Ludovico Ariosto. *"My Muse Will Have a Story to Paint." Selected Prose of Ludovico Ariosto.* Trans. with an Introduction by Dennis Looney. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 328. ISBN 978-1-4426-4087-0 (hard cover). \$65.

This is a long-awaited and important contribution for scholars of Italian Renaissance, particularly those interested in Ariosto's administrative and literary works for the House of Este. Ariosto (1474 – 1533) is one the most important Italian poets of the Renaissance. His epic poem, *Orlando furioso*, brought him success and fame during the sixteenth-century and has been recognized as an influential masterpiece from then onwards. Ariosto also composed five plays, seven satires in verse, short lyric poems in Italian and Latin, and a satirical prose work, but all these compositions came to be considered minor contributions in comparison with the epic poem. In addition to literary works, Ariosto left an extensive record of correspondence concerning his administrative duties, literary compositions, and private life.

The present book offers a collection of 214 letters and a satirical prose, *Herbal Doctor*, in English. For his translation of Ariosto's letters, Looney utilized several sources: two editions by Angelo Stella, the first of which was published in 1965 and the revised one in 1984; Antonio Cappelli's editions of 1862 and 1887; an edition of Ariosto's *Opere minori* prepared by Giuseppe Fatini, first published in 1915 and reprinted in 1978; and Mario Santoro's edition of the *Opere minori* published in 1989. As for the translation of *Herbal Doctor*, Looney relied mainly on the critical edition of 1984 by Gabriella Ronchi.

The translation of Ariosto's letters and *Herbal Doctor*, the first in English, reads smoothly and is generously annotated. Ariosto's prose style, enriched with complex syntactic structures, is intentionally modified to create moderately balanced subordinate clauses in English that convey the literal meaning rather than the style. Ariosto's letters, which touch on a variety of topics, are not composed in accordance with epistolary models of Cicero or Petrarch with an intention for future publication, but are written in a style that reflects the bureaucratic narrative of his administrative duties or the conversational tone of everyday life. Looney has categorized Ariosto's correspondence into three sections according to its content. The first section contains letters 1-29, dated from 1498 until 1520. Most of these letters touch on Ariosto's early literary productions and publications. Other letters, written between 1509 and 1520, touch on Ariosto's service as a courtier and diplomat for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este and Duke Alfonso. The next group of letters (30-186), written from 1522 until 1525, deal mostly with Ariosto's duties as a ducal commissioner in the Garfagnana region on the borders between Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, and Lombardy. The letters in this section report mainly on Ariosto's administrative services in a region that was under constant threat from criminals. The final section, letters 187-214 dated from 1528 until 1532, contains correspondence touching on Ariosto's literary productions and publications, as well as on his several works for the stage. In addition, it includes letters written by Ariosto on behalf of his wife Alessandra concerning the forthcoming wedding of one of Alessandra's relatives.

Erbolato, written sometime between 1530 and 1533, is translated as *Herbal Doctor*. It is a satirical piece deriding humanistic views and Neoplatonic philosophy, in particular the proposition that “an ennobling education will lift the human from one level of being to another upwards toward enlightenment” (9). It was composed in the form of a monologue delivered by Master Antonio Faventino who represents a kaleidoscope of several contemporary thinkers and intellectuals whom Ariosto met throughout his life, and it masterfully develops the critique of erudition versus practical knowledge. The monologue is divided into five sections. Looney offers a brief section-by-section summary so as to guide the reader through the work. *Erbolato*, first published posthumously in 1545, enjoyed several subsequent editions but has never been thoroughly studied.

Ariosto’s correspondence offers an important insight into the court poet’s daily life, his administrative duties, and his literary works. His satirical work, *Herbal Doctor*, on the other hand, exemplifies Ariosto’s criticism of contemporary intellectuals and, in particular, of intellectual controversies among members of learned academies and ducal courts. For centuries scholars have ignored the literary value of *Herbal Doctor*, considering it Ariosto’s least significant prose piece. The current translation will certainly bring the work to the attention of English-reading scholars.

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Sergius Kodera. *Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine, and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy*. CRRS Essays and Studies, 23. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010. Pp. 320. ISBN 978-0-7727-2060-3 (paperback). \$28.

Matter matters. Certainly, it did to the Renaissance thinkers explored by University of Vienna philosopher Sergius Kodera. *Disreputable Bodies* offers a series of close readings of fifteenth and sixteenth-century natural philosophers including Leone Ebreo, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Della Porta, and especially Marsilio Ficino. By guiding readers through a marvellous complex of arguments Kodera offers a rich re-thinking of Renaissance metaphysics. Many, though not all, of the topics investigated centre on conceptions of matter: what it was, how it acted, and how it related to non-material entities like form. It is difficult to boil down a book as rich and diverse as this one. But, with that disclaimer, two themes stand out. Kodera explores the metaphors natural philosophers used to describe cosmology, while elsewhere he investigates what he calls ‘go-betweens,’ the intermediaries thought to manage the relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

In terms of metaphors, Kodera finds that Renaissance thinkers describing the universe relied heavily on analogies drawn from the body. Probably unsurprisingly, given the period, such corporeal metaphors were deeply gendered. Yet, even scholars long familiar with this style of rhetoric—ranging nature as feminine or discussing the social order in terms of the body politic—will be intrigued by what