

Jan Bloemendal and Howard B. Norland, eds. *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe*.

Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe 3. Leiden: Brill, 2013. xiii + 794 pp. \$228. ISBN: 978-90-04-25342-1.

This handsomely produced collection of essays constitutes the third volume in the Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe series, and is offered by the editors

as an “overview” and “introduction” tracing the development of Neo-Latin drama from the late fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. Although each of the ten essays handles a specific country or region, there are pairs that overlap or divide drama along confessional lines: Cora Dietl’s “Neo-Latin Humanist and Protestant Drama in Germany” with Fidel Rädle’s “Jesuit Theatre in Germany, Austria and Switzerland”; Mathieu Ferrand’s “Humanist Neo-Latin Drama in France” with Jean-Frédéric Chevalier’s “Jesuit Neo-Latin Tragedy in France.” How such drama is positioned in relation to other kinds of Neo-Latin writing may now be conveniently explored in the *Brill Encyclopedia of the Neo-Latin World* (2014), another compendious and accessible work marking the growth of interest in postmedieval Latin writing.

Each well-structured chapter is broadly chronological (some also work through generic divisions), and each ends with suggestions for further reading and an appendix identifying the main Neo-Latin dramatists, the editions of the most important works, and related criticism. Norland’s chapter, “Neo-Latin Drama in Britain,” supplies a further appendix listing “Neo-Latin Plays in Britain to 1642” and “English Jesuit Neo-Latin Drama on the Continent.” For an introduction or overview, the volume’s chapters are long: putting aside the shorter treatments of “Central and Eastern European Countries” by Jan Bloemendal, and Raija Sarasti-Wilenius’s “Latin Drama in the Nordic Countries,” most span well over seventy pages, one more than a hundred. Yet as each chapter proves, there is a good deal to cover, and the generous allocation of space allows, in the best cases, the selected plays to be both usefully described (classical and medieval models and sources, consideration of genre in relation to theory, plot outlines, structure, occasion, performance details, publication, and so forth) and, more valuably, discussed within the larger narratives and interpretive contours registering changes in the political, cultural, and literary climates that fostered them.

Where recent critical collections, such as those edited by Bloemendal and Ford (*Neo-Latin Drama: Forms, Functions, Receptions* [2008]) and Ford and Taylor (*The Early Modern Cultures of Neo-Latin Drama* [2013]), have offered studies of specific plays and dramatic topics, *Neo-Latin Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe* aims to be comprehensive, and gathers together a vast bibliography of works cited. Further suggestions for reading under specific subheadings might have been helpful, especially in the editors’ well-judged introduction (“Contexts, Contents and Currents”), which efficiently raises an array of pertinent concerns to guide the reader. Moreover, the impulse toward coverage, a virtue of each essay, seems to have precluded more than a few extended quotations from plays, which, when they are offered, illuminate the discussion and prompt readers more directly toward further engagement. The differences between chapters in part highlight the varying degrees of scholarly investment in each country’s corpus of Neo-Latin drama (and Neo-Latin writing more generally), as well as the degree to which Neo-Latin drama developed distinctive national or regional characteristics. Norland’s, for example, focuses predominantly on plays written and performed at the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge (was there any engagement with Neo-Latin drama in Scotland?),

whereas the chapters by Chevalier, and Joaquín Pascual Barea's on Spain, Portugal, and Latin-America, for instance, repeatedly draw the reader back to schoolroom practices, where writers and their audiences were first exposed to ancient dramatists. Equally, the Jesuits' exploitation of drama — or, as Rädle stresses, theater, with all its complexity of corporate production — in the development of Latin eloquence and the cultivation of Catholic piety opens up particularly resonant consideration of the relationship between the rejuvenation of classical models and the medieval traditions of religious drama (mystery and morality). The essays display an active and thought-provoking engagement with recent critical work, while amplifying particular interests; for Chevalier, these include consideration of the meters in which drama was written in imitating classical models, and the shift from schoolroom study to courtly performance. Another important topic of wider interest common to several essays is the productive, bilateral relationship between Neo-Latin, or academic, drama and vernacular, or popular, drama.

While some of the essays provide clear assessments of the state of research, this is implicit in the collection as a whole, which consummately captures the “multiplicity of complex combinations” available in the huge corpus of early modern Neo-Latin drama and provides timely encouragement and dependable foundations for further work.

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