

Katharina Hartmann. *I Cantici di Fidenzio di Camillo Scroffa e la pluralità dei mondi: Il canone classico, l'eredità del Petrarca e la tradizione giocosa.*

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This interesting and learned volume offers a detailed analysis of *I Cantici di Fidenzio Glottochrysis Ludimagistro*, a poorly known text of the Italian Renaissance. Made of twenty poems of diverse format (mostly sonnets), Camillo Scroffa's *Cantici* narrates the unrequited love of the Latin teacher Fidenzio for his pupil Camillo. As the author stresses in the introduction, this brief *canzoniere* is particularly challenging from a linguistic standpoint, because it is written in a mélange of Italian and Latin. The main sources of interest of this text are its original poetic idiom, usually called *pedantesco* (pedantic), and its dense and frequent appropriation and rewriting of vernacular and Latin models. The aim of Hartmann's study is twofold: on the one hand, it intends to deepen our understanding of *I Cantici* by discussing the meaning of its extensive borrowings from canonical sources (among several others, Petrarch and Virgil). Hartmann contends that previous critical studies tended to highlight the numerous literary allusions without explaining how their presence and interaction affect the overall meaning of the poetic text. On the other hand, Hartmann's work wishes to place *I Cantici* in their historical context.

Hartmann's book can be easily divided into two major sections: a survey of the historical and literary background and an analysis of the poems. The best part of this monograph is indeed her close readings of the single poems in chapter 4 (111–212), in which she shows a remarkable knowledge of the disparate sources behind this slim but fascinating collection of poetry. After a plot summary of the twenty poems, the introduction offers a thorough history of the critical reception of *I Cantici*. The first part of the second chapter offers insightful biographical remarks about Camillo Scroffa and the character of the Latin teacher. The second part of the second chapter, dedicated to the “*contesti storici*” (“historical contexts”), is the least original section of the book, and reads like a chapter from a doctoral thesis, which is in fact the original format of Hartmann's volume. The part on homosexual behaviors in the Renaissance does not make any wrong claim, but it is nonetheless unoriginal and possibly unnecessary, especially the discussion about homosexuality

in ancient culture. In a like manner, the subsequent chapter 3, on Renaissance classicism, offers scarce new information. Two important aspects of *I Cantici* could have been examined more in detail. First, its linguistic hybridism is hinted at in more than one passage of Hartmann's volume. On page 95 she also alludes to the complex issue of Renaissance anticlassicism, which plays a central role in sixteenth-century Italian culture; but a more elaborate discussion of the significant differences among the diverse forms of linguistic experimentation, which involved literary Italian, dialects, and Latin, would have been useful for a better understanding of Scroffa's specific choice. A second, less relevant point is the discussion of the figure of the *pedante* (pedant), which is examined at length in Hartmann's book but with little or no reference, as far as I can tell, to his presence in Italian contemporary comedy, for instance Giordano Bruno's *Il candelaio*.

In the second half of the book (chapters 4–5), Hartmann dissects the single poems of Scroffa's collection, deepening the findings present in Pietro Trifone's seminal critical edition and other subsequent studies of *I Cantici*, which she engages in an insightful critical dialogue. In this section of her monograph, Hartmann shows her significant critical skills. Particularly interesting, for example, is her reading of sonnet 12, especially its opening verse in connection with the third (152). The author convincingly shows that previous scholars gave an unsatisfying interpretation of this sonnet because they overlooked a fundamental hidden source, book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in particular Dido's monologue preceding her suicide (153), which plays a central role in the first quatrain of this poem. Hartmann's intelligent close readings of the other poems are rich in similar findings. Equally thought provoking is Hartmann's analysis of the possibly obscene allusions in Scroffa's *canzoniere*, whose rhetorical devices recall Burchiello's poems, to which Hartmann, however, pays only very scant attention (chapter 5). Hartmann's volume is overall a serious contribution to an important aspect of Italian Renaissance poetry.

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