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### Blanchard, W. Scott, and Andrea Severi, eds. *Renaissance Encyclopaedism: Studies in Curiosity and Ambition*

Janice Liedl

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[See table of contents](#)

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ne déplaît pas. Au niveau du contenu, ce que j'ai par ailleurs le plus apprécié au fil des pages s'avère être une discussion en filigrane qui graduellement se dégage de tout le livre et qui pose la question du rôle de la polyphonie et qui donne lieu à quelques paragraphes bien sentis sur l'expérience spirituelle, voire mystique, que favorise la polyphonie

L'ouvrage est surtout conçu pour donner un point de départ à de nouvelles recherches. Toutefois, plusieurs de ses aspects rend l'ouvrage particulièrement utile aux étudiants et aux enseignants. Tout d'abord l'ouvrage complet est si bien organisé qu'il est très facile à consulter. L'auteur explicite systématiquement en début et en fin de chacune de ces sections ses objectifs et les étapes de sa démarche. Enfin, les expositions et la langue, sans compromis pour les contenus plus complexes, sont toujours très claires et efficaces. C'est pourquoi cet ouvrage de Chiara Bertoglio n'est pas seulement nécessaire et remarquable, il est également une leçon de musicologie.

PASCALE DUHAMEL

Université d'Ottawa

**Blanchard, W. Scott, and Andrea Severi, eds.**

***Renaissance Encyclopaedism: Studies in Curiosity and Ambition.***

Essays and Studies 41. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. 467. ISBN 978-0-7727-2189-1 (paperback) CDN\$49.95.

Understanding a "Renaissance man" as a polymath possessed of universal knowledge is a modern commonplace, but we do not fully appreciate how Renaissance humanists regarded encyclopaedic achievements. Scott Blanchard and Andrea Severi have brought together many contributors in *Renaissance Encyclopaedism* to examine how Renaissance ideas of scholarship, harmony, and utility drove the collection and categorization of information. This volume comes at an important time in the advancement of cultural studies in general as well as encyclopaedism in particular. Each chapter focuses on individual Renaissance figures or contexts coming out of a long Quattrocento running from the time of Coluccio Salutati through the age of Desiderius Erasmus and Guillaume Budé. The eleven essays embody the qualities of curiosity and

ambition in the volume's subtitle—both in the work of the humanists they study and in the analysis they provide.

The editors' erudite introduction raises driving questions: How does Renaissance encyclopaedism differ from that of the Middle Ages and to what extent does it prefigure the Enlightenment? What abstract ideals underlay the production and use of such collections (which the editors assert can best be seen by studying this long Quattrocento of humanism in Rome, Bologna, and, eventually, more broadly across early sixteenth-century Europe)? Blanchard and Severi make a case for better understanding humanist culture by interrogating the values that drove their encyclopaedism. They draw out how humanist arguments for the centrality of grammar and linguistic skills distinctly shaped the curatorial aims and cultural applications of encyclopaedism in the Renaissance. Blanchard and Severi assert that approaching the Renaissance experiences of encyclopaedia as their contributors have done will deepen our appreciation of an essential part of the humanist imaginary.

Roman case studies come first, beginning with Clementina Marsico who argues that Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantie linguae latine*, conceived and structured in decidedly innovative ways, must be understood to be as much a celebration of the vital work of engaging with ancient authors as a repudiation of the impossible task of mastering all knowledge. Paola Tomè shows how Giovanni Tortelli's *Orthographia*, an immensely popular guide to ancient authors, achieved such renown precisely because it served those seeking cultural capital. Tortelli's interpretations shine in context, perfectly contrasted against passages from Boccaccio's *Genealogia* and the *Cornu copiae* of Niccolò Perotti. In her essay, Anne Raffarin examines Flavio Biondo's pivotal influences on Renaissance antiquarianism. She makes a compelling case that Biondo's most significant contributions were his methodological innovations in cultural topography that proved especially influential among his successors.

The next four essays turn to Bologna. Loredana Chines's is the most wide-ranging of these, teasing out how Bologna functioned as a cultural crossroads nurturing tendencies towards esoteric erudition. Her analysis of the philological community's treatment of classical themes, such as the triumph, underscores how their writings imposed structure and managed influences. Andrea Severi offers up Codro Urceo as a characteristic exemplar of Bolognese humanism's approach to encyclopaedism—twinning ambition and skepticism along with innovation and preservation, as expressed in his renowned *Sermo primus*. Both

Annarita Angelini and Scott Blanchard take Angelo Poliziano as their focus. Angelini lays out his *Panepistemon* as a somewhat subversive alternative to the conventional wisdom, akin to an anatomist offering insights impossible for an Aristotelian to imagine. Blanchard links Poliziano's work in philology and poetry by exploring his rivalry with Domizio Calderini as well as placing him in closer connection with his Roman and Florentine contemporaries.

The final grouping of chapters focuses on the sixteenth century and northern Europe. Dustin Mengelkoch studies how Venetian Giorgio Valla promoted *virtù* for physicians in his encyclopaedic *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus opus* of 1501 that conceived of that quality being based in rationality as the purest expression of godliness. Lorenzo M. Cioffi explores paremiology (the study of proverbs) beginning in the later Quattrocento and, particularly, how Erasmus's *Adagia* builds on this Greek tradition as it takes on the form of an encyclopaedia. David Marsh terms this more specifically a cultural encyclopaedia in his brief chapter, concretely examining the work in terms of indexing, structure, and other models. Budé's encyclopaedizing turn earns the final examination of the volume in the work of Luigi-Alberto Sanchi, who asserts that these philological works, however little they follow the conventional forms of encyclopaedic organization, nevertheless illustrate a scholar surveying his world broadly, operating, as Sanchi describes, on an "encyclopaedic horizon" (433).

*Renaissance Encyclopaedism* is an audacious volume, tackling a daunting range of material reflective of humanist intellectual ambitions. Blanchard and Severi and the other scholars represented here make persuasive cases for appreciating distinctly Renaissance concepts of encyclopaedism and placing individuals and communities into vital context for better appreciating their aims and accomplishments. One could wish for an introduction that better integrates the individual essays into a synthetic whole. Nevertheless, researchers and senior students interested in a wide range of humanist subjects will find *Renaissance Encyclopaedism* a rewarding read, thanks to the new insights regarding overlooked but critical concepts of the intellectual culture made through the engaging, well-informed analyses of the contributors.

JANICE LIEDL

Laurentian University