ogy, which, like the pseudohistory of Annio, was always conjoined with Christian imagery. This is evident in a lament by the poet Girolamo Casio de' Medici written a few years after the Sack: "O giorno che in un ora in un momento / Tutto il Seol fe mesto / E ne la Aurora il Sol ire a l'Occaso. / Non fu la nebbia a caso / Che si vedea (e non vedeasi in essa) / Qual fe più Roma oppressa, / Ma il trar gli archibusi, il cui rumore / Nel basso inferno e in Ciel porse terrore" (275).

The "trauma" of the Sack increasingly affected writers with a kind of deep-seated pessimism which saw Rome's civilisation sucked under by barbarism, a fate it shared with Troy, Carthage and Jerusalem (292); moreover, along with this pessimism came a moralistic sense of the Sack as deserved punishment for the sins of various groups: the papacy, the pope's court, Italy, or the world. De Caprio's work on Guicciardini stresses the pessimism of that historian, who was deeply affected by the Sack (318), but who also tried to fit the Sack into a line of other disasters that took place through human folly, like the sack of Capua.

La tradizione e il trauma succeeds on many levels. The author is an eloquent writer and a scholar whose familiarity with the texts at his disposal is impeccable: he illustrates his points at length with apposite quotations. Of particular interest are his latter chapters on reflections of the Sack in contemporary poetry and historical writing, which contain the first thorough examination of this important subject. Unfortunately, the book suffers from a few flaws which tend to obtrude. A large number of minor typographical errors and bad translations from English suggest that De Caprio was not well-served by his editor. The book contains no bibliography and the index is very scanty. As it is fundamentally a collection of articles written at different times, the overall framework of the book is sketchy and unconvincing, though individual chapters are both interesting and valuable. Readers turning to this book for a complete study of the traditions of Roman humanism before the Sack will not find references to important curial figures like Cardinal Castellesi and Raffaele Maffei, for whom the interested student will have to turn to John D'Amico's work, already cited. De Caprio's interesting work on Annio da Viterbo explores what is in fact more of a sideline in Roman humanism than a main current and, though his study of Annio adds greatly to our understanding of the diverse streams in the fertile intellectual world of Renaissance letters, the place it occupies in this book is perhaps disproportionately large. At all times readers must be aware that the book is more a collection of vignettes than a comprehensive survey; the introduction to the book makes an effort to bind the chapters together, but, sadly, the author omits a conclusion. Overall, *La tradizione e il trauma* is more valuable in its parts than in its entirety.

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Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen. *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome. Trials before the Papal Magistrates*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993. Pp. 308.

Luigi Pirandello once remarked, in answer to critics who deemed his work too unrealistic, that "life, with all its brazen absurdities, small and large, has the invaluable privilege of being able to do without this ridiculous realism that art seems duty-bound to adhere

to" (*The Late Mattia Pascal*. Trans. N. Simborowski. New York: Hippocrene, 1987: 245). The valuable collection of court records transcribed and translated by Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen shows that such was the case even in mid sixteenth-century Rome. *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome* is designed as a textbook of source materials which will be of great use to teachers and students of Renaissance Italy and of interest to the general reader. The authors include a brief glossary, a map, several black-and-white illustrations, in addition to the introduction and the commentaries following each of the eight cases.

The Cohens maintain that court cases, many of which contain lengthy descriptive passages in the vernacular, offer rich and rare details about the daily lives of numerous common people. Like many recent works of social history and microhistory, this book offers extended glimpses of unlettered and therefore otherwise undocumented people. The translations of the trials heard before the papal magistrates improve our knowledge of sixteenth-century Italy by supplementing the familiar repertoire of historical materials: letters, diaries, treatises, and literary works. In studying these works together we can achieve a more meticulous understanding of sixteenth-century culture — high and low, learned and vernacular. The Cohens consistently use the term "vernacular" instead of "popular" to avoid the often misleading and contradictory significance of that overused word. In eschewing facile assumptions about "popular" culture, they offer instead a more vibrant portrait of the circulation of cultural values, thus setting social groups in their proper, interdependent context.

Thomas and Elizabeth Cohen immediately introduce literary motifs and tropes in discussing court cases: they call the documents "tales" and they speak of their "colourful language" and "clarity of plot." They compare court testimony to a "work of art," because the matter recounted therein seems to adhere to "conventions of style and subject" (5). But this assimilation of court record to fictional story presents a problem, for the "conventions of style" that the authors cite may merely reflect a property of language itself. Some customs were certainly imposed upon the speakers by the manner in which the inquisitors, magistrates and notaries fashioned their questions, eliciting particular types of narrative. We should, instead, highlight the distinction between testimony and literature, for, as literary critic Fredric Jameson has pointed out, history "is *not* a text," although it is "inaccessible to us except in textual form" (*The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1981. 82)

The Cohens further state that court records offer the "best route into the vernacular culture of sixteenth-century Italy" (4), since these cases supposedly preserve the "voices" of past peoples who could not or did not leave written texts. But here the dilemma is that, first, we must remember that oral testimony has been transmitted to us through the mediation of a notary or scribe and, second, oral and written "texts" are not interchangeable: what was written — even if intended for personal use or for a limited audience — has a self-conscious dimension entirely absent from oral testimony, especially when obtained under duress or even torture.

At the end of a complex trial of abduction and defloration, Thomas and Elizabeth Cohen make a characteristic statement that illustrates the dangers of confusing court testimony with literary works: "In its incompleteness and muddled contradictions, this tale is as baffling, as insoluble as life, and almost as poignant" (133). One is correct to object that this "tale" is life; the "seduced" Ottavia was not the heroine of a novella, and her abductor Bernardino was no wealthy heir in disguise who would save her from her fate as a

nubile, yet dowry-less daughter. Testimony presented before a magistrate will never have as many details and background information as a novella or play; yet we cannot deny that life is more complex, and more important, than literature. Kenneth Burke wrote decades ago that, "whereas it has become customary to speak of Shakespeare's figures as of living people, the stupidest and crudest person who ever lived is richer in motivation than all of Shakespeare's characters put together — and it would be either a stupidity or a sacrilege to say otherwise" ("Othello. An Essay to Illustrate a Method." *The Hudson Review* 4.2: 187-88). Ottavia was not Juliet; her moment of sexual contact with Bernardino was rather pathetic: he had skin parasites and kept scratching himself. Ottavia's life is not poetic; the brief words she gives us concerning it reveal conflict with her mother, past sexual abuse and an uncertain, probably impoverished future. Her life, along with that of the vast majority of past peoples, will remain unknown and unknowable; yet we do Ottavia and the rest a grave disservice if we reduce their "lives" to a brief appearance in court and their significance to a literary topos.

This brings me to another problem with the book, the commentaries: many of them are merely summaries of the trials, while several contain too much interpretation. Without the full-scale academic apparatus of detailed footnotes, citations in the original, and scholarly analysis, these comments seem facile, and, for students, they may make the past seem all too familiar. For example, in the commentary of Ottavia's case discussed above, there is no indication of the juridical definition of rape nor an adequate explanation of the marriage system.

These criticisms do not, however, diminish my enthusiasm for the many fine qualities of this book. It will be an asset to any course on sixteenth-century Italy. Its problematic aspects should make it an essential text in courses on methodology, where students and professors can discuss the merits of different interpretations of each case, aided by the excellent scholarship that exists on early modern Italy (including articles by Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen). We can only hope that books of trials — whether simply transcribed or both transcribed and translated — will proliferate in a much-needed effort to preserve and disseminate these valuable materials. Such cases show us life "with its glorious disdain for realism," as Pirandello would remind us (*The Late Mattia Pascal* 251).

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J. M. De Bujanda, avec l'assistance de René Davignon et Ela Stanek. *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 8: *Index de Rome, 1557, 1559, 1564. Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente*. Sherbrooke, Québec: Centre d'Études de la Renaissance, 1990. Pp. 1037.

J. M. De Bujanda, avec l'assistance de René Davignon, Ela Stanek, Marcella Richter. *Index des livres interdits*, vol. 6: *Index de l'Inquisition Espagnole, 1583, 1584*. Sherbrooke, Québec: Centre d'Études de la Renaissance, 1993. Pp. 1246.

Volume 8 takes chronological precedence over volume 6, and indeed was published several years earlier, so it will be convenient to discuss them in that order. I have already reviewed volume 8, as well as previous volumes of the series, in *Rivista storica italiana*