

differentiations trigger. Erasmus and Thomas More are given as examples of independent critical thinkers who profited greatly from Agricola's groundwork, even though van der Poel gets somewhat carried away by his enthusiasm for Agricola's substantial achievements and influence at this point, as he proclaims that such freedom of expression comes to the fore for the very first time in the writings of these authors. Such attitudes existed before these treatises, however, as the long satirical tradition of the Middle Ages, for example, not least in popular theater, shows quite clearly.

It might be more prudent to state that Agricola's reshuffling of rhetorical categories facilitated the formation of critical thinkers, helped spread such tendencies, and ended up making the texts more effective. Its more pronounced focus on rational and irrational means to influence the audience, within the framework of concern for contemporary realities and practical considerations (nature of the subject; objective of the speaker), which replaced the exclusive Scholastic focus on theory, contributed to this development. The concentration on independent thinking is also reflected in the renewed interest in dialectic syllogisms, which allow for debate and diverging opinions, as opposed to scientific or demonstrative syllogisms which do not. Finally, the moral preoccupations typical for Northern humanism are reflected in the central place that faith occupies in all these considerations.

This edition is a wonderful introduction to Agricola's writings and it successfully demonstrates his pioneering work and importance for early modern humanism. Philosophy and *studia humanitatis* are put on equal footing as two sides of the same coin in the quest for knowledge through intellectual exchange. Further study of this essential author will certainly be inspired by this volume.

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Il "Boezio" di Benedetto Varchi: Edizione critica del volgarizzamento della "Consolatio philosophiae" (1551). Dario Brancato, ed.

Biblioteca di "Lettere Italiane": Studi e Testi 77. Florence: Olschki, 2018. 492 pp. €49.

This critical edition represents one of the major editorial achievements of vernacular Renaissance philosophy in the last decade. The volume reconstructs the text of the vulgarizations of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, translated and published in 1551 by Benedetto Varchi, one of the most important intellectuals of the new emergent academies in Renaissance Italy between the forties and fifties. The critical edition includes an extensive essay on the reception of Boethius's work in the Renaissance, both in the vernacular and Latin, and its impact on the making of Italian culture. The importance of Varchi's vulgarization, and therefore of Brancato's philological work, is testified to by

the number of reprints and editions that appeared, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing until the nineteenth, outshining the contemporary publications of Ludovico Domenichi's and Cosimo Bartoli's editions of the same text. In his introductory essay, Brancato contextualizes the origin of this vernacularization in the framework of the internal feuds within the Accademia Fiorentina. Furthermore, the historical significance of Boethius's text is reconstructed through an examination of all Latin and vernacular editions and commentaries published before 1551.

Varchi's translation was not a unicum in his literary production. Indeed, as Brancato shows in detail, Varchi had much experience with translation, at least from his earlier experience at the Accademia degli Infiammati. He translated Euclid, Cicero, Ammonius, Aristotle, and many other classical authors. Most of these translations remained in manuscript, but this is not the case for the Boethius text, which was published in Florence by Lorenzo Torrentino, and in this sense represents a privileged standpoint for understanding the theory and practice of Varchi's approach to translating. Thus, Brancato's decision to work on this text, and not only on a theoretical exposition on language like the *Hercolano* (the usual recourse of scholars for assessing Varchi as a translator and language theorist), is particularly welcome. Working on Boethius, Varchi confronts a long tradition of vernacular translation, starting with the medieval Florentine Alberto della Piagentina (1332) and proceeding forward to the most recent published version of Anselmo Tanzi (1520). Brancato shows how in this confrontation with the past, with the language of other classical authors, and with the various linguistic theories at play at the Accademia, Varchi matured his own language, finalizing his translation techniques. In other words, more than ten years before the *Hercolano*, Varchi used Boethius's text to establish the Florentine *volgare*, harmonizing the various tendencies of the spoken language with Pietro Bembo's codification.

The critical edition is based on two complete manuscripts (Florence, National Central Library, II.VIII.134 and Florence, Medicean Laurentian Library, Mediceo palatino 46), on three partial manuscripts (Florence, Medicean Laurentian Library, Mediceo palatino 113; Florence, Ricciardiana Library, 2834; and Rome, National Central Library, cod. 1805), and on eighteen printed books (six of the sixteenth century, six of the eighteenth century, four of the nineteenth century, and two of the twentieth century). At least three of the manuscript copies come from the author's scriptorium, and this makes Brancato's edition even more valuable in its restoration of Varchi's original intentions and linguistic choices. Brancato compiles a long list of errors, additions, and corrections, showing how Varchi worked in practice in the transition from manuscript to editio princeps. Brancato has also been able to trace the presence of other vernacularizations in Varchi's text, in particular those of Alberto della Piagentina, Anselmo Tanzi, and of the *Commentum* of Pseudo-Aquinas on Boethius. Finally, Brancato provides a detail examination of Varchi's language, with very specific examinations of spelling, phonetics,

morphology, syntax, and deixis. Nothing is left to chance in this edition. At the end of the book there is a glossary that aims to show the relationship between Latin and vernacular and the new terms that Varchi mints. This book should be on the shelves of every scholar interested in sixteenth-century Italian linguistic theories and the dissemination of vernacular philosophy in Renaissance Italy.

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Virgil and Renaissance Culture. L. B. T. Houghton and Marco Sgarbi, eds. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 510; Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 42. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. x + 228 pp. \$75.

Virgil's reception in the Renaissance has been the subject of recent and important studies, especially the monographs of Kallendorf and Wilson-Okamura. One of the strengths of *Virgil and Renaissance Culture* is that its authors draw frankly, frequently, and gratefully on this body of work, positioning the collection as a useful supplement and addition to existing scholarship. Houghton's excellent introduction sets the tone for the volume. Through a witty interrogation of its title, he challenges a canonical approach to the topic, arguing that "the chapters which follow possess a value that does not depend on any one overarching definition of the Renaissance, of culture, or even of Virgil" (5).

As promised, the subsequent studies offer a very pleasing variety. Peter Mack elucidates the ways in which Agricola, Erasmus, and Melancthon employed Virgil as a model of style and used his poetry to develop their conceptions of rhetorical *copia*. It was Virgil's career, as well as his poetry, that inspired Guarino Veronese and his circle. Fabio Stok claims that Guarino authored the *Donatus actus*, an "enhanced and interpolated version" of Donatus's life (31), and indicates how the Virgil of the updated biography validated and ennobled the position of court humanists in Quattrocento Italy.

Some of the most innovative chapters in this volume explore Virgil's influence in non-literary contexts. Lisa Vitela argues that Isabella's D'Este's twenty-three-dish service simultaneously reminded guests of her learning and taste and served as an impetus for moralizing discussions. Examining the use of Virgilian quotations on medals and tokens from the Low Countries in the second half of the sixteenth century, Cécile Arnould and Pierre Assenmaker assert that "Virgil's verses were a still living cultural heritage that everyone was free to use and adapt in order to bring it closer to the political and ideological context of the time or merely to produce a coherent association of image and text" (73). Evan McCarthy details the wide variety of attributes that writers on