Early Modern Humanism and Postmodern Antihumanism in Dialogue.
Jan Miernowski, ed.
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xxxii + 220 pp. $79.99.

In this collection of essays, a stellar group of *seizièmistes* juxtaposes Renaissance humanism and the antihumanism ushered in by late twentieth-century postmodernism to shed new light on timely, provocative topics such as colonialism, disability, animal rights, suicide bombers, religion, and freedom. As Jan Miernowski asserts in his excellent introduction, the purpose of setting humanism and antihumanism alongside each other is not to unveil overlooked similarities between the two; rather, this method serves to emphasize their mutual strangeness. More importantly, by offering finely grained, sophisticated readings of the Renaissance, these scholars of sixteenth-century France work against the simplified narrative often promoted by the postmodernists themselves in which twentieth-century critical theory represents an unalloyed and overdue corrective to humanist naïveté, (mis)characterized as an unproblematic celebration of human reason, autonomy, and will.

Both James Helgeson and George Hoffman note in their essays that postmodern antihumanism, in deemphasizing the importance of the human agent, has led to a regrettable move away from ethics, understood as a reflection upon and recommendation for acting in the world. In Hoffman's case, this attention to action leads to a reassessment of the Reformation's recasting of religion as belief rather than practice, a recalibration that has contributed to the stark opposition between secularism and religion that characterizes, and arguably limits, contemporary thought, scholarship, and debate. For Helgeson, it offers the opportunity to reflect on the problem of authorial responsibility, an issue merely obscured, rather than negated, by proclamations of the author's "death." In his excellent contribution, Michael Randall departs from André Glucksmann's problematic reading of Rabelais's Thelema Abbey to remind the reader that freedom, for sixteenth-century humanists, did not signify (as it often seems to today) the ability to do whatever one likes, but rather service to the public good grounded in the recognition of others. Timothy Hampton moves beyond Foucault's state-based articulation of governmentality to demonstrate the centrality of the problem of colonial expansion to Renaissance political and moral thought, from Machiavelli to Montaigne.

While all of the essays are provocative and accessible to a wide range of readers, from Renaissance specialists to readers of critical theory, one wishes at times they would go deeper, or elsewhere, perhaps due to their conference-paper origins. Kathleen Long deftly traces a tolerant, open strain of Western thought on disability from Augustine through Montaigne to Canguilhem, contrasting this reluctance to idealize the normal with the rival legacy rooted in the writings of Aristotle. Yet little acknowledgment is given to the provocative move of casting Augustine as the voice of openmindedness or to accounting for what happens to his legacy when the omniscient, omnipotent divinity at its heart fades from view. Ullrich Langer acknowledges that his choice of Peter

Singer as the representative of the animal-rights movement is provocative, and even though he makes the case that Singer's arguments represent the logical culmination of an animal-rights philosophical tradition rooted in British empiricism and utilitarianism, it would have been nice to see him engage, say, with Elizabeth de Fontenay's landmark work *Le Silence des bêtes: La philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité* (1998), which presents a very different picture than the one here, one that complicates the relationship between animal welfare and animal rights. Jan Miernowski's exploration of the very different reasons why both humanists and antihumanists are unable to acknowledge the humanity of the "human bomb" provides the opportunity for deep reflection on ethics and metaphysics, yet one wonders whether approaching the figure of the self-destructive terrorist through the more commonly used phrase "suicide bomber" would have opened other avenues of inquiry.

Just as Miernowski's introduction skillfully lays out a history of the emergence of twentieth-century structuralism, his afterword gestures beyond antihumanism and toward a nascent posthumanism, in which the human dissolves into an ever-changing creaturely realm. The emergence of this theoretical paradigm has already opened new avenues of inquiry while presenting its own challenges, yet this volume testifies eloquently to the enduring legacy and relevance of Renaissance humanism, with its many paths not taken and lessons left to learn.

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Il tramonto dell'onestade. Paolo Cherchi.
Biblioteca italiana testi e studi 6. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2016. 340 pp. €28.

One of the most noted historians and epistemologists of erudite approaches to knowledge and of pre-Enlightenment encyclopedism, Paolo Cherchi dedicates a substantial monograph to the notion of *onestade* in the age of Petrarch and Boccaccio. The book has a deep taxonomic structure that tracks and conceptualizes the various declensions and diffractions of the dyad *onestade/utile* (useful) and differentiates among literary occurrences. What is *onestade*? Cherchi uses the archaic term to keep its meaning distinct from the current *onesto* and its ethical, legal, and utilitarian implications. *Onestade* is the fusion of the *honestum*, as postulated in Cicero's *De officiis*, and usefulness, a nonegoistic and non-self-interested autotelic virtue. This *onestade* reaches its apogee in courtly societies where what is useful is a celebration of courtesy itself, as in troubadoric poetry when the lover seeks love hoping that it will not be requited. In the world of Italian medieval communes, *onestade*, which over time had taken on additional philosophical connotations (*Nicomachaean Ethics*), assumes a more bourgeois character typical of the mercantile aristocracy. Boccaccio's *brigata* is *onesta* because it tells stories