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I *Feretrana* di Giovambattista Cantalicio tra storiografia e retorica epidittica

Historiography and epideictic rhetoric in Cantalycius' *Feretrana*

Abstract

The biographical and encomiastic collection of Latin epigrams known as *Feretrana*, composed by the Italian humanist poet Giovambattista Valentini, said Cantalycius, was dedicated at the end of the XVth century to the young Guidobaldo of Montefeltro, duke of Urbino: in this work the life and morals of the dedicatee's deceased father, the great Federico, are told in a series of more than fifty epigrams of different lengths and composed in various meters. In this essay we attempt to interpret what is meant by the expression *novum scriptiois genus*, the invention of which is claimed by the author in his dedicatory epistle, combining the analysis of his poetics and the direct examination of the poetic text. The *Feretrana* seem to be placed at the focal point of historiography, epideictic rhetoric and epigrammatic genre. Firstly, there is a strong similarity between Cantalycius' biographical conception and the *leges* of historiography which we read in Cicero's *De oratore*: the humanist's aims and the methods exercised show, in fact, his will to 'write history'. Secondly, we highlight the important role that the ancient topic of epideictic discourse has played in the structure of the work and in the conception of its parts. Beyond the epigrammatic fragmentation, what seems to bring together the entire poetic collection is not so much the biographical connection – which binds most of poems but not the final section of the work – but precisely the rhetoric conception of the encomium of the dead. But it seems that Valentini does not strictly adhere to a particular pattern of encomium, but he brings together various theoretical formulations. This dialectical conception of praise is a reflection, on one hand, of the theoretical and practical variety of demonstrative speech before its scholarly definition in Late Antiquity and, on the other hand, of the complex process of rediscovery and re-acquisition of ancient rhetorical heritage by the Italian Humanism.

I *Feretrana* sono un'opera poetica di argomento storico-encomiastico che Giovambattista Cantalicio¹ dedicò sullo scorcio del sec. XV al giovane Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, duca di Urbino²: in essa la vita e i costumi del defunto padre del dedicatario, il grande Federico³, sono narrati in una serie di oltre cinquanta epigrammi di diversa lunghezza e composti in metro vario.

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