

REVIEW ESSAY

Recent Trends in Neo-Latin Studies

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INTRODUCTION

THE YEARS 2014–16 will mark the appearance of not one, not two, but three new major reference works in the field of Neo-Latin studies. Since this is the time when academic publishers are offering handbooks and companions to almost everything, the appearance of these three new works might not seem significant; but in fact it suggests that the field has finally achieved real recognition in the scholarly world. People in other fields have been reading works written in Latin during the Renaissance and afterward continuously for some 700 years, but it was not until 1971 that a group of like-minded scholars organized a congress in Leuven and founded the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies, with the first modern *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, edited by IJsewijn (and Sacré, who contributed to volume 2 of the second edition), appearing six years later. That this companion has endured for almost forty years testifies to its merits, but the simultaneous appearance of three replacements signals a new maturity for Neo-Latin studies.

To make some sense out of what has happened here, I'll begin by surveying recent work in Neo-Latin that remains anchored in its origins as a marginal field within modern academic life. I will then turn to work that is more in line with what is appearing in adjacent disciplines, with a focus on the sorts of methodological concerns that characterize a maturing field. Next I will consider the role of manuscripts and early printed books in the study of Neo-Latin, followed by some final observations on how computers are changing the way in which Neo-Latinists conduct their business as they look to the future.

A MARGINAL ENTERPRISE

Notwithstanding recent advances, scholarship in Neo-Latin is still characterized to a certain extent by its place on the peripheries of modern academic life: an actual department of Neo-Latin, for example, is a very rare thing, and many publishers remain hesitant to print a monograph devoted to an obscure figure in what they see as a marginal field that lacks a firm institutional base. In this

environment essays are easier to place than books, so that compared to fields like history and the modern literatures, a disproportionate amount of important work appears as articles. Properly conceived, collections of articles can have a wide appeal, so that important essay collections like Bloemendal and Ford's; de Beer, Enenkel, and Rijser's; and de Landtsheer and Nellen's have recently appeared, along with Houghton and Manuwald's volume devoted to Neo-Latin poetry in the British Isles. A kind of essay collection that remains especially important in Neo-Latin studies is the *Kleine Schriften*, a volume containing the shorter writings of prominent individuals, especially those who were active in establishing the field and guiding its initial development. Probably the most notable example here is the three works of Walther Ludwig, who has been active since the 1971 Leuven meeting and continues to publish voluminously as he approaches his ninetieth year. Notice should also be taken of the two volumes of Liliana Monti Sabia and Salvatore Monti, which collect the work of two lifetimes on Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, a major Neapolitan writer. As one might expect in this environment, *Festschriften* to mark the retirements or birthdays of such scholars are also important, with notable volumes appearing recently to honor Charles Fantazzi, Cesare Vasoli, and Gilbert Tournoy and Monique Mund-Dopchie.¹

Many of these essay collections derive ultimately from conferences. Especially important are the proceedings of the triennial meetings of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies (IANLS), the last two of which were edited by Steiner-Weber, and Steiner-Weber and Enenkel; each of these volumes contains dozens of papers on Neo-Latin topics. Not all the papers delivered at IANLS meetings, however, go into the proceedings: important collections that began at these meetings have recently been published on humanist disputation, edited by Laureys and Simons, and Neo-Latin drama, edited by Bloemendal and Ford. The funding situation for European academics, in which research money is often tied to organizing a conference and publishing the proceedings, has allowed industrious individuals like Karl A. E. Enenkel to support the work of several groups of individuals, which has led in turn to three recent essay collections, of his own and with colleagues, in three different fields. The big money, as it were, goes to group projects like *Il ritorno dei classici nell'Umanesimo*, with forty-three members throughout Italy, and Collaborative Research Centre 644: *Transformations of Antiquity*, with more than sixty scholars centered in Berlin, each of which publishes conference proceedings and other books like the two nice recent editions of works by Giannozzo Manetti, and a volume edited by Helmuth Schirrmeyer, and Schlelein, *Historiographie des Humanismus*. Other noteworthy conference volumes that have appeared recently are Deneire's on Neo-Latin and the vernacular; La Brasca and Trottmann's on humanism from

¹See Deitz, Kircher, and Reid; Caroti and Compagni; Sacré and Papy.

Petrarca to Alberti; Leitgeb, Toussaint, and Bannert's on Florentine Neoplatonism; Modigliani, Osmond, Pade, and Ramminger's collection on Pomponio Leto; Rossi's on Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla; and *La vita e il mondo di Leon Battista Alberti*.

This is not to say, of course, that other kinds of books are not important; indeed, a traditional genre of Neo-Latin scholarship is the critical edition of a text, especially one for which no modern edition exists. Given how much was written in Latin during the Renaissance, many of these editions function to rescue from virtual oblivion such writers as István Brodarics (Brodericus), a Hungarian bishop who wrote letters to diplomats and humanists; Dermot O'Meara, the author of a five-book hexameter text edited by Edwards and Sidwell that celebrates the military achievements of Thomas Butler, Tenth Earl of Ormond; Johannes Michael Nagonius, a fifteenth-century Italian itinerant poet studied by Paul Gwynne; and the genuinely obscure Andrzej Wolan, secretary to the grand duke of Lithuania and an eminent Calvinist theologian in his day. Some of the recently published editions are of better-known authors (e.g., John Barclay, Joseph Justus Scaliger, Marc Antoine Muret, Julius Casear Scaliger, and Gerardus Joannes Vossius), while special attention should be paid to ongoing projects designed to publish the complete works of important Neo-Latin writers like Desiderius Erasmus (including the translated *Collected Works of Erasmus*), Francesco Petrarca, John Calvin, and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda.

Monographs, of course, do appear. Especially important are dissertations, which in Germany still have to be published in order for a candidate to receive the doctorate; Christoph Pieper and Ruth Monreal, for example, have begun promising academic careers by publishing fine dissertations. Among anglophone publishers, Harvard University Press deserves special praise for being willing to take the occasional chance on a Neo-Latin monograph, as two successful books, Nauta's on Lorenzo Valla and Palmer's on the reception of Lucretius, show.

A MATURING FIELD

Although some publishing patterns in Neo-Latin studies are still tied to its relatively recent origins as a field of study, things have changed quite noticeably within the last few years. The International Association for Neo-Latin Studies will add its one thousandth member at some point over the next few months, and while most members hold primary professional appointments in a related field, there are Neo-Latin chairs in Bonn and Münster; a research institute, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies, in Innsbruck; a course of study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at Cambridge; and new doctoral programs being planned at the University of Chicago and Johns Hopkins University. There are several journals devoted exclusively or primarily to Neo-Latin: *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch*, *Neo-Latin*

News, Studi Umanistici Piceni, and *Archivum Mentis*; mention should also be made of a Spanish journal that included a lot of Neo-Latin material, *Silva: Estudios de humanismo y tradición clásica*, which suspended publication in 2010, although with the hope that resources would be found to resume. There are also a number of presses that publish regularly in the field (Leo S. Olschki, Librairie Droz, Leuven University Press, Brill Academic Publishers, and the Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici at the Università degli Studi di Messina), along with several series devoted to Neo-Latin work (Noctes Neolatinae, Europa Humanistica, Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae, Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia, and Officina Latina: Selected Writings from the Neo-Latin World). And as the example of the Renaissance Society of America shows, scholarship in Neo-Latin now finds a regular home in such general-interest publications as *Renaissance Quarterly* and the RSA Texts and Studies Series.

As the field has matured, the vision of what constitutes Neo-Latin studies has also expanded. In theory, anything written in Latin since the time of Petrarca has always qualified, but in practice most of the founders of the modern discipline of Neo-Latin studies were scholars in the humanities who tended to study what they already knew something about. Even in the revised version of IJsewijn and Sacré's *The Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, the sections devoted to areas outside the humanities constitute less than 25 percent of part 2. In Ford, Bloemendal, and Fantazzi's *Brill's Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, however, the proportions are reversed, so that less than 25 percent of the "Macropaedia" is devoted to literary genres, with the remainder covering language and education, printing, the arts, philosophy, the sciences, theology, law, and Latin in the Americas. In part this reflects a change in how literary studies are currently being conducted, with many researchers in literature departments studying texts that would not have interested them when IJsewijn and Sacré were revising the original companion in the nineties. But it also reflects the fact that Neo-Latinists who have been forced to find institutional homes outside their primary field have influenced the work that is being done in these other disciplines, and this in turn has led to an expansion of what is seen to constitute Neo-Latin. The roots of the field remain in the humanities, but I expect that over the coming years, more and more scholars will follow in the footsteps of the editors of *Brill's Encyclopaedia* and begin filling in more of the nonliterary outlines.

At the same time as Neo-Latin has matured into a broader field than it once was, practitioners of Neo-Latin studies have begun thinking more reflectively about methodology. Traditionally there has been a strong emphasis on intertextuality, on demonstrating how Neo-Latin authors anchored their writings into the classical Latin with which they were positing a continuity. This approach has continued to flourish and has resulted in a good number of editions that have been accompanied by an extensive apparatus of *loci similes* and/or a commentary that exceeds the length of the text, as with the recent

editions of Marcus Hieronymus Vida's *Christias*, a well-known epic poem on the life of Christ, and Francesco Rococciolo's *Mutineis*, edited by Haye, an almost-forgotten Neo-Latin epic on the history of Rococciolo's hometown, Modena. Editions like these have served to emphasize the continuity of Neo-Latin with its classical sources and, in spite of what the humanists themselves claimed, with medieval Latin as well — Woods, for example, shows how Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, a thoroughly medieval text, continued to be taught well into the sixteenth century, when humanism had supposedly restored classical standards of Latinity.

These editions also reflect an increased interest in the language itself. Scholars are continuing to study how the humanists consolidated their control of Latin, from dictionaries like Niccolò Perotti's *Cornucopia*² to the commentaries to core classical texts that elucidated norms of proper usage, along with how these norms shaped the texts created for Renaissance monuments and buildings, as Laurens and Laurens show. While, as Jürgen Leonhardt has demonstrated, the process by which Latin came to be the common possession of educated people in the Renaissance is more complicated than we had thought, it nevertheless led to a situation where even classical Greek texts were translated into Latin, producing a genre of Neo-Latin that is attracting more attention now than it once did in books like those of Pade, Poliziano, and Cortesi and Fiaschi. In the end, of course, Latin lost out to the vernaculars, which is a traditional subject of inquiry that continues to attract considerable interest from scholars like Butler; Coroleu, Caruso, and Laird; Deneire; and Ford.

Now, however, a growing number of researchers are also working to embed Neo-Latin texts more thoroughly into the Renaissance culture in which they were produced. Christoph Pieper, for example, has produced a fine study of Cristoforo Landino's *Xandra* that draws on the principles of the so-called New Historicism, which approaches literature not simply as a reflection of culture, but as an agent that helps create that culture. Pieper's interest in questions of ideology and power continues in the essay collection he coedited several years later with Enenkel and Laureys. His Leiden colleague Susanna de Beer, in turn, produced a book about the occasional poetry of Giannantonio Campano that approaches the text not as flattery or a potential biographical source, but as a pursuit of patronage. In both these cases, the kinds of questions being asked were imported from other fields, but they have led to interesting insights within Neo-Latin studies that can be profitably extended to other authors and texts. In a similar way, Haskell and Ruys's essay collection, *Latin and Alterity*, begins with the idea that Latin was used as a means of creating a group identity among the ruling classes, but looks at those who were defined as the other against this group: speakers of the vernacular only, women who were excluded from a humanist

²See Abbamonte.

education, and the non-Europeans who became constructs in humanist Latin. Sometimes the non-Europeans were viewed through the prism of Neo-Latin culture, as happened in Julius Caesar Stella's *Columbeis*; at other times the non-European found a voice through that same culture, as was the case with Juan Latino, a black African former slave who became a professor of Latin in Granada, as Wright, Spence, and Lemons have shown.

These books mark important first steps, but at this point they are unusual: in general Neo-Latin is a conservative discipline that has proved hesitant about, if not resistant to, modern theory. To be sure, there are a couple of more books that go a little further down the new path. In *Poetry and Identity*, for example, Matteo Soranzo turns to a variety of contemporary approaches, from speech-act theory to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, to propose a model that “approaches the study of the literary field by focusing on the relations between, rather than the uniqueness of, authors, texts, and readers. In this perspective, the production of literary works is interpreted as an act of position-taking in the field, by which an author tries to acquire legitimacy and recognition among his contemporaries.”³ Even greater potential is offered by the work that is coming out of the Transformations of Antiquity project in Berlin, which is not restricted to Neo-Latin but nevertheless has the potential to change our understanding of the way in which classical culture was received in the Renaissance. But it is symptomatic of the complicated, emerging relationship between modern theory and Neo-Latin studies that the most sophisticated effort to ask what it really meant to write in Latin in the Renaissance, Leeds's *Renaissance Syntax*, redefines the principle of authorial agency to defend the very essentialist worldview that has become so desperately unpopular in many other humanistic disciplines.

A MATERIAL TURN

Similar complexity governs what might be called a material turn — a renewed interest in the physical components of a book, along with the text it carries — within Neo-Latin studies. On the one hand, Neo-Latinists have always understood that to do their work, they have to know something about manuscripts and early printed books; the last few years have seen both the completion of long-term projects like Emil Polak's census of letter-writing manuscripts and the publication of studies about important individual manuscripts like that of Spruit and Totaro. Ford, Bloemendal, and Fantazzi's *Brill's Encyclopaedia* has a special section dedicated to manuscripts and printing, and Neo-Latinists like Marchiaro and Monfasani continue to devote time and attention to cataloging the books and manuscripts that Renaissance authors owned. A hot subfield connected to this

³Soranzo, 66.

material turn is the study of commentaries, the annotations that humanist readers added to their manuscripts and early printed books that could then be copied and commented on in turn by other readers. Kristeller, Crazz, Brown, and Dinkova-Bruun's *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, a collective project designed to provide information about all the commentaries on classical authors that were produced by 1600, has been accelerating its publication schedule recently, which has led to articles and books like Julia Haig Gaisser's study of the commentaries to Apuleius. Other books in this subfield, like those by Bugada, Berté, and Megna, treat one humanist's commentary to a particular text, and a couple of important collections of essays on the Renaissance commentary by Enenkel and Nellen, and Henderson and Swan, have recently appeared as well.

Many Neo-Latinists, however, have hesitated to follow this material turn as far as their colleagues in other disciplines have gone. It has been more than thirty years, for example, since Jerome J. McGann proposed deemphasizing authorial intention in textual criticism in favor of embracing the array of interventions from editors and printers that affect the texts that are actually disseminated. The participants at a conference at the Radboud University, Nijmegen, as Van der Poel's volume of proceedings shows, explicitly rejected this kind of approach in favor of the traditional methodology, which is still followed in the editions of Neo-Latin texts listed above, although Kallendorf has suggested how McGann's approach might be applied in Neo-Latin studies. Books like Alexandre Vanautgaerden's *Érasme typographe*, which shows how Erasmus manipulated the printing process to craft his public persona, suggest the kind of results that can be obtained by thinking more deeply about books and manuscripts as physical objects; but this is the exception that proves the rule, in the sense that Vanautgaerden is a librarian who has spent years approaching books in a different way from most Neo-Latinists who hold professorial appointments. These Neo-Latinists certainly use the primary materials in manuscript and rare book collections, but they still tend to overlook (for example) exhibition catalogues like those of Cardini and Viti, and Wagner, which often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere, along with essay collections like that of Cazes that sometimes emerge from exhibitions. Another resource that is still commonly neglected is booksellers' catalogues. These are of varying value, depending on their level of detail and the expertise of the cataloger, but booksellers like Fred Schreiber and Bruce McKittrick are scholars as well as businessmen, and the catalogues of companies like Erasmushuis, Antiquariat Forum, and Libreria Philobiblon regularly contain detailed descriptions of Neo-Latin books that are not found in any institutional libraries.⁴

⁴See Erdmann, Govi, and Govi.

COMPUTERS AND THE FUTURE

Like every other scholarly field at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Neo-Latin is being transformed by computerization. Johann Ramminger's *Neulateinische Wortliste* is a perfect example of a project that only makes sense in digital format. Online union catalogues like the *Catalogue collectif de France* and the *Catalogo colectivo del patrimonio bibliográfico español* have made it possible to locate specific Neo-Latin texts more easily than ever before, with the *Universal Short Title Catalogue* now integrating much of the Renaissance material from various online sources into one database. A parallel initiative of equal value involves the digitalization of early printed books, which makes primary source material far more accessible than it has ever been in the past. The Munich Digitalization Center at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has digitalized over one million early printed books, while *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* offers digital facsimiles of over 125,000 English items. This material is not machine readable, but the *Early Modern OCR Project* at Texas A&M University is currently working on this problem, with the intention of having almost twenty-four million digitally searchable pages available within a few years. Secondary sources as well are being made more accessible digitally: most Spanish academics, for example, have webpages with links to online versions of their publications, and as the open-access movement continues to gain strength, one can only anticipate that in the near future the major research problem will no longer be gaining access to research material, but finding what one wants amid the deluge of digital information.

It is clear at this point that the potential of this new technology is only beginning to be tapped, and that Neo-Latinists will have to begin to rethink basic operating procedures in the new electronic environment. For one thing, the problems caused by a limited potential readership disappear for a digital publication, so that one can imagine an avalanche of new critical editions appearing online over the next few years. But it does not follow, I think, that Neo-Latinists should simply approach digital publication in the same way as publishing in print. It is admittedly difficult to implement McGann's principles for the social construction of texts in a print format, but it is easy to follow a text through a series of authorial revisions and external interventions when each step can be isolated and presented digitally, then associated through hyperlinks with other versions of the same text. It is also worth thinking about whether a critical edition, in print or digital format, is in fact a desideratum for every Neo-Latin text. One can argue that for a work that will stimulate serious interest among only a handful of readers, a digitalized facsimile will not only prove adequate textually, but will also preserve features like paratextual material and signs of censorship that are generally lost in a critical edition. Issues like this will have to be discussed and worked out over the coming years.

I can see several dangers that threaten Neo-Latin studies in the twenty-first century. The first, and most obvious, is the declining number of Renaissance scholars who are really comfortable working with Latin. Many Neo-Latin texts are not as challenging as, say, the speeches of Cicero, but Latin was so pervasive in certain areas of Renaissance culture that anyone working in these fields has to be able to process massive amounts of material written in Latin. A second issue is the growing dominance of English in international scholarly life, which threatens the multilingual competence that is necessary to do research in this field. And finally, notwithstanding the progress that has recently been made, the continued institutional marginalization of Neo-Latin studies is disturbing: there are still few chairs in the field, and the dispersal of scholars working in Neo-Latin means that their power within their own institutions remains limited even as their numbers grow.

Nevertheless, I am optimistic. I never imagined that I would see the membership of IANLS top a thousand, and I have noticed a striking increase in the number of younger scholars who have been attending the last couple of meetings of this organization. Similarly unexpected has been the rapid growth of the I Tatti Renaissance Library, whose English translations of Neo-Latin texts have extended accessibility to the field, and interest in it, considerably. The expansion of the field beyond its historic base in the humanities, the beginnings of a real engagement with literary theory, a renewed attention to the physical dimensions of manuscripts and early printed books, and the initial exploration of what computers can do, joined with a continuation of the traditional methods that have served Neo-Latin studies so well in the past, reveal a discipline that is in robust good health, a bit cranky and sclerotic at times, but secure in its achievements as it begins to transform itself for a new age.

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