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Ascoli, Albert Russell. A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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or reading you are studying, Foxe's volume is likely to include an example of it. *Acts of Reading* provides scholars with a variety of thoughtful models for interpreting Foxe's numerous and expansive publications and other early modern texts.

GWYNN DUJARDIN, *Queen's University*

Ascoli, Albert Russell.

A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance.

New York: Fordham University Press, 2011. Pp. x, 387. ISBN 978-0-8232-3429-5 (paperback) \$35.

This volume is a substantial study of themes that have preoccupied Ascoli for most of his career. As the Terrill Distinguished Professor of Italian at the University of California, Berkeley, Albert Russell Ascoli has made a place for himself in Italian literary studies based upon thought-provoking interpretations of Petrarch, Dante, and Ariosto. This volume is no different. *A Local Habitation* gathers nine essays from across Ascoli's career (1990–2011) and presents them as a meditation on six major themes or literary preoccupations. At the core of this volume is Ascoli's self-described "enduring obsession with the relations between 'the literary' and 'the historical'" (7), which is played out through investigations of important literary works and their authors' own personal obsessions.

The first essay, entitled "Petrarch's Middle Age," examines Petrarch's evocation of Augustine and Dante as a portal through which to discern the place, be it real, fictionalized, memorialized, or constructed, of this volume's title. However, as with most of these essays there is a greater issue blurring the edges of his argument. Ascoli strives to present Petrarch's own vision of himself while examining the modern identification of Petrarch as the canonical first modern man. This essay embodies one of the volume's major themes: revealing how modern critical discourse has presented certain authors as emblems of historical periods.

Another complementary theme appears in the second essay, entitled "Boccaccio's Auerbach: Holding a Mirror up to *Mimesis*." Here Ascoli focuses

on the issue of periodicity and the literary relations between Boccaccio and Dante. His investigation of Eric Auerbach's assertion that the *Commedia* was a necessary prerequisite to the *Decameron* becomes an investigation of Boccaccio's own marginality and the construction of literary worlds. At the chapter's end, literary reality is fleeting and periodicity seems immaterial. What follows this dissolution of firm historical bounds is an elevation of ambivalence and an emphasis on the themes of dominance and subversion in an essay entitled "Pyrrhus' Rules: Playing with Power in Boccaccio's *Decameron*." Although Ascoli himself notes the essay's preoccupation with inter- and intratextual philology and etymology, most striking is the timelessness of themes (class and gender) in comparison to the preceding essay's focus. This third essay shows Ascoli's facility with the tools of structural analysis and historicization, which functions as a third preoccupation throughout the volume and reappears in two later essays on Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

In the fourth and fifth essays Ascoli turns his focus towards the more public or politicized interactions of Petrarch and Machiavelli through their respective works, *Rerum Familiarum Libri* and *The Prince*. While these essays, entitled "Petrarch's Private Politics" and "Machiavelli's Gift of Counsel," are the clearest examples of historicizing literary works, they focus on the tension of negotiating political place through rhetoric and the difficult performance of authorial roles. Neither author succeeded in his goal, yet their attempts to identify valued and protected positions *vis à vis* local rulers help us to understand the difficulties that authors faced in acquiring and keeping a place in the fickle and constructed world of patronage.

Where the two former essays reflect Ascoli's continued interest in Italian authors and their experiences navigating the winds of change in peninsular politics, the sixth essay, entitled "Ariosto's 'Fier Pastor': Form and History in *Orlando Furioso*," moves into the realm of critique. Here Ascoli explores another more nebulous theme: the way in which authors stand as representations of their society and thus as potential conduits of social criticism. As Ascoli notes, this role is rarely textually explicit, but exists in potential as part of the literary structure — which challenges the reader to uncover the moralizing analogies linking the literary narrative with contemporary events or authorial concerns. Ascoli takes on an equally difficult task in the seventh and ninth essays, which focus on double images in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Again these essays benefit from Ascoli's ability to plumb cinquecento

culture and reveal the authors' conscious and unconscious beliefs. This cultural commentary is set against a narrative structure that is deconstructed etymologically in order to show a rich under-layer of meaning and conflict that draws on age-old themes like death and gender relations.

Readers might find the volume's subtitle, *Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance*, to be a more apt description of Ascoli's work. The nine essays collected here span a full career that brims over with skill, detail, and imagination worthy of the authors whom Ascoli studies.

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Carter, Karen E.

Creating Catholics: Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France.

Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011. Pp. xiii, 314. ISBN 978-0-268-02304-1 (paperback) n.p.

Cahiers de Doléances as sources to understand the Catholic Reformation? Historians have studied these lists of grievances written on the eve of the French Revolution for all sorts of reasons, but Karen Carter's use of them suggests the imaginative and unconventional nature of her book overall. Indeed, *Creating Catholics* offers a re-conceptualization of the periodization of early modern Europe that pulls the 1780s much closer to the 1560s and highlights just how long the changes inspired at the Council of Trent took to come to fruition.

On the face of it, *Creating Catholics* fits nicely within a body of scholarship on the Protestant and Catholic Reformations that seeks to measure the extent and nature of the impact of early modern religious changes, in this case on rural residents of France. If historians in recent years have presented the Catholic Reformation as failed, limited, or at least frustrated in the villages, Carter's book suggests that they need to widen their scope. To do this, Carter takes one facet of the Catholic Reformation, religious education, and examines it over three centuries — thus extending her research into periods traditionally covered by scholars of the Enlightenment and Revolution. Evidence suggests, she argues, that by the end of the eighteenth century, catechism and schoolteachers helped