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**Macinghi Strozzi, Alessandra. Letters to Her Sons, 1447–1470.**  
**Ed. and trans. Judith Bryce**

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Hoffman's "celestial flesh" Christology (which held that Mary was merely a vessel and Christ did not receive his human flesh from her), while decidedly a minority view in Reformation-era Europe, remained a core Mennonite doctrine well into the eighteenth century and also found adherents in England. MacCulloch's scholarship is consistently both wide-ranging and in-depth, and historians and enthusiasts of the Reformations in general and the English Reformation in particular will benefit from having access to so many of his writings in one volume.

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**Macinghi Strozzi, Alessandra.**

***Letters to Her Sons, 1447–1470.* Ed. and trans. Judith Bryce.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 46 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 493. Toronto: Iter Academic Press / Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016. Pp. xv, 294. ISBN 978-0-86698-548-2 (paperback) US\$39.95.

Recent years have seen an increase in scholarly attention to early modern women's epistolary practices. A selection of these letters was previously published well over a century ago, but the newly edited volume, *Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi: Letters to Her Son* by Judith Bryce is the only one translated in its entirety in English. This volume is an excellent addition to The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe series. Even though Alessandra cannot be placed in the same category as other prominent Renaissance literary figures such as Laura Cereta, Bryce has tried to show her readers that Alessandra's letters open a unique window into the world of patriciate women, who led relatively autonomous lives. Bryce draws a distinction between literary writers of the Renaissance and Alessandra's utilization of her literacy as a tool for keeping contact with her distanced family as well as carrying out her duties in regards to the Strozzi family, which was threatened by the economic and political upheavals of fifteenth-century Florence.

Alessandra Strozzi was left a widow in her late twenties with three sons and two daughters. From 1447 to 1470, she wrote seventy-three letters to her exiled sons. While there are many published works that focus on the lives of

early modern women, Strozzi is among the few whose writings remain extant today, and her letters give us a personal view of an early modern Florentine patriciate family that once enjoyed a certain amount of prestige and wealth. The sudden death of its patriarch left Alessandra struggling to raise five children and manage the family finances. The letters' themes are multilayered and include kinship, familial relations, motherhood, marriage, dowry, the plague, politics, trade, and economics.

Bryce provides an insightful and detailed introduction to the letters. In chapter 1 of the introduction, "The Other Voice," Bryce carves a place for Alessandra among other educated women of the Renaissance such as Margherita Datini, Antonia Pulci, and Lucrezia Tornabuoni. Bryce shows the reader the complex challenges early modern women faced when it came to acquiring an education. This chapter also questions the popular belief that educated women were an anomaly in the early modern period. Chapter 2, "The Life of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi: The Intersection of Private and Public Domains," gives the reader a peek into Alessandra's personal life and her involvement in the upkeep of the family's status and finances as well as a brief political history of Florence, which had an important influence on Alessandra's life. In chapter 3, "Alessandra and the Genre of the Familiar Letter," Bryce draws a comparison between "private" and "public" letters and provides evidence as to why these letters belong to the "private" or familial category. Chapter 4, "Writing as a Mother," is undoubtedly one of the most important chapters of the introduction. This chapter sets the volume apart from the other translations of Alessandra's letters, and from many other works on women's epistolary practices. In this chapter, Bryce discusses the complexity of Alessandra's relationship with her children, which ranges from intense love, motherly concern, unconditional support, manipulation, shame, and disappointment.

One of the notable features of the letters, which Bryce has made clear in her introduction, is the unique relationship of Alessandra with her sons. Although the majority of the letters are to her eldest son, Flippo Strozzi, she speaks often of her youngest and occasionally of her middle son and her two daughters. Through these letters, one can see that Alessandra is a strong woman who has managed to do well for herself and her family. She also seems to be making many of the important decisions concerning the family's finances. At the same time, she constantly seeks approval and consent from Flippo. Alessandra clearly acknowledges that Flippo, as the eldest son, is the head of family, and in some

instances she seems to submit to him in that role; however, it does not stop her from offering her opinion, and manipulating and controlling him.

The edited volume is an excellent addition to scholarship on the history of early modern women. While social and economic historians have cited Alessandra's letters on many occasions, Bryce's compilation provides a unique look into the concept of motherhood and what it meant to the elite Renaissance woman. Bryce admits that her edited volume is not a "quest for epistolary elegance and fine writing," but rather a compilation of private communication by a mother who is conveying day-to-day personal information to her distanced sons. These letters provide a valuable insight for professional historians as well as for general readers who are interested in Renaissance Florence.

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**Mackay, Christopher.**

*False Prophets and Preachers: Henry Gresbeck's Account of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Münster.*

Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2016. Pp. x, 318 + 14 ill. ISBN 978-1-6124-8142-5 (hardcover) US\$65.

Anabaptist control of the city of Münster for sixteen months from February 1534 to June 1535 is one of the best-known episodes of the Radical Reformation. With its lurid tales of polygamy, communism, and sometimes theatrical executions, it confirmed the exaggerated suspicions of contemporaries about Anabaptism and has drawn the interest of students, and not a few scholars, ever since. Henry Gresbeck, a cabinetmaker and burgher of the city, lived in Anabaptist Münster for fifteen months as the besieging forces of the prince-bishop and neighbouring Protestant princes camped outside its walls. His chronicle, likely written within a year of the city's capture by those forces and presented here for the first time in an English translation, is the only known eye-witness account of events from inside Münster. However, Christopher Mackay offers us more than just the first English translation of a crucial Reformation source. His text also represents part of a new, authoritative critical edition. After its composition, the original version of Gresbeck's work disappeared—into the archives, Mackay