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Ludovico Ariosto, *Latin Poetry*, edited and translated by Dennis Looney and D. Mark Possanza, 2018

This important addition to the series I Tatti Renaissance Library offers the first English translation of Ludovico Ariosto's lyric productions in Latin. The volume, published in 2018, appears in an exciting moment for the study of Ariosto's work. We are in fact in the interregnum between the fifth centennial anniversaries of the first two editions of the *Orlando furioso*, one just celebrated with worldwide academic events in 2016 and the other about to take place in 2021. The Italian octaves of the *Furioso* are of course at the core of all the recent and imminent conferences, exhibitions, and editorial initiatives about Ariosto's legacy, and are definitely the reason why Ariosto became, to use the curators' words, "arguably the most important Italian poet of the Renaissance and perhaps the most important European writer before Shakespeare" (ix). However, the minor works of such an influential protagonist of Italy's courtly humanism are attracting new international scholarly attention. Among these less explored corners of Ariosto's oeuvre, the texts published in this book have represented the most inaccessible nook for a long time, and not just because they were written in Latin. The poet's own son, Virginio, spread a longstanding prejudice about Ariosto's lack of enthusiasm for the study of classical poetry, and the challenging philological situation of the texts themselves made it hard for scholars to appreciate the *corpus* and its rich intertextual echoes since the diffusion of the poems' late and problematic *editio princeps*, printed in Venice twenty years after the author's death. Looney and Possanza, besides offering a clear and accurate English version of the poems, took up the challenge of providing the 21st century reader with a reliable text of the original Latin, updating the only (and quite dated) critical edition, which was curated in 1934 by Ezio Bolaffi. Bolaffi

perfected and reprinted his work four years later, weeks before losing his Classics professorship in Bologna because of the Racial Laws. The most prestigious later editions of Ariosto's work that include the Neo-Latin production (the Ricciardi collection of the *Opere minori*, edited by Cesare Segre in 1954, and the third volume of the *Opere* edited by Mario Santoro in 1989 for UTET) revised the text established in 1938 only superficially. Looney and Possanza, on the other hand, consulted a number of early modern editions (including Giovanni Andrea Barotti's 18th century ones), and collated Bolaffi's work against the two main authorities of Ariosto's *carmina*: the only surviving autograph manuscript, titled *Aliquot carmina autographa Ludovici Areosti Ferrariensis* (F) and the aforementioned *princeps*, edited by Giovanni Battista Pigna in 1553 (EP 1553). While F counts 39 poems, 54 are printed in EP 1553 (including poems that are apocryphal or of dubious attribution), and both authorities present texts that do not appear in the other. The result of Looney's and Possanza's work is rigorously described in the excellent critical apparatus of the book, which highlights and discusses the problems of transmission and the unsolvable *cruces* generated by such a philological situation. The book is not a new critical edition, but it diverges from Bolaffi's in a significant number of *loci* and makes it easy for the reader to understand the textual stratigraphy of F and the history and configuration of EP 1533. It meaningfully contributes to the scholarly understanding of the texts that it restores while also making them accessible to any Anglophone reader. It reveals how underestimated Ariosto's memory of Latin *auctoritates* was, as well as how actually varied his library was: an aspect of the author's humanistic culture that promises to gain more space in the analyses of his more famous vernacular works. One of the most useful parts of the book is the rich section "Notes to the Translation", which occupies almost a fourth of the volume and provides intertextual and explanatory notes as well as an introductory comment for each poem. Since most commentaries

and secondary sources on Ariosto's work in Latin are outdated, out of print, or anyway hard to access for an Anglophone reader, this new resource (opened by an informative Introduction and completed by a thorough Bibliography and Index) represents a gift and an invitation to researchers in the field of Renaissance Studies at large.

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