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Paolo Giovio. *Dialogo sugli uomini e le donne illustri del nostro tempo*.
Ed. Franco Minonzio. 2 vols. Savigliano: Nino Aragno Editore, 2011. cclvii + 790 pp. €50.
ISBN: 978-88-8419-516-6.

This two-volume publication of Paolo Giovio's work *Dialogo sugli uomini e le donne illustri del nostro tempo*, edited by Franco Minonzio, provides a comprehensive examination of this important work by a premier sixteenth-century Italian humanist. Minonzio provides a critical edition of the Latin text, as well as a facing Italian translation with all of the expected critical apparatuses. This format is particularly appropriate in light of the discussion in book 2 of the various competing merits of Latin versus Tuscan. In addition, he includes a fine, lengthy introduction that addresses a number of issues involved with this work and that solidly contextualizes and analyzes Giovio's *Dialogo*.

The situation in which Giovio's *Dialogo* was composed proves crucial in understanding and contextualizing the work. Giovio had just been compelled to flee Rome in the wake of the Sack of 1527, traveling south to the island of Ischia in the Gulf of Naples to stay with Vittoria Colonna. The *Dialogo* is dedicated to

Giovio's close friend Gian Matteo Giberto, whom Giovio had just learned had not been able to escape Rome and was imprisoned in the Castel Sant' Angelo.

The work itself consists of three books, which each cover a day of conversation among Giovio; Alfonso d'Avalos, Marchese di Pescara e del Vasto (a *condottiero* and general in the imperial army); and the Neapolitan senator Giovan Antonio Muscettola. The conversation of the first day revolves around the contemporary military weakness of Italy; the second day discusses the decline of Italo-Latin literary culture; and the third day's dialogue centers on the fragility of contemporary Italian signorial society through a discussion of the proper roles of men and women. Minonzio notes that sprinkled throughout these deliberations is a disquieting analysis of the political, social, and intellectual culture of Italy.

Minonzio's analysis of the *Dialogo* unveils a subtext within Giovio's work. This work was composed at a time of flux in Italian politics when the prospects for the peninsula were at stake, but when many options were still open regarding the future. Giovio had perceived that Italian history was about to permanently change, and the autonomy of the Italian courts could be coming to an end. In particular, Minonzio highlights Giovio's examination of the failure of humanism as a movement to use its resources to prevent the worst event in Italian history, the Sack of Rome. To Minonzio, this necessarily foretold the increasing marginalization of Italian society within the European political context. As such, he argues that this history is a fundamental work of Cinquecento historiography. Giovio's work reveals much about sixteenth-century Italian historiography, but it is also very much of the moment, disclosing the interconnected relationships between the major figures of the Italian courts at the time by highlighting the topics that could and could not be discussed.

Minonzio's introduction to this translation is substantial, almost a work unto itself, and provides a thorough contextualization and analysis of the *Dialogo*. In addition to revealing the excellence of Giovio's Latin style — the humanist was particularly admired by his contemporaries for being incisive — he places the work in its historical context and introduces the cast of characters. The editor also details the writing of the work and compares the literary setting of the *Dialogo* to the historical setting in 1527 Ischia by discussing the use of reality and anachronism in the dialogue. Finally, Minonzio details the editorial history of the piece.

All in all, Minonzio's introduction, critical work, and translation make this intriguing sixteenth-century humanist dialogue more accessible. His analytic judgments compellingly show the value of this dialogue both within the Giovio corpus and in Italian humanism generally, and successfully convinces the reader of the revelatory elements and ultimate importance of the *Dialogo sugli uomini e le donne illustri del nostro tempo*.

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