

Geschichte der neulateinischen Literatur: Vom Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart.

Martin Korenjak.

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It is a daring enterprise to write a concise history of such a vast subject as Neo-Latin literature. Not only does it comprise millions of texts, thousands of authors, and all of Europe and the colonies, but it also covers a period of six hundred years, from 1400 up to

the present day. It is indeed such a huge undertaking that it has been accomplished by a single person only two times before: in 1944 Paul Van Tieghem published his *La littérature latine de la Renaissance*, covering only the first era of Neo-Latin literature (until 1700), and in 1997 Walter Ludwig wrote his essay “Die neuzeitliche lateinische Literatur seit dem Renaissance” (in *Einleitung in die lateinische Philologie*, ed. Fritz Graf [1997]: 326–56). Korenjak has succeeded very well in providing us with such an overview. He could—and did—fall back on two recent overviews of Neo-Latin culture, *Brill’s Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, edited by Philip Ford, Charles Fantazzi, and myself (2014), and *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, edited by Stephan Tilg and Sarah Knight (2015). As such, this book fits in this wider trend of recent years of spreading the advancing knowledge of Neo-Latin—resulting also in a state of the field by Craig Kallendorf in this journal (*RQ* 69.2 [2016]: 617–29).

Korenjak completed his task by dividing his study into two parts, preceded by an introduction in which he treats the general question of the nature of Neo-Latin literature. He discusses both constituents of this combination: “Neo-Latin” as opposed to medieval Latin, and “literature,” having a much broader range than belles lettres, and including scientific works and treatises on politics, philosophy, and history, to name but a few branches. This extended scope is the main difference between his study and those overviews produced earlier by Van Tieghem and Ludwig.

The first part, “Geschichte” (“History”), is subdivided into five periods: “Humanism and Renaissance (1300–1520),” “The Age of Confessionalization (1520–1618),” “The Seventeenth Century,” “The Enlightenment (Eighteenth Century),” and “The Moderns (1800 to Present).” This division is self-explanatory, be that “The Age of Confessionalization” could suggest the period when most Neo-Latin texts were religious or steeped in theology—which was not the case. The second part, “Bedeutung” (both “meaning” and “importance”), treats a series of thematic topics: pedagogy and didactic; translation and letters (“Building Bridges”); the belles lettres; history; religion (“From Struggles of Faith to Tolerance”); politics (“Between Reason of State and Utopia”); and the Scientific Revolution. Korenjak ends his book with an “Ausblick” (“outlook into the future”). In two pages, he sketches both the difficulties of writing a history of Neo-Latin literature and the difficulties in making Neo-Latin texts known to scholars of other branches or the “general public.” His book is an attempt—and, I would say, a successful one—to make Neo-Latin culture more widely known.

Korenjak gives a lucid description of each period, and Neo-Latin culture is presented as it spreads from Italy to the other European—and extra-European—countries. Its development from an age of discovery and mastering classical languages and cultures to ages of consolidation and waning is traced, while for all ages the works are positioned in relation to classical literature. The impact of the printing press is also fully taken into account. The relation with contemporary literature in the vernaculars is dealt with, in particular in the chapters on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literatures, and in the chapter “Building Bridges,” on translations, but this treatment remains somewhat superficial. The topic of translation also features in the chapter on the moderns, which, however, reads more like

a regret of the demise of Latin culture. But even from these passages, the image arises of a literature written in a tension between classical reception and contemporary issues.

The division chosen—history and themes—unavoidably results in a certain degree of overlap, for obvious reasons, since history and themes cannot be neatly divided. However, Korenjak has accomplished a great achievement in writing a history of Neo-Latin literature that manages to discuss the important authors, issues, and themes in a well running narrative. Once more, Korenjak makes glaringly clear that a scholar researching Western culture cannot leave aside Neo-Latin culture.

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