was both taught and learned at the elementary and secondary level in mediaeval and Renaissance Italy, and he has done so *con brio*. To read this fine book is to enrich one's knowledge, to broaden one's perspective, and to be introduced to a tremendously wide range of sources which have never before been showcased, understood, and utilized so effectively.

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Witt, Ronald. *'In the Footsteps of the Ancients': The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*. Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2000. Pp. xiii, 562. ISBN 9-0041-1397-5. (Hardbound); 0-3910-4202-5. (Paper). Euros 48.70; US \$ 49.95.

For a number of reasons, Ronald Witt's impressive study of the origins of Italian humanism, *'In the Footsteps of the Ancients': The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*, will likely remain at the centre of discussions of Italian humanism in the future. Witt has undertaken a substantial revision of previous scholarly opinion on this subject, one that will require that we rethink some of the fundamental assumptions that have hitherto guided the historiography of humanism. His most controversial and compelling argument seeks to displace Petrarch as the putative originator of humanism and to reject a construct that dominated the research of a previous generation of Italian scholars, one that asserted the existence of a "pre-humanism," largely Paduan in character, that was overshadowed by the Petrarchan enterprise and not fully "humanistic." Witt asserts instead that humanistic writers like Albertino Mussato and Lovato dei Lovati, as well as a substantial number of more minor figures, constituted an important group of "lay intellectuals" (1) whose influence can be felt as far into the future as the careers of Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni. Here Witt places special emphasis on Lovato, a Paduan humanist whose early poetry of the 1260s "began the process of putting certain rare authors and texts back in circulation" (100). Witt argues that humanism grew out of grammatical rather than rhetorical studies and that the study and imitation of classical poetry in many ways define the character of Italian humanism in its original phases, pursuits that developed naturally as advanced stages of grammatical inquiry. He reminds us in this context that Petrarch's earliest efforts at imitating ancient authors were poetic in nature and that Petrarch should in general be distinguished from earlier Italian humanists whose work was more abidingly secular in nature. While a distinctly Petrarchan humanism, profoundly ethical in content and fused with Christian elements, became enormously influential on later humanists, Witt makes a strong case for the importance of a more secular form of humanism that preceded Petrarch's career.

The second major revision that Witt proposes to our understanding of the humanist movement places stylistics at the heart of the humanist enterprise. A number of important points are made by Witt in this context: first, the influence of Seneca's works on Paduan humanism becomes a more central fact of this early, "sec-

ular” phase of the humanist movement and secondly, the decline of French influence on the Italian poetic tradition now becomes important negative evidence for Witt’s claim that in Lovato we are now confronted with a genuinely humanist author (he is, Witt boldly asserts, “the founder of Italian humanism” [78]). In some ways, the central point of Witt’s entire study—or at least the one that scholars will have to contend with the most—is that humanism represented a new cultural and literary style more than it did a shift in curricular orientation, the latter interpretation being the one most closely associated with the book’s dedicatee, Paul Oskar Kristeller. Arguing that the rhetorical orientation of Florentine humanism in the early Quattrocento was but one thread of a more complex and inclusive pattern of classical imitation, Witt presents an interpretation of Italian humanism that no longer depends upon a teleological model of development that would require us to lionize the achievements of Bruni and his generation, substantial though they may have been. While classical oratory was clearly a central feature of humanism by this time, it is by no means the whole story of the humanist enterprise, and Witt’s study helps to enrich and deepen our understanding of humanism as a comprehensive, linguistically rooted shift in orientation that had more global effects, both cognitive and affective in nature, on the shaping of early modern consciousness.

While these two arguments, the first one concerning humanism’s chronology and origin, the second one centering on the defining characteristic of style, are certainly the most innovative among Witt’s observations, there are many lesser but equally exciting and refreshing ideas advanced in this rewarding volume. One might point to Witt’s reevaluation of the importance of Giovanni Malpaghini as a source of influence on the young Bruni and other humanists of the early fifteenth century, or the suggestion that by the fifteenth century humanism had become a “status commodity” (447) as well as an instrument of moral instruction, or the many close readings of humanist Latin that analyse patterns of *cursum* and other literary and rhetorical effects, or the closing remark that the humanist absorption of Latin culture did not occur “all at once” but should more accurately be seen as “a conquest of successive Latin literary genres, beginning with poetry” (497). In refusing to be content with comfortable or risk-averse generalizations, Witt’s ample and expansive study of Italian humanism will certainly complicate the future of scholarship, but it is the sort of complication much to be desired.

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Di Maria, Salvatore. *The Italian Tragedy in The Renaissance. Cultural Realities and Theatrical Innovations*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press/London, Associated University Presses, 2001. Pp. 272. ISBN 0-8387-5490-2. US.\$ 46.50.

Scopo di questo volume è quello di seguire l’invito di Marco Ariani nel rivalutare la tragedia italiana del Rinascimento, ma non solo, perché per Di Maria manca ancora una chiara prospettiva delle novità letterarie e teatrali che caratterizzano la tragedia rinascimentale italiana. In maniera specifica manca, sostiene l’autore,