

Antonia Wenzel. *Die Xandra-Gedichte des Cristoforo Landino*.

Kalliope: Studien zur griechischen und lateinischen Poesie 10. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010. 329 pp. index. bibl. €45. ISBN: 978-3-8253-5563-0.

This book, a lightly revised edition of the author's 2007 Freie Universität Berlin dissertation, is designed as an initial study of the first version of Cristoforo Landino's *Xandra*, a book of love poems written for Alessandra di Francesco degli Alberti (Sandra). The author held the chair in rhetoric and poetry at the University of Florence for almost forty years at the end of the fifteenth century. The *Xandra* was a work of his youth, first disseminated in a single-book version in 1444 when Landino was only twenty years old, then in a three-book version some fifteen years later. Wenzel offers a lengthy introduction focused on a formal analysis of the poetry, a text and translation into German of the initial 1444 version, and a detailed commentary.

After a brief overview of Landino's life and works, the introduction turns to a comparison of the two versions of the text. The strong connection to ancient models remains in the revision of the 1444 text, which forms the core of book 1 of the 1458/59 edition. Book 2 of the new version has a strong erotic flavor, while book 3 develops Florentine themes appropriate to the poet, his beloved, and his potential patrons. As Wenzel shows, the three-book version integrates the original imitation of classical models with more contemporary themes, adding in particular a creative tension between imitation of Francesco Petrarca and Antonio Beccadelli (called Panormita) that allows Landino to explore both the idealized and corporeal sides of love. A solid central chapter compares individual poems in the *Xandra* with their ancient sources, showing how Landino scripts himself in many ways like a Roman *poeta amator*, sending his beloved a present while being shut outside her house, but he also elevates his passions for his Sandra to clearly unclassical heights.

The commentary that follows is rich and detailed, more than fulfilling Wenzel's stated goal of offering an initial working introduction to the *Xandra*. The author is at her best with the details, identifying verbal parallels in the commentary

and comparing poems to their models in a search for Landino's distinctive voice. As we pull back to get the larger picture, however, a couple of issues emerge. The first revolves around the initial decision to focus on the first version of the poem instead of the second, which would seem to represent the more definitive redaction. This decision would be parallel to one in which *Paradise Lost* would be presented and analyzed in its first ten-book version rather than the familiar twelve-book one that Milton ultimately published. There can certainly be valid reasons for shifting the focus to the less-obvious text, but Wenzel never explains what these reasons might be beyond noting (correctly) that modern scholarship has largely ignored the 1444 version. In fact the introductory chapters drift repeatedly toward the 1458/59 version, suggesting that this is indeed the proper object of study.

A related issue arises from the fact that this turns out to be an extraordinary moment in the reception history of the *Xandra*. While Landino's scholarly work has attracted considerable attention in the last forty years, his Latin poetry has been rather neglected by comparison until now. It turns out, however, that the year after Wenzel's dissertation was accepted, Mary P. Chatfield published her text and translation of Landino's Latin poems in the I Tatti Renaissance Library and Christoph Pieper published his 2007 Universität Bonn dissertation, *Elegos redolere Virgiliisque sapere: Cristoforo Landinos 'Xandra' zwischen Liebe und Gesellschaft* (2008). This scholarly confluence turns out to be unfortunate for Wenzel. Chatfield prints both versions of the *Xandra*, providing a much more accessible version of the 1444 text along with the means to compare it easily with the later version. Pieper in turn confirms what one would logically expect and focuses on the later redaction as definitive, using a sophisticated theoretical model to place Landino's work within its intellectual and political milieu. In the end, then, Wenzel's book merits close study by anyone with a serious interest in the *Xandra*, but it should be supplemented by the other recent work on the later version of this poetry collection.

CRAIG KALLENDORF
Texas A&M University