Philip Ford and Andrew Taylor, eds. *The Early Modern Cultures of Neo-Latin Drama.*

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The essays in this volume arise from a symposium held in 2007 by the Cambridge Society for Neo-Latin Studies, the purpose of which was to investigate the contexts in which this distinctly nonpopular form of drama was written and performed and to explore, as the editors indicate in their introduction, the hybrid nature of Neo-Latin drama, which frequently did not understand classical drama to be its generic antecedent, but which borrowed quite often from vernacular traditions of farce and satire. Not surprisingly, much of this drama arose immediately from the pedagogical context of humanistic classrooms, though in a few instances we discover that authors attempted to connect their literary efforts to more public and even polemical concerns in the wider civic and religious culture of the sixteenth century. Not all of the thirteen essays published in this volume succeed in producing arguments that connect their dramatic examples to specific cultural contexts, so the volume has a somewhat uneven character. However, the most successful essays bear mention, as some of them have rich bibliographies and stake out new possibilities for research in the field of Neo-Latin studies.

Olivier Pédeflous's essay on the learned French humanist Ravisius Textor splendidly lays out a paradigm for understanding the school drama of this author by suggesting its use as a sort of advanced pedagogic tool for introducing students to less common Latin vocabulary terms, especially the sort of words (toponyms, mythological names, and so forth) that students would encounter in reading classical epics. He sees Textor's productions, both in his dramatic pieces and in some poems that he discusses, as closely linked to the mentality that gave rise to Poliziano's famously obscure *Sylvae* (which served as academic *praelectiones*). He suggests, in effect, that Textor was deliberately creating a sort of *théâtre érudit* for his students, teaching them the literary value of *copia* and *varietas*.

Though more of a summary than a contextual analysis, Howard Norland's essay on John Foxe's apocalyptic comedy *Christus Triumphans* does succeed in highlighting the degree to which its academic audience may have had anxiety about the immediate future during the troubled years of the Marian regime in the England of the 1550s. Two essays examine the Jesuit use of Neo-Latin school drama: Judi Loach's essay on seventeenth-century contexts, though somewhat later in its focus than most of the essays in the volume, will be of special interest to students of emblem literature and puts emphasis on the festive elements of this drama, while Joaquín Barea's essay on the Jesuit Bartholomaeus Bravo points out that school *progymnasmata*, though never actually performed, served as exercises in a dramatic form to help elucidate the various elements involved in oratorical composition and delivery. Jan Bloemendal's essay on the vernacular *Rederijkerskamers*, or rhetoricians' chambers, active in the civic culture of the Netherlands in the Renaissance, is the only essay in the volume that shows connections between

Neo-Latin drama and the vernacular, though as he acknowledges, the linkages were limited. Finally, one of the best essays in the volume is that of Sarah Knight, who carefully traces the (limited) dramatic career of Robert Burton. Burton, she argues, probably suppressed his now-lost Neo-Latin play *Alba* because it had been received badly — King James having attempted to leave the theater in the middle of its (only) performance in 1605. Burton's next attempt, *Philosophaster*, was more successful and echoed more closely the satirical approach to learning that Burton enumerated in his famous "Digression on Scholars" in the *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. She suggests that King James, too, was aware of the sometimes disconnected nature of intellectual life to the world and that a statement of his upon visiting the Bodleian Library — that he would have been a "university man" had he not been the king — would have reminded his audience of the similar sentiments of Alexander when he greeted the philosopher Diogenes.

One hopes to see a few of the other essays developed more fully in the future, as they treat figures about whom Neo-Latinists will want to know more: mention should be made here of Elia Borza's preliminary investigation of attempts to translate the difficult choruses of Sophocles into Latin by the nephew of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Alessandro Pazzi, while the satirical efforts of a Benedictine monk of the seventeenth century from Salzburg, Simon Rettenpacher, treated in Veronika Oberparleiter's essay, hold promise for students of Renaissance literature interested in Menippean satire.

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