reflects tensions and political circumstances of his own day as well as the Intronati's own objectives. The former makes the claim that the *Ortensio* marks the beginning of a new kind of theatre, following but also diverging from Aristotelian conceptions of poetry and tragedy: we have a new form of theatre called "tragicomédie." (196) The latter essay shows how Riccio's set design tries to transmit Piccolomini's own political ideals as well as architectural features of Piccolomini's home city of Siena.

The last section of the book is devoted to the popular diffusion of knowledge (*vulgarisation*) as well as Piccolomini's commentaries. Four essays comprise this last section of the volume: Anna Siekiera's "*La questione della lingua di Alessandro Piccolomini*", Daniele Cozzoli's "*L'œuvre astronomique d'Alessandro Piccolomini*", Joël Biard's "*La certitude des mathématiques et ses fondements selon Piccolomini*", and Eugenio Refini's "*Il commento ai classici nell'esperienza intellettuale di Alessandro Piccolomini*". Siekiera's essay argues that Piccolomini was not only concerned with being faithful and elegant with his translations but also with breaking down complex language and concepts, thereby rendering difficult concepts more accessible. Cozzoli argues that Piccolomini's two astronomical works, *De la sfera* and *Le theorie overo speculationi de i pianeti* are written more as manuals designed to explain leading scientific theories to courtesans than original works of scientific inquiry. Biard's essay on certitude shows that Piccolomini understood mathematical certitude in a very specific way, from subjective and objective perspectives. Piccolomini limits the extension of mathematical certitude (it is simple, abstract and immaterial), confining it to the realm of mathematical inquiry: it cannot serve as the model for all kinds of knowing. (252–253) Refini's essay closes this excellent volume: he shows how Piccolomini's work was critiqued for its lack of fidelity to the letter of texts, but to chide Piccolomini for being too simple or incomplete in his translations is to miss what Piccolomini was trying to achieve with his translations, namely, a clear interpretation and transmission of difficult concepts. (260–261) Useful for readers will also be the nice bibliography that one finds at the very end of the volume. In short, this collection makes a significant contribution to Renaissance studies but also to our understanding of the rich and varied work of Piccolomini.

ANTONIO CALCAGNO

King's University College at Western University

Lucrezia Marinella. *Exhortations to Women and to Others if They Please*. Ed. and trans. Laura Benedetti. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series, 15. Toronto: Iter Inc./Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012. Pp. xi, 230. ISBN 139780772721143. \$17.

Ginevra Conti Odorisio introduced Lucrezia Marinella (c. 1571-1653) to modern scholarship in 1979 with the publication of excerpts from the Venetian erudite's radical turn-of-the-seventeenth-century treatise *Le nobiltà et eccellenze delle donne et i difetti, e mancamenti de gl' huomini* (in *Donna e società nel Seicento*). The first

integral modern edition of *Le nobiltà* would see the light in a 1999 English translation by Anne Dunhill (intro. Letizia Panizza). Marinella's oeuvre has gained scholars' interest since Odorisio's study, and in the last fifteen years a number of Marinella's works have come out in modern editions both in Italian and translated into English. Laura Benedetti's translation of *Essortationi alle donne et a gli altri, se a loro saranno a grado* is the latest addition to the growing list of Marinella's titles garnering attention from the international academic community.

It is almost obligatory to discuss Marinella's 1645 *Essortationi*, presented here as *Exhortations to Women and to Others if They Please*, within the context of Marinella's long and prolific career spanning roughly a half century, and in particular in relation to her much earlier treatise, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*. The differences between the two tracts are striking, and modern readers will doubtless find the *Exhortations* puzzling and perhaps even infuriating, especially in light of the earlier *Nobility's* affirming message for women. The *Nobility* has been warmly received by modern critics as it exposes a side of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian society that was little known until the rediscovery of Marinella, alongside fellow proto-feminist Venetians Moderata Fonte (1555-92) and Arcangela Tarabotti (1604-52). Little was known about the *Exhortations* until Benedetti's edition, due largely to the unavailability of the text, as only three copies of the 1645 *editio princeps* are known to exist.

An initial reading of the *Exhortations* reveals a seemingly confused and, at times, contradictory message urging women to know and to accept their place in society, where God and Nature intended them to remain: secluded away at home, free from ambition to pursue wisdom through the study of letters. The convolution of Marinella's expression in the *Exhortations*, contrasted with her clearer, upfront, and more modern expression from 45 years earlier, has led to disagreement among the few scholars who have engaged with this work as to what the then 74-year-old author's true intentions were when she composed it. Does she really renounce her earlier claims of women's superiority, or does she employ antithetical and paradoxical devices in her work as a way to evade the censors, or to communicate a veiled message to only the most astute and accomplished of her female readership?

The first two exhortations implore women to embrace seclusion at home as a noble way to protect their reputations, and to reject the pursuit of literature as a means of attaining higher knowledge. She explicitly recants in the first exhortation the proclamations that she had made in the *Nobility*, and states specifically that women's condition is not the result of male malevolence, but of God's will (48). This is one among the many references she makes to her own oeuvre, and in particular to the *Nobility*, though such self-citations do not always take on such a disavowing tone. Her second exhortation dissuades women from engaging in the male-dominated world of letters. The alternative, developed in her third exhortation, is for women to focus on weaving. The fourth section extols the virtues of silence over loquacity, especially for women, given their seclusion. The fifth exhortation deals with personal ornamentation and outward luxury, most of which Marinella discourages on both aesthetic and moral grounds. Section six expounds

prudence and practical wisdom. Exhortation seven addresses both women and men, highlighting the importance of a singular vision among husbands and wives, while the next exhortation regards their children's education. The final section expresses another of Marinella's apostasies relative to her *Nobility*, in which she had suggested that beauty is divine, a position that, now a woman of an advanced age, she no longer holds to be true.

Benedetti's translation commendably reconciles Marinella's Baroque style with contemporary readers' preference for greater concision. Her research on Marinella's numerous citations and references, expanded upon in the notes, is exceptionally meticulous, which is no simple task given Marinella's often liberal citation of texts. The introductory chapter sketches all the relevant details of Marinella's personal and professional life thoroughly, offering analyses of what may have motivated her to write this bizarre treatise. Benedetti ultimately labels the *Exhortations* a "reactionary work" for its conservative stance on women and rejection of recent literary trends (30). She dedicates the final paragraph of her section on Marinella's life and works to the radically different reading of the *Exhortations* advanced by Paola Malpezzi Price and Christine Ristaino in *Lucrezia Marinella and the "Querelle des Femmes" in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (2008). Foreseeing that some might judge her reading as "hopelessly conservative," Benedetti expresses her "uneasiness with interpretations [...] that require ideological leaps of faith" (34), as she suggests Price and Ristaino's do. I would like to have seen Benedetti devote more space to the intriguing, if not always convincing, analysis put forward by Price and Ristaino, which views the *Exhortations* as consciously promoting the opposite of what the author writes. Benedetti's introduction never really questions, for example, Marinella's constant invocation of the Siculo-Greek sophist Gorgias, who was known to embrace absurd and paradoxical positions as a way of exhibiting his rhetorical prowess; or Marinella's attribution of the words of Callicles, the antagonistic voice in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*, to Plato himself. Are readers supposed to take it at face value that Marinella misinterprets Plato's intentions when she states, "You should also know that the aforementioned philosopher does not approve of philosophy even in men; you can only imagine what he would have said about women philosophers, had someone asked him"? This does seem like an invocation of the absurd: Marinella could well be prodding her readers to consult Plato, for in fact an entire section of dialogue within Book V of the *Republic* is given to the question of equality of philosophical capacity between the sexes. Marinella's recurrent referrals to her *Nobility* on issues where her earlier opinions contradict what she is putting forward in the *Exhortations* may support, at least in part, Price and Ristaino's claims. It is a very important discussion in which Benedetti, through her introduction, could have engaged at greater length, and I think that it is an issue more critics will weigh in on now that Benedetti has drawn scholars' attention to Marinella's final treatise.

Making this work available to the wider academic community is of enormous importance in helping to make sense of evolving attitudes toward women in seventeenth-century Italy. Benedetti should be further congratulated for seeking out and making known such a rare work, which, despite its likely scarce popularity in its own

time, will no doubt elicit strong opinions and fierce debates among scholars today.

KEVIN B. REYNOLDS

York University

Goldberg, Edward. *A Jew at the Medici Court. The Letters of Benedetto Blanis Hebreo, 1615-1621.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. 328. ISBN 9781442643833. \$85.00 (hardbound).

In the companion volume to his *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence: The Secret World of Benedetto Blanis*, Goldberg makes available to specialist researchers the remarkable series of 219 letters written by the protagonist Benedetto Blanis to his patron, Don Giovanni dei Medici, an illegitimate son of Duke Cosimo. These letters, which constituted the primary evidence for much of Goldberg's earlier volume, are the only known continuous series of letters by an early modern Jew. As such, they are a unique source of information on the relationships between Jewish clients and Christian patrons, on the provisioning of the Medici prince's household, and, most importantly, on the strange and contradictory roles both Benedetto and his Medici patron played in their relationship with each other and other Florentines.

The letters loosely narrate Benedetto's activities and travails in Florence between 1615 and 1621, when Don Giovanni de' Medici was posted in Venice and Benedetto took to writing assiduously to ensure his continued favour. They trace his downfall under the Medici regime, which grew increasingly suspicious of his connections to occult philosophies and other mysterious sources of knowledge. Unfortunately, the letters here constitute only one half of a two-way correspondence. Don Giovanni dei Medici's letters are not extant, as they were confiscated from Benedetto's keeping in a raid on his ghetto home by Florentine police. Benedetto's letters to his patron survived, according to Goldberg, by an accident of history when they were overlooked in a postmortem purge of Don Giovanni's Venetian estates (xii).

Benedetto's lively and personal writing style is a joy to read, and Goldberg's skilful editing of difficult Tuscan dialect make it accessible to specialists in Italian history and literature. Benedetto's story is a strange one, and the light it casts on Jewish-Christian relations in Florence reveals a great deal of intellectual and philosophical exchange between the Jew and his Medici patron. Although many of Benedetto's letters are formulated like petitions, explaining the tribulations he suffered in his business and familial relations, many others refer specifically (or nebulously, sometimes) to the books, manuals and other items of curiosity that Benedetto located and obtained for Don Giovanni, presumably on his requests. These books and other items, Goldberg argues in *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence*, reveal a practice in which Benedetto acted as a middleman between occult producers and the Medici prince. The reproduction of the letters themselves in a skillful manner makes this thesis testable by other interested scholars while opening the door to their use in other avenues of research.

The book is well-edited, with a brief but informative 8-page explanatory