

“Elizabeth I: Language, Learning, Power”.

Dipartimento di Studi Americani, Europei e Interculturali,

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On November 29th, 2013 an international conference on the linguistic and literary aspects of Elizabeth I's authorial output, convened by Donatella Montini and Iolanda Plescia, was held at Sapienza University in Rome, under the auspices of the Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies. The conference brought together scholars of international stature who contributed to shed new and fascinating light on the author Elizabeth I.

After the welcome address by the Head of the Faculty of Lettere e Filosofia, Roberto Nicolai, by the vice-director of the Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies, Ugo Rubeo, and by one of the convenors, Donatella Montini, the chair was taken by Nadia Fusini (SUM Florence) whose personal take on Elizabeth I, from the point of view of her own novel (*Lo specchio di Elisabetta*, 2004), highlighted the focal points of the creative process in the construction of Elizabeth as a literary character.

After Fusini's opening address, the first panel on Translation was opened by Brenda Hosington (Warwick University) whose research interests in women translators offered the background not only for her depiction of Elizabeth as a translator (her translations into Latin of Parr's and Ochino's texts were specifically tackled) but also of the Queen's rhetorical gifts in penning personal letters to her relatives. In the following paper of the same panel, Alessandra Petrina (Padua University) was not concerned so much with the correctness of the attribution to Elizabeth I of the translation of Petrarch's *Triumph of Eternity* as with the construction of the Queen's public persona that this controversial attribution carried with it, and thus with the role of translations and translators in a nation, England, seeking to find, particularly at the time of Elizabeth, a “sense of itself in the world”. The second panel, dedicated to the sovereign's negotiation between the public and private domains, was opened by Donatella Montini (Sapienza University of Rome) who investigated Elizabeth I's prayers from a point of view which has received to this day little scholarly attention, the linguistic and especially historical-pragmatical one. Montini's investigation of the Queen's strategic self-representation through her prayers is revealing of the nature of both the author and the political persona. Cristina Vallaro (Milan Catholic University) illustrated the work as a poetess of Elizabeth I in her particular ability to both hide and reveal, for the sake of diplomacy, her own thoughts in her most private poems. The final contribution of the morning was Giovanni Iamartino's analysis of the portrait of Elizabeth I offered by Gregorio Leti's 1693 *Historia o vero Vita di Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra*, a valuable, if arguably not always exact and impartial, testimony of Elizabeth I's British and European afterlife, also viewed in comparison with the verbal portraits of the same sovereign by another expatriate to England, Petruccio Ubaldini, the object of Iamartino's previous research.

The afternoon panel of the conference was dedicated to Elizabeth's Letters. In his contribution, Carlo Bajetta (Valle d'Aosta University) analysed the question of authorship related to Elizabeth I's letters in Italian, of which only a fraction has come to light so far; more specifically, he expanded on the challenges an editor has to face when trying to discriminate, among the letters dealing with more ordinary matters, between those written most probably by the sovereign and those only signed by her. Elizabeth's correspondence

was also the theme of Sonia De Angelis's (Lancaster University) contribution. Her investigation of the stylistic and pragmatic features of the Queen's letters to the Duke of Anjou and James VI was aimed at approaching these texts from the linguistic point of view of communicative acts. In the final paper of the panel and of the conference, Iolanda Plescia (Sapienza University of Rome), who has recently edited and translated into Italian Henry VIII's letters to Ann Boleyn, was also concerned with the sovereign's negotiation between private and public spheres and carried out a linguistic analysis of the letters which reveals the extent to which the process of astute self-fashioning through language which would become one of Elizabeth's political strategies was very much peculiar to Henry VIII himself. In her final remarks on the conference, Iolanda Plescia also highlighted the importance of an intellectual and cultural encounter among scholars such as the one which took place in Rome around the figure of Elizabeth I and expressed the wish that the lively debate and creative ideas it generated could be repeated in the future on a regular basis.

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