Textual Cultures, of Medieval Italy, edited by William Robins. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. 350. ISBN 97814426427. \$ 70.00.

This eclectic volume, the product of a homonymous 2005 conference, offers a fascinating overview of the variety of textual production and exchange in the Italian Middle Ages. As the essays themselves demonstrate, this variety is functional not only to the number of spheres that generate texts—ecclesiastic, public, legal, literary—but also to the felicitous linguistic heterogeneity of the time. The contributors focus not only on Latin and the rising Italian vernaculars, but also at times on Greek and Hebrew, exposing how Italy's geographic relation to the greater Mediterranean and to Europe finds echo in its many local cultures. Striking too is the fact that the wealth of surviving evidence, which these authors masterfully display, emerges against the backdrop of what was overall a low literacy rate in Italy. At times these written textual cultures bleed into the broader culture of oral transmission, suggesting a symbiosis that will endure beyond the Middle Ages.

The volume contains eight essays, in addition to Robins' introductory piece, on four different topic areas. Robins sets *post quem* and *ante quem* limits as the period following the introduction of writing and prior to the invention of moveable type. His essay is particularly useful as an introduction to the history of the study of medieval textual cultures; readers less familiar with the evolution of the field will find much to gratify them in his survey.

The eight remaining essays are divided into four groups. The subdivisions are somewhat gratuitous, because each essay really does stand alone, and within specific subcategories the two essays have little if anything to say to one another. Starting off, Ronald Witt offers a fascinating review of the rhetorical practices of the two textual cultures that emerge around the ninth century, clerical and notarial, the latter eventually becoming an almost exclusively lay field. Witt ties the evolution of pedagogical curricula to the twelfth-century Investiture Struggle, which he argues led to a weakening of the traditional grammar curriculum and the eventual triumph of the *ars dictaminis* and with it a rhetorical and legal culture that will catalyze the early humanists. Next, Christopher Kleinhenz offers a pocket history of the *tenzone*, the practice of sonnet exchange between two or more poets on any number of popular topics. Kleinhenz's review underscores the widespread nature of this tradition, making the case for closer attention to it as part of a broader investigation of literary and social relations in late-medieval Italy.

Linda Safran's essay, on the forms of public communication in the Salento region of southern Apulia, is truly an eye-opening introduction to the linguistic heterogeneity of this region, which records evidence of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, not to mention the underlying emergent vernacular of which the public communications only give some hints. Maria Bendinelli Predelli looks at codices of Italian *cantari* from the fourteenth century, showing how details of page layout suggest two parallel traditions, one of poems written for narrative purposes, the other of works composed for oral delivery. In this way, she interrogates, with suggestive results, the still-unresolved theories about the origins of the Italian octave.

Nicholas Everett's essay, on Paulinus of Aquileia's *Sponsio episcoporum*, a vow taken by bishops in the see of Aquileia, comes with a diplomatic edition of the *Sponsio* and an English translation. Dating to the Carolingian period, by Everett's analysis the *Sponsio* reflects how the pressure toward literacy in the Carolingian court came to be felt in Aquileia. The text itself, as Everett argues, represents a hybrid of elements from Frankish reform councils, in which Paulinus would have participated, and previously established church documentary practices. Luca Boschetto's essay takes the reader to Florence, where he traces the emergence of the vernacular at the court of the Mercanzia, which came about thanks to a 1355 law prohibiting the use of Latin in court records. Readers interested in the history of the Florentine vernacular in Italy will find this essay riveting.

The last two essays address editorial issues related to medieval texts. The first, Dominique Poirel's piece on the composition of Angela of Foligno's *Memorial*, is a densely argued study of the several manuscripts of the *Liber Angelae*. Poirel convincingly demonstrates the difficulty of producing an "ideal critical edition" of the text because of the clear evidence of post-mortem interventions by Angela's followers. The last essay, by Susanne Lepsius, exposes the processes by which legal texts in the Middle Ages were composed and later reformulated by others. Like Poirel, she concludes that producing a definitive edition of such texts presents serious challenges, given the layers of intervention the manuscripts evidence.

There are a number of useful illustrations, some decidedly better than others. Text pages reproduce decently in black and white, but illustrations requiring color reproduction, such as most of Safran's, tend to reduce to muddled grays. No doubt color plates would have added much to the cost of the volume, but this is a situation in which twenty-first century technology, such as the availability of color reproductions on-line, could be of great benefit to readers and would demonstrate creativity and thoughtfulness on Toronto's part.

My early education as an Italianist featured a significantly circumscribed view of the medieval canon. I often wonder today what my mentor, long dead, would think about the exciting spread of attention to other areas of medieval Italian culture, which so expands our own sense of the vitality of this bygone age. I would like to think that he would appreciate a book like this one, which travels several new avenues along the peninsula. We are indeed lucky to live in a time in which the past expands dramatically before our eyes, thanks to the diligent archaeology of scholars like these.

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Polcri, Alessandro. *Luigi Pulci e la Chimera. Studi sull'allegoria nel Morgante.* Firenze: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2010. Pp. 299. ISBN 9788860321497. € 24.

This is a significant contribution for scholars of Italian Renaissance, in particular for those who are interested in Luigi Pulci's literary works and their impact on literature and scholarships. Pulci (1432-1484) was an Italian poet best known for his