

The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius:

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The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet,
Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland,
1583 by David B. Quinn, Neil M.


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 ***The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583* by David B. Quinn, Neil M. Cheshire (review)**

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

HUMANITIES 385 Marall, and in each case the promise he gives is conditional on his marriage to Lady Allworth, a condition which both he and the audience know will never be met. Over-emphasis rears its head on page 89, where we are told that Jonson's Morose is prepared to go to any lengths, 'even to gelding himself' in

order to be rid of Epicoene. What Morose actually says is that he is 'vttedyvn-abled in nature, by reaSO n of frigidity, to performe the least office of a husband' C v.iv.46-7). Among the minor inaccuracies that meet the eye is the statement that Kastri l 'accepts Lovewit as a father-inlaw ' Cp 77) - it should be 'brother-in-law' - and the inclusion of Witgood among the characters in A Mad World My Masters Cp 138), instead of Follywit. But these are slight blemishes on a work which is to be welcomed for the fresh insights it offers, for its general liveliness, and for the way in which it transmits its author's evident delight in his subject. CG.R. HIBBARD)

David B. Quinn & Neil M. Cheshire, *The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius : The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfolndland, 1583*. University of Toronto Press, 1972, xii, 260, \$8.50

In 1579 Stephen Parmenius, a young classical scholar, left his native town of Buda, the Hungarian capital devastated and occupied by the Turks, determined to continue his studies at western universities while the Turkish occupation lasted. Only when Buda had regained its freedom would he return home in order to assist in the political and cultural revival of his fatherland, perhaps by writing a long epic poem commemorating the recent history of Hungary. He would not have lacked models in the poetry of his country - eg, the *Annales*, an epos on Hungarian history written in Latin by Janus Pannonius, the celebrated neo-Latin poet (1434-72), and the epic works by Sebestyen Tinodi, the 'Lutanist' Ct 1556), who recorded in Hungarian the life and death struggle of his nation against the Turks in many poems known all over the country. In some of the cultural centres of Switzerland, and Germany, and perhaps northern Italy, Parmenius improved his knowledge of classical authors, studied the local commonwealths, and obtained an inside view of their administration. During three years' wandering on the Continent his original aim seems to have become more and more remote. Arriving in England sometime before 1581, his sphere of interest was enlarged by the fortunate circumstance of his entering Christ Church in Oxford and becoming closely associated with Richard Hakluyt. A new subject for an heroic epic occurred to him: a work in Latin about the conquest of the New World to be written on the basis of his o\\'n experience.

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By that period Parmenius had written a thanksgiving hymn (Pae an) in Latin, modelled on Psalm 104 of David, dedicating it to the good and almighty Lord in gratitude for his safe journey from Hungary to England, and another poem (*De navigatione*) which praises Sir Humphrey Gilbert's projected voyage to the New World. By the intercession of mutual friends the poet was allowed to join Gilbert's expedition. He described his first impression of Newfoundland in a Latin letter to Hakluyt who printed it in his *Principall Navigations* (1589) (in 1600 all of the Parmenius material about America was assembled in the third volume of *The Principal Navigations*), but at Sable Island he, among others, was shipwrecked and drowned. Knowing Parmenius' tragic fate one cannot read today without emotion the beginning of the poetic psalm paraphrase where the author compares himself to a man who has survived the ship-destroying sea and leaves his garments in a shrine. Thus ended the history of a young Hungarian Renaissance Latinist, one of the first to risk his life in exploration in order to base his epic poetry on first-hand observation. David B. Quinn and Neil M. Cheshire carefully reconstruct Parmenius' life and background, his writings - including their translations and commentaries - speculate on the influence of *De navigatione* on Thomas Watson's *Amintae gaudia* and...

Marall, and in each case the promise he gives is conditional on his marriage to Lady Allworth, a condition which both he and the audience know will never be met. Over-emphasis rears its head on page 89, where we are told that Jonson's Morose is prepared to go to any lengths, 'even to gelding himself,' in order to be rid of Epicoene. What Morose actually says is that he is 'utterly va-ahled in nature, by reason of frigidity, to performe the least office of a husband' (v.iv.46-7). Among the minor inaccuracies that meet the eye is the statement that Kastril 'accepts Lovewit as a father-in-law' (p 77) – it should be 'brother in law' – and the inclusion of Witgood among the characters in *A Mad World My Masters* (p 138), instead of Follywit. But these are slight blemishes on a work which is to be welcomed for the fresh insights it offers, for its general liveliness, and for the way in which it transmits its author's evident delight in his subject.

(G.R. HIBBARD)

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