

## BOOK REVIEW

*Graeco-Roman Antiquity and the Idea of Nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Case Studies.* By FOEGEN, THORSTEN and RICHARD WARREN. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2016. Pp. viii + 304. Hardcover, \$128.56. ISBN 978-3-11-047178-6.

Among the ages studied by researchers interested in the reception of Classical Antiquity the 19<sup>th</sup> century occupies a very important place. The deep political and cultural changes during this period influenced the interpretation of the Classics as many studies have explained, starting with the “evergreen” Gilbert Highet’s *The Classical Tradition*. The book under review tries to explore one of the most important political concepts influenced by classicism in this period, nationalism, and does it using an interdisciplinary approach. The papers concern both the identification of classical models or influences in the written documents and in art history, opening the horizon not only to the French, English or German traditions, but also to Eastern Europe’s own tradition, as Warren’s paper on the Bohemian reception of Arminius’ Tacitean episode shows.

Apart from case studies, I find very important both the introduction of the editors and the first chapter by Anthony D. Smith, which approaches complex questions about the relationships between classical ideas and growing, modern nations from a nationalistic point of view. The editors offer a very detailed contribution, with careful preliminary remarks that explain what we cannot find in this volume (papers on the role of reception in the idea of nationalism in Southern Europe and the Slavic tradition, for instance) and of what broader research could offer, if the focus would be displaced on the other continents. In particular, they face the problem of defining nationalism and discuss—even if briefly—some key exegetical problems such as the difference between reception and tradition, with a satisfactory examination of the most important bibliographical reference works (as the already quoted Highet, Hardwick, Stephens and Vasunia, for instance).

Due to the limited space of this review, it is impossible to deal with all the papers, but I would like to underline some that seem to me particularly interest-

ing. Anthony Smith, one of the best modern reference scholars on nationalism, in his paper describes in detail the classical values perceived as predominant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the heroic virtues, the idea of citizenship and the pivotal concepts of *patria*, fraternity and inheritance. Moreover, he discusses very effectively the role of neo-classicism in architecture and performative arts, offering a rich opportunity to classicists and historians to detect also the political side of the re-use of classical texts. Moreover, I would underline on one side T. Rood's *Je viens comme Thémistocle: Napoleon and the National Identity after Waterloo*, which studies the meaning of Napoleon's reference to Themistocles in a letter sent to the Prince Regent of England about his surrender. On the other hand, A. Leoussi's *Making Nations in the Image of Greece*, starting from the reflection on Kohn's and Smith's theory about nationalism (Western and Eastern vs civic and ethnic nationalism) depicts very well the importance of Greece for nationalistic movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The iconographical apparatus, which shows the effort of the publisher to create a high quality product, deserves particular attention. The images are of a high quality, even if sometimes in a little bit too small a dimension, but they satisfy the needs of the readers. The book in itself is clearly part of a wider project that can extend itself both on the geographical and historical sides: as nationalism did not only use classical culture to justify and strengthen itself, so Classics assumed a very multifaceted role in the wide context of the development of a new identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But another very challenging target is proposed by the editors at the end of the introduction, in which they remember that Classics plays a role also in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: I hope that the editors—or others inspired by them—could pursue the target to inquire about the importance of Classics for today's culture and from a global perspective.

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