
Review

Reviewed Work(s): "Con l'appendice di molti eccellenti poeti": Gli epitaffi degli Elogia degli uomini d'arme di Paolo Giovio by Minonzio

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Reviews

Franco Minonzio, ed. “*Con l’appendice di molti eccellenti poeti*”: *Gli epitaffi degli Elogia degli uomini d’arme di Paolo Giovio*.

Rinascimento: Le Imprese 2. Milan: Lampi di stampa; Lecco: Polyhistor edizioni, 2012. 230 pp. €28. ISBN: 978-88-488-1375-4.

Although the humanist Paolo Giovio (1486–1552) viewed himself primarily as a historian, he is best known today for the *Elogia*, or capsule biographies, of literati that he wrote to accompany portraits in his museum on Lake Como. Published collectively in 1546, those character sketches provide a rich (if idiosyncratic) overview of learned culture in Renaissance Europe and have been mined extensively for their lively anecdotes. Few nonspecialists are familiar, however, with the companion volume that treats political and military leaders, *Elogia virorum bellica virtute illustrium* (*Sketches of Men Illustrious in Military Prowess*), which appeared in 1551. Thanks to the herculean efforts of Franco Minonzio, the complete set of *elogia* is now available in Italian in a heavily annotated edition, *Elogi degli uomini illustri* (2006). Its 1,030 pages were insufficient, however, to include the poems by contemporaries that Giovio had appended to the sketches of men of arms — poems that also were omitted from the Latin text of the *Elogia* that appeared in 1972 in the Italian national edition of Giovio’s works.

The present volume provides the most accurate and the only modern printing of these poems, which are accompanied by careful translations into Italian. It also includes essays that address the structural function of the poems in the *Elogia* of men of arms, Giovio’s nurturance of the careers of their young authors, and the place of those authors in the heterodox culture of mid-Cinquecento Italy. These investigations yield interesting and unexpected dividends.

Giovio’s conception of the *Elogia* changed markedly in the five years separating the two volumes. Those of literati were initially designed to combine with the portraits in the gallery to form a whole: analyses of character as revealed in deeds complemented the visual images in encapsulating the essence of their subjects so as to make of them exempla for moral reflection. The 1546 book included 150 short poems, many of them epitaphs; some subjects received multiple poems, while others got none. The *elogia* of men of arms, in contrast, provided linear accounts of their subjects’ lives and careers: diachronic biographical narratives rather than the synchronic character sketches of the earlier volume. The variety and function of the appended poems changed as well: the 1551 collection features fewer poets, many of them young, and not a few of their contributions exceed the length of any in the 1546 volume. For example, Pietro Angeli di Barga’s poem on Francesco Sforza runs to thirty-nine verses. These poems’ content and tone do not always complement Giovio’s text, which the authors likely did not see in advance. Thus

they function very differently from the epitaphs that accompanied the sketches of men of letters.

While in some cases Giovio solicited poems on men of arms, others probably arrived unrequested from fledgling literati who saw the value of associating themselves with a well-published scholar, and of celebrating one or more of the heroes (as Giovio called them) whose lives and deeds the collection commemorated. At least some (e.g., Gabriele Faerno) wrote poems specifically intended for this volume. Minonzio teases out evidence from correspondence that Giovio actively promoted the careers of several of the younger poets, bringing them to the attention of noted literati and potential patrons.

Most suggestively, Minonzio highlights the religious heterodoxy of several of the authors. Ludovico Domenichi, who, in addition to writing poems for the *Elogia*, translated some of Giovio's works into Italian, would land in prison in 1552 as a suspected heretic. Francesco Manfredi's incarceration in 1564 probably also was owed to suspicion of heresy. Onorato Fascitelli was affiliated with Waldensians in Naples, Augusto Cocceiano was a friend and sometime collaborator of Reformers, and Adamo Fumano belonged to the circle of Gian Matteo Giberti. Of course, Giovio himself was a longtime friend of *spirituali*, including Giberti, and his gallery even included a portrait of Luther's righthand man, Philipp Melanchthon. While scarcely a Reformer himself, in the final decade and a half of his life Giovio was surely better informed than many have supposed with respect to the turbulent religious currents in mid-Cinquecento culture. Important in its own right, the present volume thus also whets the appetite for Minonzio's work in progress on Giovio and the Reformation.

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