

Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi, Bilingual edition (Biblioteca Italiana)

Alessandra Strozzi
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Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi

BILINGUAL EDITION

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY HEATHER GREGORY

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Alessandra Strozzi : Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi, Bilingual edition (Biblioteca Italiana) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi, Bilingual edition (Biblioteca Italiana):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Letters of a 15th century bourgeois woman focuses on religion,

marriage and social status

By Mark K. Rempel

This was required reading for an undergraduate course on the history of Renaissance Florence at a state university. It is hard to evaluate letters from a person from another time and place, but these letters serve to place the student in the context of the time. She was very religious, very concerned about her sons, and spoke incessantly about money matters. She was of the lower nobility of 15th century Florence and was quite concerned about her social status, respectability, and the proper rituals to gain favor with the Medicis. Marriage for her children was very paramount to her, as was religion. She wrote about politics when she could, though she feared her letters being read by strangers. She was a widow for most of her life and never remarried, for she realized she had more social power as a widow than as a wife, thus as a widow she could manage the Strozzi family affairs without much interference, and, she obviously preferred it that way. But in no way can she be called a feminist as she thought little of her daughters and tended to evaluate women only as potential mates for her beloved sons. She was what we would call today an upper-middle class bourgeois, concerned about status and wealth and keeping things traditional. But, was she typical of the Time? No. Few women could read and write back then and her family had been exiled by the Medicis for most of the time the letters were written. Also, having widow for so long managing such a large house was probably unusual for the time. This is an abridged edition. The Italian publication has more letters. I give it three stars, but as rather generous, as I didn't find it all that interesting, but as an example of History of Women it is of some importance to some historians

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. An amazing collection of original letters and translation.

By The Strife of Love in a Dream

This primary source is one of the most amazing I've ever seen. Of the 72 known letters written by Alessandra Strozzi, this book collects about half and translates them in a unique side-by-side version with Italian on the left page, and the English version on the right. The letters were collected by Cesare Guasti in 1877 from originals, but the book does not include most of the annotations Guasti made. There are footnotes and also a useful (if annoyingly incomplete) index, as well as a bibliography. The translations look excellent to me (though there are some places where clothing and dye names aren't quite what I'd imagine) and show a slice of life that really does trace Alessandra's life from middle-aged exile to elderly political matriarch. It shows how she gets her daughters married off and how she pesters her two sons to get married; it talks about how her third, youngest son dies and her grief afterward; she talks extensively about her religious sentiments and how to live a good, virtuous life. Little comments about the foods she liked and how she treated her slave(s) crop up here and there, and there are all kinds of snippets in her writings about the political system and especially the various ways the exile affected her family. Famous people like the Medici weave in and out of her letters; one highlight to me was how her daughter-in-law attended Lorenzo de Medici's wedding in 1469. The real disappointment in the book was that it's not at all complete. Of the 35 or so letters, many are abridged. Some things I wish were there got snipped, like one letter wherein she advises her older son not to buy a Circassian slave even though they're beautiful, but to get a Tartar instead because they're dependable and strong. That's totally missing from this book. I really hope that Gregory releases a complete translation of the letters--and I wouldn't mind seeing Guasti's original annotations and sidenotes along with it. There's some incredible stuff here that you just won't see (like the letters written after her death wherein she gave a lot of her old clothes to charity) unless you know where to find the originals online and can translate it yourself. Overall, though, I would recommend this book vastly and do suggest it for anybody seeking to understand the period.

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By JCThanks

The letters of Alessandra Strozzi provide a vivid and spirited portrayal of life in fifteenth-century Florence. Among the richest autobiographical materials to survive from the Italian Renaissance, the letters reveal a woman who fought stubbornly to preserve her family's property and position in adverse circumstances, and who was an acute observer of Medicean society. Her letters speak of political and social status, of the concept of honor, and of the harshness of life, including the plague and the loss of children. They are also a guide to Alessandra's inner life over a period of twenty-three years, revealing the pain and sorrow, and, more rarely, the joy and triumph, with which she responded to the events unfolding around her. This edition includes translations, in full or in part, of 35 of the 73 extant letters. The selections carry forward the story of Alessandra's life and illustrate the range of attitudes, concerns, and activities which were characteristic of their author.

Language Notes

Text: English, Italian (translation)

Original Language: Italian

From the Inside Flap

"The liveliness of Ms. Gregory's translation . . . reminds me anew what a marvelous window these letters offer into the experience of a past world."

Dale Kent, author of *The Rise of the Medici*