

UCLA

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Title

Sonnet Addressed to Pope Paul III, Enemy of the Colonna Family

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5zj0m07z>

Journal

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 20(1)

ISSN

0069-6412

Author

Borrelli, Joan

Publication Date

1989-10-01

Peer reviewed

With the election in 1534 of Paul III to the papacy, Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547), along with the religious reformers of her time, sought a moral restoration within the Roman Catholic Church, corrupted by secular power and spiritually divided by the crisis of the Reformation. Colonna, born in Rome of noble family, had witnessed the sack of her native city in 1527 and had lost her husband in military service under Charles V against the French.

A profound religious faith and grief over her husband's death form two central themes in Colonna's poetry. This particular sonnet offers a representative and poignant sample of her work, with its lament for human life lost through war and its exhortation to the pope (of the noble Farnese family) to ally himself with her in the cause of restoring to his office its spiritual sanctity.

Sonnet addressed to Pope Paul III, enemy of the Colonna family

Veggio rilucer sol di armate squadre
i miei sì larghi campi, ed odo il canto
rivolto in grido e 'l dolce riso in pianto
là 've io prima toccai l'antica madre.

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!

Semo (se 'l vero in voi non copre o adombra
lo sdegno) pur di quei più antichi vostri
figli, e da' buoni per lungo uso amati!

Sotto un sol cielo entro un sol grembo nati
sono e nudriti insieme alla dolce ombra
d'una sola città gli avoli nostri!

Vittoria Colonna

I see my fields, once resplendent, gleaming
Only with the flash of armored girth,
And hear sweet laughter to lament turned, song into screaming,
There where first I touched her—mother, ancient earth.

Tell me, show by gentle deeds redeeming,
O pastor of proud and sainted birth,
How you will wear the sacred cope, go humbly, seeming
To the first pope, the first father, equal in worth.

We both (if truth won't cloud your disdain)
Spring from the same Roman sons,
And beloved of them, by long custom we both remain.

Under the same sky, at the same breast laid,
Born together in the soft shade
Of one city, the same, were our ancient ones.

Joan Borrelli

Joan Borrelli is a graduate student in Italian Language and Literature at San Francisco State University. Her translations of prose and poetry will appear in the *Longman Anthology of World Literature by Women—1895-1975* (1989).