

Lucretius's poem regarded as dangerously heretical in Christian Europe, but the poem's explicitly avowed desire to seduce readers made it riskily wanton. Indeed, it is *DRN*'s tropes of sex and desire, especially the hymn to Venus, and the conflation of amorous seduction with poetic persuasion that this monograph hones in on to best effect. Hock is especially attentive to the end of book 4 of *DRN*, where the poem is concerned with erotic fantasy and sexual obsession, and with what an atomist philosophy might be made to represent and enable in early modern poetics.

Explaining the selection of Renaissance poets and works, Hock asserts that "a language of desire" finds a "natural home" in "lyric" (7), and certainly there is some fruitful matter explored in the chapters to come, including some welcome attention to female writers: Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish. But this correlation between matter and form—desire and lyric—is one easy to question (what about the circulation of literary desire in early modern drama, or the prose of, say, Philip Sidney?) and, in fact, some of the verse investigated (e.g., Lucy Hutchinson's epic *Order and Disorder*) does not fit this designation of lyric.

At times throughout this book, terms and arguments are used and made in lax ways that could have been productively tightened up. It would also have been useful to have had a brief discussion of why and how early modern poets were so able to engage creatively with Lucretius given his scandalous and heretical reputation in the period. We know from, say, the case of Ovid, that classical texts could be regarded as not quite respectable and yet still (perhaps because of that very lack of decency) be immensely fruitful sources to Renaissance writers, so that this kind of contradictory complexity is built into their reception. Some kind of framing of Lucretius to bridge the assertions of his dangerous status with his attraction for a range of early modern poets would have been helpful.

Especially useful and productive are Hock's discussion of Lucretian *simulacra*, a theme to be traced in later chapters in relation to erotic fantasies, and Hock's comparison between Lucretian and Platonic philosophies of love, beauty, and the divine. The latter, especially, nuances the generalized way in which Renaissance love lyric tends to be seen in relation to Petrarchism and Neoplatonism; asserting an alternative model for understanding Renaissance poetic erotics is one of the most valuable takeaways from this book.

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Le lettere di Dante: Ambienti culturali, contesti storici e circolazione dei saperi.

Antonio Montefusco and Giuliano Milani, eds.

Bilingualism in Medieval Tuscany 2. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020. x + 626 pp. \$114.99.

Entirely devoted to Dante's *Epistles*, and as such unprecedented, *Le lettere di Dante* is a monumental undertaking both in size (626 pages) and in scope: it is a specialized

collection with two editors, twenty-two other contributors, and a total of twenty-six essays. Equally unprecedented is the positioning of the letters, which are traditionally viewed as ancillary, at the center of this critical endeavor, and their treatment as documentary evidence of Dante's historical and intellectual biography. In tune with Dante's polyphonic mode of understanding and distinctive encyclopedism integrating the various forms of knowledge he explores, the authors of the volume—Dante scholars, medievalists, historians, scholars of rhetoric and of the law, Latinists, philologists, linguists, paleographers, and comparatists—contribute their specific disciplinary perspectives and diverse methodological approaches to give this volume a truly Dantean depth and breadth.

One of the merits of the book is the fresh reappraisal of the manuscript tradition and the editorial history of the letters, their transmission in Latin and in vernacular translations, and the social and cultural context in which the transmission took place. This fruitful way of looking at texts in context characterizes the editors' intellectual project and Montefusco's contributions, in particular, both in his introductory chapter and in his essay in the body of the volume. The first of the book's three "macrosections," "Textual and Critical Tradition," consists of two philological studies that propose innovative evaluations of the two major testimonials of Dante's letters: the Vat. Pal. Lat 1729 (V) and the Laur. Plut. 29, 8, respectively (Romanini and Petoletti), and an essay that retraces the history of the three nineteenth-century editions of the letters through Karl Witte's documents in the Strasbourg University Library (Zanin).

The second macrosection, "Dante and the *ars dictaminis*," brings another novelty to the attention of scholars: the textual proof of Dante's familiarity with thirteenth-century epistolography, a tradition in which he legitimately partakes as *dictator illustris*, both with his theoretical pronouncements and in his own praxis of letter writing (Montefusco). The essays, recapitulated and complemented by the book's concluding chapter (Milani and Montefusco), examine Dante's epistolary style and his usage of various versions of the *kursus* and of specific tropes and topoi vis-à-vis the most important thirteenth-century *Summae Dictaminis*, such as those of Pier delle Vigne, Tommaso di Capua, Riccardo da Pofi, and Guido Faba—exemplary, in turn, of different cultural and political environments such as the Swabian and Papal courts, and the culture of the Communes (Grévin, Tomazzoli, Della Donne). Those interested in how Dante's political thought took shape will find in these studies abundant evidence and inspiration.

The third macrosection, "Letter by Letter," chronologically organized into three subsections, presents a series of close readings of the twelve letters under consideration (those to Cangrande della Scala and Guido da Polenta are excluded). "From the Militance with the Whites to the Stay in Lunigiana" (*Eps.* 1–4) casts new light on the vicissitudes in Dante's relationship with the *Universitas partis Alborum*—i.e., his fellow White Guelph exiles (Grillo, Tavoni)—and on the interdependence of poetic, philosophical, and political concerns emerging in the correspondence with Cino da Pistoia and Moroello Malaspina (Milani, Villa). "The Years of the Empire" tackles

two groups of letters: *Eps.* 5–7, connected to the advent of Henry VII (Fontes Baratto, Somaini, Marcozzi, De Vincentiis, Steinberg, Brilli), and *Eps.* 8–10, written on behalf of Countess Gherardesca Guidi of Battifolle (Bartoli Langeli, Canaccini).

Among the contributions of particular interest to this reviewer, Somaini's intertextual reading of *Ep.* 5 argues compellingly for a contiguity between the letter and *Purgatorio* 6 as two components of a "dossier"—one might say prophetic and utopian—that Dante had prepared for Henry VII to denounce the miseries of Italy and entrust the emperor with its redemption. Linking reception to political economy, De Vincentiis's study on *Ep.* 6 to "the most iniquitous" Florentines provides an analysis of the letter's readership and of its ideological reception among the Guelfs in fourteenth-century Florence, along with a comprehensive historical account of the financial relations between Guelph Florence and Angevine Naples vis-à-vis Dante's respective accusations of cupidity and avarice. With Steinberg, the exegesis of *Ep.* 6 takes a juridical turn as he focuses on the prescriptive rights invoked by the Florentines to claim their independence from the laws of the empire and Dante's rejection of such claims. The strengths of the third subsection, "Prophetic Projections and the Impossibility of a Return" (*Eps.* 11–12), include a broader perspective on the last years of Dante's life (Milani) against the backdrop of Guelf history in Central Italy (Kistner); the rehabilitation of Boccaccio as an accurate copyist through a paleographic, philological, and historical examination of *Ep.* 11 (Potestà); and a new assessment of the biblical and patristic sources in Dante's quest for a prophetic legitimation (Lokaj).

This book is a superb scholarly achievement and an invaluable resource for Dante specialists and medievalists alike.

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The Fake Husband, A Comedy. Flaminio Scala.

Ed. and trans. Rosalind Kerr. *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 75; Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 570.* Toronto: Iter Press; Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2020. 174 pp. \$41.95.

Part of the series *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, Rosalind Kerr's translation and edition of *The Fake Husband (Il Finto Marito)* offers students, readers, and scholars a bridge to a dynamic work of Italian Renaissance commedia dell'arte that has never appeared before in English. Based upon the theatrical scenario *Il Marito (The Husband)*, created and acted by the Gelosi acting troupe, this five-act drama is the adaptive work of the theater artist Flaminio Scala (1552–1624) and his seventeenth-century colleagues known as the Confidenti. The comedy delivers three romantic plots—two young aristocratic couples, and a pair of servants—who, with the help of