si parla et scrive in Firenze (ca. 1552). Ultimo ad essere introdotto è Benedetto Varchi con l'*Hercolano* (1570), "primo ritratto organico del volgare" (139) dialogo in cui si affronta la questione di cosa sia la lingua, quando e dove ebbe origine la lingua volgare e se questa debba essere chiamata italiana o toscana o fiorentina. L'autrice sottolinea "la grandiosità del progetto di Varchi, che vuole risolvere la questione della lingua attraverso la sintesi tra l'uso vivo di cui si fa esperienza a Firenze e le varie teorie linguistiche su cui si è formato." (123) Accanto a Varchi viene ricordato da ultimo anche Lionardo Salviati con la sua *Orazione in lode de la fiorentina favella* (1564) "erede spirituale di Varchi" (139) che consacra "Padre della lingua" (139).

Il volume si chiude con la bibliografia e l'indice dei nomi. Certo non esaustivo della questione della lingua, cosa molto difficile comunque data la complessità della questione e delle fonti a tal riguardo, il libro si concentra su alcuni elementi chiave del dibattito nel Cinquecento, in particolare sui trattati dialogici dell'epoca, ricostruendone contesto, contenuto e citando accreditati studi accademici sull'argomento. Utile dunque a chi voglia farsi un'idea dell'argomento e dell'importanza che la questione della lingua ha avuto e ancora ha per la storia italiana.

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Axel Erdmann, Alberto Govi, and Fabrizio Govi (eds.). *Ars Epistolica. Communication in Sixteenth Century Western Europe: Epistolaries, Letter-writing, Manuals and Model Letter Books. 1501–1600. With an Introduction by Judith Rice Henderson.* Lucerna, Modena: Gilhofer & Ranschburg, Libreria Alberto Govi di Fabrizio Govi, 2014. Pp. 771. ISBN: 9783033043299. € 150 (hard cover).

This handsomely-bound volume undertakes an ambitious task: the cataloguing, annotation and indexation of over 30,000 letters of various sorts and purposes published as collections, epistolary manuals and model epistles across Europe throughout the sixteenth century. Editors Erdmann, Alberto Govi and Fabrizio Govi have produced an impressive catalogue of epistolary sources that "is mostly focused on sixteenth-century imprints produced in Western Europe, and should give a representative overview on the subject of letter-writing in the sixteenth

century" (XXIV). Their intent is that researchers will rely upon the catalogue as a guide to the "incredibly multifarious insight into a whole century of history, local and nationwide, more or less reliable" that Renaissance epistles offer, at least for the daily lives of princely courts or the halls of humanist academies (XXIV). What they have provided is a massive bibliography of primary and secondary (both contemporary and modern) sources for the study of letter-writing, educational discourses, social relations, political intrigues and intellectual debates taking place at an international level in early modern Europe. As an aside, the editors admit that the collection forms "a representative survey of the printing business of a whole century exemplified by 127 printers from thirty different European towns" (XXV). The collection is impressive, its organization is clear although complex, and it is accessible to students beginning the search for primary research as well as advanced scholars seeking a broad comparative body of literature.

The world of letter-writing in early modern Europe is here nicely contextualized by Judith Rice Henderson of the University of Saskatchewan. Dwelling on the ephemera of modern digital communications leads her to a comparison of letter-writing habits and practices among the ancient writers who inspired Renaissance thinkers, the great writers of the Renaissance itself, and modern scribes sending text into social networks. She begins with the premise that "Europeans of the sixteenth century... deemed letter writing a vitally important skill" (VII). Leaving aside the question of elite intellectualism and its social range, Rice is correct that at least the classically trained carried a sense of the natural and learned skills required for effective prose epistles, the adjustments necessary for distinct audiences and purposes, and the more concrete signs of learned writing such as a high-quality paper. These conventions helped express the "appropriate attitude of authority or deference that were the currency of a hierarchical society" (VII). Letters required both a careful *logos*, argument, and a controlled use of *ethos* and *pathos*, self-presentation and the working of the reader's emotions.

All this seems a long way from Facebook, Twitter and the comments sections of online media outlets. But, Rice reminds us, early modern letters functioned as social media in one very similar way: "any message was potentially public" (VII). This was a fact of physical circumstances as much as a commitment to sharing ideas: Rice argues that the expense and labour required to transport letters from writer to recipient left them open to being opened; indeed, a good messenger was one who was familiar with the contents of a letter and might broadcast its general meaning around the recipients household or royal court. On long-haul journeys,

messenger relays resulted in both the physical and oral transmission of a letter's contents, with the potential for mutation, misattribution or misinterpretation at every step.

Similar too to modern social media is the writer's inability to control a letter's circulation after they have first sent it; early modern readers, impressed by a friend's letter, might copy, transcribe or simply pass it along to a wider audience. Renaissance letter-writers were aware of this, and Rice aptly attributes this awareness to the Renaissance vogue for copying, editing, recreating and simply forging the letters of ancient authors (the issue of forged, falsified and "lost/rediscovered" letters is not addressed).

Rice's introduction argues that the culture of letter-writing was widespread and malleable, that it changed throughout the Renaissance period, and ultimately that it evolved "not only into the modern newsletter... or professional journal, but even into the modern autobiography and novel." By tracing the debates over the role of ancient and vernacular languages in epistle-writing, the shift from a medieval *Ars Dictaminis* to a conscious emulation of classical models and ideals, the great Ciceronian controversies of the Northern Erasmian Renaissance, and the late sixteenth-century move towards a vernacular high literary culture accompanied by a vernacular pedagogy, Rice gives order and structure to the massive documentary catalogue here presented.

In their Preface, the editors, successful book antiquarians all, provide a helpful guide to reading and parsing the catalogue and a brief note on the project's genesis and completion. The catalogue itself presents detailed information for 170 epistolaries and manuals by intellectuals from Antiquari to Zucchi. For each entry, a facsimile of the title page is accompanied by its complete collocation and a physical description of the original binding. Brief descriptions of the work's content in first and subsequent editions are buttressed by a complete index of people and places mentioned or discussed therein. All this is wrapped up nicely in brief biographical notes for each author. Epistolary manuals and model letters are given similar treatment, though they suffice with a substantial description of the contents and a brief biography of the Author. Following the complete catalogue, the collection is listed in chronological order of publication, and we are given a useful list of European printers arranged by town. A full secondary bibliography in English provides scholarly context for the whole collection.

The lovely presentation of this volume is a fine finish on a monumental task. Here Erdmann, Alberto Govi and Fabrizio Govi have gathered a comprehensive

survey of the trade in letters that was a fashionable aspect of sixteenth-century intellectualism. It will be a useful guide to the topic for advanced undergraduate students seeking an entry into the Republic of Letters as well as for scholars at the graduate level and beyond doing advanced research into epistolary and print culture.

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Natalie Crohn Schmitt. *Befriending the Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala. The Comic Scenarios*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2014. Pp. 328. ISBN: 99781442648999. \$80 (hard cover).

Arguably one of the most important theatrical movements in Europe of the sixteenth century, the *commedia dell'Arte* has been the subject of many scholarly inquiries, as well as the topic of many articles, and books. The *commedia dell'Arte*, and, specifically, the comic scenarios of Flaminio Scala, are also the focus of Natalie Crohn Schmitt's *Befriending the Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala. The Comic Scenarios*. Throughout her work Natalie Crohn Schmitt reconstructs and discusses some of the *commedia dell'Arte* scenarios published by troupe manager Flaminio Scala (1547–1624), and provides extensive research into the social and cultural history of sixteenth-century Italy, along with the aesthetic principles of the period. The ultimate purpose is to demonstrate that the *commedia dell'Arte* relied on craftsmanship to the same extent as it relied upon improvisation, consequently elevating the perception and reputation of the genre.

Befriending the Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala. The Comic Scenarios is divided into two main parts: Part One: Context, Culture, and Aesthetics; Part Two: Scenario Reconstructions, including scenario translations by David Harwell. These two sections are preceded by a List of Illustrations and a Preface, and followed by a Conclusion, and Appendix, which includes a List of All Scala Scenarios, Notes, and an extensive Selected Bibliography.

Throughout Chapter One, "Context, Culture, and Aesthetics," Crohn Schmitt lays the foundation for her work; she briefly, but accurately and poignantly explains the importance of the *commedia dell'Arte* and emphasizes its influence on European writers, musicians, artists, and playwrights. Crohn Schmitt