

BOOK REVIEW

The Codex Fori Mussolini. A Latin Text of Italian Fascism. Edited by HAN LAMERS and BETTINA REITZ-JOOSSE, Bloomsbury Studies in Classical Reception. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. x + 139. Paperback, \$35.95. ISBN 978-1350054868.

Reception studies are one of the most interesting and promising fields in Classics, and Neo-Latin occupies a very pivotal place in this context. As a matter of fact, the Neolatin production still plays an important role during the 20th century, even if the number of writers who actively use classical languages is always diminishing. Nonetheless, during the years between 1920 and 1940, Latin gained attraction as a symbol of noble and prestigious antiquity and it was connected with the political call to restore the past. This happened in particular during the Fascist age in Italy, which was characterized by a large production of Latin texts, by an increase in competitions in the Latin language, as evidenced by several *Certamina* (*Vaticanum*, *Ruspantinianum*, *Locrense* for instance) that were associated with the high level of Latin skills required in schools.

All these elements increased in the public opinion the idea that ancient Romans' language should have a high ranking in the intellectual panorama. The book under review offers a new element in the mosaic of Latin texts under Fascism and gives back to scholars and cultivated people a forgotten work, literally buried under a great obelisk in the center of Rome, where now there is the "Foro Italico." The author was Aurelio G. Amatucci, a figure of medium level in Classical Studies in the early 20th century in Italy and a specialist of Plautus but also of Christian literature. The text is 133 lines long, written on parchment and as a *summa* for next generations of the most interesting elements of Fascist propaganda. They are the importance of Fascism in the new birth of Italy after the First World War, the enormous importance of Benito Mussolini as real leader of the new Italy and the greatness of his activity as reformer and builder of a new Rome. It is clear that the text deserves the attention of both historians and Latinists, because it is a new source for the self-interpretation of Fascism and for those who study its presence in the intellectual world of the Italian "Ventennio."

The authors offer a detailed edition, translation and commentary of the text and show a not so common knowledge of the complex dynamics of the Italian culture of these years, as the rich bibliography shows. They correctly place in context the composition of this political summary of the most important features of Fascism. Moreover, they explain with the help of a rich and useful set of illustrations the geographical position of the text and of the monuments that host it, while posing interesting questions on the role of this text in reception studies concerning Roman Fascism, placing themselves in the most productive tradition of *Realien*. Also, there is a mysterious situation that will surely pique the curiosity of the reader: as a matter of fact, the definitive text is unreachable because no archaeological survey has been done under or in the obelisk, under which it still lies. Nonetheless, as competent philologists the authors have based their work on the existing published editions that appeared in the *Bollettino dell'Opera Nazionale Balilla* 7, 2, 1932, 3-5 as well as in *Scuola e cultura* 9, 2, 1933, 153-158 (= *Codex Fori Mussolini*, Firenze 1933; *Il Foro Mussolini*, ed. By Opera Nazionale Balilla, Milano 1937, 103-104).

My only reservation regarding this good and well-edited book is the limited space given to the analysis of the Latin of Amatucci's text. In fact, it would have been interesting for the editors to examine this topic in order to understand something more about the features of Latin style during the 20th century. We should not forget that Latin composition in the last century owed so much to the example of Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912) and to a rhetorical tradition that is not completely dead today. Nonetheless, this book will surely help scholars to develop their research on this subject.

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