
Reviews

ANONIMO GRECO, "*Erotopaignia*": "*Giochi d'amore*," ed. and trans. LUCIO COCO. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2019. Pp. 47. €8. ISBN: 978-8-8222-6645-3.
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There is an undeniable attraction exerted by literary works that survive in fragmentary form; any reader can supply what is missing according to her taste, inclination, or even mood on a particular day. Likewise, fragmentary works can be read and reread frequently, likely yielding different impressions or qualities. The mid-fourteenth-century poems here translated, haphazardly unearthed at the British Museum in 1878 by the German scholar Wilhelm Wagner ("casualmente" is the adverb that Lucio Coco utilizes) (6), are not just incomplete but concern a highly evocative topic: love. It seems less surprising that they found their way to posterity.

The volume includes an informative "Introduzione," a "Bibliografia" that attests to the paucity of recent studies on this collection (the more recent critical edition dates from 1913; the latest analytical study from 1990), and the translation of the six parts that together comprise the "love games" to which the title refers.

In his "Introduzione," Coco offers some necessary contextualizing elements. He outlines the key qualities of the *paignion* genre (light, not demanding in its execution, but not limited to silly topics); he then summarizes the history of the manuscript at the British Museum and the text's possible geographic and chronological origin; afterward he describes the six-part structure of the text; and he concludes with a short description of the language in which the poems are written and a digest of previous editions and translations. There is so much that we do not know about these manuscript poems, and for this reader, the questions far outnumbered the answers that can be provided in a short introduction, assuming that they can be found at all: Are all the parts by the same author? Who might this author be? What cultural milieu do the poems spring from? What were the historical circumstances under which they were conceived? It is likely that most of them will not find a conclusive answer. These love poems were composed in demotic Greek in the late Middle Ages, after the Fourth Crusade (1204), as attested by the use of many Latin-derived terms (11). The theory that they were written in Rhodes seems conclusively disproven or, at least, flimsily based on one possible textual clue.

Coco's prose translation, accompanied by judicious footnotes, is highly readable. Given that we do not know who wrote these poems, we do not know if the male or the female voices are ventriloquized when both lovers (or would-be lovers) speak. The first, second, and fifth parts share an alphabetical structure, which in all cases is incomplete. The (likewise lacunose) third part offers the reader the most robust structure, as it provides a frame within which its short plot takes place: here the organizing principle is numerical rather than alphabetical, as a young woman challenges a young man to conquer her affection by identifying and uttering one hundred words of love. The fourth and (very short) sixth portions contain additional, seemingly unlinked love poems.

Suggestive by themselves, these verses would benefit from a philological analysis that might connect them, however hypothetically, to a sociohistorical and cultural moment, which would allow us to understand how much of what we read here is influenced by genre rules, gender expectations, et cetera. The present volume appropriately limits itself to making the poems available to Italian readers, but the very fact that most scholarship included in the bibliography goes back to the nineteenth century invites the following consideration: is it not time to analyze these poems and others like them utilizing the critical tools of the twenty-first century? Some

could shed light on neo-Greek literature from a period much more widely studied in western Mediterranean cultures.

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NICOLINO APPLAUSO, *Dante's "Comedy" and the Ethics of Invective in Medieval Italy: Humor and Evil*. (Studies in Medieval Literature.) Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020. Pp. xi, 337; black-and-white figures. \$115. ISBN: 978-1-4985-6778-7. doi:10.1086/717792

The analysis of comic poetry of the Italian Middle Ages has changed significantly over time. When these poems were rediscovered in the nineteenth century, individuals like Rustico Filippi and Cecco Angiolieri were cast as scoundrels, and their invectives were interpreted as evidence of their roguish personalities. In the 1950s, Mario Marti put scholarship on a more solid footing when he argued against a biographical interpretation by demonstrating the poets' adherence to the strictures of medieval literary theory. At the same time, Marti's formalist approach inadvertently deemphasized the personal and historical contexts of the poetry, presenting it as the universal expressions of a timeless style. It could have been written by anyone anywhere, and it had no particular relevance to the time and place of its composition. More recent scholarship has striven to correct the excessive aspects of Marti's perspective by grounding the verse in its specific historical and political situation. Nicolino Applauso's recent monograph is an example of the new trend in historicizing the comic poets while highlighting their use of established tropes in medieval comic literature.

Divided into seven chapters, the volume covers the major topics in Italian comic literature. The first chapter is an introduction that provides a definition of invective and then lays out the central argument of the book: through their invectives these poets engaged with serious historical and cultural issues. Applauso spends some time dealing with the theories of humor, in particular the Superiority Theory; although ugly, using laughter to disparage another person is still a type of humor. As support, Applauso cites Bernard of Clairvaux, who in his satire wrote: "as I bite so too do I laugh, but not without weeping" (21). By examining how the writers employed a typical comic style to comment on current events, Applauso retains the strengths of Marti's formalist method while emphasizing the poems' historical relevance. The second chapter builds upon the first, offering a historical panorama of the literature of invective in Tuscany in the centuries leading up to the lives of the writers under examination. Taken together, the two chapters furnish a thorough background in the theory and practice of invective in thirteenth-century Italy.

The following three chapters focus on a different poet of the comic tradition, Rustico Filippi, Cecco Angiolieri, and Folgore of San Gimignano. In each chapter, Applauso conducts close readings of a selection of their poems, showing how they employed derisive humor to comment on political and cultural developments during their lifetimes. In so doing, Applauso does not merely rely on the biographical studies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but instead he adds to the information we possess. Applauso returned to the archives and made additional discoveries about the lives of these important poets, and this constitutes a second strength of the volume. Applauso discovered that Filippi had a son nicknamed Cantino, thereby allowing for the clarification of a reference to him in one of the sonnets; Applauso also found that Angiolieri was involved in two violent assaults, and that Folgore carried out duties in the service of San Gimignano's army. The new information fills out the slim biographies of the poets and is a reminder that more biographical information awaits scholars in Italy's archives.

The sixth chapter deals with someone not often associated with the preceding writers, Dante Alighieri. Applauso does not deal with Dante's lyric poetry, however, but turns to his magnum