

the historical significance of these two concepts, meaning that clarifying them in context allows one not only to better understand ideas about *Simm* developed in a given era, but also to shed light on the specificity of the epoch itself.

The choice of the topics mirrors this task by focusing on transitional figures (e.g., Petrarch between Augustine and humanism), on shifting moments in literary genres (e.g., allegory in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* and in Marino's *Adone*), and also on more nuanced definitions of a given epoch (in this last case I would single out Florian Mehlretter's essay on the hidden sources of the conception of symbol in the French Enlightenment). It is a path of research that German scholarship has been constantly following in the last decades, reflecting often upon the notion of "epistemological rupture" conceived by Gaston Bachelard and then adopted by Michel Foucault, whose name not by chance appears in Franz Penzenstaldler's essay on the new kind of interest in classical mythology that arose in the French Renaissance, and in Klaus Hempfer's contribution on allegorical readings of the epic in sixteenth-century Italy. Referring already in the title to the consequences for the theory of interpretation of the *allegoresis*, Hempfer's study highlights another important goal of the book—namely, to establish a dialogue between the historical research on the specific problem of allegory/*allegoresis* and the theoretical reflection upon the transhistorical categories that scholars use in their research. This is probably the most valuable feature of the book, the one that makes it possible to read it as a collection of separate essays each dedicated to an independent topic not even limited to the Renaissance (the last study, for example, is about Elio Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia*), and also as a collective attempt to define through a historical approach categories that have challenged theorists from the Middle Ages up to modern and postmodern philosophy.

The topics (and also the length) of the essays being extremely diverse, the fact that the volume lacks a comprehensive bibliography is certainly justifiable. However, an index would have been helpful in unifying the themes of the collection, and, more importantly, a bibliography at the end of each article would have made the search for references easier. That lacuna notwithstanding, this is a valuable book whose essays both individually contribute to their fields and collectively provide a model for historically and theoretically grounded research.

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*Women, Rhetoric, and Drama in Early Modern Italy.* Alexandra Coller.  
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Within the context of early modern European theater Italy presents an exceptional number of female patrons, dramatists, and performers—including professional actresses

(documented in the peninsula at least from 1564). Although evidence of women's theatrical protagonism is often scant, in part because of the challenge posed to female decorum by the notorious license of the public stage, no fewer than nine full-length, original plays by seven female dramatists (Barbara Torelli, Maddalena Campiglia, Isabella Andreini, Leonora Bernardi, Valeria Miani, Isabetta Coreglia, and Margherita Costa) in the secular genres of comedy, tragedy, and pastoral drama composed in ca. 1586–1650 have recently come to light, as well as a political play (Moderata Fonte's *Feste* [1581]) and convent drama. Of the secular plays, five are now available in critical editions with English translations through the series *The Other Voice*; three more are forthcoming.

To this field Alexandra Collier's richly documented monograph presents a timely and stimulating addition, as the first book-length study to explore the nine secular plays (excluding Fonte's) composed by women until 1650, set against the male-dominated canon. It builds on the pioneering work by Virginia Cox (*The Prodigious Muse* [2011], chapter 2, "Drama"), and studies of individual plays and genres, offering very detailed textual readings of these dramatic texts in dialogue with an impressive range of other sources, dramatic and literary, inside and outside the canon, by authors of both sexes. Collier traces largely chronologically—across comedy, tragedy, and pastoral tragicomedy—the development of female-centered thematics (e.g., marriage and family relations, feminine *virtù* or agency on- or offstage, female friendship and love) in terms of rhetorical and dramatic practice. The female-authored works are mostly explored against a "shared network of letterati and male sponsorship" (235), and a well-documented tradition of philogynist writings linked to the ongoing *querelle des femmes*. Nonetheless, evidence is suggested (especially for Isabetta Coreglia) for the development also of a literary kinship among female dramatists through bi-gendered connections across courts, cities, and academies (especially in Lucca, Siena, and the Veneto region), as well as in "gynocentric milieu[s]" (50) (for Margherita Costa in Vittoria della Rovere's Florence).

Collier's premise is that Italian erudite drama differs notably from its ancient models due to its "intriguingly sympathetic portrayals of and sustained investment in women as vibrant and dynamic characters of the early modern stage" (1). This partly reflects the strong influence on dramatists of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but also real changes in contemporary views on women by early dramatists from Ruzante to Ludovico Dolce. The study does not aim, however, to explore how far comedies and tragedies mirror society, nor does it critically draw out issues of gender representation or voicing and performance in relation to the author's sex. Instead, Collier offers nuanced analysis of how in practice the plays discussed variously "both disturb[ ] and trump[ ] the kind of ideals prescribed to women" (23) and obliquely allude to real contexts and norms, often through apparently quite minor, but significant, variations to generic conventions.

The study falls into two connected parts: "Women as Protagonists in Male-Authored Drama: Comedy and Tragedy" and "Women as Authors / Women as Protagonists:

Pastoral Tragicomedy.” The two chapters in part 1 (both derived from earlier published essays) set up discussion across a wide range of plays of female-oriented themes, including education and the trope of cross-dressing in comedy (chapter 1), and friendship and female virtue in tragedy (chapter 2). A coda to each chapter features original analysis of the single female-authored example of each genre: respectively, Costa’s *Li buffoni* (1641, significantly later than most of the male-authored comedies discussed), and Valeria Miani’s tragedy *Celinda* (1611). The second part demonstrates how pastoral tragicomedy, the genre most conducive to women (six plays), allowed creative challenges to gender stereotypes and generic conventions, as in Miani’s lively nymph-satyr scene (chapter 5). Perhaps surprisingly, the last two chapters examine the “somewhat derivative” (198) pastoral plays by the little-known Coreglia (*Dori* [1634]; *Erindo* [1650]). However, here as before, Collier makes a strong case for closely reading these female-authored plays to appreciate their strategic rhetorical positioning against both male- and female-authored classics as part of a broader collaborative and competitive production, explicitly attuned to issues of gender and genre.

This book is recommended for scholars and graduate students of early modern theater, literature, and culture for its sensitive discussions of new textual-dramatic voices and gender-related issues, all meticulously referenced and with indications for future scholarship. We now await Collier’s welcome companion editions of Miani’s *Amorosa Speranza* and Coreglia’s *Dori*.

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*Le Prince de Fra Paolo*. Romain Borgna, ed.

Libre pensée et littérature clandestine 67. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017. 220 pp. €45.

Fake news has always existed and probably always will. The problem of distinguishing correct from false depends on one’s ability to trace back the origin of the information and its moment of transformation into fake. Yet if we look at the matter from the faker’s viewpoint, the problem is how not to leave traces that will allow an identification of the fake, or, worse, fingerprints that will lead the readers to him. The *Opinione di fra Paolo Sarpi* is a fake text whose first part was probably written in Venice in 1615, followed by a second one assembled in the 1640s from different sources. It later circulated in manuscript form until its first printed edition in 1681, to be reedited in numerous ones until the end of the eighteenth century. The work’s history contains all the ingredients of a mystery novel worth the attention of authors like Umberto Eco, and, moreover, it invites us to think of the reason for our long-standing attraction to fake texts, while we soon lose interest in the true-to-history ones.