

a rather fragile construct which contributed to the air of megalomania surrounding Cola's regime. Taking the debate outside the familiar territory of the Western church, Maria Pliukhanova examines the ways in which the Donation and associated legends concerning the right of the archbishop of Novgorod to wear a white headdress played into Novgorod's attempts to resist growing assertions of Muscovite domination in church and state. The legends associated with the Donation also lay at the root of Muscovite "Third Rome" ideology; its status was raised in disputes between the patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow in 2004.

The remaining contributions are somewhat disparate in nature. Mario Turchetti examines the divergences between François Bauduin and other Protestant writers (notably Calvin) over the proper role of secular rulers in church affair. Paolo Cozzo looks at how writers linked to the court of Savoy sought to stress connections between Constantine, the Theban Legion of the ruling house's patron St. Maurice and the lands of the Duchy (even going so far as to shift Constantine's vision of the Holy Cross from Rome to Turin). François Paschoud dissects Gibbon's handling of Constantine's reign, noting unacknowledged borrowings from other writers and the very confused chronology which presented the emperor's career as a rise to greatness and decline into bloody tyranny with the "conversion" as the hinge.

The final three papers cover artistic issues. Arnaldo Marcone examines the papalist ideology expressed in the thirteenth-century frescoes in the church of the Quattro Coronati in Rome. Rolf Quednau seeks to catalogue artistic references to Constantine in Rome from the emperor's own day to that of Mussolini; judging from his listing, such references seem to have been at their most sustained in the period 1550–1650. Finally Lukas Clemens reviews a number of artifacts in the region of Trier traditionally linked to the family of Constantine—some with more justification than others.



Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise. Camillo Agrippa. Trans. and ed. Ken Mondschein. New York: Italica, 2009. xiii + 138 pp. \$20.00. ISBN 978-1-59910-129-3.

REVIEWED BY: Brian Jeffrey Maxson, East Tennessee State University

Fencing: A Renaissance Treatise provides the first full English translation of Camillo Agrippa's popular Italian manual on fencing. As an instructor of fencing as well as a professional scholar, Ken Mondschein is particularly well suited for translating and elucidating the complexities of Agrippa's technical treatise. Mondschein's introduction and notes combine to make the work accessible even to readers unfamiliar with the intricacies of modern or historical fencing. The book's lengthy introduction seeks to tie Agrippa's treatise into broader historiographical questions about early modern Europe, particularly political, intellectual, and art historical. The book adds to the historiography on hand-to-hand combat in early modern Europe, firmly established as a serious field of study by Sydney Anglo's *The Martial Arts of Renaissance Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Mondschein's work makes an interesting treatise more accessible and includes a learned and thought-provoking introduction.

Mondschein's introduction seeks to contextualize Agrippa and his treatise as well as persuade modern readers—beyond the individuals interested in recreating and/or fully understanding the intricacies of early modern fencing—as to the work's significance. According to Mondschein, Agrippa broke from the medieval past by seeking to teach

fencing through a series of basic ideas aimed at the “self-fashioned man of the mid-sixteenth century” (xvii), rather than the old system of learning swordsmanship under a master. His treatise was also innovative by focusing overwhelmingly on fighting a duel in an artificial setting rather than the skills used on an actual battlefield. This focus reflected the growing prominence of dueling as a method of settling disputes under the watchful eye of ever more powerful rulers of states at the expense of extrajudicial methods such as vendettas. As Mondschein provides biographical, political, literary, intellectual, and other contexts in his introduction, he also attributes a large number of roles to Agrippa and his treatise. In addition to innovative fencing techniques, Mondschein argues that Agrippa inherited the Neoplatonic tradition of the late fifteenth century; influenced and was influenced by mannerism; and used hermetic symbolism in the treatise through numerology and hieroglyphics. Agrippa himself epitomized an early Enlightenment thinker while his treatise was “emblematic of the emerging mind-set of modernity” (lxxxiv). In fact, Copernicus barely preceded Agrippa in a radical new way of viewing the solar system!

The treatise itself contains three parts, two of which focus on the intricacies of hand-to-hand combat and one that looks at more abstract geometric and astronomical questions. Book I presents four basic fencing guards and multiple variations upon them. As Mondschein rightfully points out, these pages reveal insights not only into Agrippa’s own highly influential method of fighting, but also numerous glimpses into previous and opposing contemporary views of his arguments. Through Agrippa’s repeated refutations of counterarguments the reader gets a real glimpse into the debates over fighting techniques in the mid-sixteenth century. The second book elaborates on the first by presenting various techniques available to a combatant in a variety of guards and facing an opponent in a similarly diverse number of positions. These two books are copiously illustrated, containing fifty-four black-and-white reproductions of the book’s original illustrations of different guards and techniques. These pictures along with Mondschein’s lucid translation allow readers, even those unfamiliar with the actual practice of fencing, to follow Agrippa’s teachings and visualize his instructions. The short third book of the treatise presents a dialogue between Agrippa and his patron Annibale Caro. This dialogue addresses claims that Agrippa makes about geometrical figures in a handful of chapters at the start of book I. After a demonstration on making various shapes using a forked stick, the conversation turns to astronomy. Agrippa argues that the center of the earth is not in fact the center of the solar system. By contrast, the earth is mobile because of its shifting weight, a point proven by a short description of a simple celestial observation.

Mondschein provides an outstanding textual analysis of Agrippa’s treatise; nevertheless, this work may not appeal to all readers. Certainly, Mondschein’s translation from the Italian is clear. The scope and erudition of the introduction are impressive. Mondschein succeeds in demonstrating how glimpses of various aspects of early modern society appear in the book. His analysis brilliantly brings out the subtle interplay of societal forces that underlay Agrippa’s text. Yet, over the course of situating the text in broader cultural contexts, the fact that the vast majority of Agrippa’s treatise is a detailed and technical manual on hand-to-hand combat sometimes gets overshadowed. The passages of primary interest for scholars—beyond those interested in understanding or recreating specific fighting techniques—are often easily missed by readers without Mondschein’s deep knowledge of both fencing and intellectual history. These critiques should not detract from the value of making this influential treatise more accessible to scholars. On

the one hand, the treatise can provide scholars with a basic knowledge of the fighting techniques so prized by early modern men. Agrippa's treatise serves as a testament to the potential of such manuals, in the hands of scholars with particular skill sets, to reflect early modern culture. Moreover, the clear translation and explanatory notes will provide aficionados of historical fighting techniques outside of the academy with a new primary source. On the other hand, these observations should give pause to instructors seeking a text to introduce students to the history of early modern Europe or to the casual reader who does not possess a deep interest in historical fencing.



Pistols! Treason! Murder! Jonathan Walker. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 276 pp. \$35.00. ISBN 978-0-8018-9370-4.

REVIEWED BY: Luciana Cuppo, Venice, Italy

To say that *Pistols! Treason! Murder!* has drawn mixed reviews would be an understatement. We learn from the acknowledgments that Robert Rosenstone and Alun Munslow “overruled hostile peer reviews” at Cambridge (215). In Australia another reviewer’s “decisive intervention turned the project around when all seemed lost” (215).

If the reasons that determined a decisive intervention are those set out on the back cover of the book (“It is history that speaks to the tastes of the young of today in a way that few modern or postmodern histories have managed. It is a book that breathes new life, shape, and vigor into a discipline that has become flooded with stock and derivative studies,” Iain McCalman, University of Sidney); they are not such as to impress professional historians, or indeed anyone with a grain of common sense. To cater to the tastes of the young is hardly a yardstick by which to measure the merits of a book; had the author wanted to provide an amusing alternative, in the form of cartoons and slices of real life from Venetian pubs, to “stock and derivative studies,” the merciless treatment proposed by some reviewers would be amply deserved. For there are alternatives other than pubs and cartoons to “stock and derivative studies.” One is to find out the facts and the reasons behind the facts—a method that served well a historian named Thucydides. Another one is to believe that human history has a purpose and to investigate how events move toward or away from it—a method that served well another historian named Augustine.

Walker does, in fact, choose the first alternative. Though hell-bent on deconstructing the evidence he so painstakingly accumulates (“[This book] tells stories, and it deconstructs the process of stroytelling” [11]), the author searches for the facts, doubling toil and trouble and going through file 636 of the Inquisitors of State fund at the State Archives of Venice. He also examines manuscripts at the Biblioteca Marciana, a few steps away from the spot where Gerolamo Vano, the hero/villain of this story, hung from the gallows.

Francesco Foscarini was a Venetian noble hanged for high treason in April 1622, then rehabilitated posthumously in January 1623 by the same tribunal that had condemned him. He proclaimed his innocence to his last. In the eyes of historians he became a Romantic hero, a martyr for freedom and lover of a beautiful English mistress. According to the eighteenth-century index of trials (the trial records are lost) cited by Walker on page 228, Foscarini was slandered before the Inquisitors’ tribunal—hence his trial and execution. But is this true, and how could it come to that?