

[R E V I E W]

Raf Van Rooy, review of Federica Ciccolella / Luigi Silvano (eds.), *Teachers, Students, and Schools of Greek in the Renaissance* (Leiden / Boston 2017) (=Brill's *Studies in Intellectual History* 264), xv, 471 pp., ISBN: 9789004338036, €149,00, in: *thersites* 5 (2017), 182-189.



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Raf Van Rooy (Leuven)

The collected essays volume under review contains twelve original contributions to the historiography of Greek studies in the *Italian Renaissance*. For this reason, it is deplorable that the geographical delimitation 'Italian' has not been included in the book's title. The Italian peninsula no doubt was the main cradle of Greek studies during the fourteenth to (early) sixteenth centuries, but was certainly not the only area in which Greek played a major role in the intellectual life of the Renaissance. Thus, the reader would initially expect to also find papers dedicated to other hubs of Greek studies in, for instance, the Holy Roman Empire, France, the Low Countries, Spain, and England, which are, however, entirely absent. The contributions included treat a various range of topics, not only regarding the pedagogical history of learning Greek, as the title might suggest, but also the impact of studying this tongue, rediscovered in the Renaissance, on the visual arts and philology, as well as "issues related to the evolution of Greek grammar," textual transmission, the circulation of books and ideas, and the concomitant effects on Western culture (p. XI). So perhaps a different title would have better suited the contents of the book: e.g., *The Learning of Greek and Its Impact in the Italian Renaissance*.

The editors briefly introduce the main theme of the volume in their preface. They correctly point out the importance of the history of Greek studies for intellectual and cultural history, although not every reader will be convinced that the "successful case of exchange and interaction between East and West may teach a lesson to the contemporary world" (p. XI), and they emphasize the lack of research into this theme, which has led to a rather monolithic presentation of Renaissance Hellenism up to this point. The twelve chapters in the volume aim to contribute to remedying this lacuna and therefore serve, first and foremost, as "a point of departure rather than a point of arrival" (p. XI). The book aims to highlight the pedagogical methods used

and the approaches to Greek by studying primary sources that have barely been investigated thus far. As one of the main goals of the volume consists in nuancing the history of Greek studies, one might wonder how it could have escaped the editors that the Franciscan scholar Roger Bacon (ca. 1219/20–ca. 1292) already composed a Greek grammar in the second half of the thirteenth century and that even before that Greek handbooks were circulating in certain regions of Western Europe.¹ Consequently, Urbano Bolzanio from Belluno’s 1498 handbook was not “the first Greek grammar written by a Westerner” (p. X).

Let us succinctly survey the contents of the twelve chapters in the volume under review, which are arranged chronologically and amply testify to the fact that learning the Ancient Greek language was a necessary intermediary step in penetrating and recovering Greek culture. Fevronia Nousia’s opening chapter investigates the fate of Manuel Moschopoulos’ *Schedography* in Italy. This work, a practice-oriented textbook that was extremely popular in the late Byzantine period, was well-received by several Italian humanists as well, as Nousia convincingly demonstrates. In Chapter 2, Antonio Rollo draws attention to an understudied type of text, Greek-Latin lexica, and to a barely known but excellent modern work on this subject, Peter Thiermann’s 1994 doctoral dissertation, which Rollo summarizes, corrects, and updates. Vittorino da Feltre’s school takes center stage in Mariarosa Cortesi’s contribution, which discusses the link of the study of Greek with other disciplines, although Greek appears primarily in the margin of the main thread and disproportionately much attention is dedicated to music. Paola Tomè examines Greek studies in Giovanni Tortelli’s *Orthographia*, with a focus on the Greek sources on which Tortelli relied in composing this work. In Chapter 5, Denis J.-J. Robichaud presents, in a sometimes baroque style, a valuable contribution on the place of Marsilio Ficino in the history of philology and his philological method for Greek, especially with regard to Plotinus’ *Enneads*. David Speranzi then provides a highly specialist paleographical study of a group of manuscripts in Pietro da Portico’s library, which are closely associated with Pietro’s efforts to study Greek in Crete. Chapter 7 by Francesco G. Giannachi is a short article on the life, Greek educational practice, and prominent students of Sergio Stiso of Zollino (?1458–?between 1535 and 1540) in Apulia, in the heel of Italy, where Greek culture had never completely vanished. In Kalle O. Lundahl’s essay, which may be seen as the odd one out of the contributions in the

1 See, e.g., Boulhol (2014).

volume, a Greek inscription on Correggio's *Hermitage Portrait* is extensively discussed. At the same time, the author considers the scant evidence for Correggio's humanist education, while stressing that nothing is known for sure about his Greek competence. Next, Luigi Silvano analyzes part of an unknown manuscript with Basil Chalcondyles' notes on Homer's *Odyssey*, mainly based on the work of Eustathius of Thessalonica and focusing on the plot of the epic poem, which he read in his courses at Rome. Lilia Campana's chapter then treats the intellectual network, Greek professorship, and teaching method of Vettor Fausto at the School of Saint Mark in Venice. Subsequently, in a promising essay, Erika Nuti discusses two elementary manuscript handbooks of the mid-sixteenth century, their authors (Francesco Bovio of Ferrara and John Sagomalas of Nafplio), their usage, and their sources. She thus provides a case study confirming the recent insight that many study tools other than the published grammars by renowned Byzantine émigrés and Westerners were designed and circulated widely. The last and final chapter is an excellent contribution by Federica Ciccolella, in which a welcome contextual sketch (lacking in most other essays) is followed by an analysis of the Greek teaching tools in Francesco Barocci's library that are related to the early sixteenth-century copyist and teacher Andreas Donos and his Cretan circle. She reveals the "Cretan way to Greek" (p. 393); in accordance with Byzantine practice, Donos and his colleagues compiled textbooks out of existing material, both older Byzantine and more recent humanist works.

The essays are valuable contributions to the history of Greek studies written by specialists and discussing barely researched primary source materials. Additionally, the volume is a very useful English gateway to the vast array of relevant secondary literature, much of which is composed in Italian. Some authors also report important research lacunas, as Luigi Silvano does on p. 250. There, he contrasts the great amount of available primary source material for the didactic history of Greek to the scarcity of modern studies on the topic. Indeed, a colloquium and a handbook on this matter with a Europe-wide focus would be most welcome.

Apart from its many obvious qualities, the book has a not inconsiderable number of flaws as well. To begin with, for a thematic volume, the level of coherence is not satisfactory, a feature that could have been partly remedied by adding a synthetic and programmatic concluding essay and by increasing the now very low number of internal cross-references. Moreover, some papers, such as Cortesi's contribution, are not very coherent themselves,

whereas in others the authors have somewhat artificially linked the theme of their essays to that of the book, which is especially obvious in Chapters 6 and 8, where an at times justificatory tone is perceivable (see, e.g., p. 196). Short abstracts pinpointing the central idea of each contribution would have been very useful as well. Next, several authors adopt an all too sympathetic attitude toward the humanists they are discussing, which can be annoying. For example, Lilia Campana describes the achievements of Vettor Fausto in rather apologetic and laudatory terms (see especially p. 313). In some instances, an author seems to express views that are historically wrong. In the first chapter (p. 2), it is suggested that it was a widespread practice to learn Greek in self-study by means of bilingual theological texts before a systematic study by means of handbooks under the guidance of Byzantine teachers became common, but no evidence or secondary literature is cited to confirm this peculiar statement. Also, Desiderius Erasmus and Hieronymus Busleyden did not directly model their trilingual college at Louvain (°1517) on that of Alcalá and the Paris college was modelled on the Louvain initiative and not on the Alcalá college (see p. 322). Sometimes, there is confusion about the life dates of certain humanists (see, e.g., pp. 320 & 327-328 for Marcus Musurus' year of death).

Another main flaw is that the argumentation process does not always occur accurately or correctly in certain contributions. For instance, as to Moschopoulos' *Schedography*, I think it is quite a bold statement to make that "both Greek and Western students and teachers used it both in printed and manuscript form for nearly five centuries" (p. 10), without providing any convincing evidence whatsoever, especially since the author has only analyzed fifteenth-century developments in her contribution and argues by simply pointing to an eighteenth-century reprint of the text that it was still a popular handbook at that time. Also, Paola Tomè suggests that a Greek-Italian vocabulary based on Sophocles and Greek grammarians was useful to travelers in the Greek east, although it is very unclear to me how such a specialized wordlist could assist a traveler in everyday situations (pp. 81 & 94). Moreover, I don't see how Tortelli's interest in iotacism can be understood as an interest in vernacular Greek, especially since during his lifetime the only way Ancient Greek was pronounced was the vernacular, iotacized way (p. 86). In Lundahl's contribution, resorting to Derridaesque interpretations (see pp. 234-235 & 242) does not really help the argument in my view, but rather overcomplicates things. In Chapter 9 (pp. 268-269), a very general conclusion about the overall uniformity of Greek courses in the Renaissance is offered

after the analysis of one piece of source material, but I think the author should have considered that there were different levels of progression as well as regional preferences and peculiarities in didactic praxis. Also, two methodological objections can be made to the material presented in this chapter: why did the author not conduct an analysis of the entire text? Moreover, I am not sure whether silent correction is a helpful method for editions of notes written in a didactic context (see p. 272), especially since mistakes can reveal the level of progression, not only of Greek studies, but also of the students and their teachers.

In some cases, wrong interpretations or translations of primary source texts are offered. This is particularly obvious in Lilia Campana's contribution, where it occurs fairly frequently, thus making one wonder how all of that has slipped through the editing and reviewing process.² Let us look at one striking example on p. 335:

Mitto morum scientiam, quae publico inventutis moderatori, non solum debet esse notissima, verum etiam semper toto vitae curriculo.

Ethics, which disciplines the youth in public, should not only be perfectly mastered, but should always be part of the curriculum of life.

Apart from several mistakes in translation, the Latin sentence was incompletely copied from the original edition of Fausto's text.³ After "curriculo" the words "*quam sanctissime servari*" should have been added. I would myself suggest the following translation of the entire sentence:

I pass over the science of customs, which should not only be very well-known to a public youth moderator, but should also always be observed as inviolably as possible in the entire course of life.

Additionally, some quotes are presented wrongly. On p. 219, the epigram quoted there should have been distinguished into hexameters and pentameters. It would moreover have been a great help if Latin or Greek quotes were systematically translated into English (especially in Cortesi's contribution).

2 See also pp. 217-218 in Giannachi's contribution, where a wrong translation of a Greek quote results in a partly faulty description of Sergio Stiso's teaching practice.

3 See Fausto (1551) 23^r.

The value of certain appendices is unclear. For instance, why is a lengthy diplomatic edition of two schedographic texts attached to Chapter 1, although only two brief references to it are made in the main text? Also, if one reads the text in appendix, it becomes immediately apparent that much information on dialectal and poetical forms is offered (see, e.g., p. 12). The reader is, however, left to wonder how this is to be reconciled with the idea that Moschopoulos' text is a beginner's handbook. In other instances, more information would have been welcome. In Rollo's contribution, for example, the presence of a stemma codicum would have greatly helped the reader follow the discussion. David Speranzi, in turn, could have briefly explained the technical terms (allogenic, composite, etc.) he uses instead of simply referring to the work from which they are taken. In a number of instances, information should have been transferred from the footnotes to the main text. For example, how and with whom Vittorino da Feltre learned Greek is key information in a study of his Greek teaching (see p. 57, n. 12). Sometimes, footnotes could have been less extensive (e.g., on pp. 265-266 and 355-356).

The readability of the papers varies greatly. Some exhibit highly obscure passages, whereas others are more accessible. Also, it is rather odd to read about a "well-known" Plutarch manuscript and a humanist's "famous visit" (p. 74), while these qualifications only seem to apply to a very select club of specialists. Moreover, although it is laudable that the contributors have all done their best to write in English, not every contribution lives up to international scientific and grammatical standards. Indeed, most papers would have benefited from a more in-depth review by native speakers.⁴ Typesetting mistakes are not infrequent either, especially in Greek and Latin excerpts. For instance, on p. 72, one finds "μῆνιν" instead of "μῆνιν" and "σεμειῖόν" instead of "σημειῖόν." Particularly in the appendix to Chapter 9, one encounters several mistakes, probably betraying hasty work (or, less likely, a forgetfulness in using the marker [sic]).⁵

Finally, the lengthy and valuable bibliography also contains several typos, inconsistencies, mistakes, and particularities, thus betraying a lack of care in

4 On p. 57, one reads, for instance, "one of Vittorino's pupil" instead of "pupils." On p. 222, the adverb "jealously" is probably mistakenly used for "zealously." In several instances, "information" is treated as a plural noun (e.g., p. 312 and 342, n. 2) and in one case "were" can be read where "where" is expected (p. 328, n. 90).

5 One finds, for instance, "*celebrebant*" instead of "*celebrabant*" (p. 274), "*quaestus*" instead of "*questus*" (p. 282), "*dialpidarentque*" instead of "*dilapidarentque*" (p. 288), "*sequuntur*" instead of "*sequuntur*" (p. 291), and "*ingnaraequé*" instead of "*ignaraequé*" (p. 297).

compiling it. For instance, full stops are sometimes forgotten, title capitalization is inconsistently normalized, and some lines lack typographical justification. Also, the place of publication of Vettor Fausto's 1517 Latin translation of Aristotle's *Mechanics* was Paris, not Venice (see p. 397). It is moreover a pity to read in a book published in 2017 that certain URLs were last checked in 2014 (see, e.g., p. 163, n. 28). In addition, some 2016 works are oddly marked "forthcoming" (see, e.g., pp. 407, 438 & 443). Lastly, the alphabetical sequence is not always correct (see p. 414, where "Charlet" appears before "Chambers").

Although there can be no doubt that the volume under review constitutes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Renaissance study of Greek and its place in cultural history, and although it can hopefully stimulate many new studies in this promising subfield, the book has several flaws as well. These include, most importantly, its relative lack of coherence, the occasional imprecision in argumentation, the incorrect and inelegant English of some of the papers, the frequent and sometimes annoying expressions of reverence towards the humanists discussed, the seemingly hasty editing, and the deplorable assumption that 'Renaissance' equals 'Italian Renaissance.'

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