specially acute here what is a problem for any study of this kind: who are the gentry, and how do you distinguish between "upper" and "lower" gentry? Arguments about this distinction can sometimes appear circular: the kind of people who became J.P.'s and Deputy Lieutenants were the kind of people who became J.P.'s and Deputy Lieutenants. Clark uses terms that have been used by others, such as "parochial gentry" (as against the county kind) and "pseudo-gentry", (coined I think by Everitt), and introduces the "middling gentry" as well. I am very dubious about these. "Pseudo-gentry" I think particularly unfortunate; it refers to people who were "gentlemen" by any contemporary standard, including those of the heralds or of professional snobs like John Ferne (*The Blazon of Gentry*), but who were not the inheritors of large landed estates. The way Joan Thirsk and others define the parish gentry they do not seem at all different from the marginal or precarious gentry; to Clark, they are people who held about two hundred acres, plus leaseholds, belonged to old county families and only *occasionally* held county office. He does stress the difficulty of definitions and also the fact that local consequence was not simply a matter of freehold acres. Once again, this may well be truer of Kent than elsewhere, though it was surely true everywhere. Clark points out that there was "no critical financial or economic cut-off point" (p. 129) between his "county governors" and his "middling gentry." By "county governors" he means the habitual office-holders, a group he numbers about nine at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign and fifteen at its end. In the same period the number of J.P.'s in Kent rose from (roughly) sixty to a hundred; and Clark estimates that about a thousand people called themselves gentry in Kent. Some people might feel that his "middling gentry" were fairly near the top, and his "parochial gentry" somewhere in the middle. Of course, many of the thousand who called themselves gentry should not have done so. That fact, at least, is one thing about the English social system that everybody, then and now, from Sir Thomas Smith to the Cambridge Group, can feel sure about. Nobody called themselves "middling", let alone "parochial" or "pseudo", and I wonder if we should. When Clark shows us his middling group rising at the expense of others, I think he is defining them as the rising ones.

This is not to deny the value of Clark's very solid work. It is a mine of information, too vast for criticisms of detail. I will just mention "Velerandum Pollanus" (p. 74) which cannot be right, and what is wrong with "Valérand Poullain?" Clark is less fair to the tithing clergy (p. 369) than Christopher Hill; agricultural diversification was less a "golden opportunity" than a threat to the recipients of tithe, whose position was very vulnerable anyway. One further point — any possible reader who is attracted by the picture of a murder (of Arden of Faversham) on the dust jacket should be warned that there is practically nothing about it inside.

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Gigliola Fragnito. *Memoria individuale e costruzione biografica: Beccadelli, Della Casa, Vettori alle origini di un mito*. Urbino: Argalia editore, 1978. Pp. 189. L. 4,500.

Memoria individuale e costruzione biografica is an unusual book. It is not an investigation of the life of Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) but a study of the earliest,

almost contemporary biographies of the Cardinal: that of Giovanni Della Casa (1503-1556) completed by the classicist Pietro Vettori (1499-1585), and that of Ludovico Beccadelli (1501-1572). The purpose of this exercise is to examine two distinct biographical forms, each with Contarini as the subject, and to contrast the methods and intentions of their respective authors. What emerges is less a complete understanding of Contarini than a fascinating and useful image of his biographers.

To a certain extent, Fragnito recognizes that history and biography were seen as *exempla* by both Beccadelli and Della Casa (who wrote perhaps the first two-thirds of the biography that initially appeared in the 1564 edition of his Latin works, edited by Vettori, who also completed and "corrected" the life of Contarini). However, they varied greatly in what values these disciplines should illustrate: for Beccadelli, Contarini represented a hero of the Church and the Roman faith; for Della Casa, he exemplified the versatile, gifted Republican magistrate, a hero of the state and his people. Clearly, what is revealed is more than the richness of Contarini's life experience; it is the functioning of two ideologies in mid-cinquecento Italy.

Della Casa, despite his clerical vocation, remained in essence a secular, aristocratic, humanistically trained diplomat and man of letters, the author of the *Galateo*. Consequently, his life of Contarini reflects his learning and his political ideology, as well as the similar prejudices of his patrons, the Venetian patrician relatives of the Cardinal. His work is self-consciously learned, full of classical references that associate Contarini with the great figures of classical antiquity. Its Latin is elegant, polished and allusive. Left unfinished at Della Casa's death, the *Vita* was completed by Vettori, the philologist and teacher who, if anything, increased its learned content.

Also, Della Casa was an anti-Medicean Florentine patrician whose political ideology was that of the vanished Republic. Thus, Contarini is not only a classical magistrate *redivivus*, he is a Republican statesman who arose naturally from that celebrated bastion of Italian Republican freedom, *la Serenissima*. Della Casa, then, promotes the myth of Venice as carefully as he does his humanistic vision of the ideal magistrate. Contarini is shown primarily in his functions as a dedicated and brilliant servant of a just and free Republic. The Cardinal's administrative, diplomatic and political abilities are stressed far more than his spiritual and ecclesiastical roles. The myth propagated by Della Casa is that of quattrocento civic humanism in the context of the Venetian state; it is consequently a retrospective, almost nostalgic ideology that is far more reflective of the Florentine's beliefs and character than those of the Venetian Cardinal.

Beccadelli builds another myth through his life of Contarini. Unlike Della Casa, Beccadelli was intimate with the Cardinal for a considerable period, serving as his secretary. Also, unlike Della Casa, Beccadelli was a *spirituale*, a man of intense piety who was dedicated to the Cardinal's confessional principles. As a result, Beccadelli's biography focusses on the later years of Contarini's life, those following his elevation to the Sacred College. His work was written in a plain, serviceable Italian, free from learned digressions and classical references. In it, Contarini emerges as a son of the Church and a protector of the Catholic faith, his memory reviled by lesser men who had come to rule "un mondo dominato della forza del male." The Cardinal's personal qualities are described — his humanity, morality and piety — as are his orthodoxy and dedication to a unified Church. The question of his suspect beliefs, such as his views on justification, is avoided. For Beccadelli, this narrative of the events

of his later life in service to the Church and his personal qualities as a Christian should suffice to attest to his goodness and virtue.

Beccadelli's biography, then, approaches hagiography. Contarini's life becomes an *exemplum* of both the virtuous man of faith and the perfect cleric. Just as Della Casa's work looks backwards to the ideology of Republican civic humanism, Beccadelli's looks forward to the ideology of post-Tridentine hagiography, confessional literature and the role of the ideal bishop (a part in which Beccadelli himself is often cast).

Therefore, Fragnito, in bringing together her analysis of these two lives, has done far more than increase our understanding of the enigmatic personality of Contarini. She has indicated the effects that the patterns of his life had on two categories of his contemporaries. From her discussion emerge questions on the nature of history, biography and ideology, viewed by gifted men of strong principles. To accomplish this, Fragnito has recreated the complex environment that conditioned the biographies, providing material on all aspects of the production of the texts. She is obviously well versed in her sources and uses them effectively, although her tendency to quote at length in Latin without translations might intimidate those readers without classical educations. The intellectual environment of mid-cinquecento Italy, with all of its contradictions, is brought into relief through this study of Della Casa and Beccadelli's biographies of Contarini; and this represents a remarkable achievement.

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Mario Santoro. *Fortuna, ragione e prudenza nella civiltà letteraria del Cinquecento*. Naples: Liguori Editore, 1978. Pp. 611. 16,500 lire.

As Mario Santoro, editor of the recently founded journal, *Esperienze letterarie*, points out in his foreword, the present volume is a reworking of an earlier work, now out of print, with an updated bibliography and the addition of four new chapters that more fully trace the political and social development of Italian intellectual life in the period beginning with Ariosto and ending with Tasso. Of the 15 chapters that compose the book, at least 8 deal directly with the theme of fortune that Santoro pursues from the year 1494, the date of the invasion of Italy by Charles de Valois, to the last decades of the 16th century. It is Santoro's contention that to examine the theme of fortune against the background of disconcerting political and social changes is to discover fundamental aspects, problems, interests and attitudes of 16th-century civilization.

As a defense against fortune, Renaissance civilization, in Santoro's opinion, relied on prudence as a rational attitude towards life, not as a substitution for *virtù*, which humanist culture often set off against fortune, nor the prudence of medieval literary tradition recommended as a remedy against fortune. The term prudence was invested with new meanings and values acquiring a concreteness unknown in the past. The relationship between fortune and prudence assumed a radically new interpretation of man and his destiny, which properly belongs with its extraordinary variety of forms, to the literary conscience of the times.

It is essential to be aware of this particular relationship and its effect on man