

*Vita di Adriano VI: Testo latino a fronte.* Paolo Giovio.

Ed. Lara Michelacci. *Umanesimo e Rinascimento* 8. Naples: La scuola di Pitagora editrice, 2015. 190 pp. €18.

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The brief reign of Adrian VI (1521–23) was one of the more incongruous episodes in the history of the Renaissance papacy. His election was owing to a deadlock between Cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Pompeo Colonna in the conclave following the death of Leo X. Eventually the two cardinals, both members of the imperial party in the Curia, compromised on the aged Flemish cardinal Adriaan Floriszoon of Utrecht, who had been the emperor's tutor and was currently his regent in Spain. Thus it was that an elderly and severely pious cleric, a product of the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, an ascetic who had never even bothered to come to Rome, succeeded the suave and worldly Leo X. The son of Lorenzo the Magnificent and munificent patron of the arts, a master in the intricate ways of diplomacy, was to be followed by a blunt reformer, inexperienced in diplomacy, crabbed by old age, and openly hostile to the culture of the High Renaissance.

Small wonder, then, that a hopeless breach soon opened between the new pope and the Roman Curia, or that his well-intentioned efforts at reform were rendered more or less futile by the hostility of those whose duty it should have been to carry them out. In the intense political struggles between the imperialists and francophiles for the mastery of Milan, Adrian had planned to assume a neutral position, despite his closeness to the emperor, but his betrayal by the secretly francophile Cardinal Soderini of Florence led to

his joining forces with the imperialists, although he was overtaken by death as the French were still besieging Milan.

Dr. Michelacci is an experienced editor of Giovio's works, having previously produced an edition of his *Commentario delle cose de' Turchi* (2005), as well as a larger study, *Giovio in Parnasso* (2004). In her brief introduction she deftly orients Giovio's biography of Adrian in the Roman culture of the day, highlighting the hostility the pope encountered with samples of the lampoons that circulated, especially after his death. Thus she is able to explain the complexities of this remarkable biography, especially on the part of those who saw it as a masterpiece of irony.

The *Hadriani Sexti Vita* was the first major work on Adrian's papacy to appear in print. Commissioned by the late pope's faithful follower Cardinal Willem van Enkenvoirt, it was undoubtedly written between the death of Adrian in 1523 and the death of the cardinal in 1534, although it was not published until 1546. As an intimate of Cardinal de' Medici, as well as a member of the Roman Academy of humanists, Giovio was superbly prepared on both sides to chronicle Adrian's papacy. He had even played a part in the diplomacy that surrounded it. He himself had no personal ax to grind, having lost in Adrian's reforms a stipend awarded him by Leo X, but which the pope replaced with a canonry since he was "no poet." Owing to its authoritative nature, the biography was and still is a major source for the history of the period, and Renaissance scholars are in Dr. Michelacci's debt for furnishing us with a modern edition accompanied by text, Italian translation, and annotation, all on facing pages.

The Latin text chosen is that of the hard-to-find *edizione nazionale* of Giovio's works, which was based in turn on editions published during Giovio's lifetime. The translation into modern Italian reads smoothly, although perforce lacking the period color of the contemporary translation by Ludovico Domenichi and unable to reproduce the amusing irony in Giovio's choices of Latin vocabulary that so delighted even reform-minded contemporaries such as Girolamo Seripando. Fortunately the Latin text is there on hand, since it was, in fact, through such linguistic irony that Giovio was able subtly to convey the attitudes of the Roman literati, while presenting a fair and factual account of the trials of Adrian's papacy, even going so far as to admit that with regard to the need for reform, the Fleming had been right all along.

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