



Celenza, Christopher S. Petrarch: Everywhere a Wanderer

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Celenza, Christopher S.

Petrarch: Everywhere a Wanderer.

London: Reaktion Books, 2017. Pp. 263. ISBN 978-1-78023-838-8 (hardcover) US\$22.50.

As the publisher's remarks indicate, Christopher S. Celenza's comprehensive account of Petrarch's life and works is the first of its kind in English in over thirty years. But it's really much more than that. It makes a timely and incisive intervention into cultural and intellectual history by treating its topic from a prismatic perspective wholly expressive of current literary and historiographical sophistication. This perspective illuminates competing claims that had beset Petrarch throughout his long, active life and had left their mark upon his vast and astonishingly varied writing. The terms of these claims represent Petrarch as a classical scholar devoted to pagan antiquity while nourishing his intense commitment to Christianity; as a man given to deep personal relationships but also to carefully guarded privacy and at times borderline misanthropy; as a person who disdained the trappings of wealth and worldly prestige but yet positioned his own distinctiveness as the focus of his writing, through which he aspired to lasting fame; and finally, as a proudly Tuscan poet who, from the age of eight, resided in Provence for over forty years (except for a few truncated university years in Bologna) and who, upon returning to Italy, rejected Tuscany for hop-scotched residence in Milan, Parma, Venice, and Arquà. Celenza pursues these competing claims through brilliantly crafted analyses of Petrarch's most important writing in Latin and the vernacular.

The book's first chapter identifies the poet's origins in a family line of Florentine notaries and the impact of notarial literacy and public trust upon his early formation. Later, the poet's annotations in his manuscript copy of Virgil's poetry came to reflect his emerging worldview as they question how much he as a Christian might learn from pagan antecedents. They also exemplify his intellectual peregrination and self-image as "everywhere a wanderer," a phrase from his *Epistole metricae* that Celenza appropriates for the subtitle of his book. Its second chapter pursues Petrarch's subsequent exploration of the ancient world through his discovery, compilation, and editing of thirty books from Livy's *Ab urbe condita* and of Cicero's oration *Pro Archia*. Celenza gives a deft account of how Petrarch unscrambled nonsense in corrupt passages from the

former and how, as an anti-institutional non-university-affiliated outsider, he gleaned from the latter a sense of what we now call the study of the humanities. The third chapter turns to Petrarch's discovery of the physical and sociological reality of contemporaneous Rome and his subsequent attraction toward the authoritarian politics of Cola di Rienzo. Celenza links these experiences to the writer's concurrent focus upon the lives of exemplary ancient heroes in *De viris illustribus* and in his epic poem *Africa*. Both of these Latin works convey something of his insecurity and self-criticism as well as his disdain for less accomplished mortals. Overlapping with these compositions is his preliminary effort to gather his various *Rime sparse* into a synthesized *Canzoniere* that he would continue to organize, expand, and revise for the rest of his life.

The book's second half focuses upon Petrarch's interior life. Chapter 4 examines aspects of *De otio religioso* and *Secretum*, both in contexts of the devastating spread of the Black Death and of Petrarch's life-long engagement with St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *City of God*. In Celenza's nuanced view, Petrarch's contemplative life unfolds in dialectical tension with his active life, casting him as much a person in retreat as one on the move. Chapter 5 explores the poet's friendship with Boccaccio as recorded in eighteen letters between them written during Petrarch's years in Italy. The terms of their friendship appear grounded in their respective concepts of Latin and vernacular style, of Boccaccio's popularity and Petrarch's contempt for mass appeal, and—unavoidably—of Dante's dominance or lack of it over each of them. The book's final chapter concentrates upon Petrarch's adversarial relationships with the church of his time and with the scholastic Aristotelianism of European universities. Here, Celenza positions *De remediis* with its Stoic leaning as expressive of the writer's Christian sensibility and *De ignorantia sua* with its multiple revisions as expressive of his own humanities-oriented turn, which later Italian Renaissance intellectual life would embrace.

The entire book shines with Celenza's close attention to historical and philological detail, his superb textual and contextual analyses, and his deep understanding of how much Petrarch's legacy contributed to European cultural life. This brief review can barely suggest the subtlety with which the author interweaves such familiar texts as the poet's account of climbing Mount Ventoux with his evolving idea of Italy, and such ongoing endeavours as the poet's incursions into Italian verse with his efforts to secure a political future for Italy. Though designed for and accessible to a wide readership, the book will delight

Petrarchan specialists with up-to-date nuggets of scholarly information, smart insights into cultural contexts, and powerful reinterpretations of landmark texts.

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Daly, Peter M., and G. Richard Dimler.

The Jesuit Emblem in the European Context.

Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series 14. Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2016. Pp. xi, 467. ISBN 978-0-91610-188-6 (hardback) \$70.00.

Peter M. Daly, professor emeritus at McGill University, and G. Richard Dimler, emeritus at Fordham University, are both well known in the world of Jesuit emblem studies. Their extensive publications in this area, especially the encyclopedic five-volume Jesuit series in the *Corpus Librorum Emblematum*, have made them pioneers in the field. This volume provides an introductory survey to the topic. The book is divided into two parts: the first 180 or so pages introduce topics of significance to Jesuit emblem studies; the second part, roughly 285 pages, is composed of seven appendices and a selective bibliography.

We can begin with the second part. The seven appendices are organized by assistancy and province as these existed before the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. An assistancy is a grouping of provinces who report to the superior general of the Society of Jesus through one of his regional assistants, while a province is a grouping of Jesuit works and residences under the authority of a major superior known as a provincial. Each appendix lists the major institutions of the Society of Jesus by province within the assistancy, and lists the publications linked with that institution. Books of emblems (with their DBS classification) and significant theoretical works by Jesuits are listed. For example, under the listing for the college at Vienne (French assistancy, province of Lyons), one can find the works of Claude-François Ménéstrier, one of the more important Jesuit theorists of the emblem, along with a basic description of their contents. This approach makes it easy to access the voluminous bibliography of