Gustavo Costa. *Epicureismo e pederastia: Il "Lucrezio" e l'"Anacreonte" di Alessandro Marchetti secondo il Sant'Uffizio*.

Le corrispondenze letterarie, scientifiche ed erudite dal Rinascimento all'età moderna; Subsidia 18. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012. viii + 106 pp. €14. ISBN: 978–88–222–6129–8.

This book provides a new focus and new documentary evidence on Alessandro Marchetti, a leading scientist and philosopher in seventeenth-century Tuscany: the episodes of Marchetti's intellectual biography that are examined are his vernacular translations of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* and Anacreon's *Lyrics*. Advocates of dangerous doctrines — Epicureanism for Lucretius, pederasty for Anacreon, as revealed in the title of the book — the two classical poets were equally suspect in the eyes of Catholic hierarchies in Counter-Reformation Italy, and Costa's book reconstructs how both of Marchetti's translations endured harsh inquisitorial censorship.

The book is divided into eight short chapters, which work best if read as a sort of continuous commentary on the documents in the appendix, which makes up half the bulk of the volume. An index completes the book. Five chapters out of eight deal with the Lucretian translation, thus shifting the focus of the book as much on Lucretius's Italian reception as on Marchetti's intellectual profile. Costa's book thus joins a string of recent studies on Lucretian reception, the most ambitious and recent of which is Greenblatt's book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern.*

However, just as Greenblatt's book is an example of a broad and possibly extreme reading of Lucretius's rebirth and survival in Western culture, where the interpretation races ahead unencumbered by facts, Costa's study offers its readers the less appealing, but more wholesome nourishment of sound documents.

As atomism affirmed itself throughout Europe in the wake of Galileo's discoveries, Marchetti — an exceptionally gifted translator, as well as an original thinker — completed the first Italian translation of the *De rerum natura* (1668–69), a work that according to his plan would promote interest in the new scientific approach (chapter 1). The timing, however, was infelicitous due to the Church's increasingly harsh attitude to atomism (chapter 2) and so Marchetti's work fell victim to censorship. In a detailed reading of the work, the Roman inquisitor De Miro highlighted all the possible dangers of printing the translation (chapter 3), which even after the death of Marchetti and the London edition of 1717 was not cleared for publication in Italy (chapter 4). Despite its condemnation in Italy, Marchetti's Lucretius met with large success in Europe (chapter 5).

Chapters 6 through 8 deal with the similar fate of Marchetti's *Anacreonte*, which had been printed in 1707 and was immediately withdrawn by the Inquisition on charges of "lasciviousness." As for Lucretius, the inquisitors again lamented the fact that, instead of playing down or reversing Anacreon's "poisons," Marchetti had indeed enhanced their charm (44–46, 50–51).

Costa's book is well written and its argumentation sustained within the limits that it sets itself: true to Lucretian doctrine, in the captivating first part of the book, the reader is enticed toward the bitter core of the document. Costa's transparent admiration for Marchetti's intellectual freedom as well as his dismay at Catholic bigotry only make the book livelier. At times, though, readers are left with the tantalizing implications of some of the book's threads, perhaps wishing for a broader discussion of their cultural significance.

One example of this is the central question of translation versus censorship. It is clear from Costa's report that the inquisitors' central concern was whether and how a vernacular translation would enlarge the *De rerum natura*'s audience, which, by its circulation in Latin, was limited to the intellectual elite. In fact the problem of audience is touched upon by Costa several times. In their official *censura* of Marchetti's translation, the inquisitors repeatedly warn the Congregation of the Sant'Uffizio against the dangers of putting a vernacular Lucretius in the hands of just anybody, including audiences traditionally unfamiliar with the classics such as the plebs (87: *plebem etiam infimam*) and women (59).

On the other hand, the editor of the London edition, Rolli, claimed that Lucretius's profound doctrine had always made him unattainable for all but the most learned, whatever the language. Finally, Inquisitor Zavarroni complained that Marchetti's translation had rescued the Latin Lucretius, which had been languishing neglected by all, from death.

Thus, readers of Costa's book are left with as many potential questions as answers. Who actually read Lucretius at the time? Is there evidence of his poisonous influence on some particular audiences rather than others? Was the *De rerum natura*

really neglected in seventeenth-century Italy? Raising questions should be the aim of all scholarly research, just as much as answering them. Thus, Costa's book is not for the general reader; however, it will certainly appeal to those who have more than a passing interest in the survival of the classics within Western culture.

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