

significantly, Modena was the destination of *Il sommario della sacra scrittura*, a Protestant text which originated in the Low Countries. Books often arrived in Modena from Venice and contributed to a life of dissent, but also to the cultural vitality of the city, despite the increasing successes of Catholic censorship.

Heresy in the city of Modena has been the subject of many studies: works by Cesare Bianco, Albano Biondi, Sergio Pagano, Susanna Peyronel and Adriano Prosperi are just some worth mentioning. Al Kalak's book builds on that body of research, but strengthens our understanding, thanks to his close archival analysis. In particular, sources from the local office of the Roman Inquisition enable the author to contribute a wealth of new detail on dissenting figures, seen of course *via* the lens of the Counter-Reformation's repressive apparatus. Al Kalak's attention to archival detail is second to none. Compared to the previous edition, the book offers a deeper interlinking between the dissenting community and the diocesan bishops, in particular Egidio Foscarari and Giovanni Morone, both of whom had been protagonists of religious heterodoxy in their own right. The recent monumental biography of Morone by Massimo Firpo and Germano Maifreda (Turin 2019) – the culmination of many studies by Firpo of a cardinal who had been one of the key protagonists of Italian religious reform – sets the wider field of interpretation within which Al Kalak's picture furthers our understanding of Modena's religious life. This is no small achievement, given the impalpable and fissiparous nature of Italian Protestant dissent in the sixteenth century.

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Johann Wier. Debating the devil and witches in early modern Europe. By Michaela Valente. (Renaissance History, Art and Culture.) Pp. 263. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022. €106. 978 94 6298 872 9

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This book describes the fascinating Johannes Wier and his views on witchcraft. Wier was born in Grave, the Netherlands, in 1515, the son of a hop merchant, and died in 1578 in Tecklenburg, Germany. At around the age of fourteen he became a pupil of Agrippa von Nettesheim in Antwerp, Renaissance scholar and friend of Erasmus. In 1534 Wier went to Paris to study medicine. As a physician, he came into contact with a large number of people affected by witchcraft. In 1551 he became the personal physician of Duke Wilhelm IV of Gulik in Kleve. At this court a tolerant Erasmian spirit prevailed. Wier advocated a rational approach to medicine, based on facts, purged of all unscientific practices. While preparing a medical work providing guidelines to purge medicine of many unscientific practices, he decided to focus on witchcraft. His book, *De praestigiis daemnonum et incantationibus ac veneficiis* (On the deceptions of the devil and on enchantments and poisons) (Basel 1563) combined the latest scholarly results in philosophy, medicine and law, and received wide circulation. This book – chosen by Sigmund Freud as one of the ten books a person should read – is at the centre of Michaela Valente's great book. The first chapter gives a very insightful overview of the historiography of Wier and the witch-hunts, after which follows a

concise biography up until the year 1557, the year of publication of Wier's chief work. Chapter iii describes the background to Wier's *De praestigiis* and how he arrived at a different approach towards witchcraft, which he sees as a means of Satan to destroy people's lives. So Wier's position is not that of science – and in this case medicine – against theology; but rather he provides the more scientific approach of a Christian physician who is convinced of the tricks of the devil. Here the author summarises the debate Wier had with the Lutheran theologian Johannes Brenz as Wier is against punishing those that are labelled as witches. According to Wier, Satan seduces witches, and thus they do not deserve to be executed, but they must be cured from what he saw as their melancholy. The fourth chapter focuses on the sixteenth-century innovations in medicine and the way Paracelsus questioned the Galenic tradition of explaining illnesses. Wier does not choose sides but in a way tries to combine the best of both. Chapter v deals with the last stage of Wier's life and the publications of that period. Wier's views on demons, sorcerers and witches are extensively presented in chapter vi. Wier made a distinction between magicians who had responsibility for their own actions and witches whom he saw as victims of demonic influences. Here Wier's new approach and its consequences are clearly demonstrated. The influence of Erasmus and his ideas of toleration are the topic of chapter vii and the last chapter provides insight into the highly interesting debates with, and reception of Wier's standpoint, during his lifetime as well as later in the seventeenth century. 'That is what I tried to achieve' is the last sentence (p. 212) in this book and as reviewer I can say that the author certainly and convincingly managed to achieve her goal: to describe the view of Johannes Wier on witches, to clarify his context and to describe his long-term influence. Valente proffers clear and very accessible insights into the background, contents, context and reception of Wier's position as he laid it down in various works. Valente's book is an important contribution to early modern studies as it demonstrates its renewed relation between theology and medicine, but also that many non-theological academics did not take a confessional stand but just wanted to be evangelical Christians and practise their faith with an openness to new insights.

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Refusing to kiss the slipper. Opposition to Calvinism in the Francophone Reformation. By Michael W. Bruening. (Studies in Historical Theology.) Pp. xvi + 361 incl. 2 figs and 2 maps. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. £64. 978 0 19 756695 4
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When studying the Reformation in France, scholars have rightly focused on the evolving concerns of theological authority and jurisdiction during the formative years of the 1520s–1560s. Naturally, these same scholars find themselves drawn into the whirlpool of Calvin studies – a sometimes inescapable swirl of correspondence, theological works and polemics (let alone secondary historical and theological literature). Because of his assertiveness and prodigious literary output,