for its readership.

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*Selected Letters*. Isabella d'Este.

Ed. and trans. Deanna Shemek. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 54; Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 516*. Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. xv + 692 pp. \$64.95.

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This volume is a monumental addition to the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series*. In physical size alone this collection of letters testifies both to the immense commitment of the editor and translator, Deanna Shemek, to such a daunting project and to the epistolary output of Isabella d'Este (1474–1539). As Marchioness of Mantua, Isabella d'Este kept copybooks of her voluminous corre-

spondence, a practice that has allowed scholars to utilize the letters in a biographical context or to follow a particular strand of Isabella d'Este's interests and active involvement in many areas: music, literature, art, and politics, just to name the best known.

Deanna Shemek has translated 830 letters for this collection, which is by any measure an exceptional and impressive piece of work. It is the first edition of Isabella's letters in any language so that it marks an important development in the study of this woman who has attracted the often passionate attention of scholars from so many different fields. The translation is excellent and highly readable. The letters themselves are divided chronologically into five groups of which the first three cover the years 1479–1519, reflecting Isabella d'Este's intense cultural and political activities of that period. The last years of Isabella's life have often been treated rather cursorily by scholars; here the last section (1530–39) contains some eighty letters. It is crucial to emphasize that the *Selected Letters* represents only a fraction of the number Isabella d'Este wrote during her lifetime, but at the same time it is worthwhile noting that the selection goes beyond the availability of her correspondence that we have from biographies of the marchioness, the work of Luzio and Renier and the contributions of, for example, Clifford Brown in art history. Any selection of the correspondence of Isabella d'Este is bound to cause headaches for the editor. She has been represented above all as a cultural operator, but her energies were also heavily directed toward the political. This edition takes a balanced approach to both aspects of Isabella d'Este's biography resulting in an impressive overview of her multifarious activities.

In a work such as this the apparatus plays a crucial role in allowing those readers, in particular students, who do not have a deep familiarity with Isabella d'Este's milieu and the vast network of correspondents to be able to engage with the correspondence. *Selected Letters* is a feat of concision and precision in regard to the notes and other information necessary to understand the individual letters. The introduction to the volume is brief, covering biographical issues, critical reception, and letter-writing in the Renaissance. A short chronology of Isabella d'Este's life in tabular form may have been useful to create an accessible and quick reference point. Each section is prefaced by a useful overview of the main political and familial events covered in the letters that assists the reader in assessing them in the light of Isabella d'Este's overriding concerns of the period. The letters themselves all have a brief summary of the contents—a vital resource to navigate around the collection and can be used in conjunction with the index to locate others that deal with similar matters. The thematic index allows the reader to follow topics across the chronological range of the letters. The letters have footnotes the length of which is dictated by the necessity of supplying some historical context or providing essential commentary or bibliography. The reader is further assisted by genealogical tables of the Estensi and Gonzaga. There is also a glossary of names that gives the bare biographical bones of addressees and people mentioned in the correspondence. This is an admirable achievement given that the volume is bulky and that it is at the

same time vital to elucidate the references and contexts. Although students may balk at the number of letters, they offer a unique opening onto the Italian Renaissance in ways that are not possible with other kinds of texts. *Selected Letters* is a splendid achievement that will enable further study of Isabella d'Este, permitting a sustained study of a complex, strong character not fully seen before.

Stephen D. Kolsky, *University of Melbourne*

*Al crocevia della storia: Poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna.*

Maria Serena Sapegno, ed.

I libri di Viella 227. Rome: Viella, 2016. 234 pp. €29.

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Vittoria Colonna, the Marquise of Pescara, was one of the leading exponents of sixteenth-century Italian poetry and still sparks the interest of critics and academics, as can be seen by a steady stream of studies and editorial initiatives, some of them quite recent (to name one, *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*, ed. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno [2016], whose publication practically coincides with that of the volume under review).

The reason for this renewed interest surely lies in the multitude of fields in which the Marquise of Pescara played an important role at a crucial time in European history such as the first half of the sixteenth century. Moreover, there are still unresolved questions as to several long-standing issues of a strictly philological nature, such as those concerning the edition of Colonna's correspondence and private papers, as well as of a historical nature, given the lack of a proper biography due to spotty documentation. In addition, Vittoria Colonna has attracted scholars' attention in research areas that are comparatively more recent, such as the history of gender: that is, the developments in publishing and printing in what was even at that time exhibiting the characteristics of a mass market (see Tatiana Crivelli, "Godere di cattiva stampa: Spunti per una rilettura della tradizione editoriale delle rime di Vittoria Colonna"), one that gradually absorbed literature by women writers, often of a devotional nature. These were all elements that were quite important to an author who, as Abigail Brundin shows (in "Poesia come devozione: Leggere le rime di Vittoria Colonna"), paid close attention to her readers' inclinations.

This volume, edited by Maria Serena Sapegno, is a collection of articles by scholars who have examined the most controversial issues connected with Vittoria Colonna, with a focus on elements that may prove useful in presenting a broad canvas of her as-yet-unwritten biography. Colonna was an important representative of the Roman aristocracy and played an active role in the politics of her day. She served as a mediator between Pope Paul III, her brother Ascanio, and Emperor Charles V, all involved in