

honour. Each transcript includes a commentary highlighting historical, anthropological, and interpretive issues and offering hypotheses on motivations, meanings, and outcomes. It stands alone as a valuable text that can lift students beyond survey textbook certainties and stimulate seminar discussions. Those wishing to put these microhistories into a broader judicial and historical framework would be wise to pair *Words and Deeds* with Thomas Kuehn's *Law, Family, and Women: Towards a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1991).

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James Grantham Turner, ed. — *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Pp. xvii, 345.

"If we put the sex back in history," asks the editor of this collection of essays, "where does this leave the Renaissance?" (p. 1). Actually the sex never really was left out of history, but it is true that historians today are far more sensitive both to the history of sexuality and to the role of gender than was the case in the past. There is also no doubt that our perception of the Renaissance as a cultural and historical epoch is bound to be reshaped by the recognition that social behaviour and cultural artifacts were deeply moulded by assumptions and beliefs — sometimes open, sometimes hidden — about sex and gender.

This book is conceived as a contribution to the historical study of the late Renaissance; indeed, as the preface rather grandly proclaims, the essays in this volume "rise to the challenge of producing a new history" (p. xv). Only two of the authors are themselves professional historians; the other contributors are all specialists in the study of literature or art, whose techniques of analysis are generally little familiar to historians. But social historians can certainly learn much from their work.

Some of the authors in this collection do use familiar historical sources or frame their arguments in terms with which most social historians will be entirely comfortable. The historian Guido Ruggiero, for example, argues that to understand the society of Renaissance Italy we must look not only at the world of "civic morality" with its emphasis on order and controlled sexual behaviour, but also at the sexual demi-monde that existed in every Italian city. Despite vigorous attempts to suppress this illicit sexuality, Ruggiero argues, its availability actually helped mainstream society to function as smoothly as it did. The author's viewpoint is fresh, but his approach and style of exposition are reassuringly familiar. The other historian in this collection, David Kuchta, examines the "semiotics of masculinity" in Renaissance England. While his terminology may unsettle some historians, the substance of his argument about formal and informal codes of dress among English courtiers certainly will not. Constance Jordan also uses sources of a type long familiar to social historians — tracts from the great Renaissance "dispute about women" — to address the old question of class and gender: some male and female authors, she shows, were

acutely aware that women were economically exploited and believed that they could, given the chance, function as effectively as men in any social or economic role.

The other contributors to this volume address questions of sexuality and gender by using sources well known to historians, but which they hardly ever subject to rigorous analysis: paintings, plays, romances, tales, epics, poems, and other artifacts of high culture. Some of the works examined are by women. Among these are the intriguing seventeenth-century "maps of love", described by James F. Gaines and Josephine A. Roberts, and the penetrating critiques of patriarchal domination in Venice, whose proto-feminist authors are discussed by Margaret F. Rosenthal. Maureen Quilligan compares the little-known playwright Elizabeth Cary to William Shakespeare, rather to Shakespeare's disadvantage, by contrasting the assertive protagonist of Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam* to the submissive "tamed" Kate of *The Taming of the Shrew*. These essays are all useful reminders of the extent to which educated women participated in the high culture of the late Renaissance. But women were still a distinct minority among the writers and artists of early modern times. Most of the literary and artistic treatments of women described in this book were, in fact, produced by men.

It is hardly news that men who wrote about women in the sixteenth or seventeenth century generally assumed women's inferiority. Crude literary expressions of this assumption certainly abounded, as in the coarse French satires described by Domna C. Stanton. The ancient notion that spending time in the company of women sapped male vigour and rendered men effeminate resurfaced in the Elizabethan "ladies' texts" analyzed by Juliet Fleming. Readers of *Sexuality and Gender* who expect to find an unremitting catalogue of misogynistic polemics will be disappointed, however. In fact, one can hardly escape the suspicion that many early modern male authors were openly troubled by the dissonance between the accepted knowledge of female inferiority and their own very different experience of women. Perhaps this should not surprise us. Male participants in the high culture of the late Renaissance were constantly exposed to women of high social standing whose education, culture, and talent clearly rivalled their own. Inevitably this must have had some impact on their literary treatments of the opposite gender. Michael C. Schoenfeldt argues, for example, that Milton portrays Eve in *Paradise Lost* as far more energetic and egalitarian than has generally been recognized. Katharine Eisaman Maus shows that many male poets compared the creative process to the quintessentially feminine act of giving birth — a simile with many suggestive implications. Perhaps most strikingly, Janel Mueller demonstrates that John Donne's underappreciated poem "Sappho to Philaenis" broke dramatically away from the customary male condescension towards the lesbian poet by treating Sappho and her lesbianism in an entirely sympathetic and appreciative way.

Many of the authors of essays in this volume on literary and artistic treatments of women have also done homework in social history. To be sure, their references to the arguments advanced by social historians are sometimes much too vague. Broad, over-simplified statements about social change contrast sharply with their finely detailed analyses of literary texts. But who are we, as social historians, to criticize them? All too often, after all, we embellish our own carefully-constructed analyses

with some quotation plucked heedlessly from a familiar work of literature. This volume serves as a salutary reminder to social historians that, in the quest to understand the nature of gender relations in the early modern era, the same rigour and intensity that we bring to the study of parish registers and trial records must also be applied to the analysis of works of art or literary texts.

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Joanne M. Ferraro — *Family and Public Life in Brescia, 1580–1650. The Foundations of Power in the Venetian State*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture. Pp. xvii, 232.

It is useful to have a book in English on Brescia. The largest and wealthiest city of the Venetian mainland dominion and, given its position on the Milanese frontier, one of enormous strategic importance to the capital, Brescia has largely escaped the interest of non-Italian historians, perhaps because it lacks the attractions of high culture (Padua), architecture (Vicenza), a glorious past (Verona), or proximity to a metropolitan centre. It is also useful to have a study concentrating on a single city of the *terraferma*. Angelo Ventura's *Nobiltà e popolo* (1964), which established the field, was based on rapid sketches of many cities and towns and could not offer a hard look at any one place. Furthermore, Gaetano Cozzi's studies of centre-periphery relations have tended to treat the *terraferma* as an undifferentiated whole and have left uncertain the degree to which those relations were tailored to fit local situations. As Varanini, Knapton, and others have demonstrated, Venetian governance was highly place-specific (nearby and more fractious cities were kept on a shorter leash, for example). Thus we need case studies before a synthesis is possible.

Following Ventura, Joanne Ferraro's interest is less with Venetian administration — though there are some telling comments along the way — and more with the structures and exercise of power on the local level. The overall theme of the book is the consolidation of the Brescian ruling group, defined as those with the right to hold seats on the municipal council. Building upon fifteenth-century legislation that allowed *de facto* resistance to outsiders and newcomers, councillors closed ranks and became an "exclusive, hereditary elite", a "hybrid class that employed an aristocratic scheme to identify itself" (p. 53). In Brescia, aristocratization had the usual consequences: an obsession with antiquity and lineage, class endogamy, a penchant for public displays of rank, and a turn from trade and manufacture to land and the learned professions (especially law) as the basis for wealth.

A signal contribution of this book is that Ferraro is not content simply to demonstrate the closure of the political class. Too many studies have regarded power as an end in itself. Ferraro, instead, wishes to look at the ends to which power is deployed: what were the rewards (and risks) of a monopoly on civic authority? The use of political office for private gain, despite Venetian efforts to make sure that institutions worked as they were supposed to, was the order of the day. Tax evasion, favoured