

of the history of Nola (Vitale), as well as those related to festivals and traditions (Imbriani).

In addition to the analytical essays, the volume contains a series of appendixes: a bibliographical note on *De Nola*; an index of the sections in the sixteenth-century edition, paired with transcriptions of some of the passages frequently cited by the authors; and a bibliography and index of persons' names. The book has seventy-one black-and-white illustrations. The topics covered and the disciplines involved range from social history to art history, from philology to literature—although the volume is aimed at a specialized audience, experts in many fields will find the research of interest.

The authors analyze the sixteenth-century text with impeccable rigor. Thanks to a series of systematic, critical investigations and the compilation of a rich bibliography, *De Nola* has been revitalized for future research. An accurate reconstruction of Leone's milieu—which included literary figures, scholars, aristocrats, and artists—grants proper weight to a figure who has thus far received only limited attention. The principal challenge of this book lies on the interpretative level. Focused on a city with a sixteenth-century population of 4,000, *De Nola* is presented as a work pertaining to European humanism more broadly: it did, in fact, receive a positive reception from international men of letters, such as Erasmus, Pietro Summonte, and, later, Leandro Alberti. In page after page, we leave behind the borders of Nola and find ourselves projected onto sixteenth-century Europe: from the Venice of the League of Cambrai to the world of sixteenth-century publishing and the frenetic mechanisms of artistic commissions. Ultimately, there is much merit in this work: fixing its lens on *De Nola*, it presents a highly original picture of the period and cleverly plays with various aspects of cultural history, demonstrating in an exemplary manner the importance of portraying the Renaissance from hitherto little explored perspectives.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.388

De l'orator au secrétaire: Modèles épistolaires dans l'Europe de la Renaissance.
Maria Cristina Panzera.

Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 585. Geneva: Droz, 2018. 454 pp. \$82.80.

The main objective of Panzera's very substantial book is to reconstruct a long and complex tradition that transformed letter writing into a new genre, manifested by the publication of a large number of treatises on epistolography and letter collections (both in Latin and vernacular) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in Italy particularly. As its subtitle indicates, this book aims to explain the evolution from the model of the orator, taken from antiquity, to the new figure of the secretary. To this figure Francesco Sansovino dedicated the celebrated *Del Secretario* (1564), meant to teach how to

properly write letters of any kind and to provide models and illustrious examples, such as copies of letters by princes, and the titles that had to be used in addressing all people, from noblemen to commoners.

Sansovino's work was addressed to the head of an office charged with the delicate duty of public communication. However, it was not just the secretary who needed instruction on how to properly write a letter: the abundance of letters still preserved in libraries and archives prove the importance of their exchange as a social and cultural practice in the early modern age, very well known by all historians. Sansovino's work had great success, but it was not entirely original. Not only did it belong to a long tradition rooted in classical epistolography and the teaching of rhetoric, but the groundwork was prepared by a large group of works, including Erasmus's *De Conscribendis Epistolis* (On letter writing). Along with Erasmus, and possibly others, the Italian humanist Francesco Negro (Franciscus Niger, 1452–1523) seems to have provided a direct model for Sansovino's work, with his *Opusculum Scribendi Epistolas* (Little work on letter writing), first published in 1488.

Seven chapters form the main section of Panzera's book, which opens with an introduction to the field of studies that prepared the context for a wide reconstruction such as the one under proposal. The first chapter provides an overview of the flourishing of letter writing in the sixteenth century, when publications appeared that served various purposes, including self-promotion and avoiding censorship. It was in this context that Sansovino published his work, which is analyzed in depth in the final chapters (187–268). In the central section of the book, important questions are addressed about classical and medieval sources; the evolution of the models; the role played by education and teaching practices; and the most influential authors. Much attention is given to Francesco Negro's treatise (99–164), in order to assess its actual influence and to ascertain whether there were elements of continuity (from late medieval teaching to early modern practices) that coexisted with new trends (represented by Erasmus). Negro wrote his book for students of law in Padua, who wished to learn how to master not only the Latin of oral communication (the high register of the speech) but also the more familiar register, as found in Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* (Letters to his family, 106).

Negro arranged the text in three sections: a treatise on letter writing, including models and formulas; a collection of grammar rules; and a list of titles for addressees. Many editions followed the first one in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: eighty-four are listed in the introduction of the final section, which offers a valuable comparison of the models taken from both Negro's and Sansovino's texts (279–376). There are some imprecisions in the list of editions: the identifier assigned to them in bibliographies is not given, which makes it troublesome to ascertain possible discrepancies (e.g., why some fifteenth-century editions are not in the ISTC); also, the editions printed in 1500 are listed under the sixteenth century. However, this does not affect in any way an overall appreciation of the work. The wide perspective and the amount and quality of information provided make Panzera's book a very profitable read for a broad audience of

early modern historians, especially those interested in cultural and social history, including the history of education, of literature (both Italian and Neo-Latin), and of the book.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.389

Medievalism and Political Rhetoric in Humanist Historiography from the Low Countries (1515–1609). Coen Maas.

Proteus: Studies in Early Modern Identity Formation 7. Turnhout: Brepols, 2018. xx + 542 pp. €125.

Studies of medievalism usually begin in the century that gave us the term *medieval*, which was coined in the 1830s. In this book, Coen Maas examines the work of medievalism in the era when this periodizing construct was first being theorized and put into practice among humanists, and he does so by focusing on one intellectually fertile region that was undergoing dramatic political, social, and religious changes. Throughout the Low Countries, and within specific cities or provinces, the rhetorical uses of the medieval past both reflected and advanced a surprisingly varied number of projects.

Two substantial introductory chapters set up the argument. The first surveys European humanists' formulations of the *medium ævum* that separated classical antiquity from their own contemporary epoch (variously defined), revealing the shared vocabulary, narrative strategies, and intertextual citations that characterized these frameworks. In the second, Maas sketches the generic conventions of humanist historiography in the Low Countries, and the expectations that historians and their readers shared. The next five chapters comprise a series of careful case studies chosen to highlight uses of the medieval past in different works of history. In each, astute close readings of humanist Latin texts are accompanied by very clear English translations and explanations of the conventions that undergird the author's rhetorical choices—making it possible (even for those without any knowledge of Latin) to see how these texts were constructed, and how they would have been understood by a wider intellectual community.

In 1516–17, the Gouda alderman Reynier Snoy produced a *Historia Hollandie* (circulated in manuscript) that depicted that medieval county as a worthy rival of classical antiquity, not its dark successor. He also stressed the peaceful transfer of dynastic power as crucial to its economic prosperity and liberty, here defined as freedom from burdensome financial obligations of the kind that were being imposed, in his own day, by Habsburg rule. Here, there is indeed a break with the medieval past, but it is an unfortunate one. Produced a decade later, the printed *Cronica Brabantiae Ducum*, by Adrianus Barlandus, was a history of the duchy of Brabant from its seventh-century origins up to the year of publication (1526). A professor of Latin at Louvain and a member