

Christoph Pieper. *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere: Cristoforo Landinos, "Xandra" zwischen Liebe und Gesellschaft.*

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The book under review here represents the obligatory publication of the author's German doctoral dissertation. *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere*, however, offers far more than we have a right to expect from anyone's first book.

Beginning in the 1980s a group of scholars (principally Cardini in Italy, Lentzen in Germany, and Field and Kallendorf in the United States) have solidified Landino's position as a major figure in Quattrocento humanism. The *Xandra*, his poetry collection, has just appeared in a new edition (edited by Mary P. Chatfield) in the I Tatti Renaissance Library and is regularly praised in handbooks for its seminal position in the development of Neo-Latin lyric poetry. Some good articles (e.g., by Charlet) have

appeared on it of late, but surprisingly, Pieper's book is the first full monographic treatment of the *Xandra*. Pieper begins from the premise, articulated persuasively by Roland Greene and others, that the lyric is not, as traditionally conceived, a refuge from political reality, but is as implicated in the discourse of power as any other literary form. This being the case, what social work, Pieper asks, was the *Xandra* designed to do? It turns out that while Landino was revising his poetry collection, he was angling for a professorial appointment at the *Studio Fiorentino* at the time when the Medici were solidifying their hold on the institutions of Florentine life, including the university. The *Xandra*, then, serves as the means by which Landino secured his place in the world around him, first by singing the praises of the new Rome and its Medici rulers as it passed from a republic to a new form of government appropriate to its growing power in the world, then by positioning its author as the *vates*, the poet-prophet, of that power. This is all done with a sensitive eye on the poetry as poetry. Like any good humanist, Landino worked by imitation, and Pieper traces carefully his debt to the elegiac poets, to Horace and Virgil, and to Petrarch, on the one hand, and to Neoplatonic philosophy, on the other. But unlike many of the lesser poets whose efforts litter European libraries today, Petrarch revived his ancient sources in modern dress. In contrast to the Greek-centered model of Johannes Argyropoulos, Landino put forward a Latin version of Platonism that centered on Cicero and his sense of civic responsibility. Like Petrarch, Landino believed that the Platonic *furor* of poetry should lead to a higher reality, but for him the state replaced God as the ultimate goal of love lyric. In this way the *Xandra* serves to link Landino to Medici Florence and to solidify his position within it as a key part of his authorial self-fashioning.

The attentive reader is by now hearing clearly the voices of Foucault and New Historicism in all this, and Pieper acknowledges freely his debt to Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose in particular. If one were inclined to quibble with this part of his analysis, one might note that most of the Anglophone theory cited here comes from the '80s and has something of a dated air about it. But one does not expect to see the doctoral dissertation of a German classicist anchored in Anglo-American literary theory of any sort, and Pieper deserves credit for the subtlety with which he integrates theory and practice. The theoretical points he makes are never forced, but arise naturally from the poetry he is analyzing and contribute significantly in turn to our appreciation of that poetry. A logical consequence of Pieper's approach is that his analysis extends more widely than is customary in discussions of the lyric genre, including other poets of the early Italian Renaissance (Beccadelli, Marrasio, Enea Silvio Piccolomini) but also extends to intellectual issues like Bruni's civic humanism and the supposed Roman origins of Florence. The result is a book that will remain the definitive study of Landino's *Xandra* for many years to come.

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