

myths in support of history. A great merit of this book also consists of bringing together so many texts from different authors in both languages, Italian and Latin, thereby reaching a wider audience of enlightened amateurs and of contextualizing Italian humanism within cultural studies of early modern Europe.

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Exemplary Reading: Printed Renaissance Commentaries on Valerius Maximus (1470–1600). Marijke Crab.

Scientia Universalis 1; Studien zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Vormoderne 2. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015. x + 318 pp. €59.90.

The subject of this book, the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* of Valerius Maximus, does not get many readers today, since there is not much of a market for a volume that mines ancient history for moralizing exempla and wraps the results in a florid, labored style. Yet Valerius Maximus was very popular in the Renaissance—by Crab's count, he was printed 190 times by 1600 and translated into Italian, German, French, and Spanish. *Exemplary Reading* sets out to determine what Renaissance readers valued there by examining the Latin commentary tradition of the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*.

Crab limits herself to the printed commentaries, since they had the greatest impact on the cultural life of their day. Of the twenty-seven known Renaissance commentaries, Crab concentrates on nine. Her approach is “essentially positivistic in nature” (6), based in the materiality of the printed book and using the paratexts as well as the commentaries themselves. To facilitate comparison, Crab asks a fixed set of research questions for each commentary: When and where was the commentary written, by whom, for whom, and for what purpose? How is it laid out, and how does it work in relation to its base text, to other commentaries by the same author, and to its sources? And how did it evolve into a text that was printed and then generated its own reception history?

The fixed structure of Crab's inquiry allows a clear set of generalizations to emerge. The first group of commentaries, those by Omnibonus Leonicensis (1482), Oliverius Arzignanensis (1487), and Jodocus Badius Ascensius (1510), sought to explain Valerius's text through a line-by-line commentary so that a relatively young audience would appreciate the value of his anecdotes for moral instruction. These didactic commentaries, however, were replaced in the sixteenth century by a second, more technical, specialized group of selective annotations by Stephanus Pighius (1567), Claudius Mitalerius (1576), and Justus Lipsius (1585). This second group focused on emending the text by correcting mistakes in chronology, prosopography, and genealogy.

Exemplary Reading represents an unusually well-timed entry into the scholarly discourse of our day. The interests of many classicists have turned to reception, and within reception studies as a field, more attention is being paid to commentaries and to the

books that carry them as material objects. The *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, a massive project designed to provide information on every commentary to every classical author that was produced up to 1600, has now reached its eleventh volume, which provides a data base on which studies like Crab's can be built.

As Crab is well aware, the reception history of every classical author is unique, but she has written what will remain the definitive study of the commentaries on this one text. At the same time, she has raised several questions that should be taken up by others who are plowing the same field as she is. For one thing, she has noted that while the paratexts in the early printed editions emphasize the moral value of Valerius's text, very little attention is actually paid to this point in the commentaries themselves. Is this because moral lessons were developed orally in the classroom, or was it believed that the moral content was so obvious that it would be brought out naturally in close reading of the text, or is there another explanation for this discrepancy? Secondly, how precisely does the physical format of the commentary affect its interpretation and reception? Crab notes that the first didactic group of commentaries was printed in folios, while the second group of specialized annotations appeared in octavo format. The first group was reprinted regularly, probably because its didactic thrust inserted it into the large market for school texts. The second, more specialized group was reprinted less, presumably because fewer people needed a technically oriented treatment of the text. Does the change in format signal in itself a change in the status of the *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*?

In sum, *Exemplary Reading* should find its place on the shelves of anyone with a serious interest in the reception of classical texts in the Renaissance.

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Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts. Patrick Baker, Ronny Kaiser, Maike Priesterjahn, and Johannes Helmuth, eds.

Transformationen der Antike 44. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. ix + 492 pp. \$140.

This volume deals with the humanistic historiography from a point of view rather unusual, although not absolutely new: the "eulogistic" historiography or the biographical texts dedicated to political rulers. As the editors explicitly say at the beginning of the introduction: "The hallmarks of humanist historical writing are supposed to be moral purpose, eloquent style, a critical stance toward myths and legends, dedication to truth, a heightened awareness of the power of contingency and human agency, and a keen sense of anachronism" (1); this book intends the reinterpretation of this paradigm, and this is its most valuable reached goal. In fact, historiographical and biographical writing about princes are less known than civic histories, but they can