

the study, it was especially odd that Dooley gave at best passing glances to studies of women's education, women as readers and writers, and conceptions of educated women. And while it was refreshing to see him construe his female reader as more representative than exceptional, without more empirical evidence or detailed analysis such an image could lead readers (especially undergraduate readers) to some problematic conclusions.

All of which is to say that *Angelica's Book* is an intriguing and provocative narrative to be enjoyed alongside more data-driven studies of early modern Italian books and their owners. In particular, readers are encouraged to consult recent works in a similar vein but based on wider sets of archival documentation, such as those by Renata Ago, Brian Richardson, and Marino Zorzi.

Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *Boston College*

The Pleasant Nights. Giovan Francesco Straparola.

Ed. and trans. Suzanne Magnanini. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 40; Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 481*. Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015. xxiii + 502 pp. \$49.95.

Well into Giovanni Straparola's sixteenth-century collection of tales, *The Pleasant Nights*, one of the young female narrators yields her storytelling turn to a man: "As you know, he is clever and witty and has all the good qualities that befit a very courteous person. And we, simple women, would be better off with needle in hand than telling tales" (98). But this lady may protest too much or too coyly, for the story-fest itself is hosted by a woman, most of the seventy-three tales in this work are recounted by female narrators, and the interchanges between individual tales are frequently occupied with spirited debate over questions of gender, authority, and authorship.

In the introduction to her excellent new translation of Straparola's *The Pleasant Nights*, Suzanne Magnanini confronts straight on issues of gender and the privilege of authorship and publication, but in this case she begins by defending the placement of this work written by a man in a series almost exclusively devoted to female authors. In the past twenty years, the *Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* has done extraordinary work of textual recovery, publishing dozens of works by women whose writing had been neglected, and most of them translated into English for the first time. But as Magnanini convincingly argues, Straparola's work, though male authored, is critical to the discourse of early modern female authorship. Although *The Pleasant Nights* unapologetically owes its structural premise and design to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Straparola's work distinguishes itself by its focus on gender issues and its creation of a newer, more sophisticated version of the female narrator—especially a teller of a particular type of tale: the literary fairy tale. For this is perhaps the most signif-

icant distinguishing feature of *The Pleasant Nights*: interspersed with more realistic tales are sixteen fairy tales, arguably the earliest collection of European literary fairy tales, including versions of “Beauty and the Beast” and “Puss-in-Boots.” A foundational text in the fairy-tale canon, *The Pleasant Nights* influenced the generation of seventeenth-century French female salon writers, including Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy and Henriette-Julie de Murat, who explicitly acknowledged their indebtedness to Straparola.

Magnanini’s introductory essay is a thorough and lucid overview of Straparola’s work within its cultural, historical, literary, and scholarly contexts. She situates *The Pleasant Nights* within the late medieval and early modern prose tradition; she discusses its participation in the *querelle des femmes*; and she explores how the tales’ concerns with marriage and upward mobility were particularly relevant to sixteenth-century Venice. Most significantly, Magnanini examines the centrality of the female narrator in *The Pleasant Nights*, charting the association between female tale-teller—typically the old crone spinning out stories by the fireside—and the fairy-tale genre. Straparola’s innovation, Magnanini demonstrates, was in creating a new version of the “fairy tale narrator as a witty young woman in an urban salon who is as capable engaging dominant literary traditions as she is spinning fantastic yarns” (1).

This translation complements work by Ruth Bottigheimer, Jack Zipes, Donald Beecher, and other scholars who have devoted considerable attention to Straparola’s works. Magnanini’s work does not duplicate; she offers a comprehensive view of Straparola’s literary contribution and the scholarly conversation thus far surrounding him, and at the same time focuses specifically and thoroughly on his engagement with contemporary gender issues. Magnanini makes a convincing case that while *The Pleasant Nights* is not a subversive work that ultimately challenges the patriarchal status quo, it opens up spaces for multiple female voices to be heard.

This handsome paperback edition will be useful for the undergraduate or graduate classroom as well as other interested readers and scholars. The footnotes are substantial and useful but not obtrusive, and the bibliography extensive and current. Finally, one of the greatest assets of this edition is simply having the tales together in “their original home,” in a crisp, current translation. The individual fairy tales are available elsewhere, but having all of them here, right alongside bawdy, comic, and tragic tales, opens up a new conversation about the intersection between the marvelous and the real, putting into new relief the connections between fairy tales and their specific historical and ideological contexts.

Jo Eldridge Carney, *The College of New Jersey*