

VITTORIA AGANÓOR POMPILJ

(Padua 1855 – Rome 1910)

The great Italian poet of the 19th century born in Padova was the last of the five daughters of Edoardo Aganoor, man of Armenian origins, gifted of great sensibility but mentally disturbed and quick-tempered, and his wife, Giuseppina Pacini, member of the Milanese aristocracy, energetic and determined woman. Vittoria and her sisters Angelica, Maria, Elena e Virginia spent their youth in a rich and aristocratic environment while the abbot Giacomo Zanella took care of them and their instruction introducing the girls to the study of the Italian and Latin classics. The Aganoor sisters also learnt foreign languages (French, English and some German) and to play piano and harp and took lessons of painting from one of the most famous portraitists of the time, Augusto Caratti. During the winter of the 1874, due to the mental diseases of her sister Maria, the family moved in a great hurry to Campania where it stayed for a decade. The writer Domenico Ciampoli from Abruzzo describes

the twenty-years-old Vittoria: «she looked like a child; she had black hair and black thoughtful eyes; she was pale and healthy; she laughed gladly glitchy, with a mellow mood, but at that time she looked as she was thinking about something faraway. She did not talk too much and she used to say original things; but never a syllable about herself or her poems. It was a closed topic»¹. Vittoria laughs in Naples, her young age is not undermined by the pain caused by the deaths of her father, her mother, her beloved preceptor and friend Giacomo Zanella and by the many disillusionings of her sentimental relationships yet. In 1884 the Aganoor family came back to Veneto and settled in Villa Virginia near Treviso, hence the friendship with Antonio Fogazzaro and the poet Enrico Panzacchi. In 1892 she found herself alone, with the mentally disturbed sister Maria, in taking care of her

¹D. Ciampoli, *L'Aganoor giovinetta*, in «Roma Letteraria», a. XVIII, June 1910, extract from L. Ciani, *cit.*, p. 17.

Vittoria and her sister Virginia,
Archivio di Stato di Perugia,
Fondo Becherucci-Pompilj-A-
ganoor-Palmucci-Francisci,
Giuseppe Francisci, B. 9, fasc. I
(Concessione. n. 4)



old mother: these were hard times for Vittoria, marked by the intense and troubled relationships with the Florentine poet Enrico Nencioni and the literary critic Domenico Gnoli. Finally in 1900 Vittoria decided to publish a collection of poems entitled *La leggenda eterna*² dedicated to her mother, dead the year before, that had always desired to see her poems published. Vittoria was praised by the critic and her work was warmly welcomed by the public so that the book went sold out in a very short amount of time. In January 1901 Vittoria started the correspondence with Guido Pompilj and «immediately became bewitched by the crusty and enigmatic statesman»³. Their marriage took

²V. Aganoor Pompilj, *La leggenda eterna*, Treves, Milano 1900.

³J. Butcher, *Una leggenda eterna. Vita e*

place in Naples in November 1901, then Vittoria moved to Umbria together with her husband. At his side, between Perugia and Monte del Lago, Vittoria spent the happiest and calmest years of her life. During this period she hung out with another Umbrian poet, Alinda Bonacci Brunamonti, with Leopoldo Tiberi and Romeo Gallenga Stuart, entertainers of the cultural life in Perugia, and she became friend of Alessandrina Faina. Together they enjoyed long walks and they went to the cinematograph, true innovation of the century. But most of all she lived intensely the relationship with her husband, of whom she is lover, friend and supporter. Vittoria died in May 1910 in a Roman clinic after an ovarian cancer⁴.

poesia di Vittoria Aganoor Pompilj, Nuova S1, Bologna 2007, p. 119.