

Dialogo della istituzione delle donne, secondo li tre stati che cadono nella vita umana. Lodovico Dolce.

Ed. Helena Sanson. MHRA Critical Texts 30. Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2015. viii + 202 pp. \$15.99.

Instituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane *and* Ricordi di Monsignor Agostino Valier Vescovo di Verona lasciati alle monache nella sua visitazione fatta l'anno del santissimo Giubileo 1575. Agostino Valier.

Ed. Francesco Lucioli. MHRA Critical Texts 43. Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2015. vi + 172 pp. \$15.99.

How women should conduct their lives in the family and in society became the object of a great deal of reflection in the sixteenth century and the subject of a number of treatises. These two editions by Helena Sanson and Francesco Lucioli, respectively, are part of

a renewed interest in the history of female education, evidenced by the number of ongoing studies of the *trattatistica* on female education between the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation, as well as the role played by religion in these treatises and in the behavior of women. These studies can also be understood in the context of larger projects devoted to the study of behavioral treatises in general, which have played a fundamental role in the development of our civilization.

Dolce's and Valier's works concern themselves with how best to educate women in the different stages of their lives: as young girls, married women, and then widows. This historical period, incidentally, saw an increase in the number of treatises on women based on these categories. Religion plays a central role in both of these works, as the religious crises of the sixteenth century are reflected in this type of literature. The social discipline (which also concerned women) desired by the Council of Trent is particularly noticeable in Valier's work, in which the post-Tridentine climate can be clearly felt.

Ludovico Dolce (1508–68), known as a man of letters and, above all, for his activities as an editor, focused mainly on translation, proofreading, and prefaces, as well as some personal writings. He wrote on a variety of topics and might be called, as Sanson notes in the introduction, drawing on Dionisotti's definition, an "operaio della letteratura" (1). Nevertheless, Sanson does consider him to be an important figure in terms of the quantity of published translations and publications in which he was involved in the Venetian book market. Indeed, a degree of interest has developed in Dolce in recent years, as the publication of a number of monographs and editions of his work attests (3n5).

In his *Istituzione*, originally published in Venice by Giolito de Ferrari in 1545 and thought to be a plagiarization of Vivés's *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae* (1524), which was itself published in Italian translation in 1546, Dolce gives us a portrait of a woman who devotes herself completely to her family, to her husband, and to religion, creating what is almost a vindication of religious life. He entrusts his lessons in good behavior to a man, Flaminio (his spokesman), who expounds his theory of female education to a widow named Dorothea. Dolce explains that his work "treats the formation, or, if you will, according to the Spanish term, the *creanza* [breeding] of Woman: the formation of a perfect virgin, a perfect wife, a perfect widow, in such a way that each Woman, who complies with the reminders in this book, can easily raise herself to perfection in these three states" (84). Although it retains the formal structure of a dialogue, this book actually consists of a didactic, one-directional speech by Flaminio to Dorothea. As for Valier, it is a question here of creating the Christian woman and, in the 1547 edition, Dolce modifies the sentence quoted above by writing very plainly "treats the formation of the Christian woman." Dolce's woman, however, does not really have any social role, as she is entirely dedicated to domestic life, whereas Valier attempts to create women who could have a role in civil society specifically through religion.

Dolce expounds on his theory of education in the first half of the book. The family is a sort of republic in which the father must be both loved and feared. The daughter must learn two fundamental things: religion and household management. Culture is

important, but religious instruction is fundamental, and girls must refrain from reading books that might corrupt them. Equally, they must maintain the integrity of their body and their spirit by avoiding foods that might excite lust. A young girl must only leave the home on rare occasions and always accompanied by her mother. She must speak little, and always with modesty and prudence. Lastly, one should neither reproach her, nor praise her, for knowing how to dance, play, or sing. In the second half of the book, Flaminio explains that the goal of marriage is the union of the man and the woman into a single being, of which the man is the head. The aim of this union is procreation. The woman's body belongs to her husband and she must always be faithful to him; on the other hand, she must tolerate her husband's love affairs, as chastity and fidelity do not concern him. The husband is the master of everything. After God, he is his wife's only lord. The wife, in turn, must escape the earthly world and dedicate herself to prayer in order to satisfy Christ and the Christian church. The third part of the book concerns widowhood. Flaminio asserts that a widow must devote herself to religion and to her celestial husband, without ever forgetting her children and the management of her household. She must avoid, of course, earthly and ephemeral pleasures.

This third stage is more important to Valier; if Dolce's *Instituzione* concerns the three temporal stages in a woman's life, Valier's work, a didactic treatise divided into three books, containing many small chapters on different subjects, does not stick to this temporal schema. For him, widowhood is a kind of rebirth, only secondary in importance to maidenhood. The three volumes of Valier's *Instituzione*, therefore, treat, first, *Del modo di vivere delle vergini che si chiamano demesse*, then *Della vera e perfetta viduità*, and, lastly, the *Instruzione delle donne maritate*. There are numerous similarities between the type of advice that is given to women by these two authors. It is obvious in both that maidenhood and religious life are paramount. Valier stresses in particular the role of the "perfect widow" who, now separated from all vice, can prove very useful to society. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries produced a great many texts on the lives of widows (see 23n96 of Luciola's introduction), who are characterized by the ability to devote themselves entirely to religious life, a situation not shared by married women, who must occupy themselves primarily with domestic duties, nor by virgins, who, above all, had to watch over their honor.

Agostino Valier (Venice, 1531–Rome, 1606) was a teacher and cleric who became bishop of Verona in 1565. He had an important role in the post-Tridentine Church and this is clearly reflected in this work. The two volumes, *Istituzione di ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane* and *Ricordi di Monsignor Agostino Valier Vescovo di Verona lasciati alle monache nella sua visitazione fatta l'anno del santissimo Giubileo 1575*, appeared in Venice in 1575. *Ricordi* is a book on monastic life for nuns.

Lodovico Dolce's and Agostino Valier's respective works are very important examples of conduct literature for and about women in Counter-Reformation Italy. The contents of each text include a historical introduction to the author and his work, the Italian text with notes, an index of the names cited in the treatises, and a bibliography.

Mari Teresa Ricci, *CESR — Université François Rabelais de Tours*