

BOOK REVIEWS / RECENSIONI

a cura di Anna Meda e Gerhard van der Linde

Veronica Gambarà, *Le Rime*, a cura di Alan Bullock, Firenze: Olschki/The University of Western Australia, 1995. Lire 48.000.

In this edition there appear together for the first time, from thirty-five manuscripts and numerous printed sources, the 67 poems now recognized as being the work of Veronica Gambarà (1485-1550).

The poems are ordered in chronological sequence. The editor has established this by dating the biographical allusions contained in the poems and verifying them against the evidence contained in Gambarà's letters. In cases where this has not been possible, he has grouped the poems on the basis of thematic and stylistic similarities. Theme and style have also been his criterion in distinguishing between variants of substance in those cases where the manuscript tradition presents them. The chronological, textual and metrical facts pertaining to each of the poems are detailed in the accompanying notes and apparatus, in what is a truly critical edition of the poems in the highest standard of modern philological scholarship.

The ordering of the poems is, as Bullock himself states in the *Introduction*, an artificial one. There is no manuscript extant which presents in its entirety the corpus of Gambarà's poems. Nor is there evidence that Gambarà intended her poems to be placed in a canzoniere-like structure so as to be read as a *diario dell'anima*.

In keeping with the occasional character of a substantial part of her production the sonnet is the prevalent scheme. For the *terzine*, the schemes which prevail are CDCDCD and CDECDE, both amongst the most used in the RVF. Of some interest is the survival of the scheme CDECED (49, 58, 61, 63). Unknown to Petrarch, the scheme originated with Giusto de' Conti and was widely used in Northern Italian lyric poetry in the preceding century. To the prevalent scheme of CDCDCD should be added the anomalous scheme of sonnet 29: CDEDED, caused by a banal error of substitution of the Present Indicative for the Present Subjunctive, syntactically and metrically called for (*vivo* instead of *viva*).

In this case Bullock could have intervened as editor, relegating the spurious reading to the apparatus. Typical of the Cinquecento is the morphology of Gambara's madrigals (3,4, 8, 13, 21, 25) and of the *ottava*, admitted into the Parnassus of petrarchism by her correspondent, Bembo, singly (11, 12) and as *stanze* (43, 54). On its own stands the *frottola-barzella* (10). The presence of these metres in her poetry, combined with their themes, could have suggested a different form of ordering to the editor.

The textual situation, further complicated by questions of attribution which Bullock to his merit has cleared in so far as this is possible, dictated the reconstruction of Gambara's language usage. An analysis of phonological and morphological oscillations has been undertaken to put into relief the statistically prevalent form, and the editor has opted for this one, imposing uniformity on disformity. Here, a comparison with the prevalent phonemes and morphemes in Gambara's letters might have suggested a less mechanical approach.

It nevertheless remains a fact that Bullock has provided the first complete and critical edition of Gambara's poetry and done so with scholarly honesty and rigour.

Nelia Saxby
(University of Cape Town)