of Christ. Can such a series of complementary experiences be coincidental? Surely the literate Benedetta had read a life of Saint Catherine. Carlo Ginzburg has indicated the extent to which an inquiring mind was able to translate, re-interpret, and internalize the written word and also how far the historian can go in reconstructing this process. Did the life of Catherine of Siena impress the young girl to such an extent that the disturbed adult consciously tried to emulate it? Or did she indeed develop an alternate persona based on Saint Catherine? This is a problem that warrants further consideration.

Immodest Acts is well written and is organized in a manner that appeals to both the scholar and the popular reader. Selected documents of the reports of the investigations are provided in translation. These are particularly useful in illuminating the problems the investigators encountered in examining a phenomenon so far outside society's understanding. Two typographical errors are minor (p.85, surroundings and n.41, p.189, 1969 for .1619). More troublesome is the repetition of the lengthy phrase in a quotation from the Canons of the Council of Trent (n.1, pp.174 - 5). The endnotes provide useful commentary and context or indicate sources for further study.

Judith Brown has presented a remarkable study of an hitherto unexplored area. Many questions remain unanswered and unanswerable, not the least being the complex and enigmatic personalities of Benedetta Carlini and Bartolomea Crivelli. This work stands at the forefront of the rediscovery of the history of women and of sexuality. And it clearly indicates the importance and usefulness of a biographical approach for the historian of pre-modern Europe.

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Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella. *Comparative Critical Approaches to Renaissance Comedy*. Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation Series No. 9. Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1986. Pp. [vi], 165.

The editors of the Carleton series have deviated somewhat from their mandate by offering this collection of ten essays on the nature of Renaissance comedy. While this ninth publication is neither a play nor a translation, it does enrich the previous eight editions by presenting various critical views of Renaissance plays and their contexts in essays that are always engaging and quite often stimulating. The editors define the value of the collection as its "concerted effort to examine the underlying units of thought, form and sign" that occur in "plays that represent the genre, viewed across national

lines" (Introduction). The contributing authors – some with broadly theoretical, others with historically specific purposes – proceed to explore aspects of the structure, purpose and reception of Renaissance comic theatre in Italy, Spain, England and Holland.

Several of the essays seem to be related by subject matter or critical approach and, with two exceptions, are organized as such within the volume. To my mind, four sets are discernable.

Each of the first three essays – by Riccardo Scrivano, Louise George Clubb, and Domenico Pietropaolo, respectively – presents a system for the analysis of Renaissance comedy based on the identification of common theatrical units. Scrivano, in discourse that is occasionally less than direct, refers to a "great storeroom of theatre props" (p. 10) which includes units of music, scene and gesture as well as the devices of doubling and disguise. The "philosophy of Renaissance theatre", he posits, can perhaps be discovered by analysing how these common units are manipulated by playwrights in various times and places.

Taking a similar approach, Clubb speaks of "accumulated stage structures, or theatregrams" (p. 17) as identifiable units common to Renaissance comedy in Italy and England. Citing "contamination and complication" as the "essential principles of Cinquecento comedy" (p. 18), Clubb credits the "unlimited fertility" of the theatregram with establishing a common system of theatrical signs. Referring to a wealth of Italian and English plays from Ariosto's *Cassaria* to Shakespeare's *Othello*, she argues convincingly that literary or theatrical development is not linear but rather "movement by continual recombination and variation" (p. 31).

Pietropaolo concerns himself less with individual theatrical signs than with the formulation of a system that will guarantee the theatrical, not the literary, analysis of Renaissance comedy. Declaring a refreshing sentiment which is all too often lacking in the criticism of drama, he objects to the "centuries of subjection" of theatrical texts to literary critical methods (p. 36), and identifies three levels or "strata" of communication that are present in any performance. Using several Italian comedies as illustrations, and elaborating on how each type of communication is manifested in performance, Pietropaolo presents an attractive system for identifying "the questions that should be asked ... of any comedy of the period" (p. 50).

The sixth essay in the collection, by Francesco Loriggio, should also be included in this first group. While Loriggio does not analyse signs or strata, he is concerned with the genre of comedy and its perception in the Renaissance and today. Using as an illustration the device of the double (i.e. twins or identically disguised characters), he suggests that differences in Renaissance and modern views of reality are reflected in the resolutions of problems

of identity on the stage. All four essays, while relying heavily on Italian Renaissance comedies as examples, present theoretical approaches to comic theatre that could clearly extend beyond linguistic or historical boundaries.

The two essays of the second set are more specific in their analyses. Donald Beecher examines the archetype of the trickster in Italian and English comedies, reflecting an attitude common in the preceding essays as he discusses the "pragmatic process of borrowing, adapting and conflating" (p. 55), in this case of "trickster gesture". Douglas Radcliff-Umstead's survey of appearances of sorcerer figures in six Italian Renaissance comedies is informative, although his critical motivation remains somewhat unclear.

James Black's essay is more narrowly focused, being an analysis of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a "comedy of revenge." The penultimate essay in the volume, it stands by itself as a specific application of some of the critical attitudes expressed in the earlier essays. Black cites Louise George Clubb's work on the concept of *contaminatio* as he defines the typical elements of revenge tragedy, notes those elements as temporary complications in some Shakespearean comedies, and finally perceives them in *The Tempest* "reconstructed ... as tragedy's binary opposite (p. 150).

The final three essays to be mentioned – those of Leanore Lieblein, Louise Fothergill-Payne and Yehudi Lindeman – tend to represent more specifically historical research than critical theorizing, and broaden the focus of the volume beyond Italian and English drama. Lieblein remains tied to the English context, although she has worked in some references to Spanish analogues, as she attempts to discuss how performance space was defined for Renaissance drama. More important than the physical theatre space, she notes, are such considerations as the power of language to define space, the relationship of actors to spectators, and the social context of a given performance.

Fothergill-Payne presents a lucid explanation of the development of Spanish drama in the late sixteenth century. Lacking a national theatre – and thus an imposed set of "rules" – under Philip II, Spanish theatre practitioners combined their experience with both the religious *autos sacramentales* and the secular entertainments in the *corrales* to establish the popular *comedia nueva*, epitomized in the plays of Lope de Vega.

Finally, Lindeman proposes to resolve the "paradox" that the most popular comedies of the Dutch Golden Age were translations of foreign models. Citing the rhetorical concept of *energeia*, which demands of a translator both fidelity to the source text and an imaginative heightening of the new, translated text, Lindeman asserts that the Dutch translators achieved an artistic independence for their works. He supports his views with close analyses of passages from plays by G.A. Bredero and P.C. Hooft.

As in any collection from various contributors, the essays differ in complexity and thoroughness. Beecher and Ciavolella have, however, succeeded in soliciting and organizing a series of provocative papers which should, at the very least, stimulate further research into the artistic, social and aesthetic qualities of European comic theatre in the Renaissance.

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Alan C. Dessen. *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Plays*. Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986. Pp. v, 196. \$19.95.

Professor Dessen has here determined to undo the "selectivity" of our dramatic tradition; we anthologize plays unknown to Shakespeare and his contemporaries (e.g. *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Mankind*) while ignoring texts available to the Elizabethans. However much we may agree that Shakespeare and his contemporaries transcended their predecessors, we must allow that their available models are worth attention (p. 166). Dessen focusses upon the late moral plays, such as *Like Will to Like*, *The Trial of Treasure*, and *All for Money* – plays now seldom read, and less regarded. Written between approximately 1560 and 1585, these plays employ a non-realistic logic of presentation centring upon the Vice figure and upon actions that accomplish didactic aims through replication, successive demonstration, and multiple type-figures. The arguments persuade one that these plays have a strong claim for attention, stronger in fact than that of the earlier type of morality play centred upon the *humanum genus* figure; this must cause a shift in our focus when we speak of the "morality pattern" (although, admittedly, the Elizabethan play whose morality ancestry is clearest, *Dr. Faustus*, reflects the *humanum genus* type of plot). We must be careful, however, not to canonize a new "tradition" in place of the old. Against Dessen's claim that the "moral drama, in one form or another, ruled the English stage" (p. 139), we may advance the evidence coming to light in the successive volumes published by *Records of Early English Drama*, which shows that folk plays, saint plays, miracle plays, Robin Hood plays and other forms (now mostly irrecoverable) actually bulked larger in the theatrical experiences of English towns and cities than the moral plays of the travelling professionals. It is truer to say that the moral drama "ruled" the English printing press during the sixteenth century; we will never know what was the complete theatrical legacy available to Shakespeare's stage.

Dessen sees the evidence for the importance of the Elizabethan moral plays on three levels, the first of which is local allusions such as the well-known remembrances of the Vice in *I Henry IV* and *Richard III* (indeed, these