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**Sotera Fornaro, Daniela Summa (ed.), *Eidolon: saggi sulla tradizione classica. Due punti, 29*. Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2013. Pp. 151. ISBN 9788874702817. €15.00 (pb).**

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

In the always richer context of publications exploring every aspect of the reception of antiquity in modern culture and the survival of the classical tradition, this volume, derived from a workshop organized in 2013 in Freiburg (Germany), offers a small group of contributions touching on different topics, thus demonstrating once again the breadth of possible research fields and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to this category of studies.

The editors have structured the book in three blocks, whose interconnection does not always appear very evident; since no clear unity is recognizable, either in the themes addressed or in the methodology adopted, the volume is indeed to be understood more as an overview of the newest trends in studies of the classical tradition and as a collection of case studies, and in this resides its nonetheless very high value. A unity is in any case given to the volume by the fact that all contributions concentrate on the reception of antiquity in written texts of different nature (poetry, philosophical writing, historiography) and not on forms of visual reception, for instance.

The first section contains studies analyzing the literary tradition; even here the breadth and differentiation of the topics analyzed is huge. The first contribution by M. Castellari (Taboris letzter Brecht: *Antigone*-Variationen 2006, 11-22) is the work of a scholar of German literature, who has concentrated in particular on German theater and has here analyzed an episode of “double reception” of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, first through Brecht’s re-working of 1948, which was based as much on Sophocles as it was on Hölderlin, and then through the particular re-adaptation of Brecht’s text by Tabori in 2006. At the center of Castellari’s interest is the importance of the political content in Brecht’s as well as in Tabori’s work and the transformations that this necessarily entails when presented to a public which, in 2006, knows and deals with very different problems than in 1948. Particularly important is to underline how Castellari provides the reader with a perfect example of the complex multi-layered stratification of the classical tradition. It would be methodologically and conceptually wrong to analyze a particular episode of reception, such as Brecht’s *Antigone*, only through a comparison with the classical model (which was in itself already an authorial reception of myths, traditions, previous texts) – classical tradition must be viewed as a continuous uninterrupted

cultural transfer, in which every generation “rediscovers” the ancient model through the already existing and available forms of adaptation, and it is exactly in this complex “embeddedness” that every product of reception must be understood and studied. S. Fornaro (Le forme dell’amore nel frammento drammatico *Prometeo* di Goethe, 23-34), a classical philologist, concentrates on a completely different literary text, analyzing the Prometheus fragment by Goethe as a form of re-interpretation of the figure of the Titan, presented as a metaphor of man, and carefully reconstructing also the autobiographical elements which influenced Goethe’s production. M. Marino’s article (Dichtung, Philosophie und Religion: Herders erstes Exzerpt aus Lukrez’ *De rerum natura* und dessen Wirkung auf Herders Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, 35-61) focuses again on a very different field – philosophical production, the author’s own research area – and reconstructs in particular the importance of Lucretius’ poem for the development of Herder’s philosophy of history, but also of his idea of religion and of metaphysics and of his conception of literature and poetry, underlining the role played in Herder’s philosophy by both Lucretius and Spinoza.

The second section concentrates rather on the history of academic studies – a very important field of research that is unfortunately often kept separated from classical reception of which it should be an integral part, considering the continuous intersections between scientific work, popularization, and the construction of cultural memory. C. Bonnet offers a very original article (“L’*époque solsticiale de l’histoire ancienne*”: Carthage et Rome au coeur des dynamiques Est-Ouest dans la *Römische Geschichte* de Theodor Mommsen, 63-82) concentrating on Mommsen’s interpretation of the Punic Wars as turning point in the development of Roman history (and of Roman imperialism) and connecting it to Mommsen’s own political ideas and to the historical context in which he operated, the Germany of the First Reich, of which he wrote (and not always positively) in many letters. <sup>1</sup> D. Summa (Il progetto *Inscriptiones Graecae* tra passato e presente. L’esempio Cipro (IG XV), 83-106) provides once again a very different kind of topic and methodology, starting with the history of the Cypriot volume of IG and moving on to a broader reconstruction of the history of Cypriot archaeology in the context of nineteenth-century archaeological scholarship, concentrating in particular on the figure of Palma di Cesnola.

The last section finally touches on a theme which is currently prevailing in reception studies, the role of myth, its value and importance in modern society, and the discussions concerning myth and mythology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the past few years this has become a very active research area, which offers stimulating opportunities for truly interdisciplinary approaches, such as those promoted with good success by the Centre for Myth Studies at the University of Essex. <sup>2</sup> A profound analysis of the scientific debate on mythology in its connection with the literary world is provided by C. Santini (La seduzione del mito. Furio Jesi, Thomas Mann e Karol Kerényi, 107-123), who examines the epistolary exchange between Mann and Kerényi as well as that between the latter and Jesi to understand the role the German author and the two scholars attributed to myth in modern society, its ethical and practical function, as foundation of human action, against the background of the abuse of myth practiced by Nazism and the consequent difficulties (and differences among the authors considered) in dealing with this danger. In the last contribution (Pavese tra gli dei: Calvino primo commentatore dei *Dialoghi con Leucò*, 125-144) E. Cavallini takes into consideration the most “classical” work by Pavese, exploring his approach to mythology, which was mostly based on the level of psychoanalysis, and his relationship with the Greek classics (in particular Lucianus) through the

observations of Italo Calvino, who was the first enthusiastic commentator of Pavese's probably most difficult and most discussed work.

All in all, the book provides, as already mentioned, a rather unsystematic overview of the possibilities for research in the field of classical reception; its richness in topics and methods is admirable, and it is particularly worth underlining that the group of authors is truly interdisciplinary, as is absolutely necessary in order properly to understand such difficult transfer mechanisms as the ones implied by the classical tradition.

## Table of Contents

Premessa

M. Castellari, Taboris letzter Brecht: *Antigone*-Variationen 2006

S. Fornaro, Le forme dell'amore nel frammento drammatico *Prometeo* di Goethe

M. Marino, Dichtung, Philosophie und Religion: Herders erstes Exzerpt aus Lukrez' *De rerum natura* und dessen Wirkung auf Herders Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit

C. Bonnet, "L'époque solsticiale de l'histoire ancienne": Carthage et Rome au coeur des dynamiques Est-Ouest dans la *Römische Geschichte* de Theodor Mommsen

D. Summa, Il progetto *Inscriptiones Graecae* tra passato e presente. L'esempio Cipro (IG XV)

C. Santini, La seduzione del mito. Furio Jesi, Thomas Mann e Karol Kerényi

E. Cavallini, Pavese tra gli dei: Calvino primo commentatore dei *Dialoghi con Leucò*

Indice dei nomi

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## Notes:

1. See e.g. Mommsen's letter to Carlo Promis BRT 13/XXI/30 (20<sup>th</sup> March 1871) from the Royal Library in Turin.

2. [Centre for Myth Studies: Myth Reading Group.](#)

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