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Donato, Clorinda. *The Life and Legend of Catterina Vizzani: Sexual Identity, Science and Sensationalism in Eighteenth-Century Italy and England*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020. Pp. 405. ISBN 9781789622218. \$ 107.32 (paperback).

*The Life and Legend of Catterina Vizzani* presents the first accurate English translation of Giovanni Bianchi's 1744 narrative of the gender-crossing Catterina Vizzani/Giovanni Bordoni's life. Vizzani was a young woman of Rome's working class who, from around age fourteen, dressed as a man to woo women. Discovered "in the last throes of love" with another young woman, Vizzani fled Rome, to live and work as a man (Giovanni Bordoni) until his untimely death some eight years later (p. 296). Giovanni Bianchi was the doctor who performed an autopsy and subsequently wrote and published a narrative of the case.

Presented alongside Bianchi's original Italian, made widely available for the first time ever, Donato's new English translation offers a corrective to the sensationalized adaptation of Bianchi's narrative by John Cleland (1751), which was the only source that previously informed Anglophone scholarship on Vizzani/Bordoni. Donato's extensive research on the Vizzani/Bordoni case and on author Bianchi forms the basis of ten chapters that discuss eighteenth-century sexualities in Italy and England, the academic career and intellectual networks of Bianchi, Bianchi's approach to same-sex love and to female anatomy, the Italian and English literary and scientific contexts of the time, and questions regarding both translation and queerness. The chapters are followed by an appendix that comprises the three versions of Vizzani/Bordoni's story: Cleland's adaptation (1751), Donato's translation (2020), and Bianchi's original (1744). The wide range of approaches to Bianchi's text offers something for most, from the specialist of dissection history to the English literature undergraduate.

*The Life and Legend of Catterina Vizzani* is structured so as to be read in sections according to one's interests. The methodology is historical and informed by recent scholarship in a variety of disciplines; it offers multiple points of access for scholars of literature, translation, gender and sexuality, the history of medicine, and the Grand Tour. The introduction provides a well-written and helpful overview, situating the Vizzani/Bordoni story in contemporary queer studies and translation studies, and introducing eighteenth-century Grand Tour notions about Italian sexuality, the early modern study of anatomy, and Giovanni Bianchi's and John Cleland's texts. The volume successfully showcases Bianchi's *Breve storia di Catterina Vizzani* as his most important work for its insights into gender "as fluid and potentially non-binary," and for showing that doctors must "fully contemplate the entire person" (p. 16). The introduction asserts that Bianchi's narrative aimed to achieve four things: discredit the traditional medicine practiced by his colleagues at the University of Siena, angle for a job at a different university, correct misconceptions about monstrous female genitalia, and entertain the reader (p. 38). The extensive discussions across the chapters, as well as the appended source texts, bear out these stated aims. The earlier chapters do an excellent job at claiming the place of eighteenth-century Italy (through the Vizzani/Bordoni case) in discussions of queerness, transgendered identities, and changing ideas about the human body.

Of particular interest to graduate and undergraduate students of translation, sexualities, or queerness are the translations themselves and Chapter 7, "Translating the Transgender." Readers of Italian will deeply appreciate Donato's clear rendering of Bianchi's complex prose, which (Donato argues) is modeled on that of Boccaccio. Likewise, graduate students in many humanistic or social sciences disciplines could benefit from readings on science, autopsies, and religion in Chapters 3 and 4. Scholars of English literature, or students reading John Cleland's scandalous *Fanny Hill* (1748-49), will find much of interest in Chapters 7, 8, and 9, which examine Bianchi's and Cleland's local intellectual and lived contexts and the dialogue between their two versions of the Vizzani story. Eighteenth-century British scholars will be intrigued by the argument (in Chapter 8) that Cleland's translation condemns the notoriously autonomous traveler Lady Mary Wortley Montagu via parallels

between the imagined lives of Lady Mary and Vizzani/Bordoni. As a whole, this ensemble of scholarship is perhaps most significant for highlighting the importance of the specifically Italian intellectual, religious, and social worlds of Bianchi and Vizzani/Bordoni, and of the Italophobia and financial agenda of Cleland.

In presenting Bianchi's text to the wider Anglophone world from a range of perspectives, *The Life and Legend of Catterina Vizzani* performs an important service to scholars and students of many backgrounds. Donato goes beyond previous work on Vizzani/Bordoni by exploring the gender fluidity in Bianchi's text (in pronouns and in Bianchi's discussion of Bordoni's dildo), rather than reverting to lesbianism or the "female husband" paradigm that emerges from Cleland's translation. The chapters make broad claims for Giovanni Bianchi as an extremely forward-thinking scientist and advocate of transgendered and polyamorous relationships (p. 50), in counterdistinction to the "blundering doctors" in Siena (p. 131), the "pockets of lethargy" in anatomical science (p. 48), and Cleland's "linguistic gender cleansing" (p. 233). Despite the value-laden language, these claims are largely borne out by analyses that depend on careful historical detail within a larger framework informed by contemporary gender theory. The suggestion that Bianchi was "inventor" of the medical novella (p. 229), however, is nuanced by the preceding discussions of Chapter 5, which examine eighteenth-century narrative styles in Italy and England.

Given the ambitious range of the project, the multiple theoretical approaches to the texts, and Giovanni Bianchi's complex intellectual networks, it would be impossible to produce this kind of scholarship without some overlap among the chapters. Such repetition can be helpful as it allows for the reading of chapters as stand-alone pieces: the author wisely suggests that readers may not read cover-to-cover (p. 5). This strength is at times also a weakness: even the author seems exasperated by the reiteration of salient facts, like the information that Cleland's text is a rewrite rather than a translation, "as we have noted many times over the course of this volume" (p. 179). The vast amount of research that created the project could have been streamlined by trimming the information in both the main text and the footnotes. Some additional editing in the later chapters, in particular Chapter 9, could have minimized repetitions and digressions to highlight the argument and further strengthen the work's claims.

The book is a uniquely significant contribution to queer and gender studies: it makes available a set of eighteenth-century reflections on gender and gender fluidity; it dramatically expands the available scholarship on queer and transgender identities in eighteenth-century Italy; and it offers a rare transcultural analysis of ideas about bodies through an in-depth comparison between Bianchi's and Cleland's texts. The emphasis on dialogue between (conservative) English and (progressive) Italian texts about sexuality is particularly important for our moment, since it goes against the grain of common contemporary assumptions informed by Anglocentric notions of progress. As the author points out, today's world is finally ready for an eighteenth-century subject who amply demonstrates the performative nature of gender.

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