

Giulia Gonzaga: A Gentlewoman in the Italian Reformation.

Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi.

Trans. Richard Bates. Viella History, Art and Humanities Collection 11. Rome: Viella, 2021. 290 pp. €49.

Originally published in Italian in 2012, this beautiful translation features Giulia Gonzaga and the entire social, political, and economic world around her. Giulia is at the center, surrounded by women and men, powerful and poor, politicians and courtiers, religious and lay people, who come to the fore thanks to her. The picture that emerges is of a web of people from throughout the Italian Peninsula during the critical years of the mid-sixteenth century, all trying to adjust to the clashes between the Empire, France, and the Papacy, actors in a rapidly changing world that not everyone (*Giulia in primis*) could understand and accept.

Giulia lived in a milieu of small states of the Po valley seeking to gain an advantage in the struggle between the great powers, France and Spain, fighting on Italian soil. These state courts had cultural, architectural, and chivalric ambitions in which women often played a central role in the management and administration of power, since the men, busy as condottieri, were absent for months at a time.

In 1526, thirteen-year-old Giulia entered into an arranged marriage to Vespasiano Colonna of Genazzano, a widower in his forties; he was already father to Isabella, with whom Giulia would have long-standing problems. The marriage ended in 1528 when Vespasiano died, leaving both Isabella and Giulia in difficulties. These Giulia tried to circumvent by secretly marrying her brother Luigi Rodomonte to Isabella, her stepdaughter, against papal and imperial wishes. Her plan allowed Luigi to become Count of Fondi. From this union was born Vespasiano, the nephew who for Giulia was her own unborn child. As Vespasiano was the sole Gonzaga heir to the Colonnese territories, Giulia assumed his guardianship and she clashed at length with his mother Isabella. Giulia was willing to undertake any necessary political maneuver for his status; he repaid her by disappointing her immensely.

In 1535, Juan de Valdés, “an intelligence agent” (77) sent by the emperor to the papal court went to pay his respects to Fondi, with the intention of resolving the economic problems between Giulia and Isabella created by the elder Vespasiano’s will. Educated according to the rules of the time for her social class, determined not to remarry despite family pressure, Giulia had established her own intellectual court in Fondi. Here Michelangelo had painted her; here Ippolito de’ Medici had visited her several times, giving rise to gossip about their possible liaison.

In December of the same year, Giulia moved to Naples, now divided between the Spanish and the French and between the Avalos and Toledo. She took lodgings in the convent of San Francesco delle Monache, where she would reside for the rest of her life, although without taking vows. While she moved freely to visit the homes of the noblewomen, she would never leave Naples again, not even in old age, and not even to



care for Vespasiano, the Gonzaga heir for whom she had fought fiercely, and who, she had hoped, would be a prince in his own lands and not merely a courtier in the employ of Philip II.

Although the religious upheaval of the time, in which Giulia famously participated, is convincingly illustrated with its novelties and difficulties, the strength of this book lies in the representation of Giulia's world and the world around Giulia; she is portrayed as a veridical and non-idealized woman, with her passions and fears.

The detailed historical reconstruction of the time, a complex and convulsive period—of Charles V and Popes Medici, Carafa, Farnese, and Ghislieri; of the Inquisition, the Council of Trent, and the Counter-Reformation; and of the clash between the Toledos and the Duke of Alba for control not only of the kingdom of Naples but also of Spanish Italy—makes this volume an intriguing read.

Credit must be given to the author for her wide-ranging explication of a world that was rapidly changing to accommodate new imperial policies, a world in which Giulia no longer found her place. This book is an example of how to write in a historically impeccable manner about the social, political, religious, and women's history of sixteenth-century Italy.

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Governare l'odio: Pace e giustizia criminale nell'Italia moderna (secoli XVI–XVII).
Paolo Broggio.

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How does a society cultivate local peace, whose interests does peacemaking serve, and how does that society explain conciliation practices to itself? Paolo Broggio tackles these questions with gusto in a compelling account of peace in early modern Europe, ranging thematically from discourses and representations to the complex realities of local vendetta and peacemaking in Italy and beyond.

Broggio's approach emphasizes containment and conciliation, rather than the social discipline paradigm more common to studies of criminal justice. Deep-seated animosities based upon conflicts over resources and status were taken for granted in the early modern world: elites and governments aimed not at eliminating vendettas, but rather at channeling them into state-supervised forums and procedures.

How did they do so? Broggio showcases the multiple discursive and judicial tools that ecclesiastical, seigneurial, and central authorities deployed to constrain interpersonal conflicts. The book's first chapter introduces premodern European thinking on vendetta, justice, and peace. It provides a solid grasp of the conceptual tools early modern Italians had available when pursuing their own feuds and/or peacemaking efforts, and justifying them to each other and themselves.