tionship to God, which of course gives her special agency and ascendancy. If God was the master, then ministers and magistrates who did not recognize their true duty could be cast as treasonous and disobedient servants, in need of correction from their more enlightened peers. Cary, Gillespie further argues, speaks “from within the logic of enclosure and improvement, not from without...predicating her argument on a labor theory of property, one in which individuals gain the right to preach because they labor to do so” (236).

Gillespie covers a great deal more ground than I can represent here—nearly every chapter is chock full of contextual material, and she touches on the works of far more women in the period than merely the central figures of each chapter. Her approach is careful and scholarly, yet genuinely contests some recent feminist certitudes about political theory. Readers who are devoted to the case against liberal rights theory will find holes in her work, not least in the missing connections that would bring her positions on these early women to bear on current political practice and thought, but those holes cannot legitimately be held against the book given its more limited goals. It is a useful and provocative piece of critical work on writers who are still too often overlooked or mishandled. I would point out, however, that this book did need much better editing and advice in its preparation: Gillespie’s writing is often tortuous, her overuse of scare-quotes distracting in the extreme, and the volume cries out for a Works Cited and a better index (for such a complex project covering such unusual material, more than a name-and-title index is essential). All of these shortcomings could have been remedied with the help of a better editor who required further revision and demanded a more usable setup.

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Valeria Finucci. *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in the Italian Renaissance*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003. Pp. x, 316.

Finucci’s extremely energetic and scholarly book opens a portal to the dramatic and ultimately disturbing effects of misogyny on the beliefs surrounding bodies, procreation, and sex in Western civilization, by providing a learned, passionate, and visceral synthetic reading of the literature of the early modern European period. *The Manly Masquerade* brings a dazzling display of erudition to the topic of the performative aspects of masculinity, and femininity as well. Finucci uses the work of Freud as her basic lens in this work of primarily literary analysis, but also profitably brings in contemporary feminist theory (Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Kristeva), and the work of Foucault, Thomas Laqueur, and Piero Camporesi, among others. As the author writes, “masculinity is a construct, a masquerade, a display, a performance, just like femininity” (166). The seven essays that comprise this work all involve the problems surrounding the successful performance of gender and procreative sex

itself. In four, she meticulously takes apart the plots of literary works to reveal and examine the underlying notions about human sexuality that informed early modern European culture.

As the process of human procreation is central to our lives and represents our very survival as a species on earth, the received dialogue on sexuality in all its essentiality (which Finucci's book reviews from antiquity) appears here as a whirl of almost unpalatable contradictions, simultaneously thrilling, nasty, horrible, and even deadly. Mothers were thought to be endowed with the power to engender their fetuses with characteristics borne of a look or a mood during pregnancy. Monstrous births are exposed to be the result of maternal imagination. It was believed that a baby girl was born with a frog face "because her mother had held a frog...during coitus" (135), and that women had given birth to a cat or to seventeen rabbits (59, nn. 69–70). Fatherhood could be completely erased, and was perhaps not even necessary to cause pregnancy, as putrefaction and filth both had procreative powers, and genitalia were routinely mutilated as part of approved medical practice. For example, Finucci cites the work of Patrick Barbier, who found in one parish in France in 1676 "more than five hundred cases of boys castrated" (251). The tangle of power issues over controlling procreation tends to both fascinate and repel the reader in her unflinching reading of these texts.

The author's focus on what she calls the "erotic" sixteenth century in Europe provides her with a wealth of textual material written on the convoluted knot of sex and gender construction in European society, in which the cultural belief in the debased nature of women figures prominently. Her essays are populated with sodomites, spider women, hermaphrodites, cross-dressers, and castrati, to demonstrate dramatically the complex spectrum of sexuality between male and female at the most primal level of our physicality. Ironically, even though the phenomenon of castrati became somewhat of a cultural fad in the sixteenth century, the author argues that this period also demanded an increasing polarization of the sexes as a result of the fear that sexual identity was a slippery continuum and indeed volatile—that one sex could easily morph into another. She cites Castiglione as writing that "any man has woman in him and vice versa" (105). Clear differentiation between masculine and feminine was thought to be crucial to the maintenance of societal order.

Finucci's primary sources range from the philosophical works of Aristotle, Galen and Hippocrates and treatises on medicine from the sixteenth century, to the treatment of sex and engendering in literary texts such as *novelle* from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, *La mandragola* by Machiavelli, and Bibbiena's "erudite" comedy *La calandria*. Her final and longest chapter, on the baroque phenomenon of male castrati created to sing soprano parts in the developing world of Italian opera (ironically at the same time women were first appearing regularly on stage), was for me the most fascinating part of the book, with its details of this antique and extremely strange practice. Finucci calls these first male prima donnas "taboo icons" because as castrated males, they were outside the binary sex/gender system of civil law that existed in part to enforce the stability of the societal

institution of marriage. She proposes the cultural anxiety that castrati, who were not necessarily “queer” in their sexual orientation, could pose by “masquerading” as “active” males (even though they could not produce children). She suggests that their charade could perhaps empower the females with whom they became involved because castrati posed no danger of pregnancy, writing that “they [the castrati] could give women pleasures without consequences...they could allow women to be sexually in charge” (278). Ultimately, Finucci successfully demonstrates that masculinity (after all the elaborate performance of gender was said and done) was defined by society as the *power to father* progeny; throughout these texts, functioning testicles trump the penis.

That the writers of the early modern period would be drawn to the topic of sex in the first full century in which the availability of the printing press made widespread dissemination of their work possible is not surprising. Ariosto’s fury of erotomania in *Orlando furioso*, Aretino’s pornography, and Machiavelli’s obsession with the deadly sexual power of the mandrake root, as well as Garzoni’s compendium on popular culture, *La piazza universale* (1585), all take up in print strikingly secular concerns of a sexual nature in a bold new forthright manner that was unprecedented in European culture. Finucci does mention the “obsessive compilation” of manuals on the classification of monsters (pp. 133–34) in the sixteenth century that stimulated beliefs in the female role in their production, but perhaps she could have explored more fully the influence of these newly-available secular texts on the reading public (male and female) in the popular resurgence of other folkloric notions about sex as well.

One quibble I have with this book is the title itself, as it seems to me that Finucci’s essays take up male and female sexual identities based upon performance *equally* here. Also, the Freudian analysis of the literary works reviewed in chapters 3 and 4 does tend to become a bit esoteric for non-Freudian specialists. Finally, it is telling that the author herself does not include a conclusion to these essays here, for perhaps there are no clear-cut conclusions to draw, the topic being too vast, and too culturally fundamental.

As for the audience of this book—it is not for the faint of heart, and is probably too scholarly in its demands for undergraduates. It is a synthetic text which requires intellectual stamina in the reader and access to a good dictionary. Having said that, for assiduous graduate students studying the literature and history of the period, the payoff for hanging in there is potentially great. Here is a scholar at the top of her game, who strips cultural beliefs concerning human physicality naked, intent on exposing them at their most primal level.

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