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REVIEWS

Lawrence D. Green and James J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric Short-Title Catalogue 1460-1700*. Second edition. Aldershot UK/Burlington USA: Ashgate, 2006, xxxv, 467 pp. ISBN 0 7546 0509 4

As the cover of the new RRSTC of works on rhetoric from the beginning of printing to the Enlightenment states, or rather understates, this catalogue is a “revised and expanded” version of the one published by James J. Murphy two and a half decades earlier. My personal copy of this first edition tells me that I purchased it in New York City, April 23, 1981. I still remember my excitement after leaving the publisher’s office: this was indeed a precious gift for all those interested in Renaissance rhetoric. And it was a very courageous gift as well, since it inevitably demonstrated not only the vast knowledge of one of the founding fathers of the ISHR in those rich but largely unexplored fields, but also the gaps in his knowledge. Over the years, we—students of Renaissance rhetoric, in various stages of immaturity—all had the STC on our shelves, making good use of all it had to offer, and feeling proud to be able to add an edition, or a name, or an entirely unknown work in its margins. No one, except Lawrence Green, went so far as to devote the major part of his research time—and doubtlessly a considerable part of his spare time—to the correction and expansion of Murphy’s pioneering catalogue. The results of his efforts are now available in print, and the Introduction preceding the actual RRSTC shows with admirable clarity how the author managed to integrate a wealth of new printed bibliographical material and an ever-expanding variety of high quality internet sources into the previous edition. It is difficult to conceive how much relentless work and genuine scholarship are hidden behind the following simple lines in the opening paragraph of the Introduction: “The RRSTC now presents 1,717 authors and 3,842 rhetorical titles in 12,325 printings, published in 310 towns and cities by 3,340 printers and publishers from Finland to Mexico.” At the same time, one cannot fail to be deeply impressed and even more deeply grateful to the author.

In its present form, the volume contains some five hundred pages printed in small type. The 1,717 authors are listed in alphabetical order. As far as possible, copies of their works have been inspected in order to prevent the kind of fantasies one often finds in catalogues. The entry on

Cicero alone covers 30 pages, and is in itself an eloquent invitation to all students of classical rhetoric to consider more carefully and respectfully the complex history of the transmission of all the major texts they are studying. It also offers many new opportunities to investigate the interaction between commentary and textbook in the course of time. As such, this book is not only an invaluable tool for Renaissance specialists, but a guide to the study of rhetoric from Antiquity to the present.

By its very nature, an ambitious enterprise like this is open-ended; too much is happening at present on the internet. Almost every day new bibliographical data become available. This is the paradox of the present moment: we all want to have a printed catalogue like the new RRSTC and we will bless its existence. At the same time, modern bibliographical tools are moving so swiftly, that ultimate perfection is more out of reach than ever. This is why Professor Green clearly states in his Introduction how much he would welcome suggestions, additions and corrections: like no one else, he is aware of the unavoidable shortcomings of this second edition, immensely expanded and improved though it is. The author explicitly invites readers to send their specialized knowledge. Since it might seem inappropriate to take up this challenge in the present review, I will limit myself to just a few examples.

For my own country, the STCN (*Short Title Catalogue, Netherlands*), the Dutch retrospective bibliography covering the years 1540-1800, becomes a more valuable instrument each day. In France, the CCF (*Catalogue Collectif de France*), already listed among the major web-based catalogues in the new RRSTC, deserves to be followed closely, if only because its *base Patrimoine* is quickly expanding and includes at present the rare book catalogues of some sixty local specialised libraries. The "old fashioned" catalogues remain precious, however, especially when the printed volumes are being updated in a web-based equivalent, as is the case with the German VD16, the catalogue of books printed in the German speaking countries in the 16th Century (accessible through the site of the *Bibliotheksverbund Bayern* (BVB)).

In some cases, the selection of bibliographical resources, inevitable in itself, could be called into question. Why are the volumes of the so-called *grand Renouard*, which offer full descriptions of the production of some individual printing houses in Paris (for instance Jean Loys), used in the new edition, while the *petit Renouard*, which is in fact an STC of all books printed in Paris during the 16th Century, is as far as I can see not referred to (see *Inventaire chronologique des éditions parisiennes du xvi^e siècle: d'après les manuscrits de Philippe Renouard*; five volumes appeared, covering the period 1501-1540)? A similar question could be raised regarding the *Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana* and more particularly the *Répertoire bibliographique des livres imprimés en France*, which is a huge series of catalogues organised by region and by city, aiming at listing the complete production of each individual French printer (with the exception of the Parisian ones, to whom Philippe Renouard dedicated his entire life) over a period of three centuries (16th to 18th). To give just one example, if the *petit Renouard* had been taken into account, the first commentaries of Johann Sturm and of Bartholomaeus

Latomus on the orations of Cicero, published in Paris as early as 1531 by the freshly arrived Flemish printer Chrétien Wechel, would have been recorded in the RRSTC. As is well known, the activities of these young German scholars were of crucial importance for the development and—rhetorical—orientation of what is now called the Collège de France, founded in 1530.

I am sure that any other specialist of a limited field of study can make critical remarks of this kind. Some will be justified, others rejected with good reason by the authors of the RRSTC. Not one single person will be capable of asking pertinent questions concerning the full scope of the catalogue: that privilege—if it is one—is restricted to J. J. Murphy and L. D. Green.

This new edition of the RRSTC is a landmark in the history of Renaissance scholarship. It is a life-time achievement, but not in the sense that it is now in its final and definitive state. The authors promise to add in due course not only new entries, but full indexes of dates, places of publication, printers. The addition of these indexes would indeed enhance the value of the book and make it accessible to a larger and more diverse audience. Considering all the work that has been done so far, one hesitates to impose another task on the authors' shoulders. Is there no end to their efforts? There seems to be none. The heavy and grateful use of the RRSTC by the entire scholarly community will be their due reward.

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