

how literary interrogations of supplication can yet perpetuate the narratives and affective structures that continue to provide our social and emotional safety nets in moments of crisis.

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*Fiction and Figuration in High and Late Medieval Literature*. Marianne Pade, Anders Cullhed, Anders Hallengren, and Brian Møller Jensen, eds. *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici, Supplementa 47*. Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2016. 122 pp. €32.

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Defining the movement of the line between fiction and history feels more fraught, but also more necessary, in the current climate. The international group of scholars who contribute to this volume consider fiction theory central to our understanding of medieval literary culture; their arguments about fictional representation across multiple genres and languages proceed from this premise. Walter Haug claimed in 1985 that Chrétien de Troyes articulated the concept, if not the term, for fiction in the twelfth century. Dennis Green responded in 2002 that until the twelfth century, people wrote what they believed to be true; only after that did they purposefully write fiction. Several essays in this book engage directly with Green, especially with the following definition, quoted more than once: “Fiction is a category of literary text which, although it may also include events that were held to have actually taken place, gives an account of events that could not conceivably have taken place and/or that, although possible, did not take place, and which, in doing so, invites the intended audience to be willing to make-believe what would otherwise be regarded as untrue” (32).

A slim proceedings volume that retains the energy and intimacy of a small conference, this collection is lightly edited, retaining both spontaneity and some unevenness. Because of the wide range of approaches and applications, a full introduction or preface to the volume would have been welcome. The essay closest to serving this purpose is the long meditation on fictionality scholarship by Jan Ziolkowski, “Fiction in the Long Twelfth Century and Beyond,” an overview of the last fifty years of fictionality theory useful for new students of romance and other fictional genres. If we require an explicit author’s statement of intent, he says lightly, then of course we can’t date fiction before the twelfth century, although there are scraps of what we might consider fiction preceding that point. Ziolkowski’s necessarily surface references stretch from Plato to Dan Brown, with special attention to the ninth to twelfth centuries. He observes that the term *fictionality* and narrative theory generally are much more common in German than in English: in particular, anglophone scholars who discuss fictionality tend not to take the medieval period into account.

This volume and the conference it encapsulates represent attempts to rectify that gap, considering foundational authors such as Boccaccio (Raffaele Morabito), Petrarch (Anders Hallengren), Phaedrus (Brian Jensen), and Dante (Anders Cullhed) in the context of narrative theory and with particular attention to the conscious rise of fiction, the difference between *historia* and *fabula* (Fritz Peter Knapp), nominalism (Päivi Mehtonen), and the role of genre in our own biases. I focus here on highlights from the collection of most use to *RQ* readers.

Marianne Pade's "Intertextuality as a Narrative Device" intriguingly considers the epistolary genre as employed by Italian humanists beginning with Petrarch and focusing on Niccolo Perotti's dedication letters: she describes the referentiality in the letters as a way to create a persona and establish other assertions of fiction. In her reading, epistolary conventions act as subtle textual strategies of personal expression and of creating separate narrative strands. Pade ends with the revelation of Perotti's true identity, demonstrating at once a brilliant narrative strategy and a dramatic proof of her argument.

In "Getting Lost in Worlds: The Fiction of Literature," Wim Verbaal offers a new way of looking at how fiction became a viable option for eleventh- and twelfth-century writers: through recognizing their capacity to develop a time frame independent of history or the writer's own temporal experience. It's here that a theory emerges of why the medieval period was so slow to embrace fiction: "As creators of textual [temporal] worlds, they begin to see themselves as a true image of the primary Creator himself" (55). Verbaal draws from the poems of Marbod of Rennes and from the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux, noting that while these wouldn't be considered fictional in and of themselves, they allow the possibility by playing with the concept of time. In Giovanni Maggioni's reading of hagiography, an entire genre depends on matching narrative to evidence (or the lack of it) within fairly rigid preconceived conventions. He dwells not only on the tensions between imitation and fascination, between historical reality and contemporary hagiographical ideals, but also on the creation of wonder, that often unacknowledged component of the power of fiction.

This volume's production in softcover with French flaps would not withstand heavy library use, but it is just right for an instructor's reference. Each essay concludes with its own bibliography; the volume ends with a helpful and comprehensive index *nominum*.

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