Luc Deitz, Timothy Kircher, and Jonathan Reid (eds.)


The volume under review here began in a colloquium held at East Carolina University in honor of Charles Fantazzi, who has recently retired as the Thomas Harriott Distinguished Visiting Professor of Classics and Great Books. Fantazzi’s special interest has been Latin literature of the post-medieval period—Neo-Latin, as it is now generally called. On the most obvious level, the colloquium was held to recognize Fantazzi’s distinguished publication record in a field that is now well established in both Europe and the U.S., but was a marginal enterprise at best when he began his scholarly career in 1965. Since then he has published some two dozen books, focused on critical editions of Neo-Latin authors, and over forty substantive articles in peer-reviewed journals. His special interests have been Erasmus (he serves on the editorial board and executive committee of the Collected Works of Erasmus) and Vives (he is the general editor of the Selected Works by Juan Luis Vives). But unlike some well-published scholars, Fantazzi has not lost sight of the larger values connected to his field of study. A true Renaissance man—he is the only classicist I know who has performed as tenor soloist with several internationally renowned orchestras—Fantazzi has also been an inspiring teacher and an eloquent spokesman for the humanities at a time when the disciplines he loves have lurched from one seeming crisis to the next.

In this case the context is important, because the essays in the volume have been selected to shed light on Neo-Latin as a field from the perspectives that have mattered to the honoree. After an introductory note by one of the editors, Timothy Kircher, and a select bibliography of Fantazzi’s works, the volume proper begins with an essay by James Hankins, “Charles Fantazzi and the Study of Neo-Latin Literature,” judiciously placed as the only chapter in a section labelled “Orientation.” Here Hankins offers a chronological survey that begins with the concerns of the humanist writers themselves, extends through the place of Neo-Latin in the scholarly currents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and ends with the Neo-Latin lions of the last century, including Sabbadini, Novati, Perosa, and IJsewijn.

The next section, entitled “New Roles for Latin in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance,” contains two essays. “The Rolls of the Dead and the Intellectual Revival of the Twelfth Century in Francia and Italy,” by Ronald G. Witt, continues a long-standing interest of the author’s in pushing back the origins of the
intellectual revival that Petrarca brashly claimed for himself. In this essay Witt uses a previously understudied source, the rolls of the dead that sought prayers for a deceased member of the clergy. Witt argues that these rolls provided an initial impetus for the rapid increase in scholarship and Latin literary composition in the early twelfth century. In “Wrestling with Ulysses: Humanist Translations of Homeric Epic around 1470,” Timothy Kircher examines three renderings of sections from *Iliad* 9, the embassy to Achilles, to show that Leonardo Bruni’s Latin translation focused on the ability to “capture with grace” (68) the meaning of the original, while Lorenzo Valla brought out the translator’s potential to improve the Greek, and Leon Battista Alberti championed the Tuscan dialect as the best language for translation. Adam Foley’s Notre Dame doctoral dissertation, currently in progress, should shed further light on these issues.

Section 3, “Vives and Erasmus,” arrives at the heart of Fantazzi’s scholarly interests. In “Colligite Fragmenta: A Neglected Tumulus for Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540),” Jeanine de Landtsheer and Marcus de Schepper present an edition of a number of Neo-Latin epitaphs that were written to praise Vives at his death, collected in Berlin, SPK, Ms. lat. Fol. 390 from their origin on slips of paper attached to his tomb. Paul Grendler in turn uses “The Attitudes of the Jesuits toward Juan Luis Vives” to track patiently the various attitudes toward Vives held by members of the Society of Jesus. Ignatius Loyola criticized him face-to-face but tolerated the teaching of his works in the classroom. Other Jesuits viewed Vives more favorably, but eventually the leadership of the Society turned against him. “The Englishing of Erasmus: The Genesis and Progress of the Correspondence Volumes of the *Collected Works of Erasmus*” traces the history of a project with which Fantazzi has been closely involved, as editor of four volumes of letters. In this essay James M. Estes concludes that Allen’s monumental edition remains the standard source, but at this point it should be used along with the appropriate volumes of the *cwe*, which contain the fruits of decades of scholarship on the letters that add to the information Allen had available at the time when he was writing.

Section 4 contains three essays on “Sixteenth-Century Humanism and Poetics.” In “Scholasticism, Humanism and Poetics,” James K. Farge explores the murky history of Guillaume Budé’s effort to establish a humanist trilingual college in Paris, concluding that the *lecteurs royaux* never really succeeded in establishing an institution that was financed by the king and separate from the University of Paris. The next essay, by Luc Deitz, is one of the more provocative pieces in the collection. In “Francesco Patrizi da Cherso on the Nature of Poetry,” Deitz argues that Patrizi had understood, though rather dimly, what he himself has figured out, not only that the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and Horace did not structure the Renaissance treatises on poetics, as is generally believed,