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DOI:

[10.1080/13556509.2018.1443663](https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2018.1443663)

Document Version

Accepted author manuscript

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Strowe, A. (2018). “A Beautiful and Living Picture”: Translation, Biography, Reception, and Feminism in Maria Roscoe’s Vittoria Colonna: her life and poems (1868). *Translator*, 24(2), 183-203.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2018.1443663>

Published in:

Translator

Citing this paper

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“A Beautiful and Living Picture”: Translation, Biography, Reception, and Feminism in Maria Roscoe’s *Vittoria Colonna: her life and poems* (1868)

“... it is only fair to add that whatever merits her poetry does possess, Mrs. Roscoe has done her best to annihilate.”
(*The Saturday Review* 1868: 530)

“... as a literary production, it is impossible to praise Mrs. Roscoe’s book.”
(*The Saturday Review* 1868: 531)

It is, perhaps, not too much of an overstatement to say that the reviewer for the *Saturday Review* was unimpressed with Maria Roscoe’s 1868 biography of Renaissance poet Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547), which included a number of translations from Colonna’s poems. Articulating a horror of translating poetry into prose, the reviewer also notes that Roscoe’s Italian is not particularly good, suggesting snidely that “perhaps she will try her hand at Sanskrit in her next volume” (*The Saturday Review* 1868: 530). The review points out a historical quibble with one of Roscoe’s less defensible assertions, that Colonna was the first sacred poet of Italy, before finally settling on the structure of the biography itself, which the reviewer sees as an “elaborately inconsecutive” product of an “authoress” with a “truly feminine fondness for going off at a tangent into speculations very remotely connected with her subject, and neither novel nor striking in themselves” (ibid.).

The reviewer is right on many counts. Roscoe’s Italian is demonstrably insufficient at times, her translations are often tone-deaf and unpoetic, her grasp of literary history occasionally dubious, and her book a curious amalgam of biography and theological history. The femininity of tangents aside, Roscoe’s work frequently departs from the titular subject of her book, Vittoria Colonna, to discuss the development of reformist thought in Italy and abroad.

Yet there is something singular about Roscoe’s work, both in the translations and in the biography, that deserves a closer look. Taking an approach to the text informed by translation studies, cultural studies, book history, and feminist literary historical revision, this article explores how, inaccurate as the translations may be and irrelevant as the tangents might seem, Roscoe’s book insists both on its own author’s right to her topics, both central and tangential, and on the value of its female subject’s life and experiences. The analysis that follows traces the complex interaction between biography and translation, examining how the biography can be used as a key for investigating Roscoe’s translations at the same time as the translations are presented as factual evidence for the biography. By treating the translations and biography as complementary forms of rewriting (see Lefevere 1992b), we can see how the two forms coincide to produce a unified work. As parallel forms of representation the biography and the translations each contribute to a complex picture of both Roscoe’s subject and of Roscoe’s own project, presenting an important translational corollary to observations about the contradictions of Victorian feminism. Contemporary reviews of the book, another form of rewriting, demonstrate both the necessity of Roscoe’s complex self-positioning and positioning of Colonna, and her success, using language that combines Roscoe’s work as a translator and her work as a biographer.

Based on the text and contemporary criticism this article explores how both the translations and the book itself fit into the context of the history of feminism and women’s engagement with the literary world, in particular tying them to evolving notions of feminist scholarship and Victorian

women's writing. In particular, it suggests that Roscoe's work, while not feminist by most modern measures, was radical in important ways within her own context.¹ Furthermore, it shows how the combined resources of book history and translation studies can be used to explore the complex history of a particular text, by investigating translational choices and the translator's agency alongside details about publication and reception. Throughout, the focus is on the agency of the translator as both a linguistic and textual agent within the particular historical and cultural context in which she worked.

Victorian Women Writers, Renaissance Women Subjects

Maria Roscoe² was born Maria Fletcher in 1798, the second daughter of Thomas Fletcher, a Liverpool merchant, and granddaughter on her mother's side of the prominent British Unitarian minister and nonconformist educator William Enfield (Webb 2004). In 1831, she married lawyer and legal writer Henry Roscoe, tenth child of William Roscoe, a well-known historian of the Italian Renaissance and a former member of her grandfather's church (Mcnaughton 2004). This union brought Maria into a highly active literary family. Henry and several of his siblings were writers, as were a number of nephews and nieces. William Roscoe was the author of *The Life and Pontificate of Leo X* and *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent*, among others; Henry's brother William Stanley was a poet and student of Italian literature; and his brother Thomas was a published writer and translator, many of whose works focused on Italian subjects.

The Italian Renaissance was a popular subject in general in the Victorian period, with many writers interested in the role of women in that period.³ Writing on Colonna benefited from this general interest. By 1868, her biography or selections of her works had been printed in several versions: one collection of Italian poetry with translations that went through at least three editions (Glassford 1834, 1846, and 1866), a similarly popular collection of biographies (Jameson 1829, 1833, and 1837), a two volume set of the life and works of Michelangelo that includes a memoir of Colonna and some of her poems (Harford 1857, 1858), and another volume of biographies of Italian women (Trollope 1859). Colonna appears in broader surveys as well: for example William Roscoe's work on Pope Leo X includes six pages on Colonna (1805: 3.217-23) and Hallam's history of European literature a paragraph (1837: 1.575).

This interest in the Italian Renaissance, even in her own family, would not necessarily have been sufficient to justify Roscoe's literary ambition. While the men of the Roscoe family published histories, scientific and legal tracts as well as translations and poetry, the women published mainly their own poetry (e.g. sisters-in-law Mary Anne Jevons and Jane Elizabeth Roscoe), or at the most, a family biography (e.g. Jevons and Jevons 1886). Women's writing was largely restricted to topics such as memoir or biography, fiction, and religious sentiment and morality,⁴ choices that partly compensated for the public nature of writing, particularly writing for publication. Translation, too, could be a suitable task for a literary woman, but often with similarly limited topics (see Stark 2006: 125). The female subjects of biographies, furthermore, had to be shown to be themselves moral and virtuous women, largely private and domestic.⁵

¹ This observation recalls Pym's admonition (1998: 5) that historical criticism "must determine the value of a past translator's work in relation to the effects achieved in the past." It is not only the effects, but also the measures of the past that are relevant here.

² Biographical details are drawn from research on Roscoe's family. See Mcnaughton (2004), Sutton (2004), and Henry Roscoe (1906).

³ Major works include von Ranke's work on the Papacy (1834-36) as well as its translation into English (1847); Henry Hallam's volumes on Italian Renaissance literature (1837-39); Jacob Burckhardt's *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860) and its English translation (1878); Pater (1873); and Symonds (1875-1886). Of these works, Burckhardt is particularly concerned with the political and social role of women, but Hallam and Symonds also touch on women writers.

⁴ See Poovey (1984) and Jay (2001).

⁵ See Wilkes (2007) and Atkinson (2010: 147-182); on a related note, see Peterson (1999) on traditions of autobiography.

Overall, the Italian Renaissance was not seen as a particularly virtuous time or place, for all the Victorian admiration of its art and literature.⁶ Although the focus of most of the histories is on men, women were perceived as similarly immoral. Symonds' list of Renaissance women poets reads like the list of characters in an off-color novel, with many of the women described in relation to the men they entertained, or the tragedy associated with them (1881: 5.288). Coming to the only two female poets dealt with at any length, however, he describes Veronica Gambara as being "respected by all Italy, the type of what a noble woman should be in an age when virtue shone by contrast with especial lustre" (1881: 5.289). Similarly, in a review of Roscoe's book, Colonna is described as standing "in bold relief" to other women of the age, who were "destitute of moral worth," though possessing powerful intellectual gifts (*Victoria Magazine* 1868: 273). As such, Colonna is an acceptable subject, and biography and translation appropriate genres for Roscoe as a woman writer.

Translation and Biography

Roscoe's translations and biography of Colonna thus emphasized the respectability of her subject in Victorian terms, as a moral, private, and passive being. Fortunately, Colonna's biographical information, her poetic output, and her own self-positioning all lend her to such a presentation.⁷ Born in 1492, married to Fernando Francesco d'Avalos, Marquis of Pescara at 19, and widowed at the age of 33, she wrote poems that have traditionally been divided into two categories: those addressed to her husband and his memory, and those dedicated to spiritual matters.⁸ She did not remarry, and while her relationship to Michelangelo is still a topic of speculation, the set of poems that she dedicates to him are religious rather than amorous. She is described by her contemporaries and by Victorian biographers and literary scholars as socially respectable, virtuous, and moral.⁹ As a rewriting of Colonna as a historical character,¹⁰ Roscoe's biography relies on the selection of events that emphasize these traits.

Roscoe's book relies both on previous biographers and historians and on Colonna's own poems for information. The volume is divided into an introduction, 21 chapters, and an appendix. The chapters are largely chronological, each detailing a specific period of Colonna's life, through chapter 14; chapters 15 and 16 sketch the life of Cardinal Reginald Pole, both before and after Colonna's death in 1547; chapter 17 explores the history of Reformist thought in Italy 1521-1555; chapter 18 explores more religious politics between 1540 and 1545; and chapters 19 and 20 return to Colonna to describe her death, the portraits made of her, and her religious leanings. The final chapter describes some of the publishing history of her work as well as the progression of her poems and her correspondence, and the appendix includes a bibliography and brief descriptions of various slightly related people and events. Almost all of the chapters about her life (1-7, 9-14, 20-21) contain her writing as evidence, although chapter 10 uses only letters, and no poems.

The "life and times" model of the biography allows for a structure that roughly follows the main points of Colonna's life, but with digressions to discuss the doings of her family as well as political and religious conflicts and controversies. Her family life is portrayed in rather glowing

⁶ Burckhardt (1878) and Symonds (1875) for example discuss political intrigue and what Burckhardt refers to as "prevalent immorality" (1878: 2.213); Pater (1870) sees in his subjects childish innocence accompanied by lack of self-control, a perception echoed in Eliot's *Romola* (1862:5). See also Fraser (1992 : 21-24; 235-237; 241-242)

⁷ Genieys-Kirk (2007) and Haliloğlu (2007) also explore cases in which women translator/writers make use of source texts and subjects that are already in line with target epistemological frameworks, as a starting point for potentially more controversial ideological statements or actions.

⁸ The distinction begins as early as the first publication of Colonna's works (Colonna 1538) and is preserved for example by Rota, who distinguishes the "rime spirituali" (Colonna 1760: iv) and in Bullock's critical edition (Colonna 1982). See also Brundin (2008: 35) on the distinction.

⁹ See for example mentions by Dolce (1547: 15v), Giovio (1551: 26), Rota (Colonna 1760), William Roscoe (1805: 3.217-223), Visconti (Colonna 1840), Trollope (1859), and Symonds (1881: 5.289-96).

¹⁰ See again Lefevere 1992b on rewriting as a concept that can include practices such as translation, literary history, and biography.

terms, particularly her early married years with d'Avalos on the seemingly paradisiacal island of Ischia. Domestic events or attitudes build an image of Colonna as retiring, modest, loving, and attentive to her extended family. Much of the text immediately surrounding biographical details focuses on her emotions (or probable emotions) or on the beauty of the landscape around her (e.g. 1868: 94-95 and 131-134). A summary of Colonna's biography, appearing after the section on reform history, highlights the scope of what Roscoe appears to consider the actual biography of Colonna: her idyllic childhood in Ischia, her marriage, the afflictions she and her family suffered (though with nobility and respect throughout), her private use of her talents, her friendship with Michelangelo, and her death. This is the picture of a private woman, described as "the angel of peace in her family" who on her deathbed looked "so meek and saintlike" (301).

In other episodes she appears to intrude on other areas of activity. She writes letters to family members about their political and military behavior (e.g. 1868: 121), and apparently acts on behalf of Pietro Bembo (186: 137) and Bernardo Tasso (1868: 138-140). Roscoe describes her as having "great influence... over her large circle of acquaintance" (1868: 140). Such a description could be seen as merely domestic, but the following sentence places it within a larger framework: "And her mind began to turn from her private griefs to take an interest in the religious controversies and reforms of which the whole world was at this time speaking and writing." Even these episodes, however, are framed as being examples of her womanly behavior. The letters to family members are to encourage them to be virtuous. The support and advocacy exemplifies her charity and generosity. Her concern with religion demonstrates her dedication to living according to her moral values.

These concerns with her family and with religion provide a connection to wider issues. The descriptions of the men around Colonna tend towards the heroic or at least romantic, as they go off to and return from battle, or are persecuted, most often by the Church. In addition to providing a backdrop for Colonna's own selflessness and *grandeur d'âme*, these moments grant Roscoe space to engage with military, political, and religious history. Similarly, some of Colonna's travels, such as her time in Ferrara (1868: 151-154) and Rome (1868: 164 ff.) allow Roscoe to connect Colonna's biography to other historical figures, such as Veronica Gambara (1868: 115-18), Renée of Ferrara (1868: 140), John Calvin (1868: 152-54), Michelangelo Buonarroti (1868: 154 ff.), Gasparo Contarini (1868: 187 ff.), Reginald Pole (1868: 242 ff.), and Bernardino Ochino (1868: 198 ff.)—not only women, and including many at the center of religious controversy.

The digression into reform history in chapters 15-18 (1868: 244-298) is the longest section in which Colonna herself is hardly mentioned, but other sections, particularly those having to do with the military engagements and political maneuvering of the time, include very little of her own life (e.g. chapters 4 and 8). This is, of course, the "times" of the "life and times," but it is significant how much space is dedicated to the military and political. Even so, the picture of Colonna is explicitly and repeatedly drawn back to the "meek and saintlike" with which Roscoe describes her on her deathbed.

Into this picture, Roscoe inserts the poetry of Colonna. Although many early biographers assert based on her poems that Colonna was simply a private woman writing first "per sfogar l'interna doglia,"¹¹ as she herself writes, and then to express her religious devotion, more recent scholars see her as a more consciously public poet, carefully crafting her own self-image of virtue and piety through her work (see Rabitti 2000: 37 and Brundin 2005: 3-4 for example). Colonna's own work thus constructs the very image that Maria Roscoe needed to preserve and even emphasize, but Roscoe's work depends on a reading that excludes such conscious self-construction. Any acknowledgement that Colonna was deliberately writing for an audience would undermine Roscoe's argument. There is ample evidence of Colonna's active participation in semi-public literary scenes of her time (see Robin 2007), and even in Roscoe's own time T. Adolphus Trollope suggested that Colonna was a consciously public writer (1859: 343). Roscoe, however, reads the sonnets not as a bid for a public presence but as private documents that "present a beautiful and

¹¹ "to assuage the inner pain"—All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

living picture of a most charming woman” (1868: ix). Indeed, in addition to her assertions that the poems themselves document first the private grief and then the religious sentiments of a genuinely sensitive woman, Roscoe goes so far as to claim that a seeming uniformity in the poems and their topics is in fact evidence of a lack of intention for public reading: “Their sameness, also, is a proof of their not having been written for fame, nor intended for the eye of the world. She only made use of this talent to give relief to her feelings, and an utterance to her thoughts” (1868: 112-13).

The poems and their translations thus become an important site for confirmation of Colonna’s character. They are presented as first-hand, unimpeachable sources for Roscoe’s assertions about Colonna, thus authorizing Roscoe’s entire biographical project. Roscoe frequently reiterates the status of the poems as reliable evidence, referring to them as “a record of the inner life” of Colonna (1868: 86) and describing how she has selected poems that “illustrate her history and her character” (1868: ix) and “show the train of thought, and the state of feeling, which she passed through” (1868: 104). Roscoe sees in Colonna’s poems two particularly important aspects of Colonna’s persona: a purely expressive need to vent her grief, accepting her fate and not trying to affect the course of events; and a form of nascent Protestantism that rejects Catholic doctrine.

Any analysis of the translation, however, must acknowledge the fact, picked up by the reviewer of the *Saturday Review* and even by positive reviewers (*Westminster Review* 1868: 570; *Pall Mall Gazette* 1868: 12; *Spectator* 1868: 444), that Roscoe’s Italian was not particularly solid and her translations prone to error. Although the *Saturday Review* is particularly ungenerous, it appears true that Roscoe’s Italian was functional at best, missing nuance as well as the occasional bit of content. Certain errors, such as her translation of “sperai” as “you hope” instead of “I hoped” in the sonnet “Sperai che ’l tempo i caldi alti desiri,” (1868: 141) are likely errors of grammar rather than conscious choices.¹² Elsewhere, it is difficult to tell whether radical reformulations are to avoid particularly thorny grammar or because Roscoe simply preferred them.

Nonetheless, other shifts from the source text Italian poems to the translations printed in Roscoe’s biography cluster around the themes of feminine modesty, lack of agency, and religious belief that are so important to Roscoe’s presentation of Colonna. As noted above, Colonna’s poetry already contains these themes, and so these shifts are not additions to the authorial image that is being created, but amplifications that reinforce the perception of Colonna as a private, retiring woman and emphasize the aspects of her religious belief that would later be integral parts of Protestant thought. These shifts, more clearly motivated by particular ideological impulses rather than error, are the focus of the following analysis.

Two poems stand out as a pair regarding shifts that emphasize the poet’s passivity. “Penso per adolcir i giorni amari” and “Oh che tranquillo mar, oh che chiare onde” both involve shifts in tense that contribute to the vision of the poet as passively accepting her fate. The first poem (example 1) describes the attempt to use poetry as a way to sooth the narrator’s grief: a claim of authorship for private reasons, but also the articulation of an attempt at effecting change.

Example 1¹³

Penso, per adolcir i giorni amari, All’amata cagion: far degna stima Che vive in cielo, e ’n terra è ancor la prima Luce che ’l secol nostro orni e rischiari. Tento i gravi martir dogliosi e cari Narrar piangendo, e disfogarli in rima;	I thought to sweeten my bitter days by doing worthy honour to that beloved theme—now in heaven—who was on earth the brightest light that adorned and enriched our age. And I attempted, weeping, to narrate great sufferings, grievous and dear, and to lighten them in rhyme. I took counsel
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¹² The forms for second person singular present indicative (“speri”) and first person singular remote past indicative (“sperai”) differ by only one letter.

¹³ Textual analysis suggests that Roscoe has at least two sources for the Italian poems: editions by Visconti (Colonna 1840) and Rota (Colonna 1760). Visconti’s versions are given here based on variants suggesting that she followed them for these poems, except for example 5, where the ST is printed in Roscoe’s work. Gloss translations are provided in footnotes.

<p>Prendo consiglio da color, che 'n cima D'alto saper son oggi eccelsi e rari. Veggio ch'una volubil ruota move L'instabil dea, che per vie lunghe e corte, Chi più lusinga, a maggior mal riserba: Ma non trovando al fin ragion, che giove All'alma nel suo duol sempre proterva, Prego che 'l pianto mio finisca morte. (Colonna 1840: 81)¹⁴</p>	<p>from them, and endeavoured to rise to the summit of such high and rare wisdom. But I watch the inconstant wheel of the fickle goddess, and I see that those whom she most flatters only receive greater evils, by long or by short lives; and not finding any cause of rejoicing, my soul continues obstinate in its grief, and I pray that death may end my weeping. (Roscoe 1868: 91)</p>
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In Roscoe's translation, the tense shifts from the present to the past, in the description of the poet's own attempts at action (*penso*/I thought; *tento*/I attempted; *prendo consiglio*/I took counsel) and in the description of Pescara's worth (*è ancor la prima luce*/*was on earth the brightest light*). Furthermore, in the eighth line, rather than referring to Colonna consulting others who are at the summit of wisdom, Roscoe suggests that it was Colonna herself attempting to rise to that summit. Whether this is deliberate or the incorrect interpretation of the verb "son," which can be either "I am" or "they are," Roscoe adds another element of past (and futile) action as the poet "endeavoured to rise," presumably an attempt now abandoned. In the Italian, the poet claims the ongoing right to continue this attempt, which is both described in the poem and actually represented through the writing of the poem itself. In Roscoe's English, the present is reserved for the poet's resignation and acceptance of both grief and fate. The past tense, in which the action is taken, contrasts with this present resignation, and the activity of attempting to mediate loss might thus be seen as a juvenile error narrated by a now-accepting mature poet.

The second poem (example 2) moves instead from the past to the present, while simultaneously eliminating a warning from the poet to the reader about complacency.

Example 2

<p>Oh che tranquillo mar, oh che chiare onde Solcava già la mia spalmata barca, De ricca e nobil merce adorna e carica, Con l'aer puro e con l'aure seconde! Il ciel, ch'ora i bei vaghi lumi asconde, Porgea serena luce e d'ombra scarca; Ahi quanto ha da temer chi lieto varca! Chè non sempre al principio il fin risponde. Ecco l'empia e volubile fortuna Scoperse poi l'irata iniqua fronte, Dal cui furor sì gran procella insorge.</p>	<p>Oh! on what a tranquil sea, on what calm waves floats my happy bark, with its rich and noble freight! Favoured with pure air and prospering breezes, and heaven itself scattering the darkness, already gives promise of its serene light! But, behold, even now impious and capricious Fortune shows her iniquitous face, and raises up an angry storm! Winds and lightnings together meet ready to overwhelm me, but my soul still sees its <i>Faithful Star!</i> (Roscoe 1868: 106)</p>
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¹⁴ I think to sweeten the bitter days,
by giving worthy esteem to the beloved reason
who lives in heaven, and on earth is still the first
light, which adorns and brightens our age.
I attempt, the grave agonies, painful and dear,
to narrate weeping, and to give vent to them in rhyme;
I take counsel from those, who at the peak
of high knowledge are today sublime and exceptional.
I see that a rotating wheel is moved by
the fickle goddess, who by ways long and short
whomever she most flatters, for greater evil she saves:
But not finding in the end a reason that should help
the soul, always stubborn in its pain,
I pray that death shall end my weeping.

Venti, pioggia, saette insieme aduna, E fiere intorno a divorarmi pronte; Ma l'alma ancora la fida stella scorge! (Colonna 1840: 6) ¹⁵	
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In the Italian poem, the metaphor of a storm that disturbs the tranquillity of life seems to be limited to a single event (the death of Colonna's husband), and the warning is a bitter commentary by an unhappy woman on whom heaven no longer shines. Unlike in example 1, the events of this poem are mainly not actions on the part of the poet, but suffering that she undergoes. The shift from past tense to present in this poem thus shows the same type of patient grief that the previous poem showed through an opposite shift. The poet in the English suffers constantly through the reversals of fortune, and the change from past to present of the "serene light" of the heavens, which is promised rather than simply delivered, suggests that for the poet, the ultimate escape is, as in example 1, death.

Furthermore, the only real action taken by the poet in the Italian poem—warning the reader not to become complacent—is deleted from the translation, removing the poet as a rational agent and minimizing the sense of a relationship between the poet and her audience. The English poem is more simple than the Italian, offering a three-part structure of joy/suffering/faith rather than the Italian version of joy/foreshadowing/warning/suffering/faith. The overall sense that is gained of the poet's emotional state is one of passive receptivity to this state of things, although with faith as the ultimate hope, as in the Italian.

The sense of acceptance produced by both translations is mirrored in the biography, for example where Roscoe describes the satisfaction of Colonna and other Reform-minded women: "to these womanly hearts it must have been a joy to know that strong men were up and doing, against the grievous sins and unblushing depravities which they had so long mourned in secret" (Roscoe 1868: 277). Such an explicitly gendered statement allows Roscoe to present Colonna as intensely concerned with morality and religion, but exhibiting an appropriate modesty that would prevent her from acting publicly upon those concerns. Colonna is permitted in this portrait to recognise and mourn immorality, just as in the poems she may grieve and lament her fortune, but she is not expected to participate in fixing either situation. In the two poems, she acknowledges her past error in trying to be too active and declares her faith in others (the "Faithful Star" as both her love for her late husband and her religious faith).

As with the emphasis that Roscoe's translations place on Colonna's privacy and the increased sense of her passivity that some translation shifts create, the treatment of Colonna's religious sentiments is predominantly an intensification of existing proto-Protestant impulses by various means. In a few translations, references to the Pope are reinterpreted or omitted, and in one notable passage, Roscoe strengthens Colonna's statement of a need for direct and unmediated connection to God.

¹⁵ Oh what a tranquil sea, oh what clear waves
plowed then my tarred boat,
with rich and noble wares adorned and filled,
with pure air and favorable breezes!
Heaven, which now hides the beautiful graceful lights,
Afforded serene light unburdened by shadow;
Ay, how much one has to fear who sets off happy!
For the end does not always correspond to the beginning.
Here then the wicked and fickle fortune
uncovered her furious and harsh brow,
from whose fury so great a tempest arises.
Winds, rain, lightening it combines together,
and beasts around ready to devour me;
but my soul still discerns the faithful star.

In the translation of “Veggio rilucer sol di armate squadre”, Roscoe’s translation moves the poem as a whole away from Colonna’s continuing Catholicism by omitting reference to the Papacy. The poem describes how Colonna sees the lands of her birth turned into fields of war, and entreats the Pope to remember his role and his connections to the Colonna family, whom he is currently fighting. The second quatrain (example 3) includes the lines that Roscoe omits.

Example 3

<p>... Deh mostrate con l’opre alte e leggiadre Le voglie umili, o pastor saggio e santo! Vestite il sacro glorioso manto Come buon successor del primo padre! ... (Colonna 1840: 300)¹⁶</p>	<p>... Oh, Pastor wise and holy, now prove thy forgiving nature, and show thyself in high and graceful deeds! ... (1868: 346)</p>
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Despite acknowledging in the introduction to the poem that it is addressed to “the Pope, Paul III” (1868: 346), Roscoe’s poem asks Paul to behave well only in the context of his role as shepherd or pastor rather than framing this as a return to his proper role as Pope. Further, the praise of the Papacy that is implicit in the description of the “sacro glorioso manto” is omitted. Colonna’s plea to reform the existing Church makes sense in her context, but weakens Roscoe’s claim that Colonna was essentially Protestant and wished to break with the Church. An omission of this plea avoids the problem.

The figure of the Pope is removed from the two different translations included of another sonnet, “Prego il Padre divin,” one in the narration of Colonna’s life (1868: 60) and the second among poems written to her family, in the chapter “Poems and Letters” (1868: 342). Roscoe interprets this poem as addressed to Colonna’s father, before his death, rather than following Visconti’s description of the sonnet as “A Paolo III mentre guerreggiava contro a’ Colonnesei”¹⁷ (1840: 460-461; see also Cox 2013: 310 and Robin 2007: 98-99). Roscoe takes “padre nostro terren,”¹⁸ the addressee of the poem, to mean the actual father of Colonna and her brother, rather than the Pope, as Holy Father, who is earthly in contrast to God, the Heavenly Father. Thus she avoids another instance of Colonna begging the Pope to return to moral principles for the spiritual health of the Catholic Church. At the same time, this shift in addressee contributes to the emphasis on Colonna as a private, passive writer. Too many letters on political subjects such as war, to too many outside parties, would imply a public engagement on Colonna’s part that Roscoe seems to want to avoid. A letter to Colonna’s father, unlike another letter to the Pope (Roscoe does include one; 1868: 346), would not disrupt this image.

Perhaps the most theologically relevant shift comes at the end of the sonnet “L’occhio grande e divino,” in which Colonna appears to argue for a direct spiritual connection to God, and against the mediation of confession (example 5).

Example 5

<p>... Securi del suo dolce e giusto impero Non come il primo padre e la sua donna Debbiam del nostro error biasmar altrui;</p>	<p>...Secure under this sweet and just rule, we must not, like our first parents, lay our sins on others, but with kindled hopes and true penitence, passing by priestly robes, open our sins to Him alone.</p>
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¹⁶ Oh, show with high and lofty deeds
Your humble desires, o wise and saintly shepherd!
Don the sacred glorious mantle
As a good successor of the first father!

¹⁷ To Paul III as he waged war against the Colonna.

¹⁸ Our earthly father

Ma con la speme accesa e doler vero Aprir dentro, passanto oltra la gonna, I falli nostri a solo a sol con Lui. (Roscoe 1868: 322) ¹⁹	(Roscoe 1868: 323)
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A key ambiguity is present in the Italian with the preposition “oltra.” If true faith must pass “beyond,” this could mean that it must undergo confession while seeking further direct forgiveness from God, or it could mean that one must pass by confession, substituting for it an unmediated connection. Such ambiguity may have been necessary to avoid an accusation of heresy, but for Roscoe’s purposes, the translation must resolve it in favor of a rejection of confession.²⁰ The translation “passing by” retains only this sense, a reading that Roscoe tries to reinforce by commenting after the translation that “‘*Passando oltra la gonna*’ literally means ‘passing beyond the gown’” (1868: 323). She also reiterates the directness of the last line by adding that “‘*a solo a sol con Lui*,’ strictly interpreted, is tête-à-tête with God” (ibid.) Her translation “to Him alone” excludes the presence of any other mediator, as does “a solo a sol con lui,” and further could even be seen to connect to the notion of “faith alone” as the means of salvation in a Protestant ethic.

Reception

Textual analysis is able to reveal the thematic concerns that motivate Roscoe’s translation choices and certain aspects of her biography. The efficacy of those choices, and to some extent the proof that they were necessary in the first place, is visible primarily through related texts such as book reviews. Many studies of translations have considered reviews and other indices of reception as part of their analysis (for a general survey see Maier (1998/2009). This is often done, however, as a way of examining what the comments of critics reveal about their understanding of translation (e.g. Fawcett 2000; Venuti 2008: 2) or to discuss the reception of a single author (e.g. Munday 1998). Reviews can mark certain types of translational norms, by commenting for example on the admirable fluency or wooden style of a translation. They seem to be used mostly to examine details of style or the perceived worth of the source text or author, however, rather than to build up a more comprehensive picture of the entire project of a translation. Taken as a set of documents that attest to a book’s overall reception, reviews can indeed indicate what contemporary audiences thought of a particular style of translation, or new set of ideas, but they can also show indirectly how well a translational project has been accomplished. In this case, through the reviews of Maria Roscoe’s book, which include comments on both the biographical and the translational aspects of the volume, it is possible to see how Roscoe’s work as a translator and biographer was received both in terms of stylistic norms and as part of Roscoe’s broader project. In this section and the one following, Roscoe’s work is analysed through the lens of various contemporary reviews, constructing a synchronic book historical account that allows an assessment of her work as a translatorial and biographical rewriter but also of how she was able to use that work to create new discursive spaces.

A reader’s report preserved in the Macmillan Archives does not appear to recommend publication. The reader praises the subject but faults Roscoe for her writing and suggests that

¹⁹ Secure of his sweet and just rule
Not like the first father and his woman
Should we blame others for our error;
But with hope kindled and true pain
Open within, passing beyond the gown,
Our faults alone with Him alone.

²⁰ Trollope describes the meaning of these lines confusingly as “unmistakable... yet sufficiently obscure and unobvious” as to veil Colonna’s heresy (1859: 365).

Trollope's treatment of Colonna in his collection is superior.²¹ Nonetheless, Macmillan chose to publish the book, and unfortunately there are no records in the archive regarding any editing or negotiation that may have taken place.²² At the same time, however, her work may have been seen to have merit, despite the reviewer's lack of enthusiasm. Such an interpretation is borne out by the positive reviews the book garnered after publication. Apart from the skepticism of the *Saturday Review*, Roscoe's book was generally well-received by reviewers in a number of prominent periodicals. With the exception of one from the *Athenæum*, the reviews are not blind to faults in research and translation, but the book is accorded praise for its subject as well as for its author and handling. Furthermore, much of the admiration is expressed in ways that suggest the success of both Roscoe's self-presentation as a biographer and translator and her presentation of Colonna as a virtuous widow and proto-Protestant.

There is disagreement among the reviewers on the subject of the quality of the research, writing, and translations. Several of the reviews question her choice of sources and the extent of her reliance on them (*Victoria Magazine* 1868: 277; *British Quarterly Review* 1868: 268; *Spectator* 1868: 444), and two note tangential historical errors (*Victoria Magazine* 1868: 280; *Spectator* 1868: 444). The *Saturday Review*, as seen in the introduction, deplores the organization of the work, and refers dismissively to the "so-called translations" (1868: 531), but others describe it as "well and tastefully written" (*Spectator* 1868: 444) and "pleasantly written" (*Westminster Review* 1868: 570). The *Victoria Magazine*, despite observing a "slight baldness of style and an occasional want of finish in the mere diction" (1868: 274), states that in her translations "Mrs. Roscoe has faithfully rendered the meaning, and preserves much of the spirit and grace in a vehicle of prose" (1868: 278). Roscoe's choice of prose was not uniformly welcomed; apart from the *Saturday Review*, whose objection is only partly to prose itself ("Poetry translated into prose is apt to be rather flat, but it may at least be expected to be accurate"; 1868: 530), the *Englishwoman's Review* also criticizes her use of prose as giving "the sense only" and not providing the reader a sense of the "melodiousness" of the poetry (1868: 519). Despite reservations regarding the translations and the Italian, and despite characterizing the work as a whole as "what painters call 'amateurish,'" the *Pall Mall Gazette* declares the book to be "written with good taste, with a quick and intelligent sympathy, occasionally with a real freshness and charm of style" (1868: 12).

It is no surprise to find that style is subjective, or that translations are often reviewed on the basis of target language fluency rather than informed comparison to the source text (as Lawrence Venuti has noted; see 2008: 2). In this respect these reviews are unremarkable, except perhaps for the range of different periodicals in which Roscoe's book was reviewed. Ellen Miller Casey's research (1990) on later trends in reviewing fiction finds that very few works of fiction in 1883 were reviewed by the *Athenæum*, the *Saturday Review*, and the *Spectator*, suggesting that the review of Roscoe's volume in all three of these as well as a number of others could be noteworthy, but further investigation is necessary.

More important to Roscoe's project than praise of her writing or translating, however, is the acceptance of Colonna's verses (in translation) as proof of historical events, of Colonna's devotion to her husband, and of her proto-Protestant religious leanings. The *Athenæum* review, itself brimming with poetical sentiments, repeats assertions made on the basis of the poems and even reprints several lines. The *Victoria Magazine*, having commented that Visconti is not necessarily a reliable source, acknowledges the presence of much better ones on the subject of Colonna's love for

²¹ "The subject is very interesting indeed, but the writing is poor and rather thin, with no style about it. The great objection perhaps is that Thomas Trollope has gone over the ground in his "Dream [sic] of Italian Women", (Vol 1. p. 270-388) and I think done the work better. Vittoria Colonna is one of his ten heroines" (Macmillan Archive. Reel 1, Vol MCXLVI, 15). This is the entire report included in the archive.

²² It is possible that the decision was made partly on the basis of considerations unrelated to the quality of the book itself. Roscoe's son, Sir Henry Enfield Roscoe, had published a very successful textbook, *Lessons in Elementary Chemistry*, with Macmillan in 1866, with a second printing in 1867, as well as a translation of another scientific work (Kirchoff 1862). A canny editor may have seen this as the beginning of what in fact turned out to be a long and presumably profitable relationship between Sir Henry and Macmillan, in which context the publication of Sir Henry's mother's book may simply have been politic.

her husband: “We have besides, in the letters and poems of Vittoria, evidence more satisfactory on this point than the flowery, grandiloquent utterances of Visconti or Rota” (1868: 277). The poems on her husband’s memory are, according to the *Victoria Magazine*, “a noble and remarkable monument of a wife’s undying love” (1868: 279), and the *Westminster Review* describes the religious poems as “unimpeachable evidence” of Colonna’s religious leanings (1868: 570).

The appropriateness of Roscoe’s choice of biographical and translational subject and of Roscoe’s own choice to write a biography is expressed in terms that both strike the ear as sexist relics and remind one of the Earl of Roscommon’s injunction to translators—“choose an Author as you choose a Friend” (quoted in Lefevere 1992a: 43)—or Lawrence Venuti’s suggestion that translators should choose authors with whom they feel a certain connection (2008: chapter 6). The *Spectator* review describes Roscoe as having for her subject “the natural sympathy of a cultivated woman for one of her own order” (1868: 444). The *Athenæum* writes that “Vittoria Colonna, flower of Italian ladies, is matter fittest for a lady to handle” and refers to Roscoe’s family name as the guarantor of her quality as a biographer and translator, describing her work as having been done “well and lovingly” (1868: 625).²³ The sense of sympathy and friendship between the author and the subject is extended to the readers as well by the review in the *British Quarterly Review*, which declares that “Mrs. Roscoe deserves the thanks of Englishwomen for making them acquainted” with Colonna’s great nobility in both “love and piety” (1868: 269). Indeed, one review offers Colonna the high praise of observing “the similarity of the melancholy conditions of Vittoria Colonna’s life with those of our Queen” (*Victoria Magazine* 1868: 283), a comparison to yet another masterful creator of a feminine yet public self-image.

Given the acceptance of Colonna as a virtuous lady, and Roscoe as an appropriate biographer, the reception of the argument regarding Colonna’s proto-Protestantism again shows the success of Roscoe’s portrayal. As noted above, the *Westminster Review* refers to the “unimpeachable evidence” that Roscoe presents to prove Colonna’s sympathy with Church Reform (1868: 570). The *Englishwoman’s Review* is so convinced of Colonna’s leanings as to state that “she would not herself probably have much longer escaped persecution, for her feelings were known to be strongly in favour of heretical doctrines” (1868: 519), and claims that “throughout her numerous sacred poems no allusions are made to any of the peculiar doctrines of the papacy” (ibid.). Looking forward to Protestant England, the *Athenæum* describes Colonna as “in sistership with the minds that were busiest in what then must have seemed a good deal like what we call ‘free inquiry’ now” (1868: 625).

The *Pall Mall Gazette* shows the most interest in this aspect of Roscoe’s biography and of Colonna’s life. A large part of the review in fact examines not the book itself but the nature of Italian Protestantism in the Renaissance. This theological exploration is connected to the work at hand by the reviewer’s declaration that “the life of Vittoria Colonna, if fully treated, would afford in its accessories a complete history of the Protestant movement in Italy” (1868: 12). The disappointment expressed slightly later in the review that Roscoe’s book is not entirely satisfactory in this regard does not diminish the sense that the reviewer has accepted at least the attempt, albeit “amateurish” and slightly disorganized (1868: 12), at such a combination of Colonna’s life with this theological history.

If the *Pall Mall Gazette* seems the most convinced and fascinated by the connection between Colonna and Protestantism, the *Saturday Review* is, predictably, the least. Indeed, although several reviews simply pass over the topic of religion, this reviewer raises the only actual objection to Roscoe’s argument, declaring dismissively that

one gets quite bored—there is no other word for it—with the laboured attempts, in season and out of season, to prove that Vittoria was a Protestant at heart, though there is absolutely

²³ This same review, amusingly, cannot avoid a rather odd interjection on the domestic qualities of the subject, noting that there is not much information available on Colonna’s life and that “one cannot guess whether she was thorough housewife [sic] or not” before declaring her to be a “high-minded lady and builder of lofty rhyme” (*Athenæum* 1868: 625).

nothing in her writings to suggest such an idea; while there is a good deal, for instance in her passionate addresses to the Virgin, to imply the contrary. (1868: 531)

While the review is correct that Colonna's faith still included many aspects that would eventually remain Catholic and not be brought into mainstream Protestant thought (Marian devotion), it dismisses what do seem convincing instances of reform-minded thinking in the poems that are, as examined earlier, often enhanced by Roscoe's translation choices. It is important to note as well that the *Saturday Review*, with its reputation for snide and cutting remarks, appeared to have one topic that was off limits: "Ritualism was protected by the queer High-Anglican principles of [publisher] Beresford Hope" (Vulliamy 1942: 512). This refusal to accept Roscoe's arguments can thus be seen to be as much a rejection of Roscoe's own non-conformist leanings as a defense of Colonna's Catholicism.

Maria Roscoe, Biographer, Theological Historian

Maria Roscoe's accomplishment, however, is not limited to writing a biography and translating poems in such a way that both she as author and Colonna as subject are viewed as virtuous and religious. Indeed, the accomplishment of that goal, through translation and biography, is effectively in service to another, which is to give herself the space to write, and indeed, to write about another woman. Furthermore, she takes this opportunity to expand the scope of her writing to theological history, simultaneously granting herself the permission to write about men as well, and positioning Colonna, a woman, at the center of circles of Church Reform.

Biographies of eminent women did exist in the middle of the nineteenth century, as Juliette Atkinson notes, but they tended to be "simple, pious sketches" or "collective... biography" (Atkinson 2010: 146). Joanne Shattock also notes this trend in the biographies of woman writers of the period, when "comparatively few women writers were memorialized by full-scale biographies" (2001: 10). As noted earlier, Colonna had already been the subject of biographies in some of these collections, notably by Anna Jameson (1829) and T. Adolphus Trollope (1859), as well as featuring in shorter sections of other books, for example William Roscoe's *Life of Leo X* (1805) and John Harford's *Life of Michael Angelo Buonarroti* (1857). Translations of Colonna's poems appeared in similar collected volumes, including Trollope (1859), which includes fourteen complete sonnets with translations and excerpts and translations of a further five. Maria Roscoe's volume on Vittoria Colonna takes this interest, and despite the challenges of an often significant lack of documentary evidence—a common problem for biographers of women (Atkinson 2010: 146)—uses existing biographical materials and translations of Colonna's poems to claim for Colonna the privilege of an entire book.

Roscoe's book appears to be the first book-length single-subject biography of Colonna, including part or all of 69 poems,²⁴ and it is significant that the reviews do not generally deny Colonna's worthiness of such a treatment. Indeed, the subject is described as "worthy and interesting" (*Victoria Magazine* 1868: 274), and the book as "interesting and valuable" (*BQR* 1868: 268). Although couched in criticism of Roscoe's translations, even a comment from the *Englishwoman's Review* emphasizes the value of the subject, describing "a poetess whose life cannot fail to interest so deeply that the reader unacquainted with Italian must be the more disappointed at finding no adequate sample afforded of her works" (1868: 519).

The book further contributes to a centering of women's lives and women's writing by sparking the reviews themselves, which become an enactment of this same centering by discussing

²⁴ 67 are identifiable, including examples where only single lines are given as well as those where only the English or the Italian is given; two are identifiable as poems described by Bullock as incorrectly attributed to Colonna; a further six are excerpts of poems that Roscoe, following Visconti, describes as otherwise lost (1868: 335-37); and two poems I have not been able to identify, including one that is probably not Colonna's. For a complete list, please contact the author.

and debating the merits of this biography of a woman, written by another woman. The reviews themselves become rewritings not only of the text of the biography and of the translations, but of Colonna's biography and the circumstances of her life, prompted by both the content and the characteristics of Roscoe's rewriting. Non-contemporary biography can thus be seen to play the same role of constructing new public images and role models for women writers and women in general that Shattock identifies (2001: 8-9) in the process of the writing and reading of contemporary biographies. In this case, as with many others, the biography together with the translation and reviews constructs an image, while simultaneously modeling active writerly engagement.

The review in the *Victoria Magazine* takes this discussion further than the others, not only repeating or debating the particulars of Colonna's life and poems or Roscoe's writing, but engaging with the very notion of the image of the writer. Although Roscoe repeatedly attempts to show both through biography and translation that Colonna was not writing for public consumption, the *Victoria Magazine* rejects this notion, claiming hyperbolically that "her genius would be urged by laws of paramount force to produce to the world her poetical creations" (1868: 281). While not the anthem of female independence and right to public presence that later generations might look for, this is still a significant declaration: that a woman might pursue public recognition while remaining virtuous and worthy of respect.

In addition, Roscoe uses the public forum granted by Colonna's virtue and appropriateness as a biographical subject and author for translation as a space from which to write an almost parallel history of a perhaps less defensibly feminine subject: the movement for Church Reform in Renaissance Italy. Although Roscoe tries to portray Colonna as passively awaiting change while privately pleading for it in her poems, from the evidence of the letters and poems that Roscoe presents, Colonna is not simply waiting for change but is advocating for it in writing to both friends and enemies. These events also give Roscoe the opportunity to present sketches of the lives and activities of many of the reformers in Italy, including Contarini, Ochino, Pole, Valdez, Vermigli, and others, linked to the biography by occasional reference to letters or poems to or from Colonna. The excursions into Church history and the Reform movement in the second half of the biography extend two decades beyond Colonna's death, to events in 1568 (1868: 292). Thus, Roscoe uses the work of rewriting (cf. Lefevere 1992b) in the form of translation and biography to extend the scope of her writing.²⁵

By staging this history around the figure of Colonna, and the portrayal of Colonna around translations of her poems, Roscoe lays claim to her own right as a historian and posits Colonna's centrality to the movement itself. In her portrait of Colonna and the dedication of a large part of her book to the subject of Reformation history, she further asserts the right of women to participate in these matters as both contemporary agents and later analysts. The disorganization lamented by several of the reviewers means that structurally, history, biography, and translation are intertwined. This entanglement serves a dual purpose: it allows Roscoe to write both as part of a biography of a worthy woman, and it ties Colonna to a wider, and public intellectual movement while allowing her to maintain a certain modesty. The intersection shows Colonna as a vocal part of the Reform movement and the Reform movement as background to Colonna's life, depending on how the reader wishes to interpret it.

Thus, the *Saturday Review*'s complaint regarding Roscoe's tangents points inadvertently to a more interesting issue. In part warranted by the admittedly loose organization of the work, a feature noted as well but less critically by the *Pall Mall* reviewer, this particular critique can be read not simply as compositional, but as a refusal to engage with this type of writing coming from this particular source. By contrast, the *Victoria Magazine*, which also notes that Roscoe strays relatively far from the topic of Colonna, suggests that "if data for biography... be insufficient, the title of the work is bound to warn readers that it has been requisite for the author to draw with liberal hand on current historical pictures" (1868: 275). This comment is not a dismissal of the project, although the

²⁵ We can see a similar project of rewriting (in the form of translation) extending the intellectual scope of the writer in Hilary Brown's analysis (2007) of the translation work of Luise Gottsched.

reviewer is clearly disappointed by the tangents, but a proposal for what might be called truth in advertising, regarding a book taking on a scope broader than the one indicated by its title.

Afterlives

At the start of its review of Roscoe's book, the *Saturday Review* has some choice and fortunately erroneous comments on the subject of fame. The reviewer holds that "the verdict of posterity, once accorded, whether for honour or for neglect, is very rarely reversed" (1868: 530), and goes on to say rather disingenuously that Colonna had already been forgotten and that this work would hardly resuscitate her. This view might seem rather myopic, but it is worth noting that often the reversal of such judgments, especially the rehabilitation of past characters, is the product of much labor. The fame of two historical authors is at stake here to some extent: Colonna's if we were to believe that her reputation depended on Roscoe's treatment alone, but also Roscoe's as a biographer and translator. Colonna currently receives the honor of posterity that the reviewer seemed to think unwarranted and unlikely, but Roscoe has been largely lost.

In the context of the rehabilitation of non-canonical Victorian women writers over the past few decades, and in light of the arguments above regarding Roscoe's agency in writing and her insistence on the value of her subject, it seems an appropriate moment to argue for a revaluation of Maria Roscoe as well as of forms of literary biography and translation that have to some extent been overlooked. Roscoe's translations and biography suffer from belonging to another social world in that an initial reading suggests not their value but their irrelevance to modern notions of authorship and feminism, in addition to their inadequacies as critical biography or effective translations.

Roscoe's text and translations are feminist, however, if we consider them not as representing radical or revolutionary notions, as Nicola Diane Thompson argues that scholars have done in approaching Victorian fiction (2010: 67-69), but as quietly modeling both a negotiated public presence for Colonna in literary and theological history and a wider scope of topic for Roscoe herself. Similarly, feminist analysis of Roscoe's project is not of the type advocated by early feminist translation scholars, who focused on radical articulations and rewritings, but follows a pattern of identifying women's engagement with projects of translation and articulating how their participation functioned within contemporary social and cultural patterns.²⁶

Thus, rather than situating Roscoe within the older dichotomy of "feminist"—recognizably radical or innovative—and "antifeminist" that Thompson (idem.: 70) and Ann Heilmann and Valerie Sanders (2006) have called into question, we can read her work not simply in terms of what she claims to represent—the piety and virtue of her subject—but also what she actually does—center a woman in the theological debate and engage in the theological history herself. We must read across Roscoe's two fundamental exercises regarding Colonna: presenting a traditionally virtuous biographical subject but foregrounding that subject as integral to a wider history that is not solely domestic.

On one level, her Colonna reads as insipid compared to contemporary characterizations that suggest levels of both engagement and self-awareness that Roscoe simply does not admit into her portrait. Roscoe's portrait, however, through the biography as well as the translations, is not completely consistent or unified. Despite the attempts discussed above to emphasize Colonna's privacy and passivity, along with a solid but still private proto-Protestantism, Roscoe shows a woman with a prodigious poetic output and connections throughout her contemporary political and religious world. Her assertions of Colonna's privacy must thus be read against the evidence that she presents of Colonna's engagement with a wide range of powerful men.

At the same time, we must see in Roscoe's writing not only a repetition of the tropes of Victorian female virtue but also her engagement as an active intellectual. In terms of Roscoe's own authorial role, by examining what Roscoe does rather than merely what she claims to do, it becomes

²⁶ See in particular Von Flotow (1997 and 2011) and Simon (1996).

clear that far from staying within the limits that she continues to claim, of writing a biography of a virtuous and religious woman, her work extends her purview as author and historian into the political and religious doings of the men contemporary with Colonna.

The reception of the work, seen through the reader's report and through contemporary periodical reviews, suggests that various readers accepted the work on each of these different levels. Furthermore, several reviewers used the space created by the review to debate not only the value of the book itself but also the theological background, Colonna's centrality to the Reform in Italy, and Colonna's self-awareness as an author. The discussion generated by the book and continued in the reviews constitutes exactly the kind of engagement that produces shifts in the judgment of posterity that the *Saturday Review* believed so unlikely.

In Roscoe's own work as a writer and translator, it is possible to see the tensions between traditional and conservative models of femininity and the practice of writing, between Colonna's self-presentation and Roscoe's re-presentation, between Roscoe's role as a biographical and translatorial rewriter and her claim of space as a theological historian. Such an analysis of her work relies not only on examining the manipulation of content, but on investigating the paradoxical and complex interactions between her biography, historiography, and translation. This case highlights the ways in which seemingly conservative practices of translation and biography can be used in their own context in ways that accomplish progressive goals. In addition, it shows that a combination of book history and translation studies methods—publication histories, analysis of agents involved in translation, intersection between forms of rewriting, publication, reception, and linguistic analysis—can be used to produce new understandings of texts.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Dr Maeve Olohan for her feedback on a draft of the article. Thanks also to Dr John Gilmore for his supervision of the MA dissertation many years ago, that helped provide the foundation for this research.

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