



2019

Bruce McNair. 'Cristoforo Landino. His Works and Thought.'
Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 21. Leiden: Brill,
2018.

Massimiliano Lorenzon
University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/bibdant>

 Part of the [Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque Art and Architecture Commons](#), [Italian Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Medieval History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lorenzon, Massimiliano (2019) "Bruce McNair. 'Cristoforo Landino. His Works and Thought.' Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 21. Leiden: Brill, 2018.," *Bibliotheca Dantesca: Journal of Dante Studies*: Vol. 2 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/bibdant/vol2/iss1/18>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/bibdant/vol2/iss1/18>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Della Casa umanista e filologo,' pp. 217-237) provides a detailed presentation of Della Casa's humanistic and philological endeavours over two decades, from his 1537 *quaestio lepidissima* (and indeed misogynistic) called *An uxor sit ducenda* to his 1553 *zibaldone umanistico*, which included *variae lectiones* of several classical authors as well as annotations on Plutarch's *Moralia*. Finally, Paolo Procaccioli ('Filologia epistolare del medio Cinquecento. La lettera tra pratica individuale e teorizzazione,' pp. 275-291) addresses the philological problems raised by the textual instability inherent to epistolography, a genre which appears to have its own ethos (so to speak), one which allows the author to move away from the text of a letter as it stood when it was first drafted and dispatched, the revision being sometimes substantial (on the lexicon no less than the syntax) and occurring many years from the original exchange.

Gian Mario Cao, *Eastern College Consortium in Bologna*

Bruce McNair.

Cristoforo Landino. His Works and Thought.

Medieval and Renaissance Authors and Texts, 21. Leiden: Brill, 2018. VIII + 228 pp. \$143.

Bruce McNair analyzes the life and some of the works of Cristoforo Landino (1424-1498), professor of poetry and oratory at the Florentine *Studio*, as well as writer of prose and poetry, and moral philosopher. McNair decides not to study all of Landino's works, excluding texts such as his Italian translation of Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, his *Formulario di lettere e di orazioni in volgare*, and his commentary on Horace. McNair discusses the *Xandra*; three courses taught by Landino between the fifties and the sixties (the one on Cicerone, the one on the *Canzoniere* by Petrarch and the one on the *Aeneid*); the philosophical works *De anima* and *Disputationes Camaldulenses*; the commentary on the *Aeneid* and that on the *Divine Comedy*. McNair's aim, in particular, is to study how Landino developed his ideas and methods over the course of about forty years, as well as the themes that the philosopher himself considered most important.

McNair's work presents a summary of Landino's biography and works, also explaining the goals of his book (Chapter 1). In the second chapter, McNair analyzes the *Xandra*, the only collection of poems by Landino, in which we find for the first time a concept dear to the philosopher, that of the *civis poeta*, the poet who advises the powerful. Landino will discuss again this concept in his later works. However, in the *Xandra*, the idea of the individual passing from earthly interest to the divine ones is missing (this concept will be fundamental in his later works). In the *Xandra*, the idea of *furor* as outlined in other works is also missing. Here, in fact, the *furor*, the madness, is part of the ideal of the *civis poeta*, who passes from physical concerns to civic ones (while in the other works the *furor* makes it possible to recognize the futility of earthly matters and let embrace divine things).

In the third chapter, McNair discusses some courses taught by Landino. First, McNair examines the philosopher's preface to his course on Cicero in 1458. Here, for the first time, we find some of the key themes for Landino: moral philosophy; virtue and vice; the highest good (which is the knowledge of God); the different types of knowledge; the private and the public utility of education. Furthermore, here Landino supports the idea of the geographical transfer of knowledge, which passed from Egypt to Greece and finally to Rome.

Continuing in chapter 3, McNair also discusses the preface of Landino's course on Petrarch (1467), where the philosopher defends the study and the use of the vernacular, basing his thesis on the concept of the historical development of language and of the linguistic transfer from Greek to Latin to Tuscan. As McNair observes, this concept of transfer recalls the idea of the geographical transfer of knowledge. In the same chapter, McNair also deals with the lectures on Virgil (1462-63). Here, we find a new concept of *furore*, that Landino draws from Ficino (from the *De divino furore*). Landino affirms that the divine *furore* allows poets to discuss divine elements, and, as a consequence, they can convey happiness and knowledge. Furthermore, Landino analyzes the *Aeneid*, from a grammatical and allegorical perspective. The philosopher studies the interaction between reason and appetite, which allows him to interpret the journey of Aeneas from Troy to Carthage to Rome as the passage from a life of pleasure to an active life, and finally to a contemplative life. For the first time, we find an allegory much used by Landino, that of Plato's chariot, studied by the Florentine scholar to analyze reason and appetite. Also, in these lectures, for the first time, Landino mentions Macrobius in regards to the virtues. Both Plato's chariot and Macrobius will be present in all the other works analyzed by McNair.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the study of *De anima*, a text in which Landino analyzes the nature of the soul and its powers, citing what some philosophical schools say about it. Landino classifies the powers of the soul from the least important to the most important: nutrition, sensation, motion, and reason. The Reason is, therefore, the most important power according to Landino, since the philosopher considers it the most remarkable of human abilities. In the *De anima*, we also find the concept of the rational soul (which has a double power: an inferior power called reason and a superior power called intellect). Moreover, Landino also deals with the virtues. According to the philosopher, as for Macrobius, the three types of virtues are the civil virtues (which are used to live in society with honesty and decency), the expiatory virtues (which allow to purge the soul from all the mortal things), and the virtues of the purged soul (present only in a few people, who live with a soul purged from all mortal desires). In addition, Landino discusses the divine illumination (that allows one to reach the knowledge of God, the highest good reachable by man according to the philosopher). All these issues will then be extensively covered in his commentaries.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the *Disputationes camaldulenses*, where Landino uses different terminology for active life and contemplative life, that is *negotium* and *otium*. Here, Landino states that the best life is one that combines both *negotium* and *otium*. Furthermore, in the *Disputationes* Landino discusses the allegory of the *Aeneid* (I-VI). Here, the philosopher affirms that Enea's journey from Troy throughout Italy is a journey of the mind towards divine things. The allegory is

more complex from that of 1462–63: here Landino distinguishes between a superior and an inferior reason (which allows for the development of the concept of reason) and appetite, with the divine illumination that allows Enea to reach the highest good (God).

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the commentary of the *Aeneid*, similar in many ways to the course of 1462–63. Here Landino does not use the terms *negotium* and *otium*, but rather goes back to the terminology of his course in the sixties (namely: life of pleasure, active life, and contemplative life). Chapter 8 is dedicated to the comment of the *Divine Comedy*. Here, Landino considers the triad Homer–Virgil–Dante as the transfer of poetic hegemony in epic poetry, thus resuming his ideas on philosophical and linguistic transfer. Here, we also find the description of the powers of the soul, the virtues, the different types of life, and the idea that a person may reach the highest good both through active life and contemplative life. The analogy of Plato's chariot is also present, but here, for the first time, Landino provides the means by which a soul shattered by sensual vice and desire can redeem itself: that is, through divine grace. Divine grace not only illuminates and inspires the human soul but also allows to reach the highest good, namely God and divine things. The concept of divine grace is unknown to the ancient writers but present in Dante, says Landino. For this reason, Dante surpasses his classical predecessors.

In chapter 9, McNair presents a summary of his book, claiming that Landino's works present Platonic elements, but not only: in fact, Landino might be considered, besides as a Platonist, or Neoplatonist, also as a Thomist, or Aristotelian. But the best label, McNair argues, would be that of a follower of Dante, who tries to merge concepts of different philosophical schools. Therefore, it is not possible to simplistically catalogue Landino, who instead shows a particularly versatile thought.

Massimiliano Lorenzon, *University of Pennsylvania*

Adriana Alessandrini.

Il libro a stampa e la cultura del Rinascimento. Un'indagine sulle biblioteche fiorentine negli anni 1470–1520.

Biblioteche e archivi, 35; RICABIM. Texts and studies, 3. Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. XXVI + 340 pp. €160.

This impressive volume constitutes an essential contribution to the history of the circulation of printed books in Italy in the early typographic age. Adriana Alessandrini focuses her work on the Florentine libraries between 1470 and 1520. The author selects this time frame for two reasons: first, because this period defines the investigation on which the documentary repertory RICABIM is based, from which Alessandrini obtains the sources that form the core of her work. Secondly, because in those years the printing industry developed exponentially in Italy, giving readers the opportunity to expand their book collections with new bibliographic products. In the Introduction, Alessandrini explains the objectives and analytical criteria of