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# Palma, Pina. Savoring Power, Consuming the Times: The Metaphors of Food in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Literature

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Ce recueil offre un panorama complet et divers de ce sujet, offrant des pistes de travail et de réflexions intéressantes. Son principal intérêt est son approche pluridisciplinaire de la notion de justice, qui permet au lecteur de s'imprégner du climat de l'époque afin d'en comprendre les différents tenants et aboutissants.

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**Palma, Pina.**

***Savoring Power, Consuming the Times: The Metaphors of Food in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Literature.***

Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Pp. xi, 428. ISBN 978-0-268-03839-7 (paperback) \$42.

This book has a particularly interesting title: it suggests ample talk about food, perhaps about recipes, and certainly about how human beings regard food. Instead, the reality of this beautiful book is that it analyzes food not only as nourishment but as a reference and “tool” used by culture and literature to teach, explain, and critique.

The various chapters cover a long span of time in Italian literature and touch on important works where food plays a fundamental role. The volume starts with Boccaccio and his *Decameron*, moves to Luigi Pulci's *Morgante*, Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, and Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, then finishes with Pietro Aretino's *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia*. Cultural and literary references appear throughout. Palma's analysis ranges over not only the authors mentioned above, but also writers from Cicero to Petronius, from Homer to Dante, from Tristan to Augustine. If, for Guicciardini, “food is a sign of its times” (1), for Palma it is a sign of a society's philological, religious, ethical, aesthetic, linguistic, and artistic aspects. And so is lack of food, or food restrictions: the importance placed on frugality as a way to promote spiritual and intellectual growth is particularly interesting, especially in a period when there existed remarkable differences between those who could choose what to eat and those who had to be satisfied with whatever was on hand. And if “visually appropriating an artistic, literary, or architectural

object is comparable to taking in, to consuming it" (6), the concept of eating the holy writings, or the value of food that is not only nutritional but sates the sight and the mind, is also fascinating. The transformation of food into different colours and shapes, by the work of cooks who are compared to veritable artists, is also noteworthy. Through such transformations—whether for consumption or for formal presentation—cooks help to give food its social role.

In the *Decameron*, Giovanni Boccaccio uses food as a metaphor for personal freedom of choice that can run counter to social conventions; in *Morgante*, Pulci uses the hunger that drives the two giants, Margutte and Morgante, as a metaphor for the corruption and greed that drive court life. In *Orlando Innamorato*, Boiardo uses food to depict the Este court of Ferrara, as does Aretino for the papal court in Rome in the *Ragionamento*. But while for Boiardo "food becomes the conduit into the exploration of the tensions between ethics and aesthetics, form and substance, appearance and reality, permanence and impermanence" (22), for Aretino "the curia's hedonistic lifestyle widens the gap between the secular and the spiritual, the powerful and the powerless" (25).

If the object of human desire is both possession of a thing desired and sexual gratification, the *Decameron* is the book in which these "appetites" are more clearly defined. The novella about the marchioness of Monferrato (1.5) focuses on the social role of the banquet, while the novella about Alibech (3.10) talks about abstention from food; yet both have as their main character a woman who uses food as a means to personal independence and autonomy in a society that would like her to be "different" from what she really is.

For Pulci, the *Morgante* is the way not only to criticize the political manoeuvres and social climbing present at the court of Lorenzo de' Medici, but also to attack Marsilio Ficino and Matteo Franco who, with their slanders, had destroyed Pulci's friendship with Lorenzo. Drawn to a castle that seems deserted, Orlando is struck by a table richly set up, but he "is aware of the fact that between appearance and reality there might be a radical difference" (92). The comparison with the captured frogs clearly gives the idea of the inability not only of Orlando to find a way of escape from the enchanted castle, but also of Pulci to accept social and moral values he does not share with the court around him.

In Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, food reaches an even more marked social value. Sophisticated ways of life require foods that are particularly delicate, prepared and presented as works of art. Here "dietary conventions define

social identity" (153). The banquet offered by Giuliano della Rovere and Pietro Riario (nephews of Pope Sixtus IV) in Rome, 1473, to honour Eleonora of Aragon, future bride of Ercole I Este, is to be viewed under this light; and so also the banquet in Ariosto's *Innamorato* offered by Charlemagne to all knights, Saracens included, to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. In both, woman becomes the desired food, the one to possess/eat.

The connections among these literary works of the Italian canon, viewed through the lens of food, are extremely interesting. Food becomes a tool that allows the reader to catch subtle nuances, references, citations, and interpretations that touch on social, religious, and cultural realities of the time. Pina Palma's book is an intriguing read that goes well beyond appearances and brings to light an intricate network of connections that a modern reader would definitely miss without the help of her accurate and well-balanced transversal reading.

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**Pattenden, Miles.**

***Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa: Nepotism and Papal Authority in Counter-Reformation Rome.***

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. viii, 154. ISBN 978-0-19-967062-8 (hardcover) \$99.

This study investigates several important approaches to the field of papal history. First, it ably reconstructs the events surrounding a series of trials that took place in 1560–61 through which Pope Pius IV prosecuted the nephews of Pope Paul IV. The notoriety of the Carafa family's crimes makes this a good case study for a revisionist perspective built upon manuscript evidence. Second, this study enlarges the current discussion of early modern nepotism using a well-known example, but questions basic assumptions about the expectation of profit and the transmission of papal authority. Third, Pattenden takes up the issue of strategic reform by popes in a period that is sometimes glossed in too generous a fashion as reformist. As Pattenden argues, further inquiry and discussion are necessary in order to establish a true understanding of what contemporaries