

la restrittiva e sociale. Il quarto capitolo funge allora bene da tramite con il seguente perché, oltre ad andare avanti nella storia senese (dopo la chiusura delle accademie senesi nel 1568), sempre in modo molto critico e legato all'argomento principale, allude mediante le imprese accademiche alla promiscuità strutturale dalla quale fuggivano le donne nel Cinquecento: l'autore accenna ad una tematica tanto difficile perché rinvia a simboli e perché rimane a volte interpretativa, ma quanto necessaria per la comprensione dei motivi di quelle donne, per l'affermazione della loro identità in un momento in cui i dibattiti a riguardo sono molto accesi. L'autore dedica poi gran parte alla fondazione dell'Accademia delle Assicurate: risulta fondamentale visto che ricostruisce la storia e l'identità della prima accademia femminile della storia italiana e che quindi aggiorna il paragrafo di Michele Maylender a tal riguardo nella sua enciclopedia. Le bellissime illustrazioni dei manoscritti consultati dimostrano l'accuratezza con la quale le protagoniste dell'accademia desideravano affermarsi mediante statuti, incisioni di imprese, ecc., quindi mantenere un certo *status* rispetto alle strutture maschili omologhe. Illustra per finire l'eredità dei giochi senesi e dell'impegno femminile nel Settecento dimostrandone la legittimità in quanto genere socio-culturale duraturo dal Cinquecento, anzi dal Trecento se riteniamo la preminenza boccacciana. L'autore allargando l'arco temporale dal Cinquecento ai primi del Settecento dà rilevanza alle origini, allo sviluppo e al lascito dei *parlour games* nella vita delle donne senesi confrontate a vari contesti, maschili innanzitutto, cortigiani, teatrali, bellici, ecc. Non si tratta infatti di uno studio chiuso: l'autore pone le domande giuste rispetto ad un contesto storico che non riguarda solo Siena ma anche Firenze. Inoltre, il suo avvertimento sul femminismo nella prefazione, se è utile nella definizione di un concetto e nel prendere distanza da esso, viene illustrato lungo il libro in cui un'intera società erudita promosse la cultura femminile.

L'equilibrio del libro mediante capitoli cronologici, con illustrazioni pertinenti tratte da documenti autentici di ottima qualità, dimostra sia la rilevanza del "fenomeno" studiato dall'autore, sia la chiarezza del suo ragionamento in un inglese d'altronde molto fluido. Non si tratta quindi di un ennesimo studio ridondante sulle donne nel Rinascimento: partendo dagli studi già pubblicati, l'autore sin dalla prefazione intende andare oltre e vince quella sfida.

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**Kenneth R Bartlett. *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance: A Sourcebook*. Second Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. 312. ISBN 97814426 0485 8. \$ 59.95 CAD.**

Kenneth Bartlett's second edition titled *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance* offers a comprehensive approach for anyone interested in the study of the Italian Renaissance. He touches on a myriad of subjects essential to the understanding of this time period.

Similar to the previous edition, this version approaches all facets of early modern Italian civilization. In the introduction, aside from providing an overall context, the author highlights the importance of the classical era to the study of the Renaissance. He provides information on two important authors to Renaissance thought and philosophy: Quintilian and Cicero. However, he leaves out Plato. The exclusion forms a gap between this chapter and that on neoplatonism. Had the author included information on Plato and his works in the introduction, it may have facilitated a deeper understanding of the origins of neoplatonic thought.

As noted by the author, this edition contains significant additions and some omissions. One such addition is a basic guide to reading historical documents. Since Bartlett includes a variety of primary sources in this book, this is a useful resource that each student should consult when confronting texts found in this book, as well as sources encountered while conducting their own research.

His second chapter titled: “Dante and Medieval Italy” is a new section that is invaluable to this companion. In this chapter, he informs his reader of the various differences between the two time periods: the medieval and the Renaissance. It also highlights the medieval world’s undeniable influences on the Renaissance. He introduces the reader to the life of Dante Alighieri and his major work, the *Divine Comedy*, alongside the life and works of his contemporaries such as Brunetto Latini, Guido Cavalcanti, and Cino da Pistoia.

He devotes the next chapter to Petrarch. Bartlett focuses on Petrarch’s rapport with the ancients, especially with regard to Cicero, and his contribution to the beginnings of the humanist movement. While he emphasizes Petrarch’s role as “a transitional figure between the older values of the Middle Ages and the new ideas of the Renaissance Italy” (26), he does not mention Petrarch’s greatest contribution to the Italian vernacular: the *Canzoniere*.

In the chapters that follow, Bartlett meticulously addresses political, social, economic, cultural, literary, artistic, and religious aspects to Renaissance life. Each chapter has a similar structure. He begins with an introduction outlining a main topic. Next, he includes biographies of authors ranging from historians to literary writers. Then, he supplies primary source excerpts that thematically relate to the chapter. Since the author includes only primary source texts, readers can form their own opinions on the topic. This format creates an accessible and organized overview of the content.

Moreover, one of the most interesting aspects of this book is the author’s inclusion of various historical documents. For example, the chapter, “Marriage, the Family, and Women,” includes provocative court documents that illustrate the life of lower class marginalized women such as prostitutes, and even an alleged witch.

While Bartlett makes substantial additions to content in this new edition, he omits all images found in the earlier edition. In the preface, he states that this decision is based on the fact that students can readily find relevant images on the Internet.

While there is room for expansion, Bartlett’s goal is to provide a concise introduction to the Renaissance, especially for those students with little or no prior knowledge on the matter. Bartlett’s jargon free sourcebook should be a required read for any student enrolled in a beginning Italian history or culture course. It could also

serve as a reference companion to a survey of Italian literature course. Since all primary sources are in translation, no knowledge of a Latin or Italian is needed.

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**Konrad Eisenbichler.** *The Sword and the Pen. Women, Politics, and Poetry in Sixteenth-Century Siena.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. Pp. 392. ISBN 9780268027766. \$32. (Paperback)

This meticulously argued study presents and contextualizes the poetic production of a group of patrician women in Siena in the middle decades of the sixteenth century. *The Sword and the Pen* offers modern editions and English translations of 79 poems, some previously published by the author. Eisenbichler shows how Petrarchism becomes the means to engage in the poetic discourse of the larger community of male poets, and for these poets to express themselves distinctively on a wide variety of topics. The scholar's patient research underscores the aptness of Virigina Cox's assertion that "much of women's writing before the 1540s circulated in manuscript, not in printed form."

The poets are bound by relationships of kinship, admiration, and communality of religious beliefs or political interests. The scholar uses the metaphor of a "virtual academy" to describe the community, comparable to academies like the *Intronati* of Siena. Besides the poetry, documents suggest discussions among women, as well as between men and women, on topics ranging from Dante's *Paradiso* and Leone Ebreo's Platonic philosophy, to astronomy, theology and moral philosophy.

*The Sword and the Pen* opens with two pieces that set the scene. The first has a male protagonist: Alessandro Piccolomini, who, in the summer of 1540, makes a pilgrimage to the tomb of Petrarch in Arquà, then circulates a sonnet of homage, *Giunto Alessandro a la famosa Tomba*, in Siena and elsewhere. Women and men respond in *tenzone*, including six Siense women whose responses raise questions of spirituality and the social restraints that prevent women from pilgrimages like those of the young student, among others. The second piece is more provocative: it is a 1538 dialogue by Marc'Antonio Piccolomini in which several women discuss whether beauty is the consequence of chance or design, leading them to debate the role of Providence and free will, and eventually, the necessity of Purgatory. One of the interlocutors, Laudomia Forteguerri, assumes decidedly heterodox positions, only to be guided back to orthodoxy, inviting us to ponder why a young woman of social prominence would be portrayed in this way.

*The Sword and the Pen* then focuses on three poets known for their beauty, charm, and wit: Aurelia Petrucci, Laudomia Forteguerri and Virginia Martini Salvi. Reliable historical information on the three poets is scarce, leaving the scholar to conjecture frequently. Although only two poems by Aurelia Petrucci (1511-1542) survive her call for unity among the warring Siense factions, *Dove sta il tuo*