and jousting; thus, diplomatic reports are a good source to better understand games and leisure activities in the Renaissance.

In conclusion, this book has a lot to teach to both English-speaking and Italian-speaking readers, since it deals with topics that are not often taught, even in Italian universities, and nevertheless underlie all the Italian Early Modern political systems. Scholars study kings and dukes, wars and peace treaties, the *Camera Picta* of Mantua, etc., but not what makes all this work: ambassadors and diplomacy. Such a particular point of view actually has very wide repercussions, that are highlighted here with acumen by the subdivision into sections and chapters, which show all the links and implications that diplomacy has with other disciplines, such as history of crime, art, architecture, clothing, language, women studies, literature, religion, language, and material culture: everything has something to do with letters and ambassadors.

Obviously, it would have been useful to have the original texts next to the translation, but it is easy to imagine the editorial reasons for this exclusion. I am left with the wish that the book had explored further the sixteenth century, so that readers could understand if and how the ambassador's role changed with the decay of the Italian courts, the wars between Charles V and Francis I, and the sack of Rome.

VERONICA COPELLO

American Academy in Rome

Jane Everson, Denis V. Reidy, and Lisa Sampson, editors. *The Italian Academies: 1525–1700. Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent*. Cambridge: Legenda, 2016. Pp. 348. ISBN 97819099662575.

This volume presents 18 essays that go a long way to rectify the bias of many early critics and goes beyond the encyclopaedic approach of Michele Maylender's *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*. The collection surveys with breadth and detail and with new archival research the rise and affirmation of the academic movement and the vital role academies played in developing culture, political and scholarly debate, and intellectual networks in Italy from the 1500s to 1700.

Jane Everson, Denis V. Reidy, and Lisa Sampson's Introduction provides a workable definition of the academy as "a kind of society that termed itself thus

and was structured around defined objectives and activities and, increasingly, formally constituted with membership rules, lists of members, and statutes" (4). The volume shows how academies contributed to innovation, dissent, and dissemination of ideas in networks of cultural debate later known as the Republic of Letters. The book is divided into four sections focusing on politics, religion and Counter-Reformation culture, on academic organization, configuration, and membership; one section deals with literature and the arts, while another deals with experimentation, innovation, and production. In the Appendix, Delphine Montoliu adds a bio-bibliographical database on Sicilian academies from the 1400s to 1700.

Alison Brown explores the role of academies in Florentine culture and politics and shows how they kept a spirit of non-conformity through the burlesque and anonymity: from the informal setting of Rucellai gardens, to the irreverent *Umidi*, to the *Accademia Fiorentina*, mouthpiece of the Medici regime. In times of authoritarianism, academies expressed dissent; brought together disenfranchised elites, promoting lectures, debate and printed publications; they also fostered involvement in Florentine culture and politics. Continuing the investigation on the relations with the Medici, Déborah Blocker studies the ambivalence and complex relations of the *Alterati* of Florence with the Medici. Known today for establishing early opera with Rinuccini, the *Alterati* functioned as a shadow academy of the Medici-sponsored *Fiorentina*; they allowed ambivalent figures, excluded by the Medici regime, to work and express dissent, eventually leading to social integration. With Germano Pallini we move to Siennese academies that are considered a *respublica litteraria*. Siena was a centre of spiritual debate; its interest in reformation was evident in the *Accademia Grande*, later absorbed by the *Intronati*. The *Intronati* used the theatre to spread their message and affirm themselves as a literary republic, when Siena's republican independence was over. Lisa Sampson delves into Parma, a less obvious, yet equally active, academic centre. Its *Innominati* played a major role in reforming Farnese theatre. Salvatore Bottari studies another smaller academic centre: Messina. The *Accademia della Fucina* was active in the Seicento with a prominent civic role in negotiating autonomy from Spanish vice-royal authority.

Ambra Moroncini examines religious dissent in the little-known Roman *Accademia della Virtù*, linked to the evangelical reform movement. Marco Faini investigates the obscure *Accademia dei Dubbiosi* of Brescia and the work of Girolamo Ruscelli, and of others close to the *Dubbiosi*, to detect links to heterodox ideas, philosophical scepticism, and possible association with the Erasmian concept of

doubt, a sound tool of intellectual inquiry. Maurizio Sangalli proves that academies were sometimes opposed to religious authorities, as was the case for Paolo Beni, expelled Jesuit, university professor in Padua, and member of the *Animosi* and *Ricovrati* in early-seventeenth-century Padua. Beni's perspective, though unsuited to university and religious order, was accepted in the hybrid space of the academy, which helped promote the reform of education and culture, prefiguring the educational reform of the Enlightenment.

Virginia Cox's central chapter takes an innovative approach to study the impact of women in academies. By extending the forms of female participation to those of inspirer, patron, dedicatee, interlocutor, and affiliate, Cox demonstrates that women were more involved with academies than previously thought. Geo-cultural configurations reveal that smaller centres like Lucca and Siena gave major roles to women, though issues of decorum limited women to virtual, rather than actual, participation. Cox also provides statistical data about female academic membership and involvement, which provide a starting point for new research.

Peter Lukehart studies the Roman *Accademia di San Luca*, specifically formed to promote artists' status, role, and education, as well as the role of the pope in artists' guild educational and religious reform. Clizia Gurreri shows mixed membership in Bologna's academies. In the absence of a princely court, academies, especially the *Gelati*, served as an aggregating space for elites, artists, religious figures, politicians, and intellectuals. The *Gelati* had strong connections with local artists like Agostino Carracci, who designed their emblem. Simone Testa takes us back to the *Gelati* in connection with the Venetian *Incogniti*. These two academies are seen as precursors of social and intellectual networks, especially in their editorial illustrated biographies, which contributed to the circulation of texts and to the acquisition of fame. The *Incogniti's Glorie* and the *Gelati's Memorie* are monumental volumes of erudition, with hundreds of biographies of members, which include *imprese* and portraits, following projects like Giambattista Marino's *Galeria* and Jacopo Tomasini's *Illustrium virorum elogia iconibus exornata*.

Paolo Procaccioli examines Ruscelli's membership in several academies: *Dello sdegno*, *Ardenti*, *Dubbiosi*, and *Fratta*. Ruscelli's activities as academician, printing entrepreneur, publisher, and editor of important volumes, like the annotated edition to Ariosto's *Furioso*, confirm that academies were the natural places of cultural debate and the source of abundant material for the prosperity of publishing houses. Irene Bagni surveys the Palermitan *Accademia degli Accesi*, a society with strong ties to the local court, as an example of Petrarchism in the

late Cinquecento. Lorenzo Sacchini follows the *Insensati* of Perugia in the mid Cinquecento and its transition of interest from Petrarch's to Marino's poetry. Carla Chiummo adds to current research on Bronzino with insight on his artistic, literary, and even religious interactions with the *Accademia Fiorentina*. Bronzino painted famous portraits of Medici family members and composed burlesque poetry for the *Fiorentina* but was later excluded from this academy, making him an artist who was both for and against the Medici.

Paule Desmoulière studies the funerary poetry of the *Accademia Olimpica* of Vicenza. She sees a strong tie between academies and encomiastic, commemorative poetry. Members of the *Olimpica* composed verses and orations for Andrea Palladio, internationally acclaimed architect and founding member. Verses and orations were recited in the famous Olympic Theatre but not published in printed collections; rather, they were recited in performance at the theatre. Paola Cosentino examines the misogynist representation of women in novels by the *Incogniti*. Pona, Busenello, Pallavicino, and Lupis wrote about the dissolute and lustful life of classical-time empresses and queens such as Cleopatra, Messalina, Poppea, the two Agrippines, and Faustina. Women are depicted as avid of power and politically ambitious. Corruption of Imperial Rome parallels the one of current-time papal Rome and serves as an indirect celebration of the virtuous Venetian Republic.

With new archival research, new areas of study, and an innovative approach, *Italian Academies* challenges preconceived ideas about academies and successfully demonstrates the fundamental role played by these associations in disseminating ideas, culture, innovation, and dissent in the early modern period.

PATRIZIA BETTELLA
University of Alberta

Domenico Pietropaolo. *Semiotics and Pragmatics of Stage Improvisation*. London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2016. Pp. 154. ISBN: 9781474225793.

This valuable study covers important facets of the foundational contribution to the art and craft of stage improvisation of the commedia dell'arte, providing examples of its evolving practice from the 1540s until the 1740s. Domenico Pietropaolo shows his expert knowledge and deep appreciation for the commedia dell'arte as it unfolds over time. My review focuses on some of the key findings that his