time, will no doubt elicit strong opinions and fierce debates among scholars today.

KEVIN B. REYNOLDS

York University

Goldberg, Edward. *A Jew at the Medici Court. The Letters of Benedetto Blanis Hebreo, 1615-1621.* Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. 328. ISBN 9781442643833. \$85.00 (hardbound).

In the companion volume to his *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence: The Secret World of Benedetto Blanis*, Goldberg makes available to specialist researchers the remarkable series of 219 letters written by the protagonist Benedetto Blanis to his patron, Don Giovanni dei Medici, an illegitimate son of Duke Cosimo. These letters, which constituted the primary evidence for much of Goldberg's earlier volume, are the only known continuous series of letters by an early modern Jew. As such, they are a unique source of information on the relationships between Jewish clients and Christian patrons, on the provisioning of the Medici prince's household, and, most importantly, on the strange and contradictory roles both Benedetto and his Medici patron played in their relationship with each other and other Florentines.

The letters loosely narrate Benedetto's activities and travails in Florence between 1615 and 1621, when Don Giovanni de' Medici was posted in Venice and Benedetto took to writing assiduously to ensure his continued favour. They trace his downfall under the Medici regime, which grew increasingly suspicious of his connections to occult philosophies and other mysterious sources of knowledge. Unfortunately, the letters here constitute only one half of a two-way correspondence. Don Giovanni dei Medici's letters are not extant, as they were confiscated from Benedetto's keeping in a raid on his ghetto home by Florentine police. Benedetto's letters to his patron survived, according to Goldberg, by an accident of history when they were overlooked in a postmortem purge of Don Giovanni's Venetian estates (xii).

Benedetto's lively and personal writing style is a joy to read, and Goldberg's skilful editing of difficult Tuscan dialect make it accessible to specialists in Italian history and literature. Benedetto's story is a strange one, and the light it casts on Jewish-Christian relations in Florence reveals a great deal of intellectual and philosophical exchange between the Jew and his Medici patron. Although many of Benedetto's letters are formulated like petitions, explaining the tribulations he suffered in his business and familial relations, many others refer specifically (or nebulously, sometimes) to the books, manuals and other items of curiosity that Benedetto located and obtained for Don Giovanni, presumably on his requests. These books and other items, Goldberg argues in *Jews and Magic in Medici Florence*, reveal a practice in which Benedetto acted as a middleman between occult producers and the Medici prince. The reproduction of the letters themselves in a skillful manner makes this thesis testable by other interested scholars while opening the door to their use in other avenues of research.

The book is well-edited, with a brief but informative 8-page explanatory

introduction, English summaries at the head of each letter, a bibliography of related works and footnotes explaining the complex web of characters as well as obscure words of dialect. It is appropriate for, and recommended to, specialists and senior graduate students in early modern Italian history and culture.

COLIN ROSE

University of Toronto

***Cultures in Contact. Translation and Reception of I promessi sposi in 19th Century England.* Ed. by Vittoria Intonti and Rosella Mallardi. Bern, Berlin etc: Peter Lang, 2011. Pp. 407. ISBN: 978-3-0343-0688-1. \$100.95.**

This volume is the result of a research project undertaken by members of the University of Bari, ranging from professors to post-doctoral students in the English Department, with specialization, among other areas, in Translation Studies. The opening section, on “Literary and Cultural Context” is a rich overview, by Vittoria Intonti, which looks at the source and target cultures during the time the translations were undertaken, and examines the features which made Italian literature, in this case Manzoni’s novel, attractive to the English speaking world. This included, naturally, non-literary considerations, such as the appeal of Italy for travellers and then the role of Italian refugees in England, like Foscolo and Panizzi (who, incidentally was Professor at University College, not King’s College, before moving to the British Museum). They contributed to the spread of knowledge about Italian culture. Here, as in the rest of the volume, the theoretical works of, among others, Gideon Toury and Lawrence Venuti are used for contextualization.

The second section on “Cultural and Linguistic Intersections” comprises of four essays by Rosella Mallardi. The first offers us a survey of “*I Promessi Sposi*. The State of the Stranlation.” Here French translations play an important role as they had a marked influence on the later English translations and on subsequent American ones, considering both the versions of the ‘ventisettana’ and of the ‘quarantana’. The first English translation of *I Promessi Sposi* was by a Royal Navy Chaplain, Charles Swan; it came out in 1828, it was abridged and was lacking Manzoni’s introduction. The second (1834) appeared as an anonymous work (although actually by Andrews Norton, professor of Biblical Criticism at Harvard), and likewise anonymous were the third (1844, but still of the ‘ventisettana’) and the fourth translations (1845, of the ‘quarantana’). As well as these editions there were adaptations in English for school children and students, similar to editions in French. In fact this section is very valuable for the care it takes discussing the relationship between the French translations and the English ones, noting Manzoni’s role in revising the French editions and providing an interesting survey of the reviews that followed these publications. It also considers the elements that were omitted from the translations—the introduction, as we have seen, but also historical descriptions and digressions and “passages considered unsuitable to young or female readers”(87). Perhaps we could have been told which they are.

Mallardi in later sections examines the intertextual relations between the first