

Cristoforo Landino. *Poems*.

Trans. Mary P. Chatfield. The I Tatti Renaissance Library 35. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. xxv + 398 pp. index. append. bibl. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-674-03148-7.

The recent edition of Cristoforo Landino's *Poems* is a welcome addition to the growing body of Renaissance literature in circulation, making many of the poems available in English for the first time. Chatfield's translation is presented alongside the original Latin, drawn from Perosa's monumental *Christophori Landini Carmina Omnia* (1939). The centerpiece of this volume is the *Three Books of Xandra*, which Landino (1424–98) had completed by 1460. The first of these is presented in its

second redaction. The poems omitted from the earlier redaction of book 1 (ca. 1444) are included after, followed by various other poems and correspondence. The historical introduction emphasizes the numerous tensions underlying this poetic corpus, with special emphasis on how *Xandra* serves as a chronicle reflecting both Landino's scholarly and civic development.

The copious notes provide a useful linear gloss on the wealth of classical and contemporary allusions and references. Relegating these and the metrical notes to the appendix has the merit of preserving the integrity of the text without sacrificing access to the breadth and depth of Landino's erudition — which, perhaps not coincidentally, one might deem Alexandrian.

Chatfield's eloquence shines brightly when interpreting the voice and verse of Landino. Her own prose contains some colloquialisms which, being both informal and ephemeral, are not the best choice for scholarly writing. For example, in reference to the many ladyloves of his youth, the introduction describes Landino as "playing the field" (xviii). Few of such liberties are taken in the translation itself, although the emphasis of the English is sometimes questionable in poems referencing contemporary historical events. In book 1, poem 18 (30–31), for instance, Landino commemorates the death of his fellow humanist and predecessor Leonardo Bruni. Little poetic license is taken with the translation, but the order (which does make for smoother reading) is potentially misleading. The Latin suggests that Bruni lies buried with the laurel blooming around his temples for three major accomplishments, namely: his Latinity, his *History of the Florentine People*, and his translations of Greek philosophy into Latin. In Bruni's day it was no small honor to receive the laurel crown, whether for civic or literary accomplishment, hence its privileged place at the outset of the epitaph. The English foregrounds Bruni as a model of Latinity. The order of the translation also leads to the misinterpretation that the temples of "the Roman tongue" are bound or garlanded with the laurel. This implication effectively diminishes the relative significance of Bruni's deeds and his reward, as well as the eulogizing nature of the epitaph composed by Landino. On the whole, however, Chatfield's rendering is precise and lucid, as well as poetic.

Before this publication Landino was remembered best for his scholarly work, particularly his commentaries on Dante and Virgil. Now the commendably readable translation and the quality of the notes and introduction shall make his literary work readily accessible. This book is thus valuable for both scholars and the broader public — including undergraduates and non-Latin literate Renaissance enthusiasts. It will undoubtedly foster Landino's reputation as a poet in his own right and serve as a stimulus to future research. Chatfield's edition of Landino's *Poems* is thus a fitting contribution to the I Tatti series and a boon to Renaissance studies more generally.

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