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Scala, Flaminio.

***The Fake Husband, A Comedy.* Ed. and trans. Rosalind Kerr.**

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 75. Toronto: Iter Press, 2020. Pp. xvii, 174. ISBN 978-0-86698-628-1 (paperback) US\$41.95.

Rosalind Kerr's translation and edition of Flaminio Scala's *Il finto marito* (*The Fake Husband*) finally provides English-speaking scholars and readers access to a text that is pivotal in the history of commedia dell'arte. This volume is the latest addition to a fifteen-year-long endeavour to make dramatic literature by Italian professional actors available in English. The series was inaugurated by the publication of another work by Scala, thirty of his *scenari*, edited and translated by Richard Andrews in *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala: A Translation and Analysis of 30 Scenarios* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008). Andrews's publication was followed by Jon R. Snyder's edition and translation of Giovan Battista Andreini's *Amor nello Specchio* (*Love in the Mirror* [Toronto: Iter Press, 2009]) and further expanded by the publication of Isabella Andreini's *Mirtilla, A Pastoral: A Bilingual Edition*, edited by Valeria Finucci and translated by Julia Kisacky (Toronto: Iter Press, 2018). These works are an indispensable resource and complement the critical studies on commedia dell'arte produced by Anglo-American scholars in the last two decades.

The volume is in two parts that present critical and textual material respectively. The first part of the volume is an introduction that contextualizes the work and its author. As Kerr points out, this comedy provides "a broader understanding of how commedia dell'arte developed from its beginning as buffoonery to its maturity as a disciplined dramatic form" (34), for the scripted play is an expanded version of one of Scala's *scenari*, *Il marito* (*The Husband*). *The Fake Husband* retains the original contribution of each of the actors—and actresses in particular—who performed *Il marito* and, by means of their improvisations, collaboratively developed the action and dialogue of the scripted play. In this rich and comprehensive introduction, the editor also highlights the metatheatrical dimension of the play: Scala portrays himself as the mastermind servant Scaramuccia and gives the character playmaking powers that mirror his own real-life function as *capocomico* (leader of a theatre company). The interaction between *The Fake Husband* and its source text is extensively addressed by Kerr who develops her arguments on this matter while taking into account important scholarly contributions such as those

of Richard Andrews (noted above) and Tim Fitzpatrick (*The Relationship of Oral and Literate Performance Processes in the Commedia dell'Arte: Beyond the Improvisation/Memorisation Divide* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995]). The inclusion of this text in *The Other Voice* series speaks to the allegations made in the play concerning the treatment of women: the fake husband is, in fact, a woman, fictitiously married to another woman to escape a forced marriage. Under the comedic veneer, the play deals with women's resistance to male tyranny and their search for "freedom to pursue their own desires" (1). Protofeminist claims are not new to the dramaturgy of Italian professional performers, something that perhaps the reader could have been made aware of.

Beyond providing an in-depth analysis of the specific features of the text and its production history, this volume offers the readers a detailed introduction to Scala's life and works, paying special attention to the artistic and literary networks he was part of and his ties with Florentine, Mantuan, and Venetian nobility. Kerr refers to Scala's long-lasting connection with Francesco and Isabella Andreini and offers a taste of his activity as *capocomico* by reviewing some key events related to his theatrical practice. By analyzing Scala's relationship with his patron, Don Giovanni de' Medici, Kerr convincingly argues that *The Fake Husband* was the result of a specific commission by the patron, who intended to benefit from Scala's success among the Florentine academic and courtly audience to pave the way for his own return to court. Building on the facts of Don Giovanni de' Medici's private life, Kerr advances the hypothesis that "his attempts to get [his partner] Livia Vernazza's first marriage annulled so that he could marry her legitimately might have attracted him to this play" (36) and encouraged its publication.

The translation, complete with explanatory footnotes, makes up the second part of the volume. Based on the Italian modern edition of the play by Laura Falavolti (*Commedie dei Comici dell'Arte* [Turin: UTET, 1982]), it is driven by "a search for equivalent modern idioms to capture seventeenth-century expressions" (34). The translator chose not to add stage directions in order to allow the reader to pay undivided attention to the word on the page, and chose to retain the titles and form of address used by the characters in order to stress the importance of class markers in the early modern period. Despite some inaccuracies (e.g., "meritevole di comparirle davanti": "worthy to make future comparisons to," 39; "si darebbe loro il premio con le meluzze": "it wouldn't be considered unusual," 43), the translation achieves the overall

purpose of providing a workable play script that can be performed and succeeds in conveying a sense of the ensemble effort that characterizes commedia dell'arte performances.

The Fake Husband is a welcome addition to our bookshelves. It deepens our knowledge of early modern Italian theatre. It lets us hope for other future editions and translations of works by professional performers that might give an English reader a full view of the revolutionary nature of their thinking.

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