

To be sure, the "other" appears to be transformed from villain into popular hero as exemplified by the well-named Grand Ferré or Jeanne la Hachette. Rather, the argument of "rehabilitation" of the ax in medieval mentalities since the Carolingian period is far less convincing (in the absence of comparable sources) than the claim of its social promotion from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, a commoner's weapon that became an arm of choice for the knightly class (particularly in the duchy of Burgundy) as the Hundred Years War and the civil unrest that ensued called for the *guerre à outrance*. Finally, this development may well explain why justice officers, such as the sergeants officiating at the Châtelet de Paris, substituted the sword for the ax in the early fifteenth century.

Readers will undoubtedly enjoy the numerous plates selected from devotional literature, chansons de geste, and chronicles, even though they should have been integrated into the text. One regrets the absence of a comprehensive index and a glossary, considering the length and the nature of the book. Lastly, it is unfortunate that *Le Léopard d'Or* did not provide the author with editorial assistance in the daunting preparation of the manuscript, for the work is plagued with significant phonetic misspellings, erroneous punctuation, and grammatical errors. Nevertheless, these formal shortcomings should not detract from the enormous benefit that students, academics, and the public at large will derive from *A la hache*, given its incomparable wealth of information.

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SILVIA RIZZO, *Ricerche sul latino umanistico*, 1. (Storia e Letteratura, Raccolta di Studi e Testi, 213.) Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002. Paper. Pp. viii, 237. €33.

This is the first of two volumes in which Silvia Rizzo proposes to summarize the findings of over three decades of research into humanist Latin. Rizzo has studied the theory of language in the period, the practice of teaching Latin, and the lexical, syntactic, and stylistic choices of major humanists and minor ones. Hers is without doubt the most authoritative voice on the subject today, and these essays present the fruits of her long and careful researches in admirably succinct and useful form. The present volume includes six essays, four on Latin and the vernacular in language theory of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, and two on the practices of teaching Latin in the humanist fifteenth century. These themes lend themselves to a reconsideration of the long-standing scholarly debate over the degree to which the early Italian humanists depended upon or cut loose from medieval Latin learning. Rizzo has always been of the party that sees substantial continuity between medieval and early-humanist practice, and this volume is one of the most persuasive efforts ever to appear because it treats the sources in close, new readings. A later volume will treat in depth the compositional practices of the humanists of the fifteenth century.

Each of the essays in the first part of this volume takes up, expands upon, and refines a theme that Rizzo has already weighed in upon. Her survey of medieval notions of language is updated with reference to extensive recent work on the early vernaculars by other scholars. As is usual among Italian scholars, Rizzo proposes a major shift in the emphases of linguistic thinkers between Dante and Petrarch, and especially in the course of Petrarch's career; but she also stresses that the change was one of continuous movement and organic growth, not a sharp or conscious rejection of medieval theory. The second chapter here, on Petrarch, is the crucial one, for it recounts the way in which the poet refocused received linguistic theory into a unique, highly personal notion of literary style. Ostensibly a narrowly focused discussion of what Petrarch meant by the *genus renatum* or "measured sort of eloquence," in fact this chapter is a wide-ranging discussion of Petrarch's ideas on language. Rizzo demonstrates that for Petrarch (and for most of his contemporaries) Latin and the Italian vernacular were not yet distinct languages but different registers of the same

language. This conviction was based on an inclusive notion of eloquence, which allowed for achievement in several literary genres without respect to the language employed. For Petrarch this affirmation had theoretical value, but it also (and primarily) served to justify his own career as a poet in both Latin and the vernacular.

Rizzo's third essay surveys the linguistic opinions of Latin and the vernacular held by the humanists of the early fifteenth century; the fourth concentrates on Lorenzo Valla. Just as the crucial figure in the trecento was Petrarch, who built upon the commonplace arguments of his medieval predecessors to achieve a synthetic view of Latin and the *volgare*, the hero of Rizzo's early quattrocento is Valla. And just as Petrarch's opinions must be painstakingly reconstructed from scattered, unsystematic references, so also Valla's opinions must be unveiled from behind the polemical, pedagogical, and philological rhetoric with which he developed them. In a mosaic of carefully contextualized citations, Rizzo demonstrates that Valla was of the (medieval) opinion that Latin was an entirely artificial construct and thought that the ancient Romans had an unlearned vernacular from which modern Romance languages derive. Valla's opinion on this unlearned vulgar Latin throws into high relief the urgency of the major project of his later life, the *Elegantiae*. Because literary Latin was for Valla the greatest achievement of Roman high culture, the recovery of its supreme artifice after centuries of decadence was the essential task of the humanist. Throughout, Rizzo is careful to cite the varied opinions of contemporary scholars. She typically relegates these discussions to the footnotes; but an appendix to the first part of this collection provides a detailed critique of a single recent article (by Mariangela Regogliosi) that seems to her particularly wrongheaded. Rizzo offers it as an example of the persistent view that early humanists made a sharp break with the linguistics of the Middle Ages and as a test case for her own position that it was only with the mature humanism of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that any real distance from medieval attitudes was achieved.

The essays in the second part of the book proceed in the same fashion, reviewing both Rizzo's own published opinions and those of others, especially recently published books and articles, on the history of Latin pedagogy in the fifteenth century. While the most important modern scholarly works she discusses in the first half of the book are by Italians, in this second section Rizzo deals as well with an extensive English-language literature. In the interest of full disclosure, I should perhaps remark that my own 1993 book is among the works she critiques extensively. Indeed, on one important point—the role of the vernacular in elementary education—she comes down squarely against my conclusions and agrees instead with the newest work in English on the subject, by Robert Black. Black and his collaborator Gabriella Pomaro redated much of the important manuscript evidence for classroom practice and concluded, no doubt correctly, that the grammar curriculum was highly articulated in most schools and that, at least until the fifteenth century, the youngest students were always or almost always presented with Latin texts to decipher whether or not they were going to go on to study Latin. Rizzo endorses this view and adduces additional evidence that the Donat or basic Latin grammar book was a drilling text for reading skills, and that serious study of Latin grammatical notions only began in an intermediate stage, by studying other, intermediate Latin grammars. As with earlier essays, Rizzo's account of the curriculum is a judicious summary of the state of the field. She picks her way carefully among the contrasting opinions of earlier scholars and provides a concise, useful synthesis of what we now know and what work remains to be done.

Among the most eloquent and useful pages of Rizzo's book are those she dedicates in the last essay to one of the central paradoxes of early humanism, the fact that the movement became one of school reform despite the distaste of early humanists for teaching and their repeated assertions that true eloquence can be learned only from direct and private study of the classics. Rizzo puts these protestations into their correct, rather defensive context

and shows that the need for school reform was widely accepted by the earliest humanists, even those who disdained or merely declined to teach. She then reviews the curriculum and describes the content of the grammatical manuals in use in the fifteenth century, including those that were composed late in the fifteenth century, probably with printed publication in mind. She offers a succinct account of the nonstandard usage promoted by the grammars of the day, which were, in her words, "indiscriminate catch basins for usage of all periods." This brief review looks forward to the next volume in her collection, for it introduces some technical aspects of the subjects of lexicography and style that will be taken up there.

The second half of the present volume is also provided with an appendix, exemplary both because it offers specimens of primary sources and because it provides essential, often hitherto unremarked evidence without which the author's opinions would be difficult to judge, information that is so often missing from recent monographic works. Rizzo here quotes at length the basic texts in which grammarians (from Alexander of Villa Dei in 1199 to Aldus Manutius at the very end of the fifteenth century) discussed the grammar course. Since the best editions of these texts are often incunables or can be found only in periodical literature, this short appendix is a valuable basic reader in itself.

English-language readers will perhaps be disappointed that Rizzo nowhere in this volume addresses Ronald G. Witt's recent book on the origins of humanism. Her always thoughtful opinions would certainly add to the debate that book has caused. We can hope that she will rise to the occasion in the next volume of her collected essays, turning her fine eye for language and style to the texts of the thirteenth century in which Witt locates the start of the humanist aesthetic.

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DAVID ROLLASON, *Northumbria, 500–1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom*.

Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xxvii, 339; 18 black-and-white figures, 38 black-and-white illustrations, and maps. \$85.

Northumbria as political kingdom, cultural construction, center of the St. Cuthbert cult, transitional space between England and Scotland, distinct dialect area, contact zone between English and Scandinavians—all these and more make their appearance in David Rollason's new history of the region. His recognition that this area, however demarcated, took on different identities and played different roles over a span of six hundred years gives this study a welcome richness. Some of its chapters focus on specific moments of political succession or territorial expansion; others reflect on the mingling of artistic styles in stone sculptures or the shaping of regional identity through local hagiographies. At least one irony emerges quickly from Rollason's argument: the most obvious source of Northumbrian identity—that it is the region north of the Humber—turns out to be more onomastically than historically precise.

From the start Rollason declares his historiographic commitment: "The book is nevertheless founded on the notion that geography really matters in history, and that variations in space as well as time even within a relatively restricted area such as the kingdom of Northumbria are of immense importance to understanding how past societies worked" (p. xviii). *Northumbria, 500–1100* is thus implicitly a test case for a certain kind of geographically informed history, though it derives less from an *Annales*-school concern with topography, soil content, agricultural production, and the like than from a social and political model of frontiers and heartlands. This model gives Rollason the freedom to shift the borders of Northumbria, both internal and external, to register the larger political and cultural developments that took place over the centuries. The Humber should therefore not be drawn on the map as a strictly defined line of division, like a modern boundary between