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Straparola, Giovan Francesco. The Pleasant Nights. Ed. and trans. Suzanne Magnanini

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philosophy and its measured deployment in the bard's drama, even if he never quite manages to convince us of Shakespeare the Renaissance Humanist's ethical intent.

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Straparola, Giovan Francesco.
The Pleasant Nights. **Ed. and trans. Suzanne Magnanini.**
The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 40 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 481. Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. xx, 501. ISBN 978-0-86698-536-9 (paperback) US$49.95.

Suzanne Magnanini's new translation and edition of Giovan Francesco Straparola da Caravaggio's *Piacevoli Notti* (vol. 1, 1550 / vol. 2, 1553) is a welcome addition to the resources and scholarship in English on the works of Straparola, as well as on the early European fairy tale and the transnational novella tradition. Based on Donato Pirovano's recent Italian edition (Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2002), the volume importantly places Straparola's text—the first framed European story collection to include a substantial number of magical tales—within the context of discourses on early modern gender and authorship.

    The Pleasant Nights stages a Decameronian storytelling gathering under the leadership of Lucrezia (Sforza) Gonzaga, daughter of Ottaviano Maria Sforza, at their villa on the Venetian island of Murano. The seventy-three stories include sixteen fairy tales, the latter all told by young women, alongside novellas of various kinds. A sampling: a rapist, confused by God, attacks pots and pans instead of his intended target (2.3); Crazy Pietro spares the life of a talking tuna fish, who then helps him magically impregnate a princess, saves her reputation, and finally makes him into a good spouse (3.1); a princess without a dowry, but educated in arms and letters, lives an adventurous life as a young man until a king marries her (4.1); a dying man leaves his notary's and his confessor's souls to hell, along with his own (10.4); a cat who is a fairy helps a young man make his fortune (11.1); and a nun experiences swelling and pain until an operation

reveals male genitalia (13.9). Each story is framed by reaction from the listeners and paired with a riddle that usually invites a bawdy interpretation.

Magnanini's volume appears, significantly, within a series primarily devoted to female authors: The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe. As Magnanini argues, this makes sense for three reasons: First, Straparola's collection portrays a new type of female narrator of fairy tales, elite young women who not only tell fantastic stories but also participate in the literary novella tradition. Second, and relatedly, the literary fairy tales included in the collection became a model for the French women such as Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier, and Henriette-Julie de Murat who wrote fairy tales in 1690s Paris. Third, the collection participates in the *querelle des femmes*, as stories are told in response to an ongoing discussion in the frame tale about gender and the status of women, especially on the second day. The role of women's voices in Straparola's male authored text is complex. The fairy tale is a feminized genre with historical and representational ties to old, non-elite female narrators, and Straparola's collection draws on an oral tradition in which women certainly told both novellas and fairy tales. Magnanini suggests that the metaphor of the hermaphrodite applies to the voice of Straparola's text and echoes in the tale of the beautiful and attractive nun who becomes a hermaphrodite (13.9). She makes the important point that the representation of a particular type of female voice in this collection claims a new cultural reach for the fairy tale genre that is later developed by historical women.

Magnanini's pertinent and informative introduction discusses the collection's appeal to the Venetian print market in terms of its emphasis on the marvelous and the novelty of female authorship, and examines the ambiguous status of the attractive, socially integrated young female narrators. Obviously eroticized as they tell bawdy riddles, the young ladies nevertheless challenge gender norms in some of their stories and discussion, especially, Magnanini argues, in their fairy tales.

In an extended analysis of the second day of storytelling, Magnanini emphasizes that the fairy tale of "King Pig," an early version of "Beauty and Beast," opens a debate about the status and experiences of women. "King Pig" portrays marital violence and recommends female subservice, while entertaining the wish that kindness will transform a pig into a prince. The remaining stories and discussion in this day include criticism of misogyny by the female narrators, but end up reinforcing patriarchal norms overall.

Magnanini sums up well when she writes that the stories "function as tools for acculturation that encourage the acceptance of established gender norms," but "we can nonetheless still hear in them female voices that decry the injustice—if only momentarily—of these very same norms" (29). Magnanini's introduction also situates the collection in relation to early modern Italian women writers, to later translations of the text in Spain, France, Germany, and England, and to nineteenth-century Italian fairy tales.

Readers of Straparola in English benefit already from Donald Beecher's edition (University of Toronto Press, 2012). Based on an updated Victorian translation by William George Waters, Beecher's edition emphasizes book history, early modern gaming pastimes, and a transnational and transhistorical web of stories. Magnanini's edition contributes a lively, literal, and contemporary translation that illuminates the cultural world of the early modern Italian text without sanitizing or smoothing it. For instance, when Salardo pretends he has killed his lord's favorite falcon and tells his wife to cook it "per amor del marchese" (Pirovano, 21), Beecher's edition reasonably gives "in honor of the marquis" (1.152); but Magnanini's literal "out of love for the marquis" (54) raises different questions (questions that arise in the space between languages and time periods), inviting a reader to consider the historical connection between love and service and potentially tying this moment to eaten-heart stories (such as *Decameron* 4.1 and 4.9) that triangulate violence, love, and eating. Magnanini's notes also aid the student with potentially unfamiliar relationships, as when, after translating *compare* and *comare* (literally, "cofather" and "comother") as "dear friend," Magnanini explains the quasi-incestuous nature of sex between such friends.

This well-annotated and accessible translation will appeal to students, teachers, scholars, and the general reader. By assessing the significance of *The Pleasant Nights* with regard to The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe, Magnanini contributes to the important work of recontextualizing the novella and fairy traditions within a contemporary understanding of gender and authorship in early modern print culture.

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