

FRANCESCO BARBARO, *De re uxoria*, ed. CLAUDIO GRIGGIO and CHIARA KRAVINA. (Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento Studi e testi 53.) Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2021. Pp. xiv, 425; color figures. €55. ISBN: 978-8-8222-6728-3.  
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Editors Claudio Griggio and Chiara Kravina have produced a book that explores *De re uxoria* [On matrimony], a treatise written by the Venetian patrician, jurist, and statesman Francesco Barbaro (1390–1454). Griggio and Kravina’s book includes a thematic and stylistic analysis of Barbaro’s treatise and provides a critical edition of Barbaro’s original Latin text (along with parallel text in Italian) through the philological process defined as “ecdotic/textual criticism.”

The first part (1–149), authored by Kravina, unfolds in six sections that examine, respectively, the treatise’s inception and purpose, its structure and themes, its literary sources, its

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influence on Renaissance literature, its editorial fortune, and eventually its wide circulation in Italy and Europe. Kravina highlights the treatise's socio-historical context, that is, the city of Venice where Barbaro wrote it in the summer of 1415, after his stay at the Medici court in Florence. With it, he aimed to pay tribute to the approaching wedding of Cosimo the Elder's brother, Lorenzo, and to his bride-to-be, Ginevra Cavalcanti. He also intended to offer the young scions of Cosimo's oligarchic echelon (and their Venetian peers) a handbook of precepts leading to their choosing a noble wife who would embody the Platonic *kalokagathia* (the union of physical beauty and wisdom). Such a woman would be apt to produce and raise healthy and virtuous offspring for the continuation and glory of the family lineage.

Kravina assembles a rich tapestry of classic historiographic sources along with an array of patristic *loci* that inspired Barbaro's treatise. Among them are Plutarch's *Coniugalia praecepta*, Xenophon's *Oikonomikós*, Cicero's *De officiis*, and Augustine of Hippo's *Quaestiones in Genesim*. She notes that such sources, albeit not part of the long-standing classical misogynistic tradition, still prescribed the docile submission of wives to their male counterparts. Kravina illustrates the immediate and enthusiastic reception of Barbaro's manual that circulated in several manuscript copies throughout the peninsula and met with the unanimous admiration of humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini and Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder.

She remarks that, over time, *De re uxoria* steadily percolated into the fabric of the *res publica litterarum* and transcended national boundaries. In this regard, Kravina lists Leon Battista Alberti's *De familia liber II* (1433–34); the *editio princeps* of the treatise by the French magistrate André Tiraqueau (1513), as well as its emulation in Spain by Juan Luis Vives (1524); its influence on some passages of Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (1528) and Ariosto's 1532 version of the *Furioso*; its reworked translation in Lutheran Germany (1536); and its impact on Alessandro Piccolomini's *De la institutione di tutta la vita de l'huomo nato nobile* (1542) and on Ludovico Dolce's reprint of the *Dialogo della institutione delle donne* (1547). In 1548 Alberto Lollio's translation of *De re uxoria* was printed in Venice. Two centuries later, the translation's two reprints (1778 and 1785) exerted an influence on the Italian intellectuals of the Enlightenment who debated the subject of matrimony and influenced several pedagogical writings of the 1800s. In outlining the importance of the first critical edition of the treatise, assembled by Attilio Gnesotto (1915), Kravina discusses the interest garnered by *De re uxoria* in Nazi Germany through Percy Gothein's monograph on Barbaro (1932) and through his German translation of the treatise (1933). The appendix (146–49) contains the list of the 129 selected manuscripts of *De re uxoria* and concludes the first part.

The second part (153–425) is entirely authored by Griggio, with the exception of the list of bibliographical abbreviations and of the indexes, both of which were assembled by Kravina. It includes the critical edition of Barbaro's treatise and its Italian translation, followed by the commentary to the original Latin text. Although Griggio, in his "Note to the Text" (153–75), acknowledges Gnesotto's scholarly merits, he also states that his edition is biased by the fact that it has regarded the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut. 78.24 (technically called L2 and produced in Florence in 1416) as the *exemplum* of Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut. 78.25 (L), copied in Venice. Supported by the findings of previous paleographic investigations, and led by his own philological expertise, Griggio overturns the filiation of the two manuscripts and asserts that L constitutes indeed the model for L2. He also validates the textual authoritativeness of the additional manuscripts of *De re uxoria* that he selected to compare with L. They are, specifically, the four copies (three from Venice and one from Verona) produced between 1416 and 1428.

This book, whose two parts harmoniously complement each other, is meritorious for the rigorous accuracy with which the editors have assembled it. Kravina's precise and exhaustive weaving of the multiple threads forming the tapestry of *De re uxoria* is exemplary and stands on a par with the *enquête* done by Margaret L. King's *The Wealth of Wives: A Fifteenth-Century Marriage Manual* (2015). Griggio's textual rendition and valuable commentary to the treatise

are a true labor of love which crowns his indefatigable interest in Barbaro that started more than three decades ago. The volume provides readers, both specialists and non-specialists alike, with the modern and accessible version of a work that, for centuries, has been a constant and untarnished presence on the Italian and European cultural scene.

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