

or recognition of what is good; thus, the purpose of theatrical dialogue, allegory, and evocative language emerges. Kircher summarizes this idea himself: “Humanists . . . wear their own personae and react to those worn by others. In the earthly theater, where all abide, distinctions are blurred between the secular and spiritual, the human and the divine” (223).

This argument explains the title of the book, *Before Enlightenment*. Kircher identifies the pre-Cartesian mode of thought as central to Renaissance epistemology. So it is appropriate that the subhead of his final chapter is a quote from T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, and his second chapter title, “Esse et Videri,” contrasts with the Enlightenment dictum of Bishop Berkeley that “esse est percipi”: Kircher, emulating his humanist models, is engaged in learned playful dialogue and allusive wordplay with his readers.

There is much to recommend this book to any specialist of Renaissance humanism. Although heavily dependent on Italian texts beginning with Petrarch, Kircher moves beyond Italy to trace his observations in later writers such as Rabelais, Erasmus, and Montaigne. The depth of reading is impressive, and the use of less studied texts, such as Bembo’s *De Etna* and Alberti’s *Momus* particularly welcome. Kircher’s insightful interpretation of such a broad compendium of humanist writing alone makes the book a useful additional to a scholarly library.

The major problem with the book is its often unnecessarily opaque prose and awkward organization. Complex ideas find greater currency if revealed with straightforward clarity, and texts are best understood holistically. The reader too often encounters references to what went before and what will appear later. It is understandable that the author wishes to discuss texts from several perspectives, but the recurring back-and-forth analyses reveal the need for a more coherent structure.

That said, the book provides a subtle and rich investigation of humanist thought and writing revealed though a careful and original reading of a great many texts, some very well known, others less current. For this alone Kircher merits our appreciation.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.415

La Fortuna di Omero nel Rinascimento tra Bisanzio e l'Occidente.

Valentina Prosperi and Federica Ciccolella, eds.

Hellencia: Testi e strumenti di letteratura greca antica, medievale e umanistica 84.
Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2020. viii + 212 pp. €20.00.

At the outset of their foreword, Prosperi and Ciccolella emphasize that the recovery of Homer’s epics in Italy—initiated by Byzantine scholars for whom the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* continued to serve as the cornerstones of a literary education—was no “triumphant

entry” (v) but, rather, that it was a slow and fluctuating process. In the first chapter, Braccini explores the earliest codices of the *Iliad* copied in early fifteenth-century Italy and the career of Sozomon who (despite being elected the canon of Pistoia in 1418) was not hindered by his clerical duties from commuting to Florence to pursue (profitably) his teaching of Greek. Braccini illuminates Sozomon’s flair as a teacher in his discussion of Sozomon’s library—which included ten codices that he had copied in his own hand—and examines Sozomon’s use of these in his teaching. Indeed, the Byzantine humanist’s skills in opening up accessibility to Greek texts, then as well as now (such as in introductory courses on Greek palaeography) is highlighted by the remarkable clarity of his hand (4).

The second chapter, “Imagining Homer in the Renaissance,” is an ambitious and imaginative study of the potential influences upon Raphael’s depiction of Homer in *The Parnassus*. In raising the question “how much autonomy did Raphael have in depicting Homer?” (26), Fornaro and Viccei offer many persuasive and original insights into the formative role that Neoplatonism and humanist biographies of Homer (30–32), Poliziano’s Latin translation of the *Iliad* (35–36), and Greek texts published by Aldus Manutius (27–28) had upon Raphael’s figuration of Homer. In “The Italian Translations of the *Iliad* in the *Cinquecento*: Some Preliminary Notes,” Prosperi examines the eight Italian translations of Homer from the sixteenth century (compared to the forty-six that Craig Kallendorf identifies in *A Bibliography of Italian Translations of Virgil* [1994]).

The account of Niccolo Franco’s translation is a particularly sorry one, since, as Prosperi mordantly puts it, his manuscript translation ultimately met with “the gnawing criticism of mice” (45). Prosperi’s chapter is particularly engaged in determining the audiences of these translations: “For whom did Homer speak in the vernacular, and for what purpose?” (46). Prosperi prefaces her analysis of passages from the eight translations with the observation that—like North’s Plutarch—their authors were likely working from an intermediary translation rather than directly from the Greek original, as they were all created after the publication of Andreas Divus’s highly influential Latin translation (48). Sadly, the “common denominator” that Prosperi identifies between the eight Italian translation is “failure” (72).

But what one scholar views as a failure is another scholar’s opportunity to illuminate what’s been misunderstood. In his chapter on Trissino’s *Italia liberata da’ Goti*, Di Santo claims that the work has been interpreted as a “total failure” on account of critics’ misunderstanding of Trissino’s metrical and formulaic experimentation (84). Arguing that *Italia liberata* presages “four centuries before [Milman] Parry’s” (91) groundbreaking scholarship on oral-formulaic composition, Di Santo states that “criticism has failed to highlight the centrality of this fundamental model, long considered secondary and limited in value” (92).

Detailed analysis of Homeric imitation in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme conquistata* follows Di Santo’s essay, in which Sarnelli provides a rich, fine-grained study of Tasso’s

imitation of Homer. Sarnelli's essay is particularly valuable in its careful elucidation of Tasso, not just as a reader of Homer but as a reader of Homer's commentators, including the Byzantine commentator, Eustathius of Thessaloniki (124–25). The next essay by Lovato also explores the influence of Byzantine Homeric commentators, in her case John Tzetzes. Just as Di Santo outlines the remarkable similarities between Trissino and Parry in spite of the gap of four centuries that separates their poetic and scholarly work respectively, "Re-Reading Homer in Paris and Byzantium" underlines how Samxon and Tzetzes—also four centuries apart—have a great deal in common in the ways they approach the Homeric texts: "both the Byzantine scholar and the French jurist have something new to say" (159).

Lastly, Ciccolella's chapter on Homer and the Protestant Reformation, and Silvano's short edition (with facing Italian translation) of an unedited *prolusio* can be read as a valuable, interlinked pair that explores the reception of Homer in Northern European universities: specifically, at Melancthon's Wittenburg and at Vulcianus's Leiden respectively.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.414

The Italian Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern Humanities: An Intellectual History, 1400–1800. Christopher Celenza.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xii + 328 pp. \$39.99.

In this erudite and beautifully written book, Christopher Celenza addresses us directly—"But if there is one big question that I hope this book will impel you to ask, it is this: Why do we study the humanities?" (x). He takes what may seem like well-worn territories to scholars of Renaissance humanism and what may seem like the driest of topics (i.e., philology) to the general public, and brings them alive in new and original ways. Philology was and is about editing texts, but for Renaissance thinkers it was also about bringing the humanities to bear on finding a better way of life. And this is Celenza's goal as well for our own times.

Celenza lucidly explains the thought of Renaissance philologists. First, that of the barbative Lorenzo Valla. An analysis of the *Donation of Constantine* and Valla's writings on the New Testament show how philological arguments having to do with the meanings of particular words in specific texts were passionately argued and connected to important issues concerning religion. Valla influenced Erasmus and later Martin Luther. His writings were among the generative seeds of the Protestant Reformation.

Pointing to the ways in which trust and emotions were closely tied to humanist writing, Celenza treats, among others, the writings of the great humanist Poliziano. He shows how philology developed as the intense endeavor among friends to arrive