

The Toronto Collected Works of Erasmus, CWE, continues to make magnificent progress: with the appearance of these two volumes, forty-seven had appeared out of a projected eighty-six. Like their predecessors in the series, both are elegantly designed, admirably indexed, and generally a pleasure to handle. Great learning has gone into them, and the translations are, moreover, written in unfailingly lucid and attractive prose.

Drysdall and Grant’s is the fifth of the six volumes translating the Adages; the sixth has at the time of writing just been published, and a prefatory volume is in the making. It is in one important respect an improvement on its three immediate predecessors, volumes 32–34: it returns to the practice of volume 31 and prints notes at the foot of the page, a very helpful feature in an edition of a work that is always citing others. It shares with volume 34 and the last part of volume 33 the advantage of having been prepared after the publication of the corresponding volumes of the Amsterdam edition of Erasmus’ Latin text, ASD, to which a number of annotations refer (for the developing relationship between ASD and CWE see Albert Rabil in Renaissance Quarterly 54.1 [2001]: 246–51). An inevitable consequence of this sensible practice is that readers of this volume who do not have access to ASD (which, for instance, my own university library has apparently ceased to acquire) will sometimes be frustrated by notes such as “But see ASD ii-7 69:532–3n.” Another presence in the annotations is Henri Estienne, who edited the Adages in 1558: a number of his very interesting criticisms of Erasmus’ readings of Greek texts were printed in the great 1703–1706 Opera, the LB edition, and are given in translation here. To be sure, at least one trivial mistake is still to be found after the work of such learned annotators—St Roche came to be invoked in preference to St Antony of Padua, not St Antony of Egypt—and interesting questions, particularly about the sources of some of Erasmus’ more recondite learning, remain unanswered, but overall, the achievement of the annotations is splendid.

The adages themselves include two of the great set-pieces, III vi 1, Scarabaeus aquilam quaerit, and IV i 1, Dulce bellum inexpertis, the latter as bitterly topical now as it was in 1515. But these are two among nine hundred. One of the pleasures of this volume is watching the play of Erasmus’ learning and intelligence in century after century of adages, as he draws inspiration from a single author as in III vii 24–75 from Aristophanes, or from an earlier proverb collection as in III iv 74–100 from Apostolius, or as he roams freely among the classics. One odd sequence runs
from III viii 1 to III x 75, and comprises a long series of verses from Homer which Erasmus felt might be used as adages: formulae such as “a good phrase would be this” or “this could be applied” occur again and again in his text, and the cumulative effect is somewhat laborious.

Reading the *Adages*, one is often reading Erasmus at his best. The same cannot be said of his controversies with Alberto Pio, prince of Carpi. These began when Erasmus wrote to Alberto on 10 October 1525 complaining that the prince had been speaking against him and, in particular, accusing him of responsibility for “the Lutheran tragedy.” Alberto replied with a 200–page printed *Responsio paraenetica* (1529). Erasmus’ counterattack, *Responsio ad epistolam paraeneticam Alberti Pii*, is the first work translated in Minnich and Sheerin’s volume. Alberto replied to this with the very long posthumously published *Tres et viginti libri in locos lucubrationum variarum D. Erasmi Roterodami* (1531). Erasmus’ response to this, *Apologia adversus rhapsodias Alberti Pii*, is the second work translated here. He wrote this without access to the index of Alberto’s book, and when he at last received a copy of this index, reflecting that “titles and indexes” are particularly lethal parts of a polemic “because most people read only them,” he wrote a separate refutation of 122 select entries, *Brevissima scholia*, which is the third work translated here. Erasmus’ *Responsio* and *Apologia* are edited in LB but not yet in ASD; the *Brevissima scholia* is not even in LB but has been edited in J-F Gilmont and A. Vanautgaerden’s slightly elusive collection *Circuler et naviguer ou les index à l’époque humaniste*, also to be found catalogued as *Circuler et voyager* or under the series title *Nugae humanisticae* (Brepols / Musée de la Maison d’Érasme, 2001). Alberto’s *Responsio* has recently appeared in a critical edition by Fabio Forner (Olschki, 2002), but his *Tres et viginti libri* is to be found only in editions of 1531 and a Castilian translation of 1535.

One real problem with a volume like the one reviewed here is that it inevitably represents one side of the argument much better than the other. We can read Erasmus’ words in extenso, but not Alberto’s—and as Minnich remarks in his long introduction, as the *Apologia* goes on, “it is increasingly difficult for the reader to follow Erasmus’ arguments unless he has before him a copy of the *XXIII libri* opened to the section on which Erasmus is commenting.” She or he need not, in fact, travel to the handful of research libraries which own the book, since as Dana Sutton’s invaluable directory of online neo-Latin texts notes, the Provincial Library of Bizkaia has generously made a copy available online: go to <http://bibliotecaforal.bizkaia.net/>, choose English, select Digital Library, and the page images are easy to find. It is, however, a pity that both sides of the controversy could not have been presented in translation, even though this would have called for a second volume. As it is, Minnich and Sheerin do their best to translate or paraphrase the most relevant passages of Alberto’s books in their annotations.

These annotations are therefore inevitably lengthy, many of them creeping halfway up the page, and they are sometimes avoidably lengthy. For instance, on the words “Adam ... suffered the same punishment as the original Carthusians,” there is a 27–line footnote on the history of the Carthusian order, where all that need have
been said was that Adam’s punishment was to live a simple and laborious life in the wilderness, just as the first Carthusians had done. Likewise, the introduction includes a two-page paraphrase of Alberto’s will, with a 45–line footnote occupying most of a third page, and the will then appears translated over a 16–page appendix, ornamented with 47 more footnotes: this will is not discussed by Erasmus. Hugh Trevor-Roper once said of CWE that its editorial apparatus was “economical but entirely sufficient.” Economical is not the mot juste here. He also said, though, that the project as a whole was “a marvellous work of organization, erudition, and presentation ... a splendid enterprise,” and that is certainly still absolutely true.

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The year 1660 is often identified as the point at which women began to perform publicly in English dramatic productions, and various reasons have been given for this milestone. Several critics have maintained that the rise of women on stage was likely a result of King Charles II’s acceptance of female performers in European productions. In an important study, Katharine Maus has suggested the importance of seventeenth-century England’s celebratory conflations of feminine sexuality and drama. Sophie Tomlinson notes these influential arguments but posits that the impulse underlying and explaining these dramatic shifts can actually be traced to masques presented decades earlier by the Stuart Queens Anna and Henrietta Maria. Tomlinson does not regard the 1660 emergence “of … professional actress[es] as a decisive change from the past,” but as a progression that was based on debates from as early as 1603. She suggests that it is no longer tenable for historians to maintain their “long-held assumption” that England’s public theatre tradition was “exclusively male” until 1660. Additionally, she argues for a need to examine dramatic works further that are centered on and written by women, texts “in which female theatrical representation is at issue,” arguing that for too long academic research has focused almost solely on the figure of the male cross-dressing actor.

Tomlinson examines the conditions that allowed women to perform female roles publicly on English stages. Her discussion of Stuart performance, including genres like court masque and closet drama leads to her convincing argument that seventeenth-century spaces for and understandings of performance were surprisingly diverse. Tomlinson goes farther than past studies, which have underplayed the wide variety of dramatic roles performed by women, and she connects female performance with changing notions of women’s subjectivity. Stuart court culture enabled upper-class women to assume greater levels of influence by means of drama, as in the case of Queen Anna, consort to James I and VI, whose patronage of and participation in masques surely cannot be separated from political manoeuvring.