

“circumtheatrical media hub,” offering salient cases in which local agglomerations produced and sustained icons that straddled the divide between the transgressively extraordinary and commonplace commodity (114). Karen Raber’s chapter on John Taylor’s failed event to stage Nicholas Wood, the great eater of Kent, and his tireless ingestion of edibles at the Bear Garden uncovers the spatial semiotics and multimedia mechanisms spanning pamphlet and playhouse that were exploited by Taylor, particularly in his bestialization of Wood’s anti-commensality, as a form of self-publicizing.

Matthew Hunter’s essay tracks the notorious Mary Frith on her dizzying journey between historical embodiment and abstraction into Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*, and reveals how a celebrity figure like Moll/Frith became marked for the onus of social organization—that is, to (incompletely) seal the gap between disembodied mass and individuated embodiment at the core of public constitution.

Collectively, these essays advance previous work on the early modern public sphere in ways that magnify the yet unremarked circulatory patterns of consumer-producer co-fabrication that drew heavily on theatrical modes to activate celebrity as both social adhesive and legibility imposed on forms of association.

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The Renaissance Discovery of Violence, from Boccaccio to Shakespeare.

Robert Appelbaum.

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The title of Robert Appelbaum’s new study of violence is misleading or unhelpful in at least two respects. The book contains only a smattering of references to Boccaccio and cursory readings of scenes from Shakespeare’s plays in comparison with the sustained attention he gives to other writers. Also puzzling is Appelbaum’s use of the term *discovery* to describe his project, which actually centers on the performance of violence in early modern European literature. Individual chapters highlight four genres: the novella pioneered by Boccaccio, as continued by Straparola, Bandello, and Marguerite de Navarre in their collections; the satires of More and Erasmus and the revival of the just war debate in the early sixteenth century; the epic romances of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso and their ironic undercutting of medieval ideals of chivalry; and, finally, the spectacular violence narrated or staged in revenge tragedies by Cinthio, Garnier, and Kyd. Appelbaum is most interested in how readers or audiences (in the case of plays) make moral, intellectual, and aesthetic sense of the violence represented in the literature of this turbulent period.

As he argues of the principal successors to Boccaccio, while their comic or moving novellas depicting acts of violence “adopt the stance of exemplarity” (49) familiar from

didactic medieval literature, the moral truths these novellas illustrate prove jarringly inadequate to the complexity of the fictional circumstances, or flatly contradictory. Marguerite de Navarre's focus in her *Heptameron* on rape and compromised female honor treats signal differences of gender and class identification in the auditors' responses in the novella's frame. In the case of Bandello's stories, which center on the upper classes (in contrast with Straparola's comic focus on commoners in his stories), Sofonisba's and the Duchess of Malfi's cruel treatment at the hands of their male tormentors impress us with a sense of "incalculable loss" (54) that stems from our pity, compassion, and admiration for these brave heroines and our grasp of the unavailability or felt inadequacy of any retributive justice.

After a chapter on the trenchant promotion of pacifism by Erasmus in his *Complaint of Peace* and More's conflicted critique and justification of the rationales for state-sponsored violence in *Utopia*, Appelbaum turns to the genre of heroic romance. He points out a key complicating fact of the representation of the norms of medieval chivalry in these later texts: the new technology associated with war in the early modern period, including firearms, explosives, and cannons, "led to ever more destructive warfare, waged systematically and relentlessly" (35) by armies over decades in the Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years' War. The heroic exploits of knight adventurers in rescuing innocents from peril may be viewed with some measure of nostalgia, but from far more ironic distance in these Renaissance romances. In *Orlando Furioso*, violence "has been translated into epic simile; it has been rendered largely as a thing told, not a thing shown; it has been figuratively dehumanized, rendered brutal rather than heroic," Appelbaum observes (154). His close readings of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, left incomplete at his death, and Ariosto's sequel, *Orlando Furioso*, are highlights of this comparative study.

The last chapter considers in depth three plays that Appelbaum views as landmarks of sixteenth-century tragedy—one Italian, one French, and one English, each of which dramatizes the ill-fated protagonists' "unnatural suffering" (173) and provokes intense affective responses in audiences through staging extreme acts of violence. Appelbaum readily acknowledges that "drama is another country. And tragedy is a precinct all its own" (173), in comparing tragedy with the other genres he foregrounds in *The Renaissance Discovery of Violence*. While his readings of *Orbecche*, *Les Juives*, and *The Spanish Tragedy* are sensitive, feminist, and alert to the complexities of audience affect when violences are performed for spectators in a theater (as opposed to being consumed by readers in private), his inclusion of drama with such dissimilar genres as novellas, satire, and heroic romance makes for an idiosyncratic, even eccentric, grouping of authors and texts.

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