

BOOK REVIEW

Classics from Papyrus to the Internet. An Introduction to Transmission and Reception. By JEFFREY M. HUNT, R. ALDEN SMITH and FABIO STOK. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017. Pp. 344. Hardcover, \$ 29.95. ISBN 978-1-4773-1302-2.

This book has its roots in Fabio Stok's introductory handbook to classical studies, *I classici dal papiro a internet* (Roma: Carocci, 2012), but it is not merely a translation or even a rework. It is a largely new and more complete book, which covers the history and methodology of classical scholarship in order to provide basic skills to advanced students and aspiring classicists. It provides a reliable and engaging overview of how the texts of Greek and Latin authors were edited, transmitted and commented upon, from antiquity through the third millennium.

For the historical background, this book is undeniably indebted to the important works of Rudolf Pfeiffer (*History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) and Reynolds & Wilson (*Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968; 4th edition, 2013), but it appears more updated and "modern." It also provides technical guidance and "work tools," belonging to scholarly disciplines as epigraphy, papyrology, paleography, textual criticism and so on, in the wake of the *Handbook for Classical Research* by David Schaps (London-New York: Routledge, 2011) and Clemens & Graham's *Introduction to Manuscripts Studies* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

The study of literary transmission begins with an exploration of the origins and development of writing in ancient

Greece and Rome (Chapter 1), focusing largely on how attitudes toward texts evolve over time with respect to changes in the physical form of the book (especially the protracted transition from papyrus to parchment, coinciding with the decisive switch from roll to codex). Then, the book examines the rise of textual scholarship in antiquity and its long-standing effects, as the systemization of punctuation and grammar (Chapter 2). Due attention is devoted to the intellectual contributions of Hellenistic scholars that will have a strong influence on subsequent approaches to literary texts. The use of reading aids (such as scholia) and the conditions of medieval monastic copying rooms (the so-called *scriptoria*) are also taken into consideration.

The next step is the history of classical reception from Antiquity to the Middle Ages (Chapter 3), with a special focus on Late Antiquity and Carolingian renaissance. Valuable information on the evolution of writing and the characteristics of different scripts and letterforms over time, with the useful support of some illustrations, is also provided. The historical account continues with Humanism (Chapter 4), which represents an extraordinary rise of interest for classical texts both in quantitative and qualitative terms, and with the “age of printing,” which marks the beginning of the modern science of Antiquity (Chapter 5). Petrarch’s role in initiating humanistic ideas and practice is rightly recognized, and the contributions of individual members of this cultural movement (such as Coluccio Salutati, Poggio Bracciolini and Lorenzo Valla) is well assessed, but perhaps Erasmus of Rotterdam (only one page, 195) deserves more space. The paragraph on the method developed by Lachmann in the restoration of classical texts is a synthetic and effective presentation of textual criticism as a whole: the reconstruction of the gradual development of this method before Lachmann (from Politian to Nicolai Madvig) is unavoidably indebted to Sebastiano Timapanaro, *La genesi del metodo di Lachmann* (Florence, 1963; Engl. trans. Glenn Most, Chicago University Press, 2005) and Giovanni Fiesoli, *La genesi del lachmannismo* (Florence, 2000).

Finally, the book presents the tools for modern scholars, from paper to online (Chapter 6): lexical and bibliographical databases (such as the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and *L'Année philologique*), text corpora (such as the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* and the *Graecorum Tragicorum Fragmenta*), online multipurpose resources, including texts, possibly with translations, options of lexical analysis, statistics and even commentary notes (such as the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, realized by the Packard Institute, and the *Perseus Project*).

In such a rich and varied volume of information, one may happen to find a few questionable assertions, such as the following: "Ausonius was the author of poems that fit within the genre of profane literature, without the intrusion of the Christian faith that he personally professed" (97). Actually, it would be better to say that he was the author of many "profane" poems and a few others inspired by Christian faith (such as the fine *Oratio matutina*, included in the *Ephemeris*), and for this very reason scholars do not agree on the sincerity of his faith.

However, the book as a whole is reliable and trustworthy, seriously meditated and carefully written: it is a valuable tool for students approaching classical philology. Indeed, it would work very well as, and it will eventually become, a reference handbook for university teaching of ancient texts and culture. It ends with a large bibliography and a useful *index nominum rerumque*.

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